

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SURVEY FINDS PRIORITIES IN RESPONSES



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March 29, 2021 – Work continues on synthesizing survey responses into the updated economic development strategy but already trends are developing on important business development themes.

There was considerable consensus on the importance of economic development goals with almost 81% saying the creation and retention of jobs was either very or extremely important. This was also reflected as 68% of respondents felt the availability of jobs was a weakness.

Fully 76% of respondents felt new companies opening was very or extremely important and 72% agreed that ensuring existing companies were stable and expanding in the community and region was a very or extremely important economic development goal. Supporting the theme of job creation being important were 53% agreeing that keeping young skilled workers was a weakness along with 48% saying that changes within the forest industry was a weakness.

Respondents felt three areas had the highest potential of regional growth and these were, in order, tourism, construction and health and public service.

As the top three reasons for people choosing to live here were (1) quality of life; (2) grew up in the region; and (3) affordable cost of living it was not a surprise that 58% of respondents felt affordability of housing was a strength, with 45% feeling that transportation and 38% agreeing that proximity of recreational opportunities was a strength.

Combining business development responses with community quality of life helps to provide targeted strategies – for instance, creating or retaining jobs within tourism or construction sectors with the availability of affordable housing and recreation becomes a very strong argument for why families and others will want to locate in our community.

Mayor Mitch Campsall reported “the consensus that we are seeing in responses is providing good indications of what is important to the community and we are grateful to the businesses and individuals who completed the survey so we can use these tools to strengthen our community. Now is the time for us to take these new learnings and plan our way forward.”

The Economic Development Survey was an opportunity for residents to provide their feedback on a range of questions and work is continuing on reviewing the responses and gathering similarities together. As responses are reviewed the District is looking forward to regularly releasing information on new survey developments.

The District has now completed a number of steps towards updating the Economic Development Strategy. With an expected completion date of May 2021, work continues on building an inclusive and effective economic development program.

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