

Shawnigan Village Business Walk Results

March 24, 2022

Background: Business Walks are a tool to gather and track the pulse of local businesses and help community leaders identify measures and actions that ensure jobs, goods and services stay in the community. The walk gathers information that can be used to identify and remove barriers to doing business, and guide the future of programs and services.

Economic Development Cowichan (EDC) conducted a Business Walk in the Shawnigan Village and south Shawnigan industrial area on March 3, 2022. CVRD Electoral Area B Director, Sierra Acton, joined as the team walked door-to-door visiting businesses in the areas.

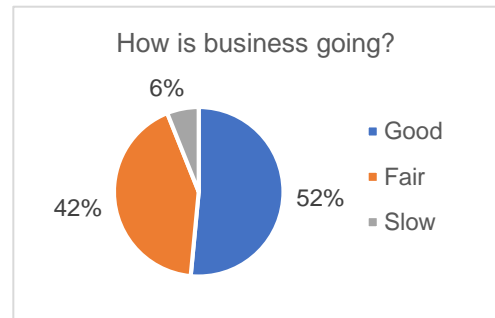
Questionnaire: Businesses were asked four questions:

- 1) How is your business doing? (What is the state of your business?)
- 2) What do you like most about doing business in Shawnigan?
- 3) What do you find challenging about doing business in Shawnigan?
- 4) What tools and actions would help your business thrive?

Summary of Results: From 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 3, 25 local businesses were surveyed. Businesses also participated in an online version of the questionnaire, and any businesses that were missed or closed received a follow-up email and phone call/survey the following week. Overall, 33 businesses participated in the Business Walk.

1) How is business going? (What is the state of your business?)

When asked about how their business was going, 94% of businesses provided a positive response with either “Good and increasing”, or “Fair and steady”. Only 6% noted that business was slow. Those who noted business was slow stated reasons still related to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated public health order restrictions.



2) What do you like most about doing business in Shawnigan?

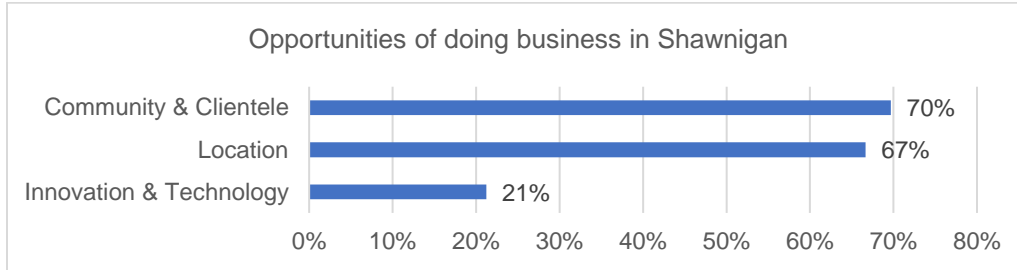
When asked what they liked most about doing business in Shawnigan, the overwhelming first choice for 70% of respondents was the local community in Shawnigan. Business owners and managers noted the rural “small town” feel of the Shawnigan Village in particular, and being connected and involved in the community. Respondents also noted that the interesting people and customers were really what made the community so great. In particular, the support of the community throughout the Covid-19 health crisis was critical to keeping local businesses afloat.

The next most frequent response related to the location of Shawnigan, with 67% of respondents noting the geography as a key reason they were located in Shawnigan. Many business owners and managers noted the beauty of the surrounding environment, including the lake’s numerous hiking trails and nature walks, as the reason they live and work in Shawnigan. With the south Shawnigan industrial area, construction related businesses appreciate being close to more urban centers like Victoria, Langford and Duncan.

While not particular to Shawnigan, many businesses were opportunistic throughout the Covid-19 health pandemic. Twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents mentioned that creativity and innovation kept their business open. Within the food and beverage sector, businesses quickly switched from dine-in to take-out and delivery and automated online bookings. Personal service establishments made the jump from paper to paperless with automated receptionists. Dance, music, yoga and health and fitness classes were moved online to Zoom, and in doing so were able to attract new clients beyond the local Shawnigan residents. The creativity and innovation shown over the past two years shows an adaptability that will benefit businesses through future challenges as they arise.

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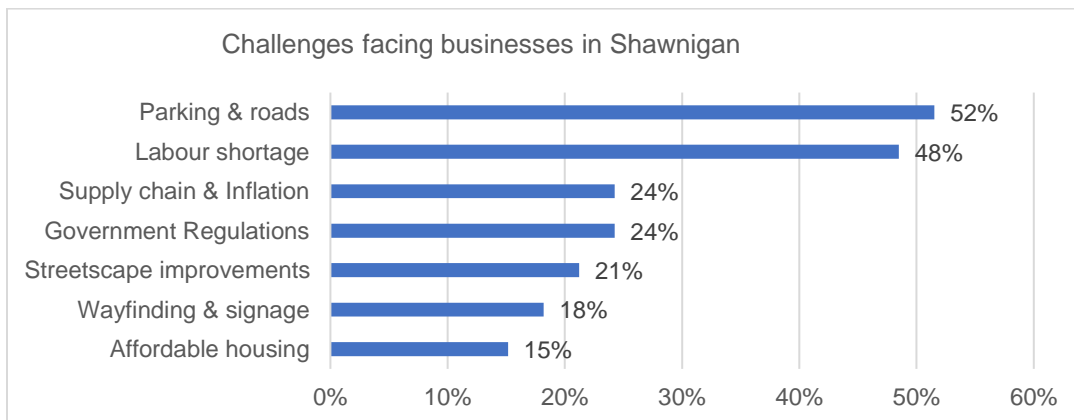


3) What do you find challenging about doing business in Shawnigan? What can be done to help your business thrive?

When asked about the challenges of doing business in the Shawnigan area, and the tools and actions that could help businesses thrive, the responses noted challenges at both the local and global scale. The top concern within the village core was around parking and road conditions, identified by 52% of respondents. Comments included safety around unmaintained and narrow roads, particularly with vehicles speeding. Parking supply and availability in the Shawnigan Village was noted as well, with little information on the location of parking and lack of overall parking management.

The shortage of skilled labour was the next most frequent response, with 48% of respondents across industries speaking to the labour shortage. This is not solely a local issue, but businesses felt that because the community is more rural the challenge is being felt acutely. Many respondents related the labour shortage to the lack of affordable housing in the area, with 15% of respondents noting this in particular as a challenge.

Almost a quarter of respondents, 24%, particularly within the industrial area, noted supply chain issues with regards to obtaining supplies and materials, as well as the inflation of these costs. The supply chain comments were noted by varying sectors as well, from local retail, personal service, to the construction and development sector. Other areas that were identified as challenges to doing business included burdensome government regulations (24%), inadequate streetscape infrastructure (21%), and lack of appropriate and informative wayfinding and signage (18%).



Conclusion: While owners and managers spoke about numerous challenges facing businesses in Shawnigan, the overwhelming majority were optimistic and positive about the state of their business. Economic Development Cowichan is actively following-up with resources and information related to the themes identified in the Business Walk, and aims to provide a facilitation role for localized issues requiring community engagement. A follow-up event to present the results of the Business Walk is scheduled for March 28, 2022. The follow-up event will allow for both information sharing, and be a networking opportunity for local businesses.