

## 2017 Vernon Business Walks Survey

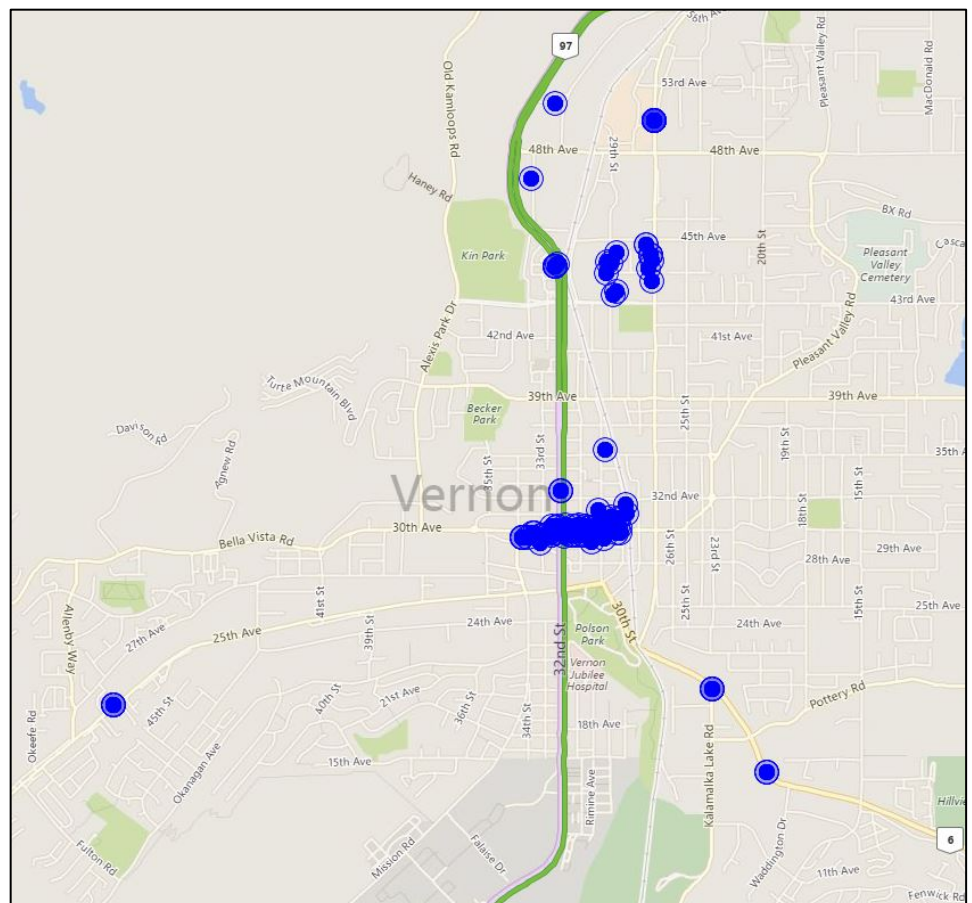
### General Results

Within a two hour period, a total of 26 volunteers split into 13 teams and met with 132 businesses across Vernon. The volunteers included representatives from Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures North Okanagan, Downtown Vernon Association, Okanagan College, City of Vernon and other professionals.

Most of the locations within the community were the same as in the previous surveys in order to provide comparable year over year data.

Businesses that were interviewed were located in the following areas:

- Downtown – 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 29<sup>th</sup> Street
- Fruit Union Plaza and Highway 6
- The Shops at Polson Park and Kalamalka Lake Road
- Vernon Square
- Village Green Centre
- Anderson Way
- 4300-4420 27<sup>th</sup> Street
- 4300-4607 29<sup>th</sup> Street
- Okanagan Landing Plaza and 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue



Map 1: Business Walks Survey Location Map  
(Source: Executive Pulse, 2017)

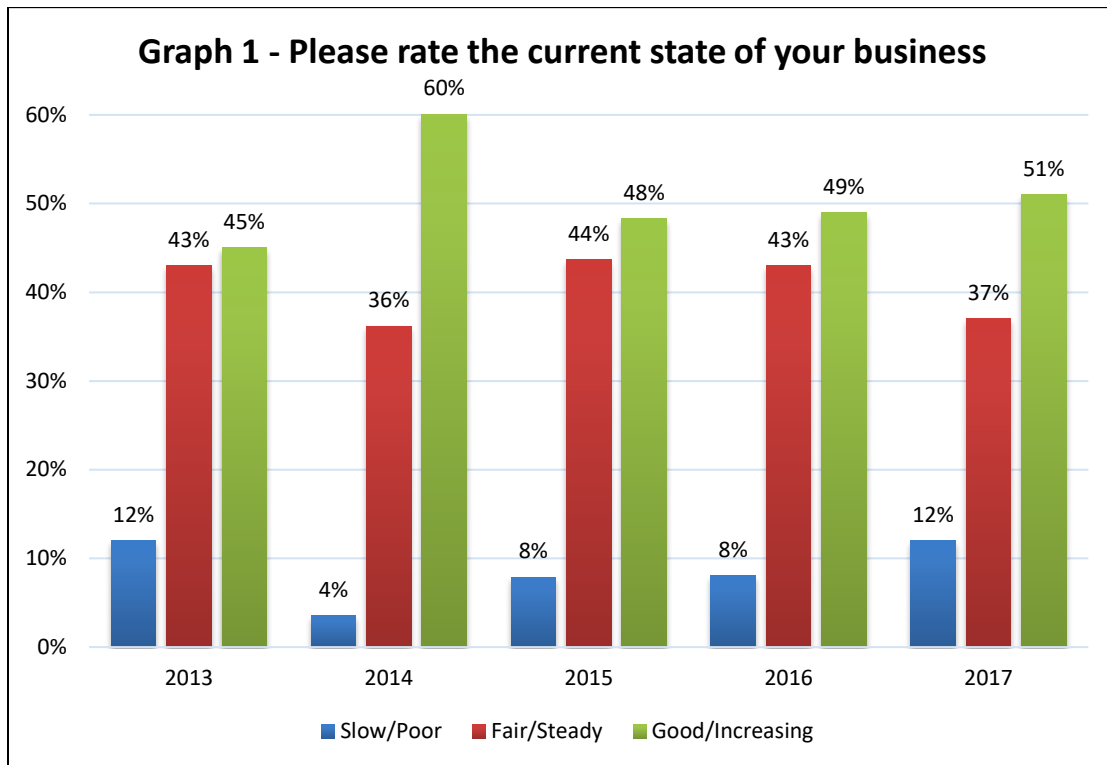
## Survey Results

**88% OF THE BUSINESSES IN THE 2017 BUSINESS WALKS SURVEY ARE EITHER STEADY OR INCREASING**

**THE 132 BUSINESSES INTERVIEWED EMPLOY A TOTAL OF 1,158 PEOPLE**

### Question 1: Please rate the current state of your business?

A total of 51% of businesses surveyed responded that business was **good/increasing**, slightly higher than last year’s survey (49%). In 2017 88% of the businesses surveyed were either **fair and steady** or **good and increasing**, compared to 92% in 2016 and 2015, 96% in 2014 and 88% in 2013. In 2017, 12% of respondents rated their business state as **slow/poor**, which is similar to 2013 and higher than 2015 and 2016 (8%), and 2014 (4%).

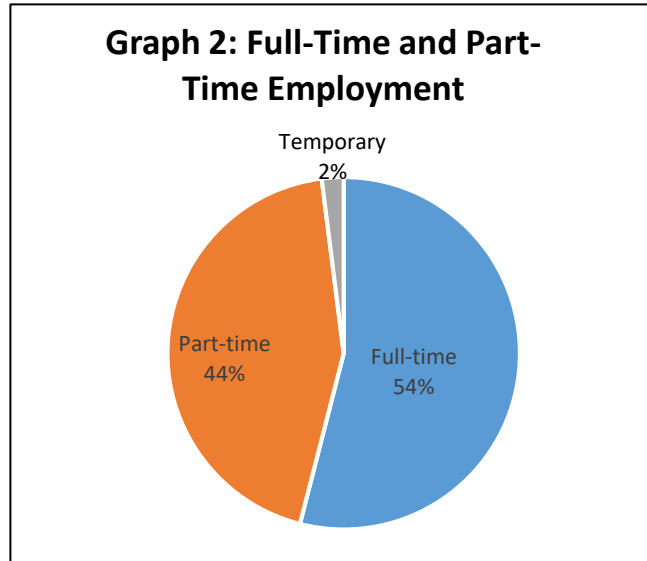


### Question 2: What is the average number of employees including yourself?

The 132 businesses interviewed employ a total of 1,158 people. 54% are in a full time position and 44% are part time.

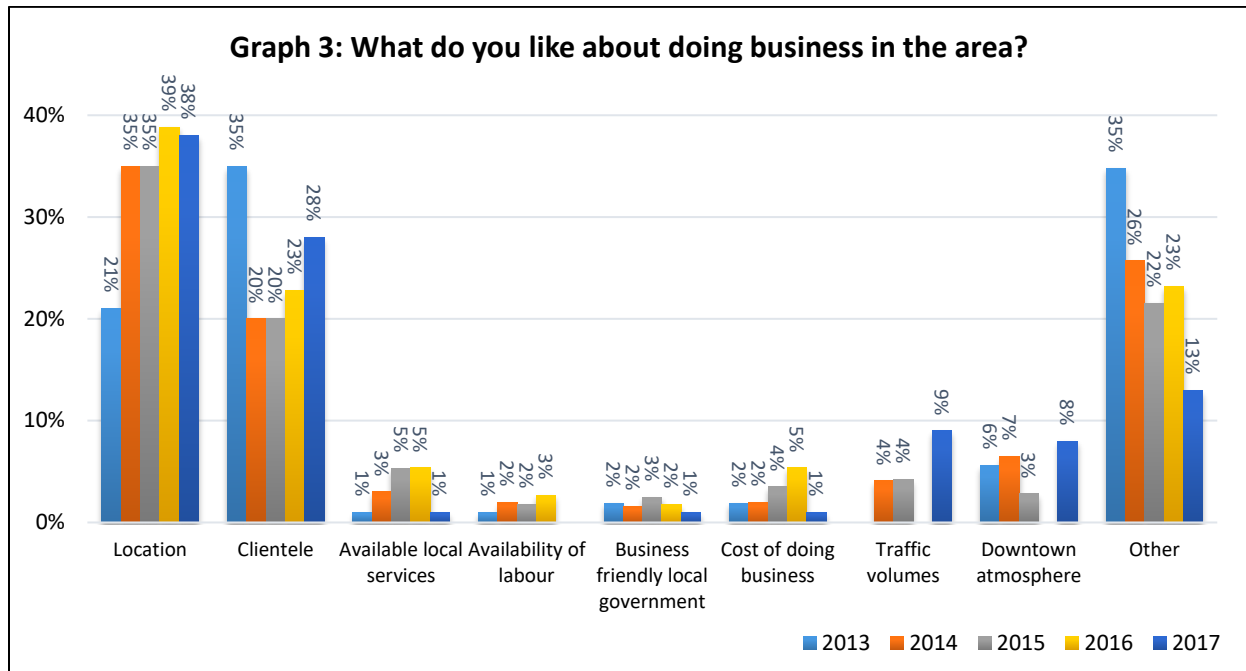
The number of employees in each business ranged from 1 to 75 and the average number of employees per business was 9.

76% of the businesses interviewed employ 10 people or less.



### Question 3: What do you like about doing business in the area?

The third question was asked to gain a better understanding of why businesses chose a particular area of the community, or Vernon in general, as a place to do business. In 2017, 38% of businesses highlighted that **location** was the key factor, while 28% highlighted **clientele** as the main factor. 13% of respondents choose other factors, such as availability of free parking, size of community, sense of place, affordability and the city demographic.



### Question 4: What are the biggest challenges facing your business?

Question 4 provides insight into the main challenges facing local businesses. **Other** challenges (41%), **finding employees** (18%) and **parking availability** (18%) were among the most common challenges in 2017.

Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the concerns reported under **Other** in 2017 compared to the 2016 survey. In 2017, 27% of the “Other” responses stated that **community safety and homelessness** was the main challenge compare to 43% in 2016. **Competition** and **affordability** were also cited frequently in this response.

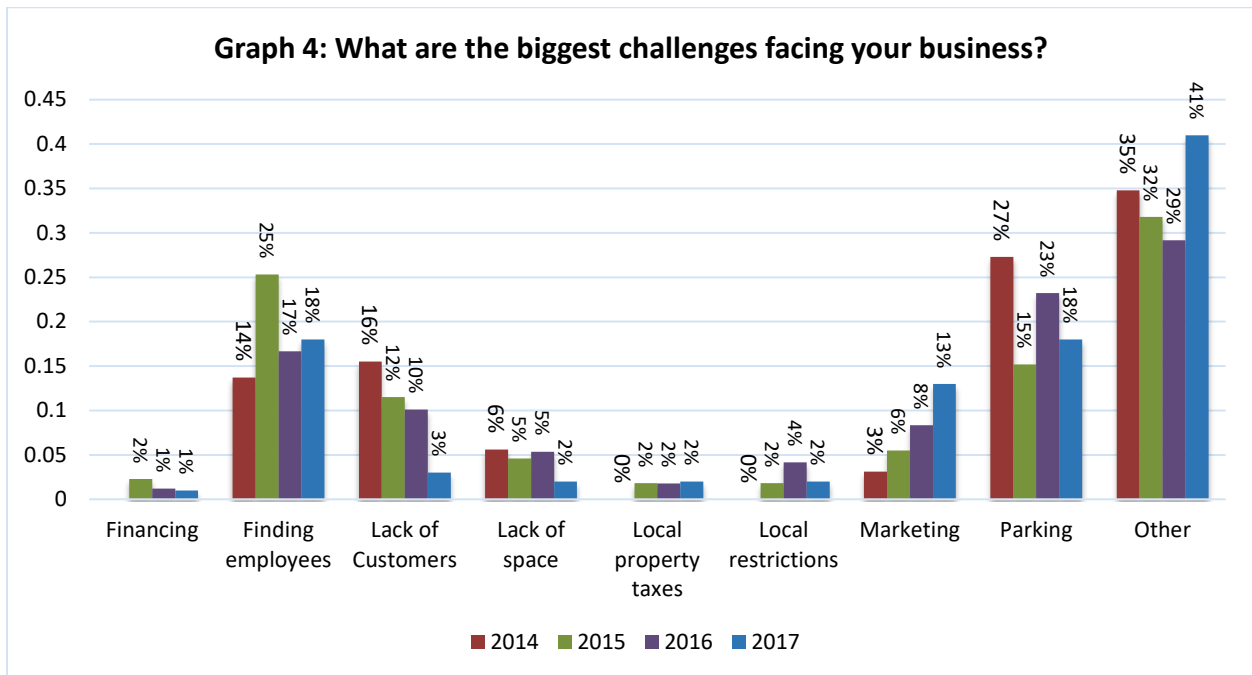


Table 1: Other challenges local businesses are facing	% of “Other” Responses	
	2016	2017
Community safety and homelessness	43%	27%
Competition	22%	16%
Affordability	6%	16%
Bylaw enforcement and City development process	-	14%
Seasonal market	2%	11%
Mall’s high vacancy and low traffic	-	8%
Aging community	4%	5%
Lack of space	-	3%
Road Access Issues	22%	-

### Question 5: What can be done to help your business thrive?

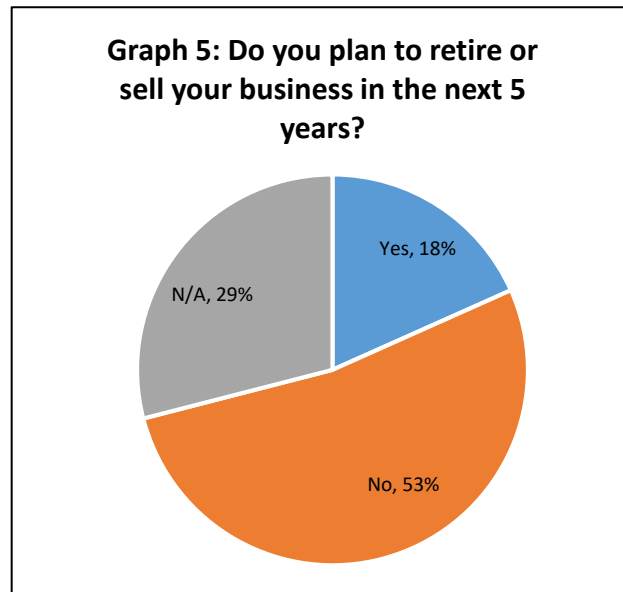
The responses for this question were the most diverse, ranging in comments about parking challenges, Bylaw enforcement, street safety, homelessness, crime prevention, marketing and advertising, City services and taxes, street maintenance, Downtown revitalization and community programs.

**Table 2: What can be done to help your business thrive?**

Address parking issues (lack of supply, price, over-enforcement etc.)	22%
Address safety concerns, homelessness and crime prevention	21%
Help with marketing and advertising	21%
Promote local programs and events	7%
Improve road access	7%
Improve City services and policies (i.e. Sign Bylaw)	7%
Downtown revitalization	3%
Increase foot traffic	2%
Reduce taxes and provide incentives	2%
Improve street maintenance	2%
All other	4%

### Question 6: Do you plan to retire or sell your business in the next 5 years?

Question 6 was added to the 2017 Business Walks Survey in order to gain insight into the future changes in the local business community. 18% of the businesses interviewed plan to retire or sell the business within the next 5 years.



### Question 7: Do you have a succession plan in place?

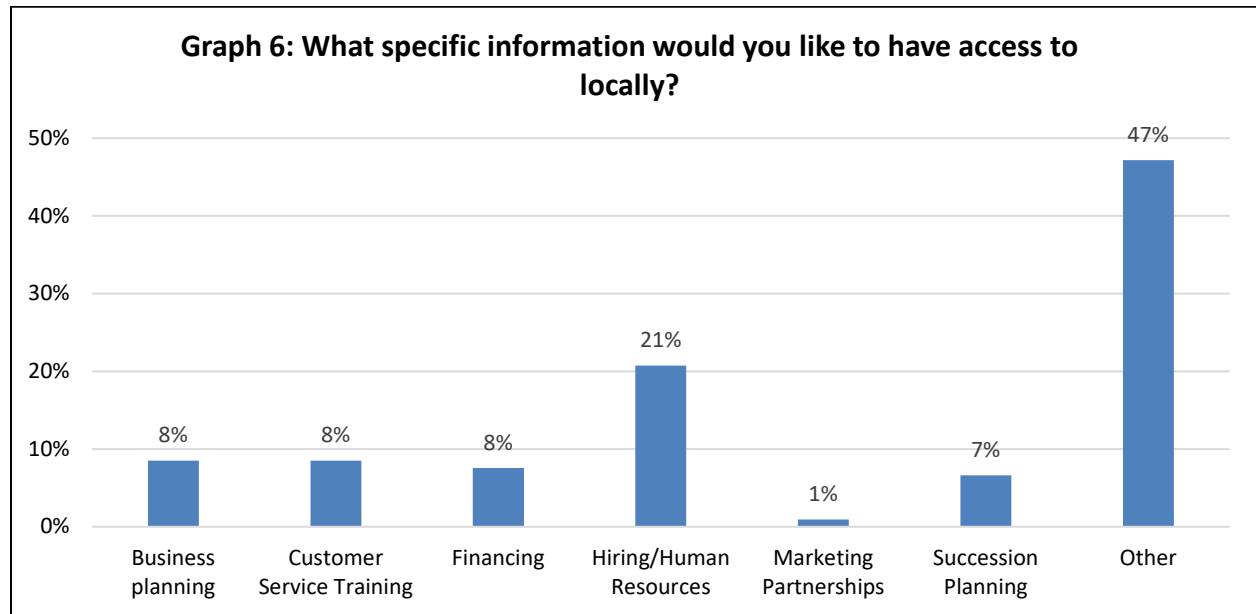
Question 7 was also added to the 2017 Business walks survey. 16% of the businesses interviewed have a succession plan in place. 52% of the interviewed businesses stated a succession plan was not applicable.



### Question 8: What specific information would you like to have access to locally?

The final question was geared toward finding out what resources are required locally to better assist the business community. The most common assistance required was **hiring / human resources** (21%). 8% requested access to **business planning**, **customer service training** and **financing**. 7% requested information on **succession planning**.

Almost half of respondents (47%) requested **other** types of information, such as available incentives, local events and information on marketing, social media opportunities and campaigns.



## Walkers' Question

### Should this company be revisited to provide 1:1 assistance?

One of the primary objectives of the Business Walks is to find out if there are immediate concerns that businesses have that may need assistance from the City of Vernon or other business support organizations. This year 18% of businesses requested a follow up, an increase from the 12% of the businesses which required some form of assistance in 2016 and 10% in 2015. Staff have begun the follow up process and will have completed all of the follow up by the end of the year, based on the determined urgency level.

