



# CITY OF PORT ALBERNI

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER REPORT

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TO: Ken Watson, City Manager  
FROM: Pat Deakin, Economic Development Manager  
DATE: For December 14, 2015 Council Meeting

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### SUBJECT: BUSINESS WALKS REPORT

#### Background:

Interim results of the Business Walk conducted October 23<sup>rd</sup> have been shared with Council at previous meetings. This report reiterates those results, provides new information and proposes some next steps in support of the business community.

#### Overall Summary of Results:

- 128 businesses were visited; 81 responded to survey
- When asked about the state of their Business
  - 63% said Good/Increasing; 26% said Fair/Steady; 11% said Poor
- When asked what they liked about doing business in their area:
  - 53% said Location; 29% said Clientele; 9% said Affordability
- When asked what might be done to help their business thrive:
  - 43% said more marketing; 27% said increase sales; 12% said reduce municipal red tape
- When asked if they were considering improvements to the business premises:
  - 59% said Yes; 41% No
- When asked about the value of improvements planned:
  - 50% said under \$25K; 27% said between \$25 & \$100K; 23% said above \$100K
- When asked what incentive would inspire them to do the improvements within 1 year:
  - Most common answers were tax exemptions, façade improvements & matching grants

#### Comparing Business Areas:

Business District >>>>	Upper Johnston	Lower Johnston	10 <sup>th</sup> Redford/Roger	Lower 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup>	Uptown / Harbour Quay
<b>State of Business</b>	80% Good 20% Steady	56% Good 22% Steady 22% Poor	22% Good 56% Steady 22% Poor	82% Good 12% Steady 6% Poor	63% Good 26% Steady 11% Poor
<b>What Like About District</b>	83% Location 17% Clientele	82% Location 17% Affordability	33% Location 33% Clientele 17% Available LF	35% Location 17% Affordability 58% Clientele	42% Location 42% Affordability 67% Clientele
<b>What Can be Done to Thrive</b>	Marketing	Social Media Marketing Increase Sales	Social Media Marketing	Marketing Succession Planning Access Capital	< Municipal Red Tape Marketing / Social Media Expansion Loans
<b>Making Improvements</b>	29% Yes 71% No	46% Yes 54% No	25% Yes 75% No	50% Yes 50% No	40% Yes 60% No
<b>\$ Value of Improvements</b>	N/A	60% below \$25K 40% > \$100K	100% > \$100K	25% below \$25K 63% \$26K - \$100K	25% below \$25K 63% \$26K - \$100K



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## Reasonable Conclusions

- A. The results from the individual business districts make sense when their respective attributes are considered; i.e.
  - Upper Johnston mostly big franchise
  - Lower Johnston mostly independent, some perceived parking issues
  - 10<sup>th</sup> & Redford/Roger mix of big franchise & independent
  - Lower 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> mix of big franchise & independent serving resource industries
  - Uptown/Harbour Quay mostly independent, some perceived social issues impact
- B. Although most businesses are doing well or holding steady, those that are doing poorly should be visited again and invited to meet with Community Futures
- C. A façade improvement program would likely get some uptake throughout the City
- D. A Commercial Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw for the business districts not currently covered by one would likely get some uptake
- E. Marketing assistance for individual business districts and/or events in the midst of some of the business districts might address perceived concerns and economic 'leakage'.

## Proposed Next Steps

1. Complete draft of Commercial Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw.
2. Prepare draft Façade Improvement program.
3. Meet with Community Futures and Chamber of Commerce to discuss possible outreach.
4. Make a conditional offer to each business district of a small amount of seed money (i.e. \$1,000) from Economic Development budget to organize events, develop an identity and address perceived issues.
5. Ask for Business Walks results from other communities for comparison purposes.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pat Deakin".

Pat Deakin, Economic Development Manager