

Business Pulse



Business Retention and Expansion Survey **Port Alberni, BC** 2013



City of
Port Alberni



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PORT ALBERNI

Community Overview

Situated roughly in the central interior of Vancouver Island at the end of a long narrow inlet, Port Alberni is one of the few ports on the West Coast that provides shelter against some of the powerful Pacific weather systems. Blessed with a moderate climate, it harbours both commercial fishing vessels and pleasure craft. The history of Port Alberni is linked to the forestry industry, however in recent years tourism, post-secondary education, the arts, agriculture and high tech industries have played an increasingly important role in the economy. Recreational activities in the area include fishing, hiking, riding all-terrain vehicles, dirt bikes and mountain bikes, scuba diving, golfing, kayaking, water-skiing, wakeboarding, kite-boarding and windsurfing. Port Alberni has the most affordable property on Vancouver Island.

Accessibility

Port Alberni is located in the mid-section of Vancouver Island on the shores of Alberni Inlet. Highway 4 connects Port Alberni with the major centres of Nanaimo, a distance of 82 km (approx. 1 hour) and the provincial capital of Victoria, a distance of 195 km (3 hours), as well as smaller get-away towns like Tofino and Ucluelet on the west coast of the Island. Port Alberni is accessible by road including regular bus service and air via a small commuter service via Qualicum and float plane out of Nanaimo, The Port Alberni Airport caters primarily to industrial air operations. Port Alberni is central to commercial airports with regular flights located near Nanaimo and Comox.

History

The area was first occupied by the Tseshaht and Hupacasath nations of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth (Nootka). Loggers arrived in 1860 when a sawmill was soon opened by James Thompson & Co of England. It closed its doors after a few years and the area developed some when miners and farmers settled in the 1880s. Its connections to the rest of Vancouver Island truly began in 1911, with the introduction of the railway to Nanaimo. Forestry took a foothold once again, and today remains the driving force of the economy. Originally there were two separate communities, Alberni, and Port Alberni, however the two joined in 1967 to become Port Alberni.

Economy

Port Alberni is one of the principal forest industry centers in Western Canada. Thanks to recent environmental developments in the forestry sector, the town prides itself on having air quality that's the cleanest of any industry-based city in Canada. Tourism is a growing industry as

more and more travelers discover that Port Alberni is central to exploring the pristine Pacific Rim region. As mentioned previously, post-secondary educational opportunities, the arts, agriculture and high tech as well as health care are increasingly important to the economy. In the near term, investments being made by local corporations are expected to create new jobs. The Port Alberni Port Authority and other levels of government are exploring the feasibility of two multi-billion projects near the entrance to the Alberni Inlet; these are long term prospects.

Population Profile

The population of Port Alberni is 17,836 and is part of a total catchment population of 31,664. The median age is 40.9 compared to 38.4 in BC as a whole. While the population has remained stable over the years, modest growth is anticipated in the near term.

Climate

The moderate climate of Port Alberni affords the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors year-round. Located at the end of the Alberni Inlet, the coastal town experiences the warmest summers on Vancouver Island. The predictable summer afternoon winds are enjoyed by kite-boarders and windsurfers. Winters generally have little or no snow and temperatures above 0 degrees. The average annual rainfall in Port Alberni is 1797 mm and the annual snowfall, 114 cm.

Housing

Living accommodations in Port Alberni include apartments, condominiums, town homes, duplexes, and single-family homes (some with acreages and views), both for rental and for purchase. The average cost of a single-family home in Port Alberni is in the \$190,000 range. Rentals in apartments range about \$750 per month.

Education/Daycare

Port Alberni has six elementary schools (Kindergarten to grade 5), two middle schools (Grades 6 to 8), an Alternative School and a brand new secondary school (Grades 9 to 12) that opened in 2012. Daycare is widely available. French Immersion programs are available at both the elementary and junior secondary levels. Hockey and wrestling academies as well as forestry programs are available at the senior secondary level. Two churches offer private schooling opportunities.

North Island College has a strong presence in Port Alberni, offering a diverse range of academic, career/technical upgrading and vocational programs. The Justice Institute and the Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health

Sciences also provide post-secondary education in their respective fields.

Recreation

Fishing enthusiasts are common in Port Alberni, reputed to be the Salmon Capital of the World and Canada's 'Ultimate Fishing Town'. All five species of Pacific salmon can be found in the area's waters.

One of the many spots for fishing—as well as swimming, camping, and water skiing—is Sproat Lake Provincial Park. Park visitors frequently have the opportunity to see the Coulson Group's Martin Mars Flying Tankers, the world's largest water bombers, which are instrumental in fighting forest fires. Among the park's many attractions is a prehistoric petroglyph, named K'ak'awin, thought to represent ancient monsters of the lake.

Port Alberni is home to Della Falls, the highest waterfall (444 metres) in North America, whose beauty awaits hikers at the end of a 22-kilometre trek. The vast recreational opportunities in Port Alberni, and the fact that it provides easy access to explore the region, draw outdoor enthusiasts of all kinds. From boaters to kayakers, golfers to bird watchers, , water-skiers, wake boarders, kite-boarders, wind-surfers, and off-road enthusiasts all find much to enjoy.

There are numerous recreational facilities in Port Alberni, from fitness centers and playing fields, to skating rinks and bowling alleys, to local golf courses. The community is proud of its reputation as a great host of sport-tourism activities and recognized as one of the only municipalities that has hosted all four of the provincial games; BC Winter Games, BC Summer Games, BC Senior's Games and BC Games for the Disabled. It also successfully hosted the 2009 World Under 17 Hockey Challenge. The trails throughout the community are widely used by walkers, hikers, runners and mountain-bikers.

Culture

Port Alberni has a rich cultural life. Visual and performing arts are represented through various organizations, including Choirs and the Community Arts District and the Capitol Theatre.

The Port Alberni Museum, a great place to discover the heritage of Port Alberni, features First Nations art, historic

photographs and unique folk art. A look back in time is also offered at the McLean Mill National Historic Site, the only steam-operated sawmill in the country. The Maritime Discovery Centre tells the story of the community as seen through its fascinating maritime history.

Each Labour Day, Port Alberni hosts the annual Salmon Festival, which attracts participants from around the world. Following on the heels of the Salmon Festival, is the annual Fall Fair, 4 days of fun, rides, farm animals, crafts and more. "Thunder in the Valley" is a popular event that draws thousands of people to watch drag races and a car show at the airport. The Port Alberni Toy Run brings more than 1,200 motorcycle riders to the Valley and has raised more than a half-million dollars for charitable causes. Other events of note are the annual Port Alberni Charity Golf Classic (which has also raised hundreds of thousands of dollars) and 'Art Rave' a newly established annual event showcasing local artists

Services & Amenities

Port Alberni offers the modern conveniences of a larger city in a small town setting. Accessible shopping centers, a local public transit system and a core business area make for easy day-to-day living. Harbour Quay on the Alberni Inlet is a vibrant waterfront development featuring restaurants, art galleries and gift shops, as well as a marina. A wide range of professional services (doctor, lawyer, veterinarian, accountant etc.) as well as high speed Internet service is available here.

Places of worship serve the following faiths: Presbyterian, Evangelical Lutheran, Christian Reformed, Anglican, Baptist, Roman Catholic, United, Sikh and Seventh Day Adventist.

Health Authority

The West Coast General Hospital is a 52-bed acute care hospital located in Port Alberni and is part of the Central Island health service delivery on Vancouver Island. Island Health (formerly Vancouver Island Health Authority or VIHA) provides healthcare services that include acute care facilities, mental health & addictions, environmental and public health, home, and community care.

Thank you to Island Health
for the background for the above Community Profile
<http://www.viha.ca>

Internet References
BritishColumbia.com
<http://www.britishcolumbia.com/regions>
Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce
<http://www.avcoc.com>
City of Port Alberni
<http://www.city.port-alberni.bc.ca>
Statistics Canada (Community demographic information)
<http://www.statcan.ca>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall makeup of Port Alberni suggests a strong community of long-term business ownership. The city has a number of businesses from retailers to restaurants to service agencies that have been in place, typically under family ownership, for decades in some cases. Many merchants expressed that the last few years have been very difficult (following the 2008 economic downturn). Business owner experience and dedication are foundations that enabled most to remain operational. It's also important and interesting to note that seventy five percent (75%) of our merchants believe the situation is improving. One merchant even stated "We're on the verge of greatness!"

There are 721 licensed businesses in Port Alberni and between January and July, 2013, one hundred and seventy five (175) merchants, or 24% of the business community, gave their time and insight to help the City with this business survey. Interviews were predominantly conducted in the Lower Johnston and Uptown business areas.

The goals of this Survey were to determine how the local business community was faring through challenging economic times, what aspects of business were difficult and where opportunities for business expansion might exist. Additionally the City wanted to understand what, if anything, it could do to assist in creating a better business environment. The openness of our merchants during the interviews is very much appreciated and has enabled us to achieve the survey goals.

There are themes that resonated from our merchants and these themes have created our [Top 10 to Tackle List](#):
In Alphabetical Order –

1. **Attitudes:** Potentially the most significant obstacle to growth, attitudes within the community topped the list of barriers noted by merchants.
2. **Beautification:** Dedication to beautification efforts from the entrance of the community and throughout is high on the list. Look good, feel good; be proud.
3. **Business Succession:** Business owners are in many cases older people who are nearing the end of their working careers yet many have no exit strategy.
4. **Business Training:** Including Electronic Media (a concern when some experts indicate 90% of Canadians have access to Internet yet only 17% of businesses sell on-line) and Customer Service training to compete with competitors and attract and retain customer base.
5. **Employee Attraction:** Many of our professional services have identified a recruitment problem and this issue is expected to continue.
6. **Harbour and Victoria Quay Improvements:** Parking, retail and event offerings, aesthetics, consistent hours of merchant operations and signage to get there.
7. **Marketing and Promotion of our Community:** Merchants are looking for leaders to do some very basic things; make the community look good, be safe and tell the world how great Port Alberni is – improve Port Alberni's Brand.
8. **North Port / South Port:** Merchants want to see all areas of the community considered equally.
9. **Second Highway:** A second highway is viewed as ideal to help all aspects of the local economy.
10. **Taxation / Tax Incentives:** Monitor and use them to support business.

COMMITMENT

The information provided to us from our business leaders enabled us to create this list of priorities. The list provides direction to support our businesses and create an environment for success. We will work on items within our respective mandates and resources, engage individuals and agencies throughout our community and keep you informed. You've got our commitment.

City of Port Alberni
Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce
Community Futures Alberni Clayoquot

Survey Goals and Objectives

The City of Port Alberni wanted to determine how the business community was faring through the challenging economic times that have affected most communities on Vancouver Island and throughout the Province. Additionally, the city wanted to understand the impact of its own initiatives as seen and understood by the business owners. There was a desire to collect as much data as possible from the Up-Town and Lower Johnston Road areas of Port Alberni. The Uptown has struggled, as many 'downtown' areas have, with business relocations, and additions of large box type stores in other areas and is a priority of Council. It was thought that businesses on Lower Johnston Road were going through some similar challenges and would provide a comparative measure of business activity. The Survey results were expected to provide the City with information on current issues, future prospects, investment objectives, status of employment and perhaps most important; the future prospectus of Port Alberni as seen by the business leaders.

Immediate Goals:

- ✓ Demonstrate the City's interest in the Business Community
- ✓ Demonstrate a commitment to address immediate concerns within our mandate

Longer Term Goals:

- ✓ Determine effective strategies to complement the current business community
- ✓ Strengthen Port Alberni as a "Place to do Business on Vancouver Island"
- ✓ Work with the Chamber of Commerce, and Community Futures to improve the business environment

Survey Methodology

The City of Port Alberni utilized the survey materials developed by Executive Pulse network who have a client base of over 6500 communities throughout Canada and the USA. The Executive Pulse Business Intelligence System is the most widely used database system for business retention and expansion available in North America. At the present time there are over ¼ million business retention and expansion profiles within the database. No other vendor serving the industry operates on this scale.

The City of Port Alberni through the office of the Economic Development Manager (EDM) embarked on an aggressive campaign to visit and solicit key information from as many of the licensed businesses within the Port Alberni region as was feasible given resources..

The City of Port Alberni contracted the Port Alberni Chamber of Commerce to do the interviews. The Chamber Manager visited 175 local businesses between January and the end of July, 2013.

With a myriad of questions the survey typically could be completed within 30 minutes however many participants used the time with the interviewer to discuss other issues of importance or simply to request specific future follow-up. It was not uncommon for a survey interview to last as much as 2 hours.

Subsequent to the collection of the information the survey data was entered into the Executive Pulse Database, a process that would take approximately 15 – 20 minutes per survey depending of course on the additional content included. The Executive Pulse system does allow for additional comments and in turn the system can pull out common themes were they discovered during the interviewing process. And, they were!

Businesses Interviewed

A total of 175 businesses were interviewed (24% of licensed businesses in the City of Port Alberni inclusive of home-based businesses). The geographic coverage focussed on businesses in what is considered the Uptown and Lower Johnston business areas. Survey responses were compiled both separately and together.

For the purpose of the survey, businesses are classed under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). A full list of industry codes and titles to correspond with interviewed businesses is noted at the back of this report. Appendix A

Survey Percentages

Percentages in graphs or explanations may not always add to 100 due to rounding up or down.

Survey Legend

In many cases graphs show separate and compiled responses from merchants in the Lower Johnston and Uptown business areas. The colour legend is noted as:



COMPANY INFORMATION

Business Profile - Key Findings

Businesses were asked to rate their current life cycle between emerging, growing, maturing or declining.

- 13% confirmed themselves as emerging
- ✓ 38% placed themselves as growing
- 35% suggested that they were in a mature stage of business
- 14% felt that they were in a decline

Uptown businesses were more likely to rate themselves as 'emerging or maturing'. The Lower Johnston area was primarily in the 'growing stage of the life cycle.

96% of businesses confirmed their ownership status as being privately held

- Of those, 28% operate as Sole Proprietorship
- 5% are in Partnerships
- ✓ 65% operate under a corporate umbrella

94% of businesses confirmed ownership as being BC based

- 2% of businesses surveyed have International Ownership
- 5% are held outside of BC but within Canada

Business longevity was determined

- 7% of businesses have been open for less than one year
- 14% of businesses are between 1 – 4 years

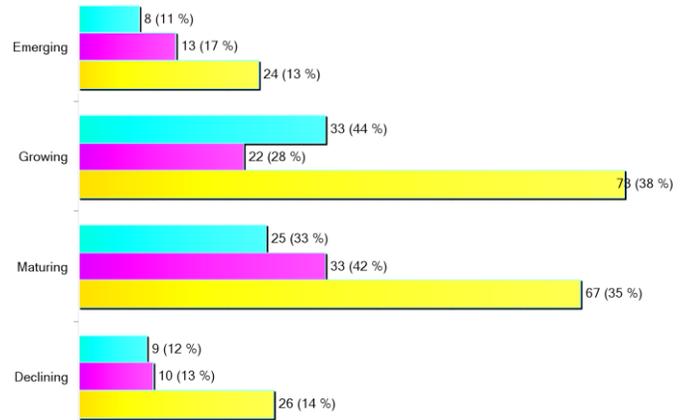
- 19% of businesses are between 5 – 9 years
- 16% of businesses are between 10 – 19 years
- ✓ 42% of Port Alberni businesses have operated for 20 years or more
- The above statistics are generally similar between Uptown and Lower Johnston

Businesses surveyed generally fell in to two categories with 40% being classified as 'Distribution' (include retail) and 45% in the Service industry

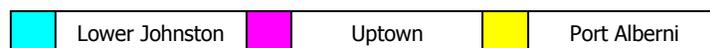
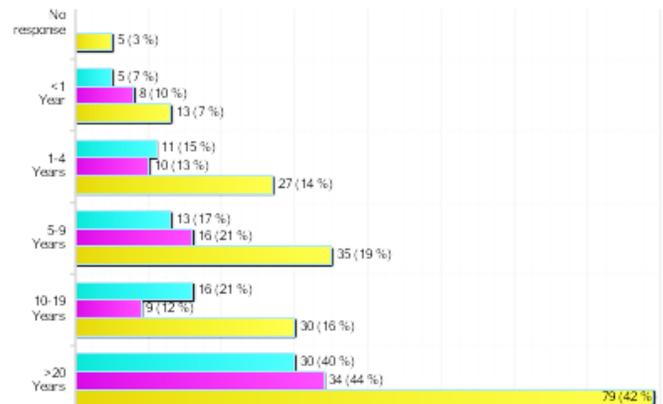
In terms of 'other locations' business owners responded with the following data

- 14% indicated that they operate as a 'location' where other locations also exist
- ✓ 86% of businesses operate as a single location here in Port Alberni

Business Life Cycle



Length of Time in Business



When asked of current ownership specifically with respect to the last five years
 13% of respondents indicated an ownership change during the ½ decade
 ✓ 87% confirm that the ownership has remained constant for more than 5 years

Of the 13% of businesses who have seen ownership change 61% confirm a positive trend since the change

When asked about ‘future’ ownership plans (*Succession*), respondents indicated
 23% have something in the works either actual plans or a desire to create something soon
 ✓ 77% of business owners suggest that no current plan is in place

Of the businesses with ‘something’ in place
 30% suggest within 1 year or less
 16% confirm within 2 years
 ✓ 54% indicate 3 years or more

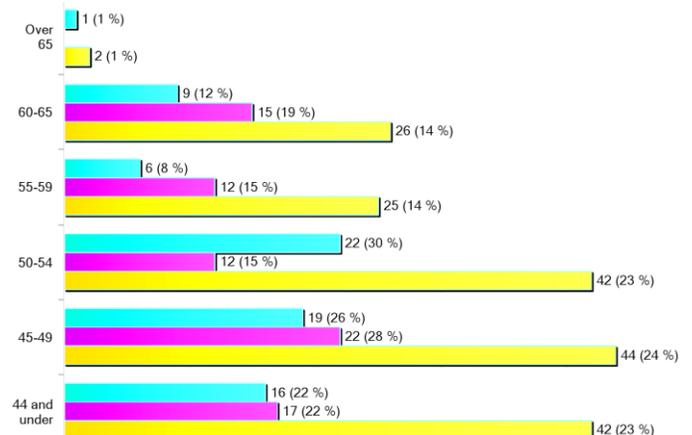
Driving further into the succession plans
 18% indicate a most probable sale to an immediate family member
 28% have no particular person(s) in mind
 43% plan to sell to another company
 8% plan to close the business
 5% aren’t sure
 ✓ It should be noted that 87% of respondents have not really identified a successor for their business

Demographics of the ownership through determination of the interviewer
 1% appears to be 65 years old or older
 14% range between 60 – 65 years
 14% range between 55 – 59 years
 23% range between 50 – 54 years
 24% range between 45 – 49 years
 23% seem to be younger than 45 years old

Most businesses have not sought assistance with respect to succession plans

The worry of succession is clearly something that the Port Alberni business environment should be concerned about. We are nearing a tipping point where businesses aren’t prepared or are unwilling to prepare for the inevitable.

Owner Demographic



Local Workforce

Employee Profile

Merchants were asked to comment on their employees with respect to wages, retention, performance, attitude etc.

- Businesses surveyed confirmed a total of 1023 FT employees and an additional 1092 PT. Another 47 people were identified as temporary employees. It should be noted that some respondents weren't sure of exact numbers or were reluctant to share that information
- Lower Johnston businesses generally reported proportionately more FT than Uptown and the reverse when it came to PT employees
- Total payroll for the respondents able or willing to report earnings exceeded \$21 million

Interesting to note that employers report that over 90% of employees are residents of Port Alberni

When asked about 'employment trends' i.e.: Declining, Stable or Increasing our respondents noted

- 16% FT – 13% PT indicated some employment growth over the period
- 68% FT – 73% PT suggested stable employment
- 13% FT – 11% PT indicated a decline in employment offerings over the past three years
- No discernible differences were determined between Uptown and Lower Johnston when reporting higher numbers in the 'increasing' category

When queried about projected employment growth over the next three years using actual employee numbers it should be noted that employers reported a potential growth rate of 1.5% in staff numbers

- In terms of %'s 6% of employers feel that further employment declines are likely over the next three years
- 60% expect to hold the same
- 31% expect some potential employment growth
- Most employers reported favourable conditions for employment conditions with respect to unfilled positions
- 88% of businesses reported no problem with respect to employee recruitment
- Those that are in difficulty were typically in the 'professional' fields and/or in typical high turnover businesses such as food and beverage operations

When asked about employee training it became apparent that most employers do not really isolate specific funds for training but instead they incorporate training into everyday functions

- 40% indicated a training budget but again during 'discussion' the above note became apparent
- 60% confirmed that no budget was in place for employee training

When asked about Professional Development for employees

- 17% confirmed that additional training would be beneficial
- 83% felt that no additional training was required
- Few employers invest in training outside of their specific location
- 1% confirmed training opportunities for their employees outside of BC
- 15% indicated that they invest in training outside of Port Alberni with Nanaimo most often mentioned as the destination

While most employers confirmed an overall lack of training, they advised

- 28% do things 'in classroom' that is translated to 'on the job'
- 42% confirm individual coaching that can also be translated to 'on the job'
- 30% have done some webinar forms of training

Average hourly wages were rated under the categories of Skilled/Professional, Semi-Skilled or Entry Level

- Skilled Professionals are paid the equivalent of \$22.70 per hour with the Uptown Area clearly on the upper side of the average
- Semi-Skilled persons come in with an average wage of \$15.34 per hour and again Uptown employees appear to earn more than their counterparts in other areas
- Entry Level employees come in at \$1.00 per hour above the BC Minimum Wages with Uptown leading Lower Johnston by about \$0.18 per hour
- The numbers provided are not inclusive as a large number of businesses did not respond, were not certain or simply avoided the question

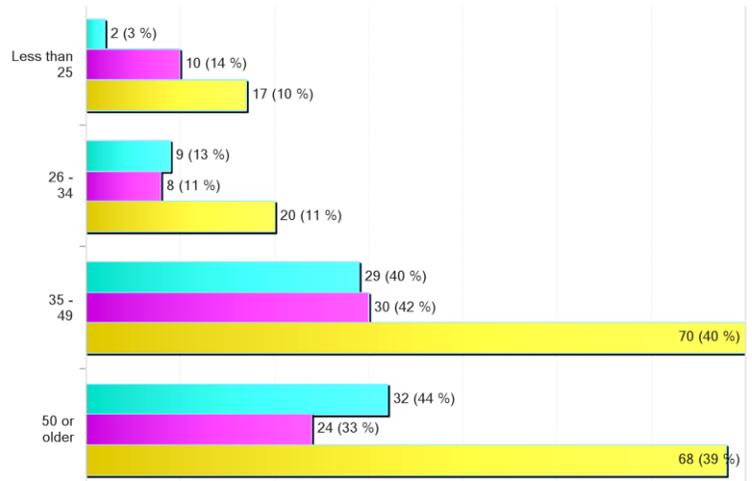
Businesses were asked how they measured against competition pay scales. Many commented that they didn't really know what their competition pays at but the stats below indicate their 'belief'

- 15% felt that they might be lower than competition
- 50% believe their wages to be on par
- 31% are certain that they pay higher wages than their competitors

Demographic of the Employee

- 10% of essential employees are less than 25 years of age
- 11% are in the 26 – 34 age bracket
- 40% are between 35 – 49 years of age
- 39% of employees are 50 and older
- Based on observations by the interviewer it can be suggested that the 39% rating might be a little low

Current Employee Demographic



Specific to Employee Retention determined

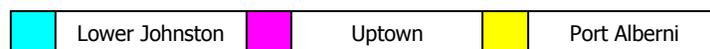
- Only 10% of employers cited any sort of retention problem
- 90% of employers have no identifiable issues with respect to retention
- There were however some concerns with ongoing recruitment within the Professional Trades as noted previously
- 25% of companies under this umbrella cite serious concerns about recruitment. These comments were echoed between Veterinarians, Accountants, Lawyers, Health Care workers and others

Specific to the Businesses interviewed

- 10% of Food/Beverage companies cited recruitment problems
- 24% of Professional services identified the same problem
- 10% of Retail businesses agreed

For the future i.e.: over the next 3 – 5 years the numbers alter slightly

- 13% of Food/Beverage companies fear this issue
- 25% of Professional services
- 6% of Retail



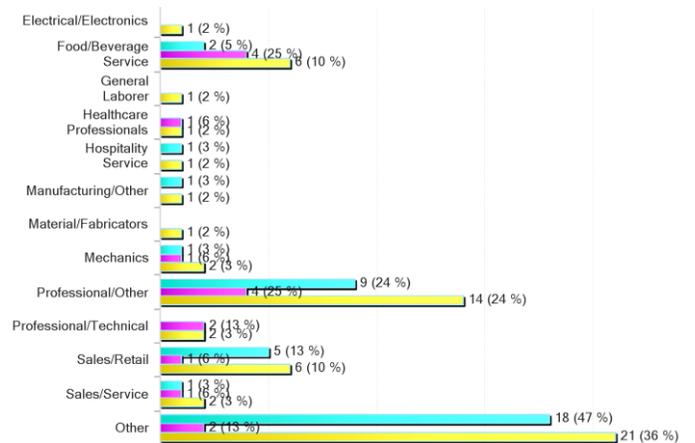
Retention

Recruitment for the most part appeared to be a non-issue except within Professional Skills categories and with business models that traditionally experience high turnover i.e.: those employing High School youth. In the case of professionals, our local businesses are refusing work simply because they don't have the qualified staff to manage the sales potential. Comments received in during these discussions included

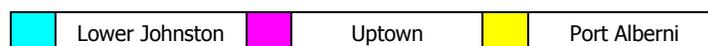
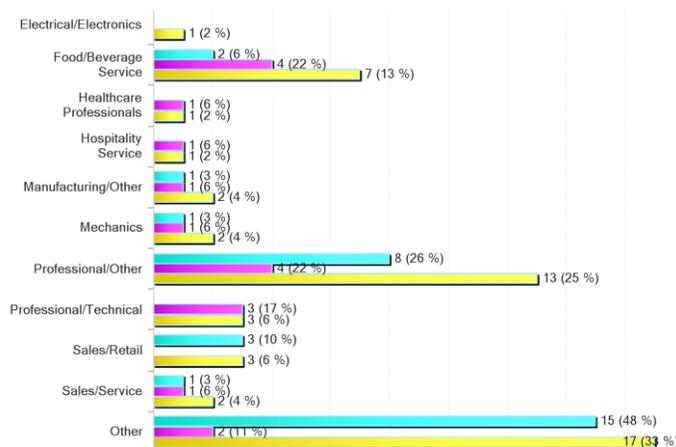
- I'm exhausted, I wanted to retire but I have too much work and I can't locate skilled people to assist me I'll pay what it takes
- We had two people lined up to start this year and then both ended up backing out due to 'Google Searches' by their spouse that didn't paint Port Alberni very well
- We had to hire out of Scotland simply because we couldn't find anyone in Canada
- Cannot find a partner for the location because whenever we get close the spouse cannot find suitable employment in Port Alberni
- Our Profession is in big trouble because graduates from University will only accept positions in Vancouver or Victoria. Even Kelowna struggles to attract them, let alone communities the size of Port Alberni
- In general, pay rates in Port Alberni are lower in our field than elsewhere and that's because our invoicing is proportionately lower. The difficulty then becomes in communicating this to prospective employees as they are often focussed only on the remuneration package vs. the lifestyle, cost of living etc. all of which can translate to higher disposable income here in Port Alberni. It is a big challenge for us

Retention of Professionals is a current and anticipated long term issue as noted in these graphs

Current Recruitment Problems – Positions / Skills



Anticipated Recruitment Difficulties 3 – 5 Years

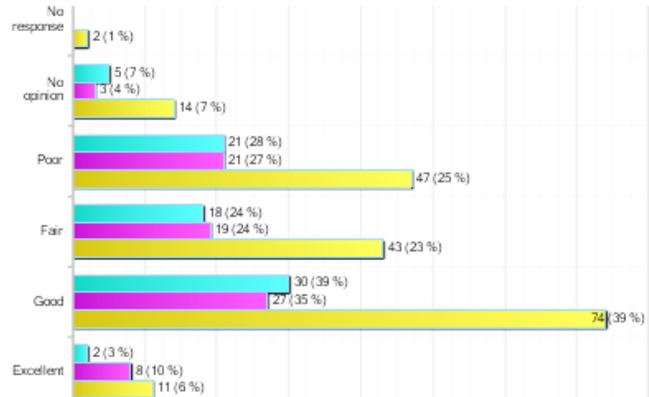


Workforce

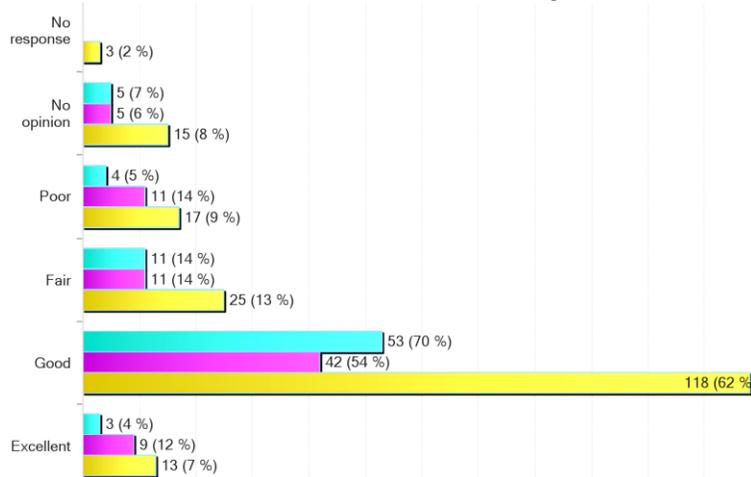
A series of questions were asked relating to workforce including

- Quality of Workforce (50% rated Good/Excellent)
- Availability of Workforce (54% Good/Excellent)
- Stability of Workforce (75% Good/Excellent)

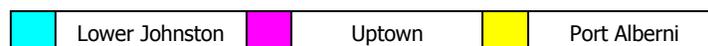
Workforce Quality



Workforce Stability



Workforce Availability



SALES

Sales Performance

Not all respondents were prepared to disclose sales figures but of those that did we can draw the following conclusions:

- A combined sales level of \$117, 776, 000 was disclosed

Sales growth was an area where respondents were somewhat uncomfortable in predicting the future

- 13% felt that declines were inevitable with 16% of the Lower Johnston merchants agreeing with this viewpoint vs. 11% of Uptown businesses
- 44% of businesses (combined) felt that a gain of 1-9% was achievable with Uptown more confident

Sales Trend Notes

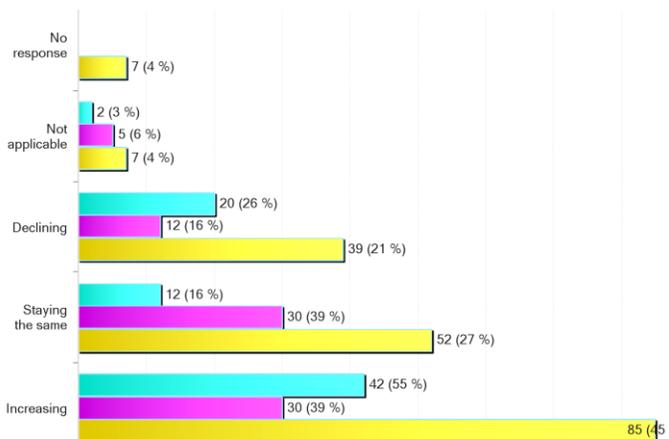
Many merchants stated revenues are holding steady or improving, that they are confident in their products or services and believe there is lots of potential in the future

A number of merchants noted that even beyond difficult economic times, a combination of a stagnant population, the market share pie is only so large and competition as forces to reckon with; often keeping sales at the same level or even declining. Increasing the size of the pie could be achieved by commitments to shop locally and reaching outside of its border bringing people to Port Alberni to shop or to shop virtually

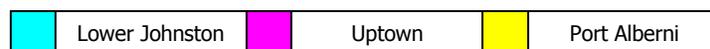
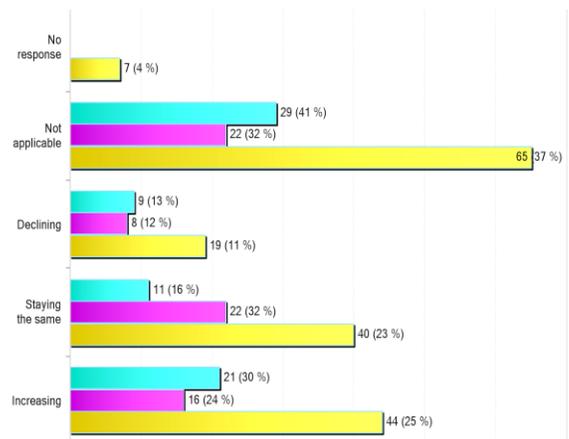
Historically speaking the merchants confirmed the following statistics based on their assessment of trends over the last 3 – 5 years

- 21 % decline (26% Lower Johnston / 16% Uptown)
- 27% flat (16% Lower Johnston / 39% Uptown)
- 45% growing (55% Lower Johnston / 39% Uptown)

Historical Sales Performance 3 - 5 Years



Sales Projections 3 - 5 Years

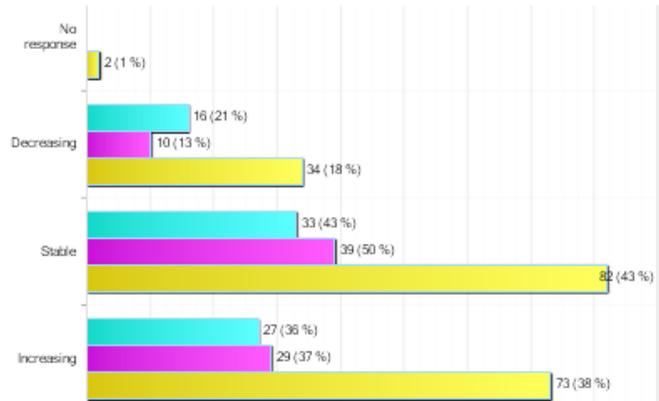


Market and Competition

Respondents were asked to determine the current market for their products

- 13% believe that they are working within a market decline
- Overall the Lower Johnston area reports less favorable results than the Uptown area
- Decreasing Lower Johnston = 21%, Uptown = 13%
- Increasing Lower Johnston = 36%, Uptown = 37%

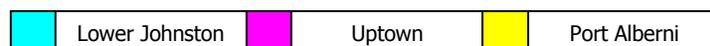
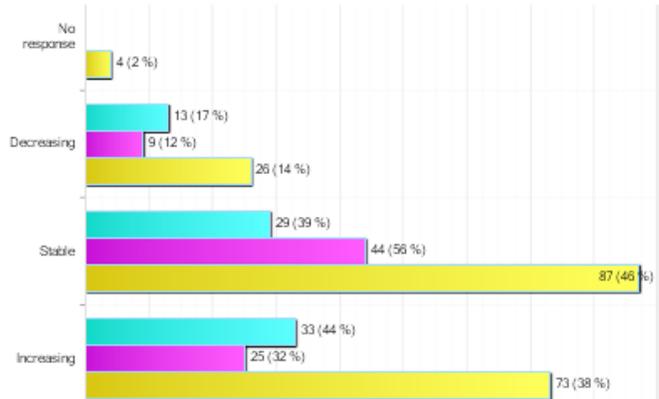
Market for Product



Merchants were then asked to determine their market share within the community comparative to their competitors

- 14% admitted to a decline in market share
- 46% felt things were stable in the available pie
- 38% were confident in saying that their share was larger/growing comparative to their competition

Market Share vs. Competition



FACILITY / EQUIPMENT

Facility

When businesses were asked about lease arrangements it was discovered that a high number operate without a formal lease

Facility / Equipment notes

Merchants were asked about their historical investments along with considerations for the future. A number of merchants have recently renovated and moved to accommodate service provision or growth. Merchants do consider energy cost and a few are concerned with costs of heating.

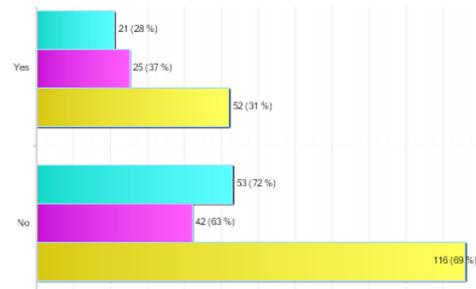
Expansion Possibilities

Businesses were asked if they were considering any sort of expansion over the next 12 – 18 months. Specific scoring is based on 'Local' Expansion and doesn't consider the option to grow beyond Port Alberni. Lower Johnston merchants were more likely to say 'no' to potential expansion.

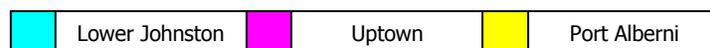
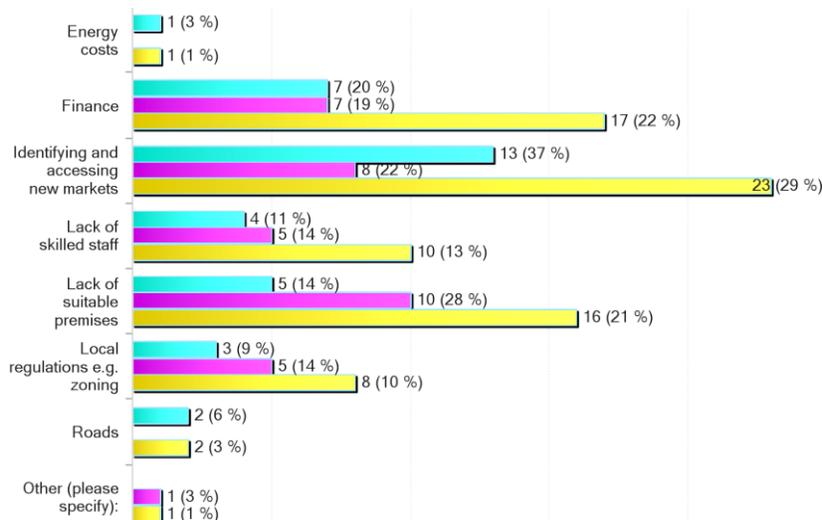
In the near future 2 merchants are looking to expand and 7 additional merchants have expansion as a longer term consideration.

- 4 merchants are expanding services in-town
- 3 are considering in-town moves
- 2 merchants plan on upgrading / renovating their facility
- 1 is planning to streamline their services by amalgamating spaces

Expansion Possibility - Port Alberni



Major Constraints to Expansion



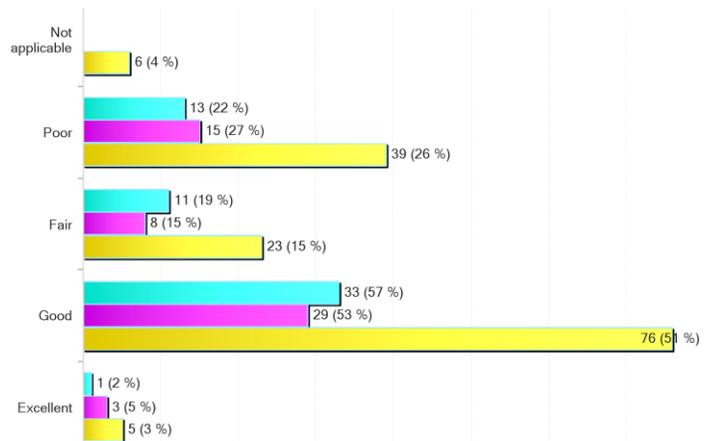
GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Several questions were asked regarding local and overall Island Infrastructure matters

Following are some comments received with particular attention given to those matters raised throughout the survey

- A total of 41% of respondents were either dissatisfied or somewhat satisfied of current airport services
- 50% of respondents indicated that overall access to airports is acceptable
- A high number of those people did comment that they don't really use air services much either for their business or personally

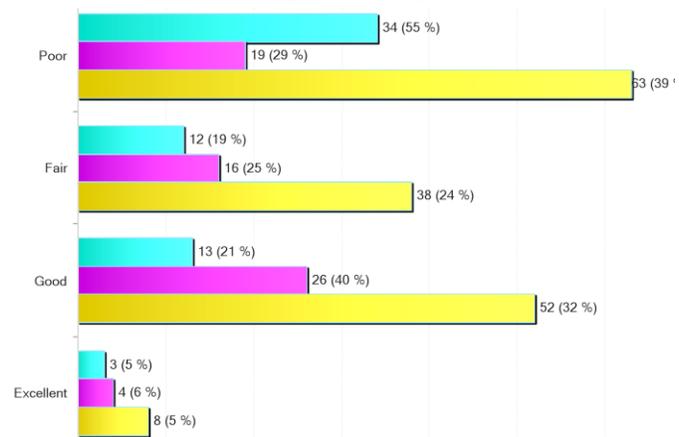
Access to Airports



Respondents were asked to report on the 'highway system' to / from the city
 Commenting on the existing highway, 39% remarked that the system was poor / unacceptable with comments such as:

- Poorly marked
- Dangerous
- On route – safety concerns
- Often closed

Highway System



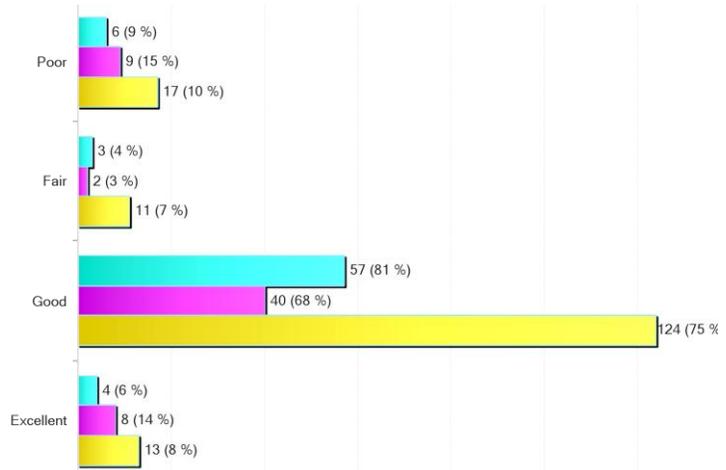
******If there is one area that nearly all merchants agreed with, that would be the realization of a second highway to Port Alberni. A second highway is expected to help all aspects of the local economy.

Garbage Collection

Overall the community's business owners were quite satisfied with the Garbage Collections services (exclusive of recycling)

- Fully 75% were satisfied with the service in place and only 10% cited the system as poor
- Nearly that many again commented that the system in place was / is excellent

Disposal of Waste Material

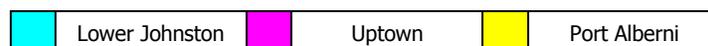
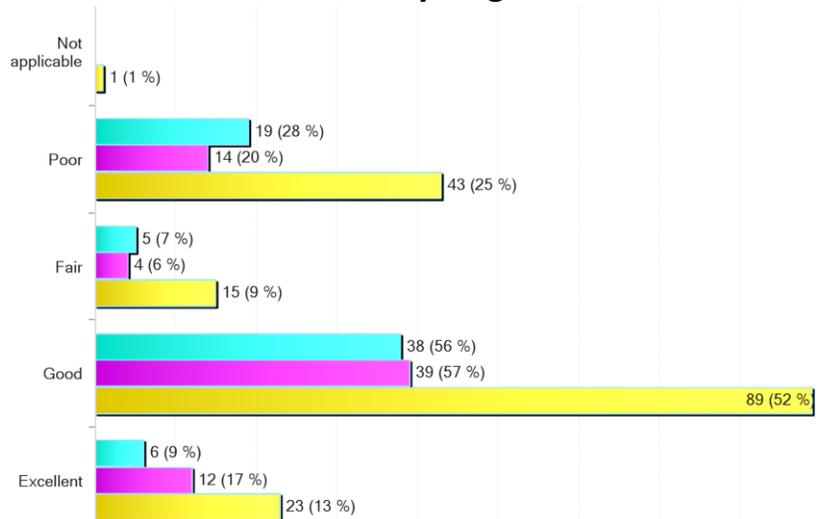


Recycling

The recycling question brought out more comments as a high number of owners felt that more needs to be done in this area

- Cardboard pick up was often remarked as challenging or non-existent
- A general feeling that the community is lagging behind others in the area of recycling responsibility
- Improved recycling overall and to expand to accommodate glass and commercial recycling was also frequently identified

Recycling

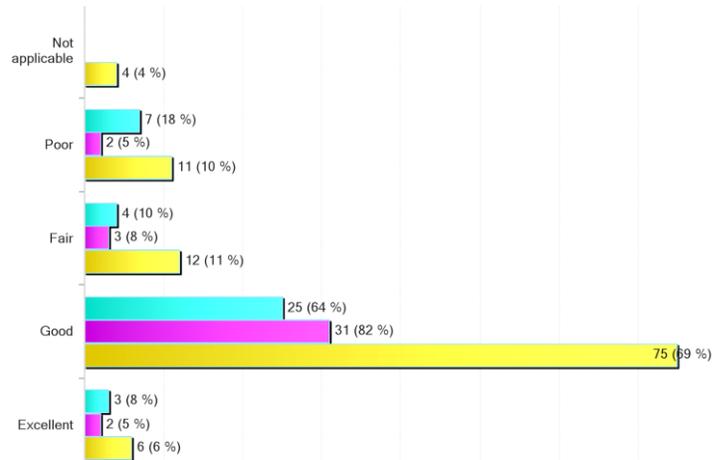


Development Approval Process

Similar to the Licensing question below we found a strong level of confidence through the community with respect to the overall Development Approval Process

- Over 75% of respondents ranked the city in the 'Good/Excellent' categories
- With the exception of the Excellent category the Lower Johnston area rates the city less favorably than their colleagues in the Uptown area

Development Approval

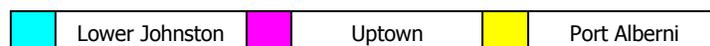
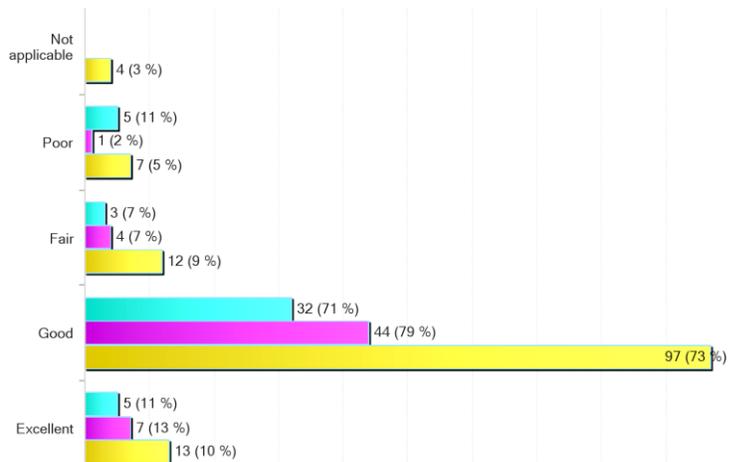


Inspections and Licensing

Owners were asked to comment on licensing systems within the city offices

- Nearly 85% of respondents scored the city either 'Good/Excellent' in this area
- The graphs will also show that in general the Uptown merchants were more positive than their counterparts in Lower Johnston

Licensing

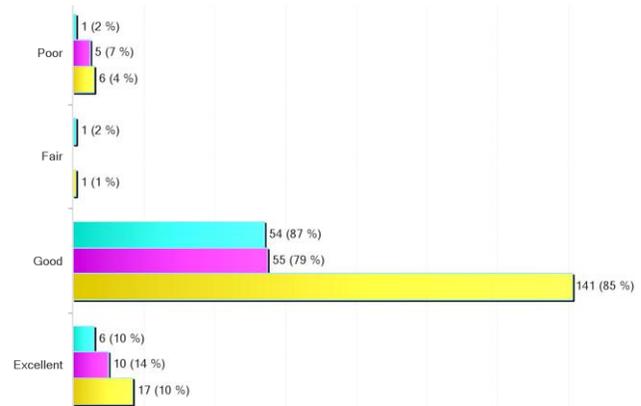


Communications

The city and general area (except for Sproat Lake in the ACRD) rate very well in all areas of communications

- Telephone
- Cellular
- Internet
- 95% overall confidence

Telecommunications

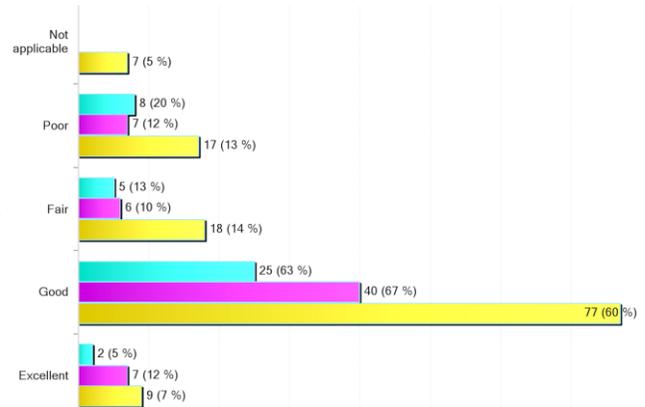


Buildings / Land / Zoning

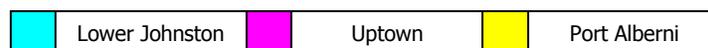
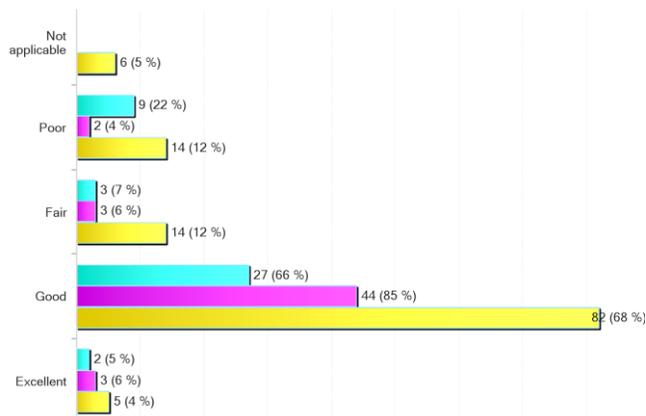
In general there is recognition that there are options for lease or purchase of buildings throughout the city

- Zoning did not appear to be a concern for most businesses and where it is or was, it was most commented that the city has been easy to work with for rezoning applications

Availability of Buildings



Availability of Appropriately Zoned Land



Municipal Services Notes

No significant themes emerged from comments from merchants however merchants did note that they would like improvements, consideration or action in a number of areas

Merchant Comments

- City has been great to deal with, very impressed with every person there
- By-Law enforcement is weak
- Mayor Douglas is working hard and very visible
- City should shop locally as should the School District and the Chamber of Commerce
- City needs to do a better job of beautification

Improvements

- By law enforcement, licensing and RFP processes and streamline and speed up city processes
- Recycling and garbage collections
- Wi-Fi / Cell service

Action

- Shop locally
- Beautification and maintenance throughout community
- Do something with derelict and empty buildings
- Improve Port Alberni “brand”
- McLean Mill needs to be self-sufficient

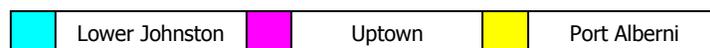
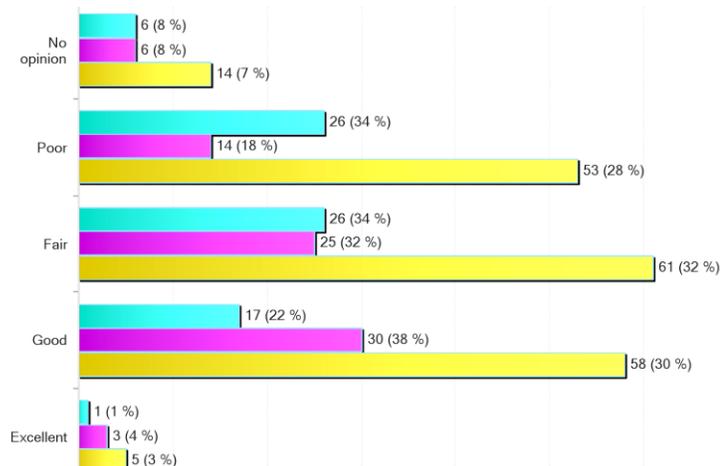
Consideration

- Too much focus on 3rd Ave.
- User friendly curbs
- Home base business licensing (creates unfair competition)

Performance of the local Government was queried through the survey

- 33% gave a score of Good / Excellent
- 32% gave the ‘city’ a Fair rating
- 28% of respondents scored the performance as ‘Poor’

Local Government

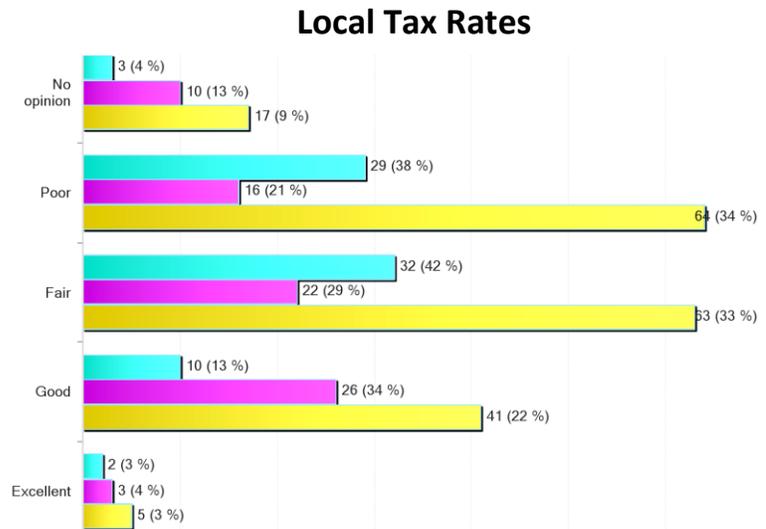


Services

Tax Structure

The survey was conducted during the Tax review season thus local taxes were being discussed frequently in the media

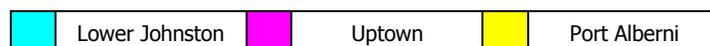
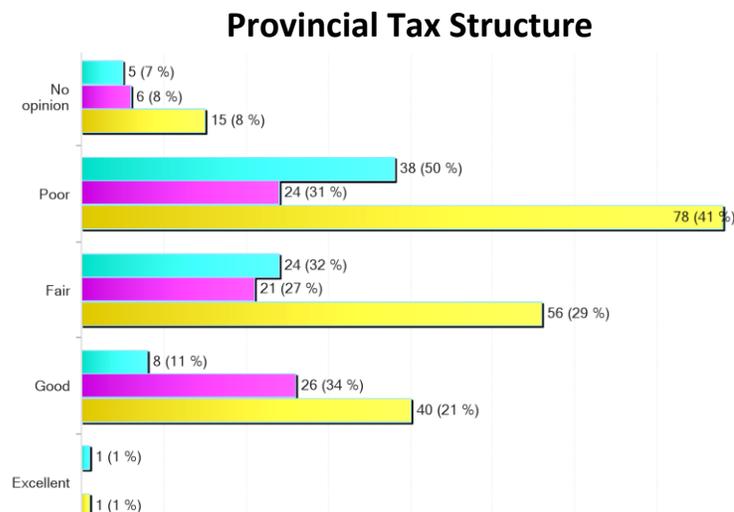
- In general the survey found a level of ‘acceptance’ throughout the community
- People often said to score it “fair” even though they were okay with things. Didn’t want to give too high a mark



Tax Rates

Like the city rates the migration back to PST / GST was very much in the mindset of most interviewees

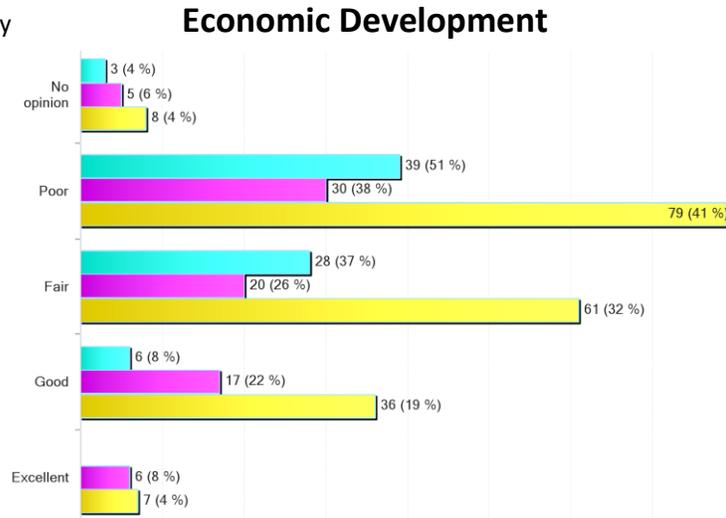
- Most people who remarked ‘poorly’ on the Provincial Tax System were opposed to the move away from HST
- The marketing of the initial move to HST and the subsequent attempts at keeping it were often cited as very poor on the part of the BC Government



Economic Development

Most merchants were complimentary of the city’s efforts especially with respect to the Economic Development Manager however

- Many had strong opinions on the local economy and conversations were lively in this point of the survey
- 55% of respondents scored Fair or better and 41% scored Poor

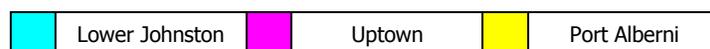
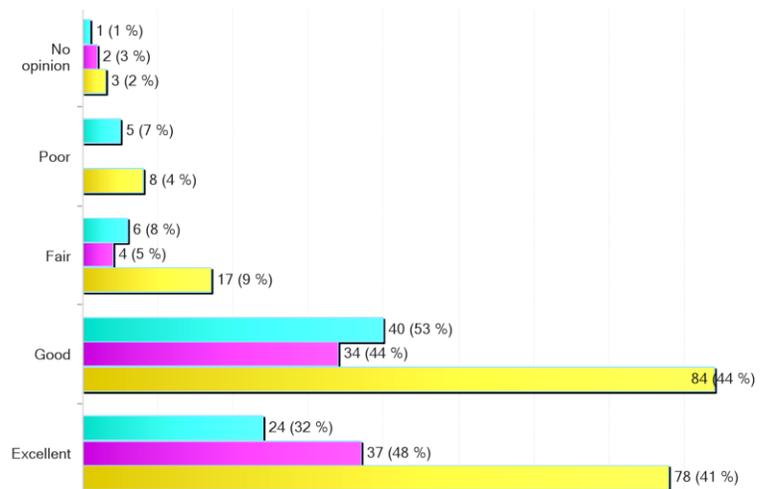


Cultural and Recreational Amenities

Overall merchants are very happy with the amenities in the city with 85% rating them as good or excellent. Most significant Municipal amenity improvements desired by the merchants are:

- Float plane service
- Beautification to the entrance and throughout the town, and
- Having the City keep costs under control

Amenities in the City

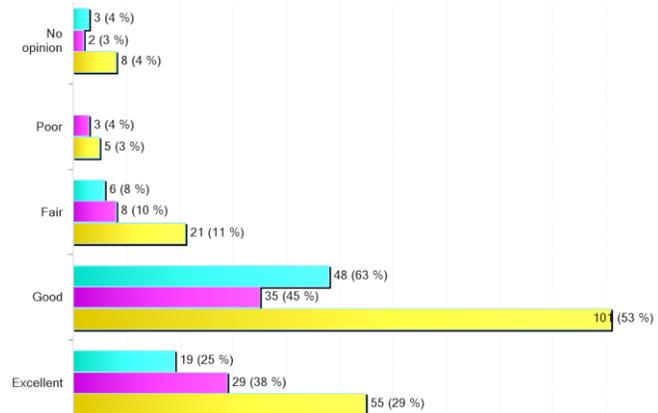


Housing – Availability / Affordability

Another question that generally garnered high praise

- This question had the highest level of ‘excellent’ responses with 29% of people confirming that level of satisfaction
- A further 53% rated Housing as Good
- 3% said it was poor and another 11% rated it as Fair

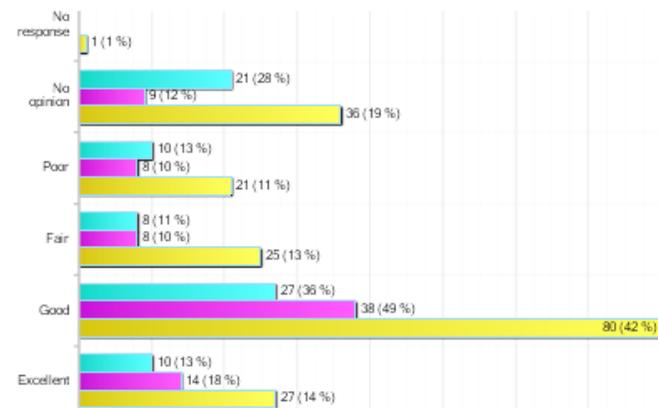
Housing



Education

- School closures came up during this question on a number of occasions
- Many commented there is a lack of good jobs thus an exit migration is apparent for young families causing school enrollment issues
- The new High School is a clear source of pride in the community

K - 12

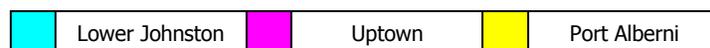
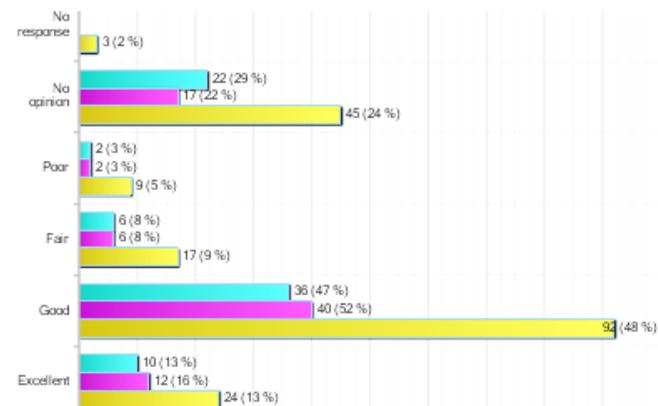


Colleges / Universities

This question had a high level of ‘no opinion’ due to the demographic of many interviewees whose children are not within the system any longer

- North Island College was in itself rated very favorably by those familiar with its programming and operation
- 48% gave a good rating while an additional 13% were most complimentary with an excellent score

Post-Secondary



BUSINESS CLIMATE

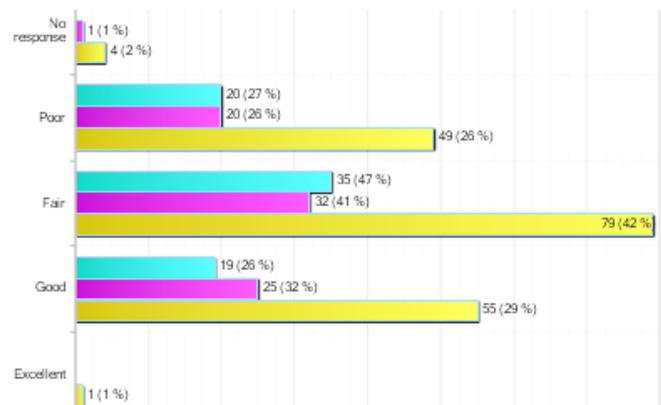
Quotes from Merchants

Local Business Climate

72% of the merchants believe that positive change is forthcoming. Some of the comments from the merchants include

- Art's District and Harbour Quay kiosks appear to be doing well
- If the proposed hotel is built, then things should improve significantly, otherwise little hope (Note: this survey was done during a time of erroneous public speculation that the Marine Building at Harbour Quay would become a hotel)
- Seems to be a collective opinion that things are improving
- Optimistic and sees good local potential. It is a perfect location for growth
- Lots of potential for growth in Port Alberni
- Things need to happen for the situation to improve, we can't just want it
- Good plans in place and good effort
- Will improve so long as tax rules change and become appropriate for business development
- New blood in the community is really helping
- Lots of strong, good people who are committed to seeing prosperity in the area
- Good to see the focus on listening to the business community
- Very happy with Mayor and his commitment to Uptown
- Optimistic on the future but it's going at a very slow pace
- Seems to be a willingness by many to foster improvement
- Feels that business will improve because of the commitment of many in the area who are working hard to change the perception

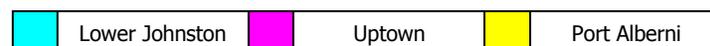
Local Business Climate



Less than a third of the merchants think the business climate is poor. Concerns, for the most part, fell in to these categories; government and taxes, market share and competition and economics and location of business

Economy and Location of Business

- This part of Port Alberni (Uptown) has really seen a decline in the financial stability of the residents. It is becoming quite worrisome doing business here
- Focus on places like Bread of Life hurts the uptown business district
- Ultimately the old buildings should be bulldozed
- Just get rid of the downtown area altogether
- Still major issues between the various business districts. Inequality in city funding for the communities Okay to help 3rd Avenue but some attention must be paid to other areas
- Johnston Road has been somewhat rejuvenated but 3rd Avenue is dying. It is embarrassing
- Overall the newspaper is too focused on doom and gloom
- Bad economics and poor economic policy is hurting the Port Alberni area especially the South side. We have two towns that are completely polarized



Government and Taxes

- Taxes are way too high!
- The city is hurting business opportunity with its rules / regulations
- Will improve so long as tax rules change and become appropriate for business development
- City hall is supportive only of laziness
- No direction from city, too much focus on city internal staff i.e.: taxes increased to pay for ridiculously high union wages
- Never seen mayor and feel that local government ignores the business

Continued Quotes from Merchants

Market Share and Competition

- There will be some closures because we have too many of certain retail segments. Too many Dollar Stores, pet stores, furniture stores
- Some sectors are saturated thus the piece of the pie is too small for success. Auto parts, furniture and pet stores as good examples
- Saturated market in many sectors including furniture
- Concerned about aging in the community and too much of a focus on bringing seniors in vs. families

Community's Strengths as a Place to do Business

"Everything is here and we are on the verge of greatness" noted one merchant and another stated "Why wouldn't someone want to live here?"

- 1) Friendly, loyal, small community committed to supporting the business community
- 2) Affordability
- 3) Location, lifestyle, environment and recreational opportunities

Other Supporting Strengths were noted

- Determined business community
- Good base of products and services
- Personal customer service
- Limited competition / captive audience
- Safe community
- Good access to labour

Community's Weaknesses as a Place to do Business

- Municipal taxes or conversely no tax incentives, city hall closed to ideas and slow in application processes, red tape and regulations
- Negative attitudes, poor reputation outside community, old time thinkers and change resisters
- Economics, not a lot of high income earners, unemployment and limited job opportunities
- Proximity to other markets and out of town shopping
- Derelict and empty buildings
- Appearance of community and lack of a beautification strategy
- Too many economic / business areas
- Low population / lack of customers
- Lack of specialty businesses and / or diversity creating need for shopping elsewhere
- Transportation and access to support inbound shoppers

Barriers to Growth

Continued Quotes from Merchants

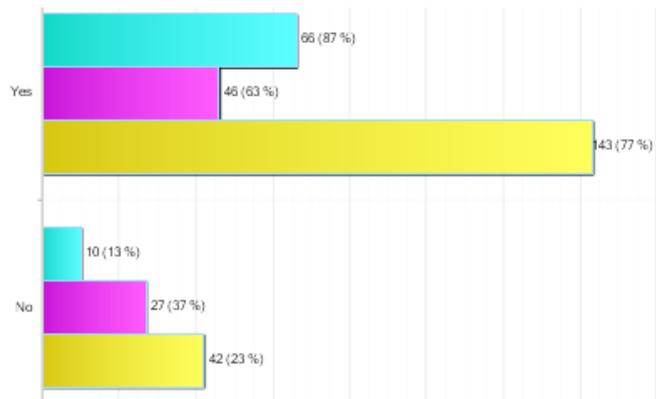
The question “Are there barriers to growth in this community and if so, what are they?”

Barriers to Growth – Attitude

Potentially the most significant barrier to growth are the attitudes within the community and it topped in the list of barriers noted by merchants. Some comments noted

- Negativity, people stuck in the same mind-set as they were twenty years ago
- Mill town attitude and people who vote against growth opportunities
- The Old Voice is still strong and it clearly affects the ability and will to grow
- We are known as the armpit of Canada; fringe people have too much power / create too much negativity

Barriers to Growth



Barriers to Growth – Taxes / Government

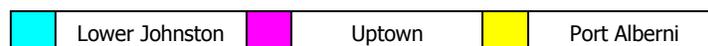
- Taxes are high due to too many paid administrators at high wages
- Way too many paid firemen and overall the employee benefits for the city workers far exceed what it can afford
- City staff is too negative, too union focused.
- Not going after the right businesses and then those that do come in have major hurdles to get through
- Too much focus on South side
- Union at the city dictates everything
- City doesn't support North Port
- No place to develop prime land / property and the City doesn't control properties they should

Barriers to Growth – Geography, Location, Access

- Geography, proximity to other markets like Nanaimo and Courtenay
- Lack of infrastructure compared to Courtenay
- Out of town shopping seems near impossible to stop
- Geography works against us, single road to town, mill town mentality

At the local level Merchants noted

- Chopped up city
- Messed up city; too many retail areas so no real sense of a city centre
- North Port vs. South Port
- Very tough to do business uptown
- Too much focus on social matters is hurting the viability of the business community in the Uptown area



Access to and from Port Alberni was mentioned on a number of occasions

- Our isolation and location make it difficult to sustain growth
- One way in and one way out; this is very bad for business. We need a second highway
- Not on main artery of the Island

Barriers to Growth – Demographics and Population

- Aging demographics
- Relatively small, stagnant population
- Volume of younger people leaving

Barriers to Growth – Money, Income and Poverty

- Unemployment and lack of disposable income was seen as a significant contributing factor
- Merchants noted a need for a drastic change in the appearance of 3rd Avenue; uptown is in bad shape
- Too many derelict buildings, absentee landlords, drugs and social issues all over
- Not enough industry to really attract good stable businesses

Are there customers and / or businesses that could be attracted to the community?

Targeting People

- Tourists
- **Younger families
- Targeting Qualicum, Parksville
- Any person is a potential customer, we must promote our strength and fix our weaknesses
- Visitors, customers coming with new businesses, new residents and therefore more business
- Retirement place, short term benefits for contractors. Also young tourism entrepreneurs
- Population numbers. Need to bring in young families to live here

Targeting Businesses ** Indicates identified frequently

Tourism

- Recreational marine industry
- Large business such as Costco would be valuable to the community
- ATV supply store could do well
- ** Cruise Ships
- **Anything Eco-Tourism related
- **Lots of room for additional tourist activities
- Cultural centre. We should partner with and encourage the First Nations community to build something like the Polynesian Cultural Centre in Oahu, that would do very well

Retail

- **Department stores / London Drugs / Costco / M & M / Old Navy / Home Sense
- Ladies fashion middle range type with lots of inventory
- Need to fill the Zellers store with small business operations
- **Higher end sports store / Brand name sports store / Hockey support businesses
- Cultural foods
- The uptown area should be full of interesting boutiques
- Lifestyle stores such as Bed/Bath, Home Decor etc.
- Specialty stores
- A supermarket would be an excellent advantage for the uptown area
- Higher end shoe stores

- Businesses that could attract more people to the uptown core area / Hardware / Groceries
- Art / Hobby
- **Sporting Goods

Service

- Car Wash
- Qualified IT people
- Electric Repair / Machine Shop
- Mental health services are sorely lacking in the community
- **Float plane services
- Call centres
- Kids facilities such as “Jumping Jiminy’s”
- Home based businesses such as software development
- Community Futures type of business concept as noted above. Training, development
- Cottage industry / Home businesses
- Recyclers

Industrial / Manufacturing

- Anything designed towards industry
- Deep sea port industry/ Fish Plant / Secondary industries
- Need manufacturing jobs, Yes to Raven Coal so long as environmentally sound / Spin off jobs will occur
- Deep sea, Raven
- Deep sea port related businesses and services
- Diversify from being a Mill town
- Raven Coal project so long as by rail, Plywood mill reopen
- Businesses related to shipping
- We absolutely need a fuel dock. Right now large boats can only fill up in Ucluelet or further down the west coast. We miss out on huge revenue opportunities because of this
- Resource based manufacturing
- Deep sea port related businesses, manufacturing

Food Services

- Commercial style restaurant with more diversity in their food/menu choices
- **Restaurant - branded such as White Spot
- Higher end restaurants / Trendy
- Trendy Jazz Bar
- **Fast Food

Accommodation

- **We are sorely lacking in resorts. There should be something on the lake and something along the inlet.
- **RV Park and Campground near the Quay Land is available and the placement of an RV Park in the vicinity would drive up local business substantially
- Retirement homes / assisted living

Entertainment

- Theatre

** Indicates identified frequently

Business Climate versus 5 years ago

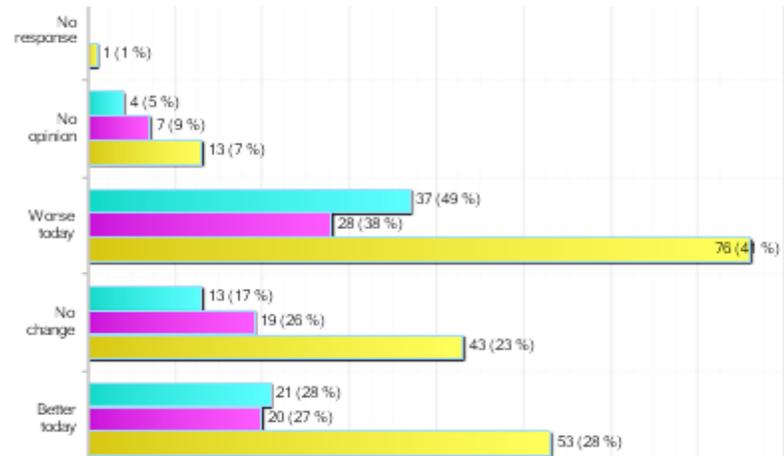
If the business climate is worse than 5 years ago, what are contributing factors?

General economic conditions were identified as the prevalent factor. A huge distance behind and identified on occasion were a population decline affecting market share; attitudes and the competition between North Port and South Port. The advent of Big Box retailers, derelict buildings, empty store fronts and social issues were each noted a few times.

Quotes relating to this question

- Mill slow
- Port Fish moving to Ucluelet was horrible for the town
- Brand of Port Alberni
- Low income housing integrated within the business community
- Professionals don't want to live here and the scene of a smelter environment will only serve to worsen things
- Not enough education on why / how to shop locally, education on that
- City hires outside companies to do work such as a Nanaimo company for Fire hall work. Why?
- Most employees of the Mill do not live in town thus they earn income here and spend it elsewhere. This is a huge problem that Catalyst must address in future hiring programs
- Lack of jobs, too many men working in Alberta
- We can't keep people in town, must find a way to keep people living here
- Why the trucks on 3rd Ave.? Horrible, please fix that!

Business Climate vs. 5 Years Ago

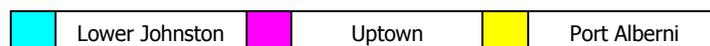
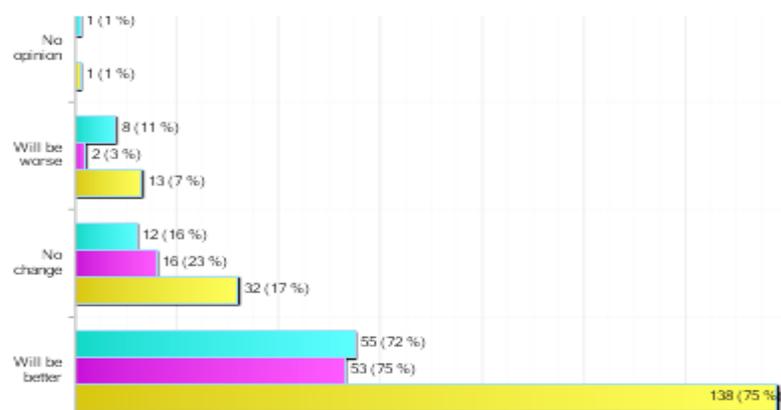


Business Climate in 5 years – Projection

The vast majority of respondents throughout the city felt that the worst is over and things will be better in the next five years.

- 11% of Lower Johnston and 3% of Uptown merchants believed it would be worse
- 16% of Lower Johnston and 23% of Uptown merchants felt it would be the same
- 72% of Lower Johnston and 75% of Uptown merchants said things would be better

Business Climate – 5 Year Projection



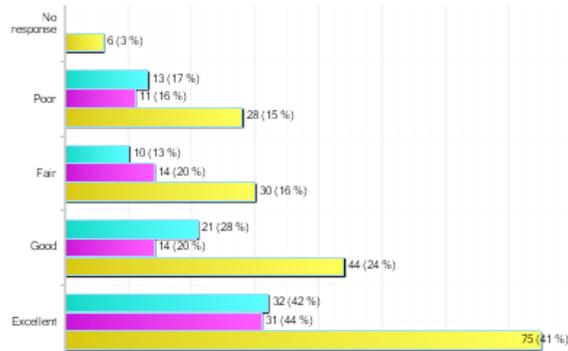
ASSESSMENT

These assessments are observations from the interviewers, however many owners provided their own summary of their operations

Overall Health of the Business

- 41% appear to be in excellent health
- 24% are in good business shape
- 16% are in fair shape
- 15% were rated as being in 'poor' shape

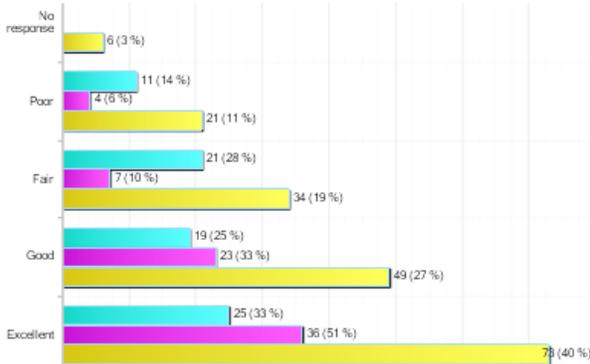
Overall Health of Businesses



Owner/Management Attitude toward Community

- Port Alberni is a passionate community
- Regardless of how the assessment to this question comes out, the general feel was / is that the business community loves doing business in Port Alberni

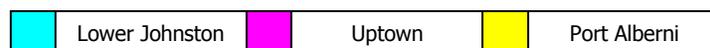
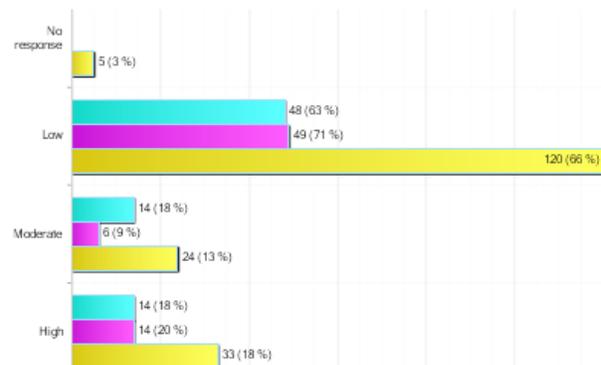
Attitude towards Community



Failure Possibilities

- This is a sensitive issue. It is important to note that just under a third of our business owners believe there is potential for failure

Business Failure Potential



APPENDIX A

NAICS for and Volumes of Businesses Interviewed

1	238150 - Glass and Glazing Contractors	1	512120 - Motion Picture and Video Distribution
1	31192 - Coffee and Tea Manufacturing	1	515112 - Radio Stations
1	312120 - Breweries	1	518210 - Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services
1	31521 - Cut and Sew Apparel Contractors	3	522110 - Commercial Banking
1	31699 - Other Leather and Allied Product Manufacturing	1	522291 - Consumer Lending
1	33131 - Alumina and Aluminum Production and Processing	1	522298 - All Other Nondepository Credit Intermediation
1	332999 - All Other Miscellaneous Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	1	522310 - Mortgage and Nonmortgage Loan Brokers
1	337110 - Wood Kitchen Cabinet and Countertop Manufacturing	3	523930 - Investment Advice
1	423910 - Sporting and Recreational Goods and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	2	524210 - Insurance Agencies and Brokerages
1	423940 - Jewelry, Watch, Precious Stone, and Precious Metal Merchant Wholesalers	1	531110 - Lessors of Residential Buildings and Dwellings
1	424720 - Petroleum / Petroleum Products Merchant Wholesalers (except Bulk / Stations / Terminals)	2	531210 - Offices of Real Estate Agents and Brokers
2	441110 - New Car Dealers	2	541110 - Offices of Lawyers
2	441120 - Used Car Dealers	2	541120 - Offices of Notaries
1	441222 - Boat Dealers	1	541211 - Offices of Certified Public Accountants
2	441310 - Automotive Parts and Accessories Stores	1	541211 - Offices of Certified Public Accountants
4	442110 - Furniture Stores	1	541213 - Tax Preparation Services
2	442210 - Floor Covering Stores	1	541330 - Engineering Services
4	442299 - All Other Home Furnishings Stores	1	541370 - Surveying and Mapping (except Geophysical) Services
1	444110 - Home Centers	2	541430 - Graphic Design Services
2	444120 - Paint and Wallpaper Stores	1	541511 - Custom Computer Programming Services
4	444190 - Other Building Material Dealers	1	541519 - Other Computer Related Services
1	445110 - Supermarkets and Other Grocery (except Convenience) Stores	1	541940 - Veterinary Services
1	445210 - Meat Markets	1	561311 - Employment Placement Agencies
1	445292 - Confectionery and Nut Stores	1	561612 - Security Guards and Patrol Services
1	445299 - All Other Specialty Food Stores	1	561710 - Exterminating and Pest Control Services
1	446110 - Pharmacies and Drug Stores	1	561720 - Janitorial Services
1	446120 - Cosmetics, Beauty Supplies, and Perfume Stores	1	562111 - Solid Waste Collection
1	446191 - Food (Health) Supplement Stores	1	611620 - Sports and Recreation Instruction
1	446191 - Food (Health) Supplement Stores	1	621310 - Offices of Chiropractors
1	448110 - Men's Clothing Stores	2	621340 - Offices of Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapists, and Audiologists
3	448120 - Women's Clothing Stores	1	624190 - Other Individual and Family Services
2	448130 - Children's and Infants' Clothing Stores	3	624410 - Child Day Care Services
1	448140 - Family Clothing Stores	1	711310 - Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports, and Similar Events with Facilities
3	448210 - Shoe Stores	1	713940 - Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
3	451110 - Sporting Goods Stores	5	721110 - Hotels (except Casino Hotels) and Motels
2	451130 - Sewing, Needlework, and Piece Goods Stores	3	721191 - Bed-and-Breakfast Inns
1	451140 - Musical Instrument and Supplies Stores	1	721310 - Rooming and Boarding Houses
1	451211 - Book Stores	1	722310 - Food Service Contractors
1	453110 - Florists	1	722330 - Mobile Food Services
1	453210 - Office Supplies and Stationery Stores	3	722410 - Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)
1	453210 - Office Supplies and Stationery Stores	21	72251 - Restaurants and Other Eating Places
6	453220 - Gift, Novelty, and Souvenir Stores	1	811111 - General Automotive Repair
4	453310 - Used Merchandise Stores	1	811112 - Automotive Exhaust System Repair
1	453910 - Pet and Pet Supplies Stores	1	811113 - Automotive Transmission Repair
1	453920 - Art Dealers	1	811121 - Automotive Body, Paint, and Interior Repair and Maintenance
1	453991 - Tobacco Stores	1	811191 - Automotive Oil Change and Lubrication Shops
1	453998 - All Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers (except Tobacco Stores)	6	812112 - Beauty Salons
1	485320 - Limousine Service	1	812210 - Funeral Homes and Funeral Services
1	487210 - Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Water	1	812310 - Coin-Operated Laundries and Drycleaners
1	511110 - Newspaper Publishers	1	813319 - Other Social Advocacy Organizations

Merchants were asked to focus on the Waterfront and were asked two questions

- 1) What barriers exist that stop people from taking advantage of the Waterfront?
- 2) What activities or amenities could be added to the Waterfront to encourage more business from the travelling public?

From your perspective, what barriers prevent people from stopping and taking advantage of Port Alberni's waterfront area?

Most merchants commented on the Harbour Quay area and four significant trends emerged from this question. In order of frequency noted they are amenities needing attention, signage and awareness, image and location and its closeness to the mill.

Amenities needing attention were mentioned most often and they were directed towards:

- Lack of parking and RV parking
- Stores need to keep consistent hours
- More and better retail shops
- Safety
- "Clean it up"

There was a general feeling that the lack of signage made it very difficult, even for those who wished to go to the Quay, to find it. The lack of promotion of Port Alberni is noted throughout the survey and in this is highlighted again when it comes to specific assets of amenities the community has. A general lack of awareness of the Quay's existence was noted time and again.

Then the concern became what people will find on their way to or upon arrival at the Quay. Visual images along the way are a concern with some noting you "have to drive through a slum to get there." Another went on to say "people don't want to stop in 'dirty old Port Alberni. "Image Problems". Beautification, or lack thereof, was noted numerous times and a theme emerged for the need of a beautification process to be established for the community as a whole.



From your perspective, what amenities or activities in the waterfront area would encourage the travelling public to do more business in Port Alberni?

Virtually all merchants agreed the Quay needs to see improvements to be or remain successful. Merchants provided a wide range of both activities and amenities. Everything noted below was identified as opportunities a number of times with walkways, events and entertainment and street markets and farmers markets identified most frequently.

Entertainment / Kids Family Programs or activities

- Buskers, music, Kite flying, fishing lessons or camps, mini golf

Walkways

- Bridging Harbour and Victoria Quay / Clutesi

Events

- Tall ships, Christmas, Car shows, Art events like Filberg, Community events, Fishing Derbies
- Bring celebrities in for fishing camps, events like the Bathtub race

Street Markets / Farmers Market

- Throughout warmer seasons

Marina infrastructure

- Dock, moorage, cruise ships and float planes

Restaurant / Pub

- Need to be assured restaurant is there and open

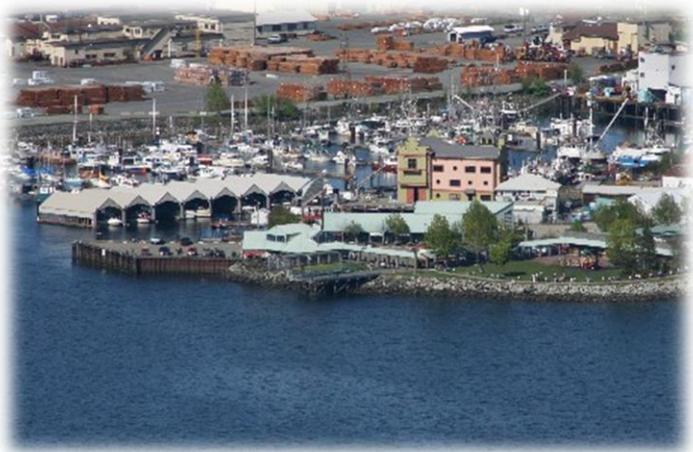
Condo and /or Hotel

Businesses

- Small, interesting businesses, existing and new businesses must keep posted hours

Extreme Recreation

- Kite surfing, zip lines
bungee jumping,



Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce SURVEY ADDENDUM

Merchants were also asked “What can the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce do to improve your business?”

Overwhelming the response was to “Market and Promote” the community. While marketing and promotion is often attached to tourism attraction it was evident the merchants were seeking a more holistic approach that would support the community and all elements of the business community.

The merchants also noted education and communication on business support services as priorities in the area of Chamber benefits and the value and importance of shopping locally.

Many merchants also noted the importance of the Ambassador Program.

