



MAIN STREET  
REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE  
Tweed Madoc Marmora Stirling

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APPENDIX D

Business Survey  
Executive Summary and Full Report

October, 2005  
Stirling Results



## Executive Summary

### Method and Response Rate

- *Community In Action Committee wanted to revitalize the main street with business needs in mind*
- *Business Survey created with support from the Ontario Government (Business Retention & Expansion program) and some questions adopted from Wisconsin main street survey*
- *Project Coordinator (Andrew Redden) tasked by Committee to visit main street/downtown businesses and introduce survey and setup interviews – some interviews conducted by MMAH Summer Intern and BIA Intern*
- *Study area: See Map A*
- *32 Stirling businesses invited to participate, 23 were completed – 72% response rate*

### Impression of community

- *52% say Stirling is an “Good” place in which to do business followed by 5% who said “Fair” while 9% said “Excellent” and 4% said “Poor”.*
- *43% of businesses are family owned and operated. 96% of owners are involved in the day-to-day operation. Only 1 business indicated they are part of a franchise*
- *70% are completely satisfied with the current site of their business in the community while 26% are somewhat satisfied*
- *Only 35% are willing to act as Business Ambassadors to the community*
- *When asked to list the advantages of having a business in Stirling, such items as location and small town lifestyle were mentioned.*
- *Disadvantages listed varied. But some said that they are experiencing a lack of parking.*

### Company Information

- *Just 57% have a Succession Plan in place, 57% have a Business Plan*
- *52% say they have a Marketing Plan*
- *52% have 1-4 employees. 17% have 5-9 employees*
- *61% of employees (amongst business interviewed) live within the Municipality*
- *74% of business owners are a resident of the community*

### Economic Development

- *57% said that as far as they know, the local community has an Economic Development Plan. 43% said “No” or they “Don’t Know”*
- *Amongst those who said the community has an Economic Development Plan, 62% “Don’t Know” if it is being effectively implemented*
- *Just 30% indicated the Municipality takes an adequate role in Business and Economic Development. 30% said “No” they don’t take an adequate role and 40% are Unaware of what’s being done*

### What businesses want

- *An overwhelming number of businesses would like assistance with Joint advertising and marketing followed by Identification of opportunities for shared use of buildings, and Business networking sessions*
- *Parking spots and availability needs improvement as well as Public amenities, Parking signage and Uniform hours of operation*

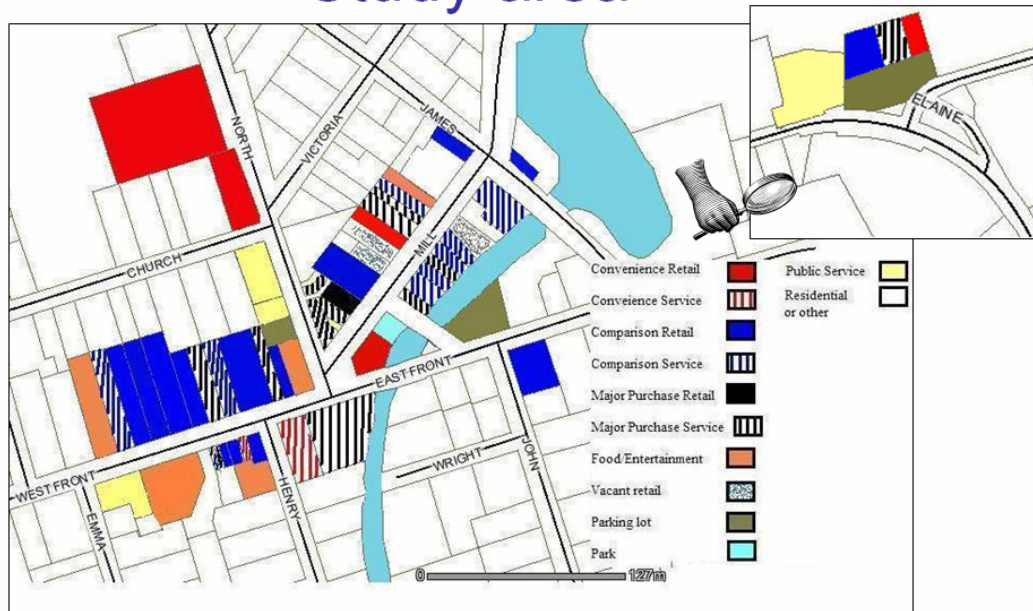
- *Businesses say they would benefit from Business directories, Public area physical improvements, Cooperative advertising/joint marketing, Building improvement grant programs, Retail and special event coordination, and Sign improvement grant programs*
- *Several businesses would attend workshops on Advertising/marketing and Window displays/Interior store design.*

Improving the retail business environment

- *The top 3 suggestions for improving Stirling's downtown are More hotels/accommodations, an Improved streetscape and a Focused downtown revitalization strategy*
- *The four community assets that they would like to see developed are Public washrooms in the downtown, Public parking, Walking and bike trails, and Directional signs*
- *Several businesses would like see clothing stores added to the downtown as well as shoe stores*
- *There are several businesses that believe there is NOT enough parking downtown*
- *Not all businesses agree that their building façade and window displays draws customers into their business*
- *A number of businesses disagree that the look and feel of downtown helps their business*
- *The existing downtown business mix could use some improvement*

MAP A

## Study area



## Introduction

In the summer of 2005, the Main Street Revitalization committees in Centre Hastings, Marmora & Lake, Stirling-Rawdon and Tweed committed to researching the issues and concerns of the businesses located in the downtown/main street area. More specifically, the committees wanted to:

- Identify the needs, concerns and opportunities of existing local businesses, in order that, where appropriate, local action can be taken to respond to the businesses' needs or development opportunities
- Learn how businesses view their main street, what improvements they want and where assistance can be provided
- Demonstrate the community's pro-business attitude and develop an effective means of communication with local businesses
- Have the community actively involved in economic development

The underlying goal of the business survey was to be responsive to business needs. The information and input that each business contributed has been extremely valuable as the Main Street Revitalization committees form both short and long term strategic plans for each town.

## Method

The survey was prepared using guidelines provided by the *Rues Principales* and the *Main Street* programs. Survey questions were adopted from the Province of Ontario's Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program. The Province's online BR&E database was also utilized to input and store the data and to analyze the results. A number of questions were also adopted from the State of Wisconsin's Main Street program.

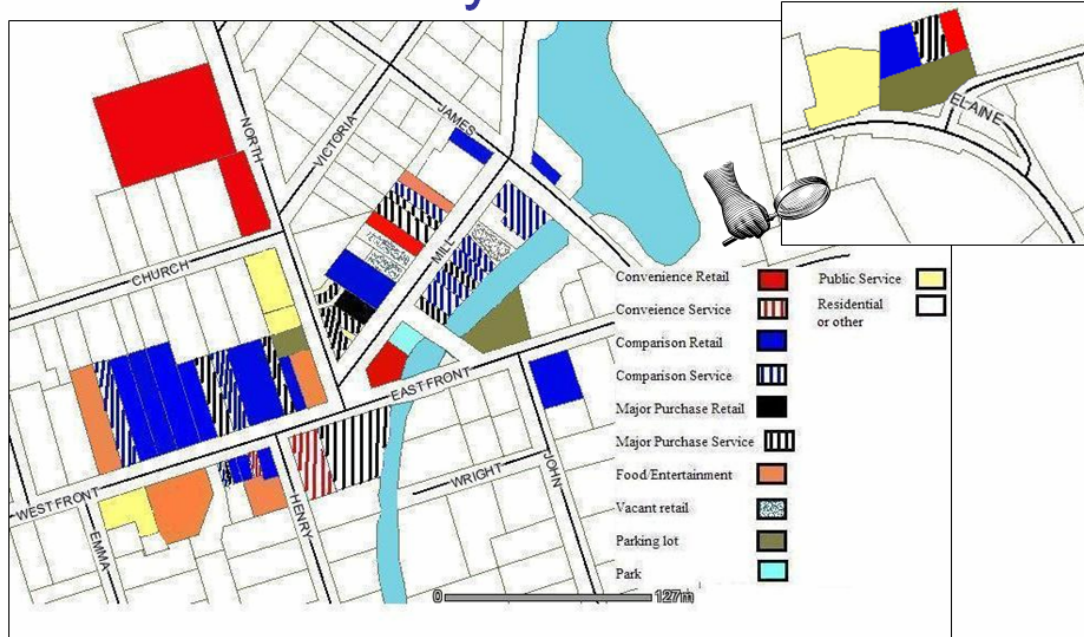
The survey was distributed to businesses in person by the Project Coordinator in the early months of Summer, 2005 as per the decision of all four of the Main Street Committees. The Coordinator made a brief visit to each business, introducing himself and provided a copy of the survey and an introductory letter from the Head of Municipal Council (copy of the letter provided at the end of this report). The Coordinator recorded the name and contact information of the key business contact and/or owner and promised to contact them again to setup a time to complete the survey.

The surveys were completed throughout the summer up to the end of September, 2005. The survey was confidential and the names of respondents are not provided in this report or any others. The average length of interviews was 1.5 hours.

## Area targeted

The businesses targeted in Stirling were those located in the “downtown” or “main street” area. The map below shows the businesses that were visited on East, West and North Streets as well as Mill Street and the Balu’s Pharmacy Plaza.

## Study area



## Survey Response Rate

Thirty-two businesses in Stirling were invited to participate in the business survey. A total of 23 surveys were completed providing a 72% response rate.

## Analysis

The results from Stirling were analyzed separately from the other three communities. The Province’s online BR&E program was used to enter and tabulate the results.

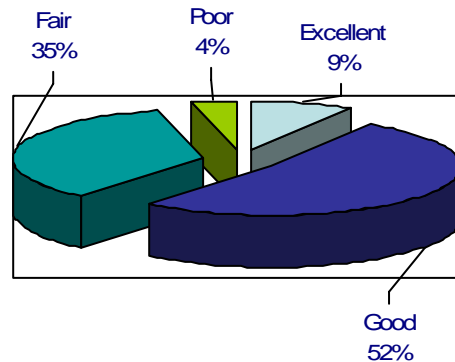
## Business Survey Results & Analysis: Stirling

### Business Climate

Businesses in Stirling have a good impression of their community as a place in which to do business. 87% rated Stirling as "Good" or "Fair".

Impression of Stirling as a place in which to do business

➤ Question: What is your general impression of Stirling as a place in which to do business?



When asked if their attitude has changed in the past 3 years, 61% said "No" while 39% said "Yes" it has. Amongst those who said "Yes", 89% said that their attitude is now more negative. Their comments were:

Reasons why attitude toward doing business in Stirling is now more negative
"I see things going steadily downhill. High taxes a major problem!!! Empty storefronts and no attractions to bring people here."
"There's a lack of forward thinking by the community (municipality and residents), they don't want to rock the boat."
"There is a lack of community growth/home development. The main street is decaying and unclean, sidewalks are constantly being torn up, mismatching sidewalks, lack of downtown lighting, pathetic flower baskets, negative business environment/attitudes. There is an isolated attitude of merchants, lack of positive municipal vision/leadership, increased truck traffic."
"Building owners have decided that local parking (behind stores) is private parking, although it sits empty all day, therefore, providing no public parking on the west side of town (near the stores)."
"Our business has experienced a decline in revenue and customer traffic"
"Because of overnight parking, my staff and customers have no place to park."
"We need a good clothing store with kids clothing"
"We want to be more informed about events happening in the community and with the Chamber of Commerce"

## ***Company Information***

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Most businesses interviewed said that they are either a Sole Proprietorship (11 responses), a Corporation (7), a Partnership (4) and one was a non-profit retail store. It is interesting to note that only 43% of the businesses interviewed are family owned. Only 1 business indicated that they are a franchise while 96% of owners are involved in the day to day operation and 74% of business owners are a resident of the community.

Stirling is the headquarters for 87% of the businesses interviewed and the remainder have their headquarters elsewhere. 52% have been in operation in Stirling more than 10 Years.

The primary activity and main products and services of businesses interviewed are:

<b>NAICS Code</b>	<b>Primary activity conducted by business:</b>	<b>Main products/services at or from location:</b>
4529	- Other General Merchandise Stores	General merchandise and horse tack.
4512	- Book, Periodical, and Music Stores	New & used books, cafe, gifts
7221	- Full-Service Restaurant	Restaurant, bar and catering.
4529	- Other General Merchandise Stores	Alterations & Repairs
4481	- Clothing Stores	Mens and ladies clothing, home decor
1151	- Support Activities for Crop Production	Agriculture supplies, animal feeds.
4529	- Other General Merchandise Stores	Bulk store, Sears Catalogue Agent, gift shop.
4452	- Specialty Food Stores	Handcrafted chocolates, homemade icecream, homemade fudge
4529	- Other General Merchandise Stores	Household items, ornaments, food, tools, cosmetics, school supplies, garden things, candys, toys.
4461	- Health and Personal Care Stores	Hairstyling
4539	- Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	Flowers & Gifts
4521	- Department Stores	General Hardware supply
4461	- Health and Personal Care Stores	Hair salon
7221	- Full-Service Restaurants	Pizza, restaurant
4529	- Other General Merchandise Stores	General giftware, collectibles, candles and home decor. We also provide gift/wedding registries and wedding invitations and decor ideas
7221	- Full-Service Restaurants	Breakfast and lunches, dinners
5241	- Insurance Carriers	Sales of insurance
5259	- Other Investment Pools and Funds	Professional financial advice in Estate and Retirement Planning, Life Insurance, Group Insurance, GICs, Mutual Funds and Business Succession Planning.
7139	- Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	Movie/video rentals
4461	- Health and Personal Care Stores	Family hair care
4461	- Health and Personal Care Stores	Hairstyle services
4451	- Grocery Stores	Grocery
4533	- Used Merchandise Stores	Donations of used goods in support of the Cancer Society

Businesses were asked if they have a Succession, Business and/or a Marketing Plan. 57% said they have a Succession Plan and coincidentally 57% said they have a Business Plan while 52% said they have a Marketing Plan.

Most businesses (52%) have 1 – 4 employees and the second most responses (17%) were 5-9 employees. 17% are just the Owner(s). The average number of permanent full-time employees is 6.3 and the average number of permanent part time employees is 2.3 (It should be noted that the preceding averages might be skewed by one business having significantly more employees than another). When asked how many of the employees live within the Municipality, 61% of businesses said that their employees live locally.

### ***Business Development***

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Amongst 83% of businesses interviewed, their current location is their only location. Only 39% own their facility while the remainder rent, however, none of the businesses foresee any problems renewing their lease.

When asked how satisfied they are with their current site in the community, 70% said they are “Completely Satisfied” while 26% said “Somewhat Satisfied”. 4% are actually “Very Dissatisfied”. When asked why they are not “Completely Satisfied”, the responses were:

<b>Why businesses are not completely satisfied with their current site</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Condition of building	3
No opportunity for expansion	2
Availability of skilled labour	2
Business taxes	2
Community business support	2
General appearance of site	1
Location is inconvenient for customers	1
Trucking & Distribution	1
General appearance of community	1
Noise of Trucks passing by	1
Cost of hydro	1
Empty storefronts	1

### ***Local Community***

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Just one business interviewed knows of another business that is willing to locate in Stirling and they are willing to provide the contact information for this business.

When asked if they would be willing to participate in a Business Ambassador Program, just 35% of businesses interviewed said that they would.

Businesses were also asked which new suppliers of products or services they would like to see added to Stirling. The following is a list of the varied responses received:

<b>Products and/or services that businesses would like to see added to Stirling</b>		
Children's clothing	Tim Hortons	Jewellery Store
Competitive grocery store	Highschool	Tim Hortons
Another grocery store	Tim Hortons	Electronics Store
High quality stores and restaurants	Bed & Breakfast	Tourist information
Another bank	Another grocery store	Public washrooms/public benches
Reliable restaurant	Accomodation	Canadian Tire
Cheaper Grocery Chain	Giant Tiger	Canadian Tire
More gift shops	Average priced clothing store	Affordable grocery store
Manufacturing	Grocery store	Children's Clothing
Antiques	Women's clothing	Children's store
Nuts and bolts	No food suppliers	Grocery store
Manufacturing Plant	Large Restaurant	Small hotel
Clothing store for children		

Just 57% said "Yes" as far as they know the local community has an Economic Development Plan while 43% said "No" or they "Don't Know" if the community has one. Amongst those who said "Yes", 62% said that they "Don't Know" if it is being effectively implemented. Just 30% indicated the Municipality takes an adequate role in Business and Economic Development, another 30% said "No" they don't take an adequate role while 32% are Unaware of what's being done. Some additional comments received are outlined in the chart below:

<b>Comments regarding economic development efforts in Stirling</b>
"Taxes are way too high for businesses"
"They're (Mun. Govt.) not leaders, and not good followers of best practices elsewhere."
"Yes (taking an adequate role), but only recently!!"
"Has improved from a year ago."
"They are conducting survey of businesses, listening and reaching out."
"They've done a terrible job! Have not done a good job helping struggling businesses."

Businesses were given the opportunity to list the advantages of Stirling as a place in which to do business. While they appear varied, there were many similar responses relating to Stirling's location and overall size of the community:

<b>Advantages of Stirling as a place in which to do business</b>		
Customer service	Competitive pricing	Good sense of community, loyalty from public
Personal service	Marketing, word of mouth	No competition
It's becoming a bedroom community for Belleville & Trenton	We have a good public school system	Very sports oriented community
Theatre - Tourists coming in	Everything in close proximity	Nice place to visit
Location, within a half hour over 100,000 people	Beautification potential	High volume of traffic and the Theatre

Location - hub: Peterborough, Ottawa, Trenton, Belleville	Theatre draw	Early growth stages
Small town	Consumer dedication	Small town atmosphere
Overall size of the town	Heritage/Theatre & Museum	Closeness/proximity to Belleville
Location	Well off economic population	Pretty good transportation
Centrally located (between Madoc, Marmora, Campbellford)	Main Street is within walking distance	
Agriculture	Close to big towns	Beautiful community
Unique community (culturally and physically)	Safe community with its own police force	Active community (recreation, churches etc.)
Friendly	Clean	Open and friendly
Small town friendly atmosphere	Small town service	Everything that a person needs without going to the city
Small town/Community watch	People are nice and the Theatre is great	Low crime rate
Close knit community		

Their responses to the disadvantages of Stirling as a place in which to do business were:

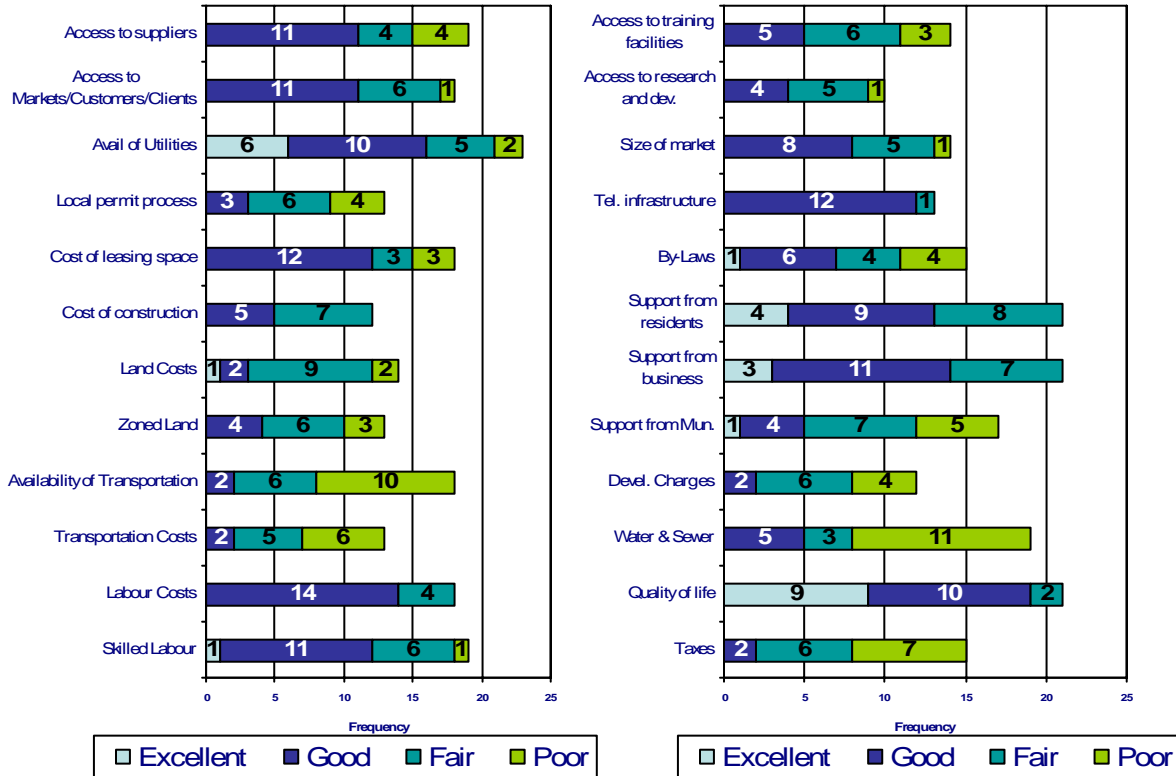
<b>Disadvantages of Stirling as a place in which to do business</b>		
Inconsistent hours among all businesses	Organizing committees (i.e. BIA providing lack of direction)	No business directory for business in town (some businesses are unaware of what we have in our commun
Taxes are very high for what we don't get	Lack of an identity (as a result of amalgamation)	Overhead that you can't control
Sidewalks are horrible!!!	Hours of operation are bad	Lack of direction
Municipal (urban) roads, sidewalks, sewer in disrepair	No marketing strategy to attract tourism and new business	Community has a lack of positive, sustainable vision
No Parking	Requires more industry	95% shop in Belleville
Inadequate business hours	No middle class shopping	Clothing and sports stores are all in Belleville
Too easy to go to Belleville, through traffic to Belleville that don't stop	Lack of believe that change is necessary within a core group	Noisy traffic
Not enough public parking	A couple of self-serving business owners	Lack of parking
Lack of parking	Small town – too close to Belleville	Few major attractions
Size and population density isn't good	Telephone communications is marginal	Misinterpretation of business needs
Slow bureaucratic system	Lack of parking	Parking
Close to larger centres	Lack of local employment opportunities	Fluctuating secure local support of local businesses

Other comments about Stirling as a place in which to do business were:

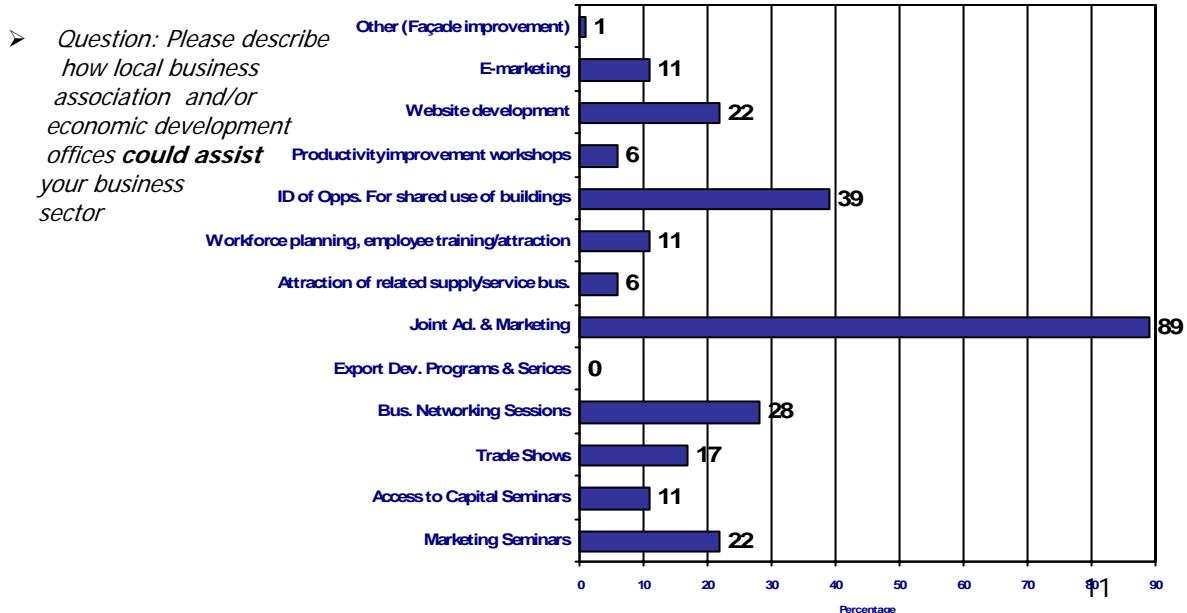
<b>Additional comments about Stirling as a place in which to do business</b>
"Lack of focus from Council."
"Arts are good in town. Make it more pedestrian friendly. There's too many large trucks going through town."
"Less bureaucracy, cliques and pettiness by leaders. We need a much more open progressive attitude. Willingness to change. Stirling/Rawdon needs to have a greater presence in the Quinte area (i.e. Belleville, Q.W., Brighton, County) It is the economic hub of this area. Slow down traffic in the Business District."
"BIA needs to be more responsive to their mandate. Focus is often more on service industry than retail."
"Safe environment, the picturesque scenery, creek and bridge"
"Business community is pretty friendly and easy to get along with."
"Most people are friendly"
"It's hard to do business with hydro going up and also fuel costs."
"Stirling is a wonderful village with huge potential. But until there is a true economic program in place, that focuses on all business, rather than a chosen few, it will not grow. As the old saying goes "Too many people with their own personal interest at heart - have their hand in the cookie jar!" Stirling has more to offer than a theatre."
"Store hours need to be consistent"

Using a scale of Excellent, Good, Fair and Poor, businesses were asked to take a list of factors and rate them in terms of doing business in Stirling. As shown in the following bar graphs, many businesses rate Quality of life, Support from Residents and other Business, and Availability of utilities as "Excellent" or "Good". Fairly "Poor" ratings were given to Availability of transportation, Water and sewer and Taxes as factors in doing business.

➤ Question: Using a scale of excellent, good, fair and poor, how would you rate the following factors in doing business in this community?



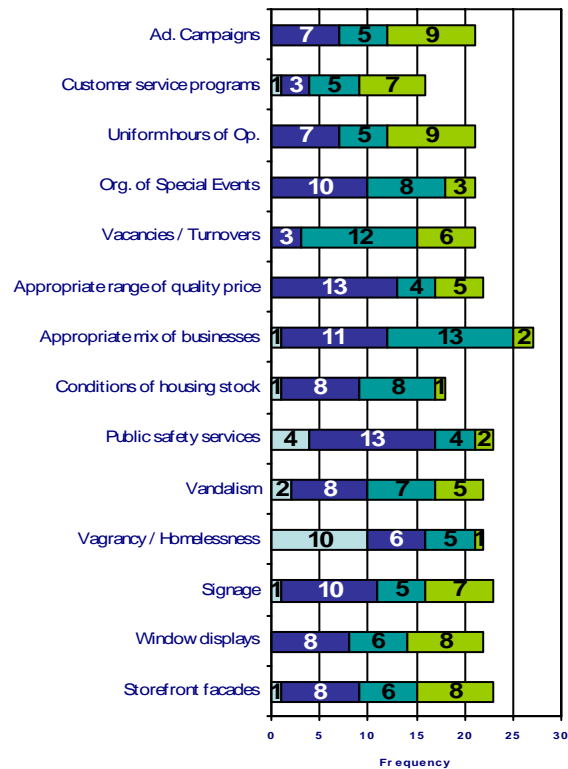
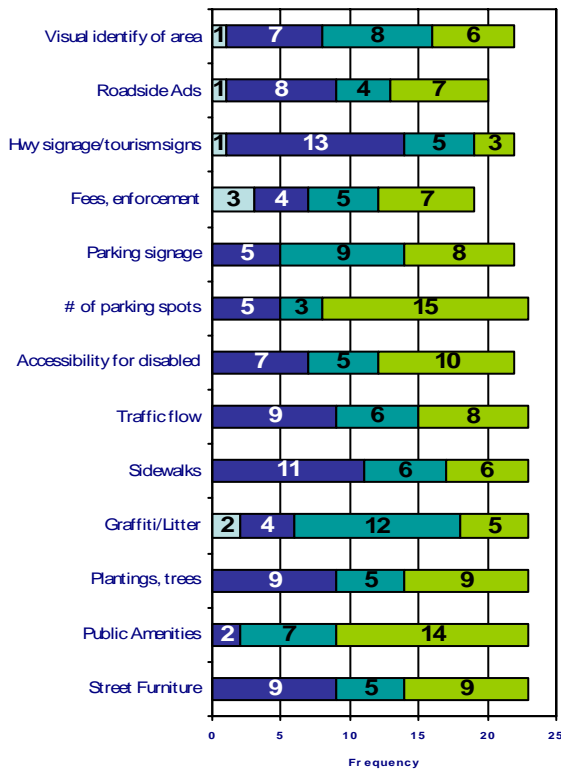
Businesses were asked how a local business association and/or an economic development office could assist their business sector. As shown in the following bar graph, many businesses said they would like assistance with Joint advertising and marketing, Identification for shared use of buildings, Business networking sessions, Website development and Marketing Seminars.



**Retail/Service Business Questions**

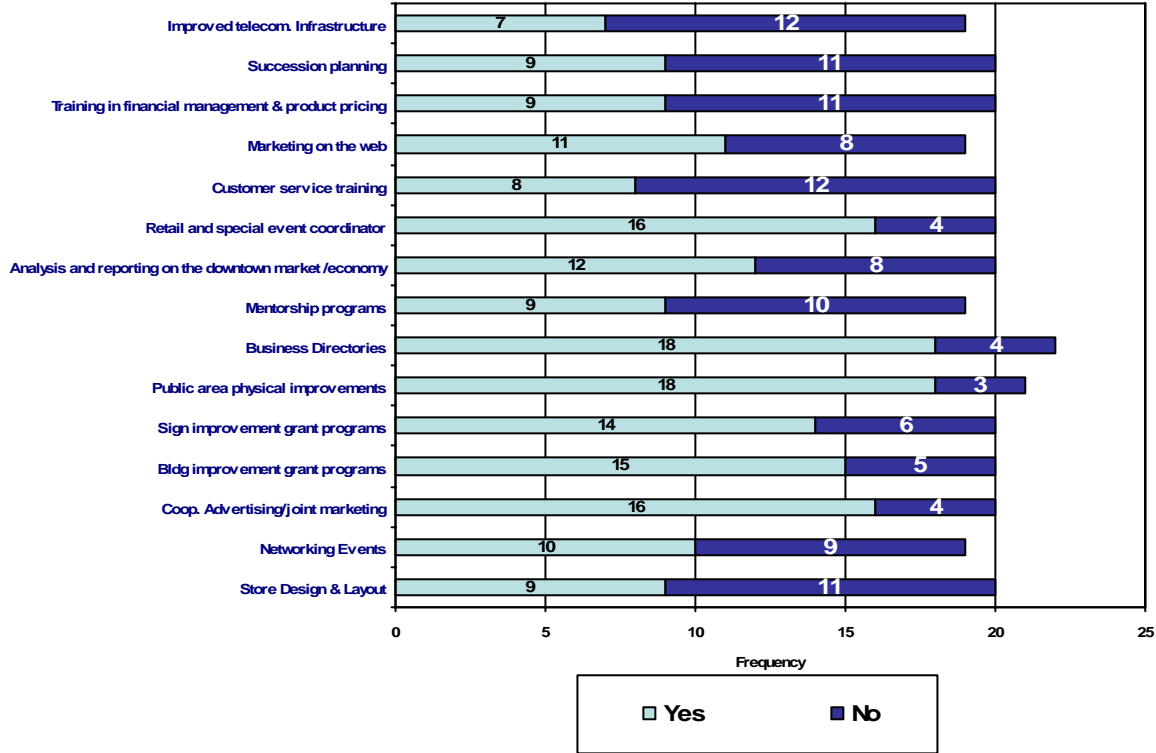
Businesses were given the opportunity to rate the condition of their commercial district. As can be observed in the following two charts, a number of businesses gave an “Excellent” rating to the condition of Vagrancy, homelessness and panhandling, as well as parking fees/enforcement, Graffiti/litter, and Public safety services. Those that received several ratings as “Fair” or “Needs Improving” included: Number of parking spots available, Accessibility for disabled persons, Public amenities, and Store uniform hours of operation.

➤ Question: Using the scale provided, please rate the **condition** of your **commercial district** for each factor.



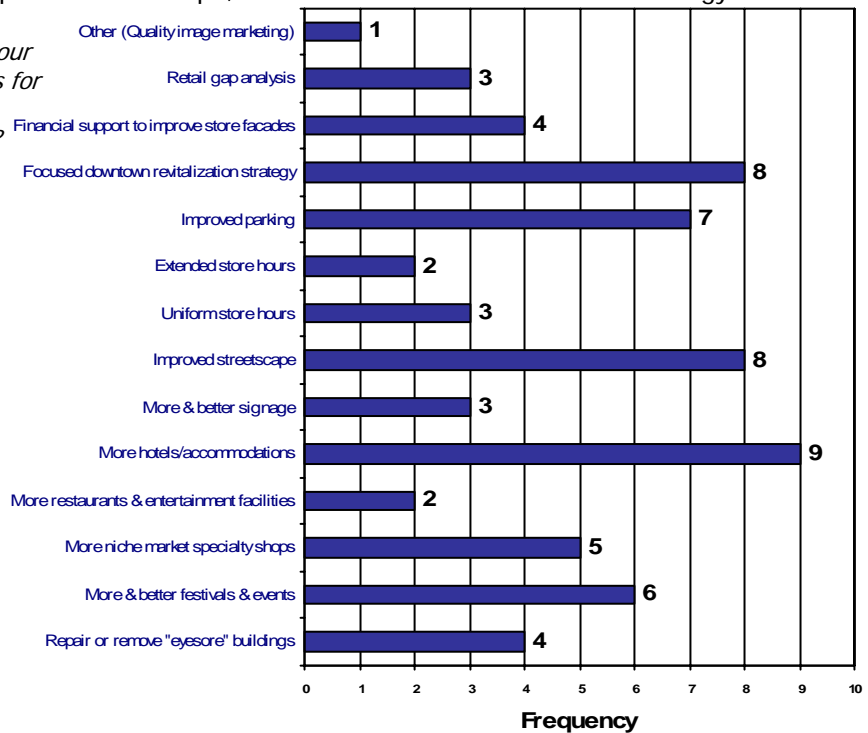
Businesses were also given a list of programs and services and asked to select which ones that would benefit them the most. Clearly, as displayed in the graph below, businesses would benefit from help with Business directories, Public area physical improvements, Retail and special event coordination, Cooperative advertising/joint marketing and Building improvement grant programs.

➤ Question: Would your business benefit from the following programs and services?



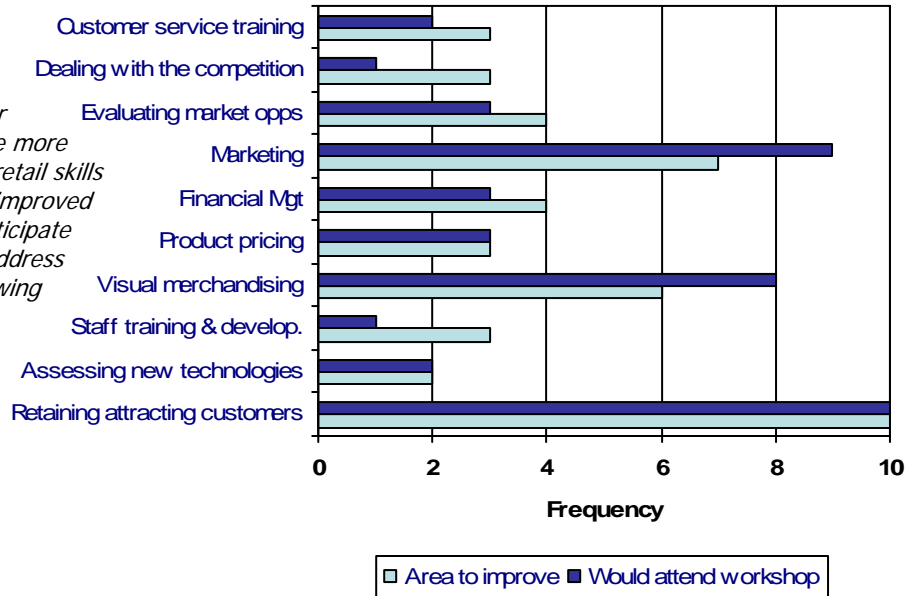
The top three suggestions for improving Stirling’s retail business environment are: More hotels/accommodations, Improved Streetscape, Focused downtown revitalization strategy.

➤ Question: What are your top three suggestions for improving the retail business environment?



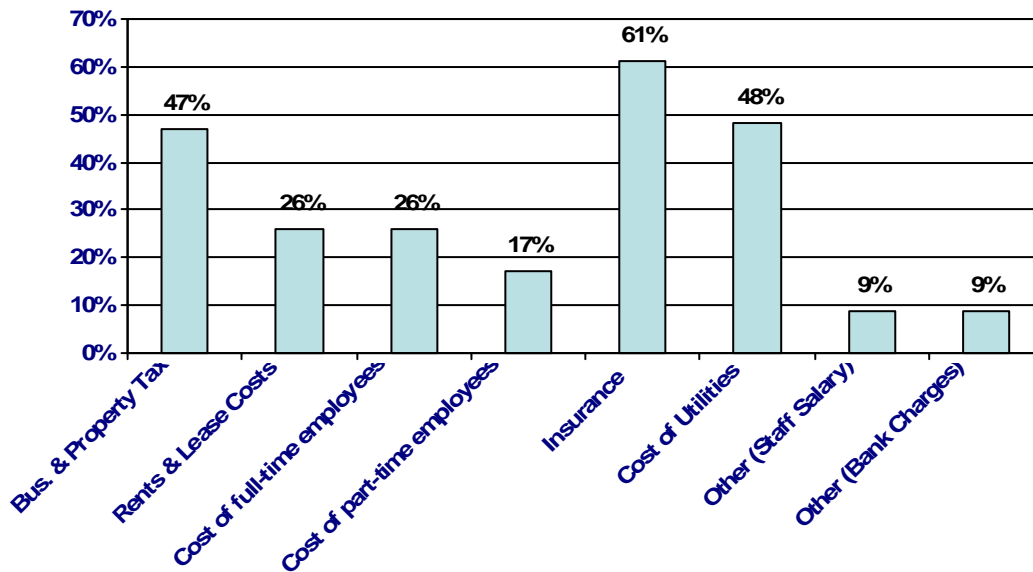
Businesses were asked what retail skills they would like to see improved and would they participate in workshops to improve those skills. From the graph below, most would like to improve Retaining and attracting customers, Marketing and Visual merchandising. With respect to participating in workshops, coincidentally they would like to attend workshops on Retaining and attracting customers, Marketing, and Visual merchandising.

➤ Question: In order for your business to be more competitive, A) What retail skills would you like to see improved and B) Would you participate in any workshops to address any of the of the following issues?



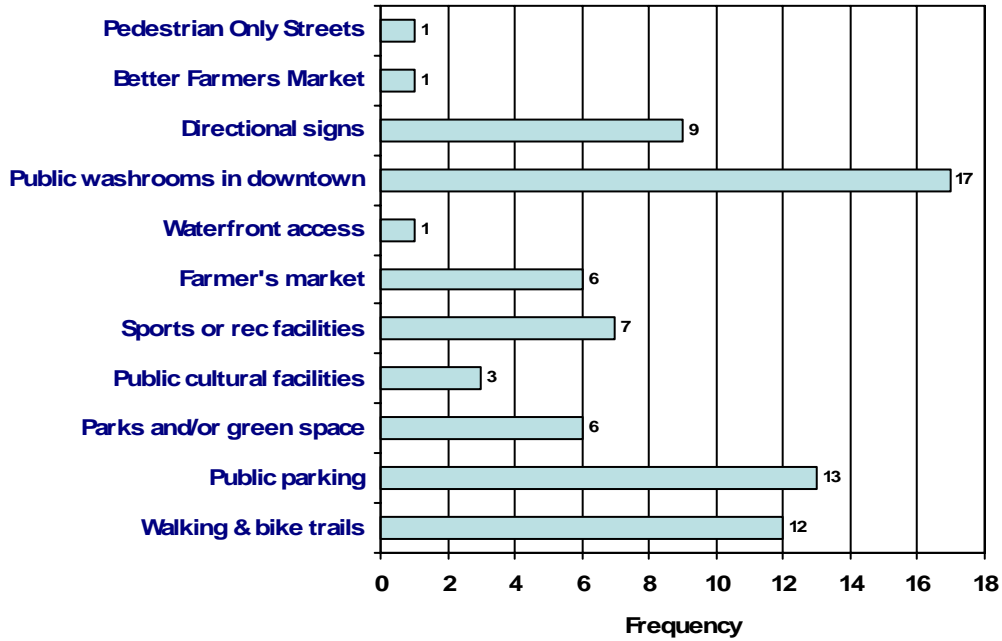
Costs of operation that are a serious concern to the success of Stirling businesses is Insurance costs, Utilities and Business and Property Tax.

➤ Question: Are any of the following a serious concern to the success of your business?



The four community assets that businesses would like to see developed in Stirling are Public washrooms downtown, Public parking, Walking and bike trails as well as Directional signs.

➤ Question: What four community assets would you like to see developed in your community?



### ***Downtown Revitalization Questions***

Businesses were asked if they know the date that their business was established. Not enough businesses knew the date since several were not the original owner. Businesses were also asked to list the square footage of their business. Several did not know, and as a result, the information provided by those who did is not included in this report considering that an aggregate square footage cannot be sufficiently calculated. Similarly, the same scenario takes place for annual total sales for each of the businesses as many did not want to reveal this data.

Businesses were asked to list the hours of operation for their business. The chart below provides the most frequent response to get a sense of when most businesses on average (amongst those interviewed) open and close their business.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Most frequent response	Closed	Open by 9:00am – Closed by 5:30pm	Open by 9:00am – Closed by 5:00pm	Open by 9:00am – Closed by 5:30pm	Open by 9:00am – Closed by 5:30pm	Open by 9:00am – Closed by 5:30pm	Open by 9:00am – Closed by 5:30pm

When businesses were asked for their weekly foot traffic, the most frequent responses (12) were allocated to 100-500 while five said less than 100 and four said over 1000. The busiest days of the week on average are Friday and Saturday while the busiest times of day are, firstly, the afternoon (1pm – 5pm) and in the morning (8:00am to noon). The busiest months of the year are December (13 mentions), June (8), July (8) and August (6).

61% of businesses interviewed said that they typically plan major sales/specials and when asked for what months, businesses said for most months of the year. When asked what events

increased foot traffic or sales volume for their business, most responses were allocated to The Stirling Theatre, Santa Claus Parade, Stirling Fair and the RCMP Musical Ride.

70% said that Female customers are the most typical customers while 22% said both genders. 35% said that the most typical age is 45-54 while 30% said the age range varies. Most businesses are unsure of what the annual household income of their customers would be. Most (52%) track their customers. Amongst those that do, they said that their customers are from Stirling (11), Belleville (7), Campbellford (6), Quinte West (5).

When businesses were asked to list the six products and/or services that best differentiate their business from the competition, responses varied considerably and it appears from the list below that businesses provided answers that were too personal in nature and not taking into consideration the objective of the question:

<b>Products and/or service that best differentiate businesses from the competition</b>			
Quality	Price	Service	Availability
Personal attention	Special orders	"Complete" gift	Collectibles
Customer Service	Private label branding	Only service in town	Variety of products
Friendlier	Better service	Cleanliness	Best food (good pies)
Quality	Price	Service	Home decor
Hours	Willing to work weekends	Experience	Ladies clothing
Western wear	Tack	Yarn	Cards
Personality	Up to date	Location	Prices are better
Staff	Custom Service	Flexibility	Customer service
Low cost items	Variety of products	In-store butcher	Homemade ice cream
Customer service	In-store bakeshop	Carry out service	In-store full service deli
Games	Cheapest Cigarettes	Selection	Old fashioned toys
Bulk food	Sears Merchandise	Hard Ice Cream	Local artists
Hand crafted truffles	Belgian chocolate	Unique flavours	Homemade fudge
Fair trade coffee	Local book selections		

Businesses were asked to list the toughest competition for their business. The answers varied considerably. However, it can be noted that Out-of-Town competitors were mentioned 13 times while In-Town competitors had just 8 mentions. The main competitive edge, versus the competitors listed, is Service. The majority (65%) have an average price point that they target.

Businesses were given the opportunity to list downtown businesses that complement their business the most. They could specify up to three by name. The responses were:

<b>Downtown businesses that respondents said complement them the most</b>		
Forever Yours Gift Shoppe	Theatre	Restaurants
West Wings	Masons	Chocolatier
Balu's Pharmacy	Restaurants	Stirling Theatre
Wells Ford	Poste's Mercantile	Doctor's offices
Stirling Theatre	Bank	Post Office
Stirling Festival Theatre	West Wings	Forever Yours Gift Shoppe
Stirling Theatre	Mason's	Forever Yours Gift Shoppe
Cameo flower shop	Specialty gift shops	Stirling Theatre
Thym & Again Bakery	Jenny's Country Lane Restaurant	Stirling Video
Hardware Store	Pharmacy	Wine Barrell
Jimmy's		

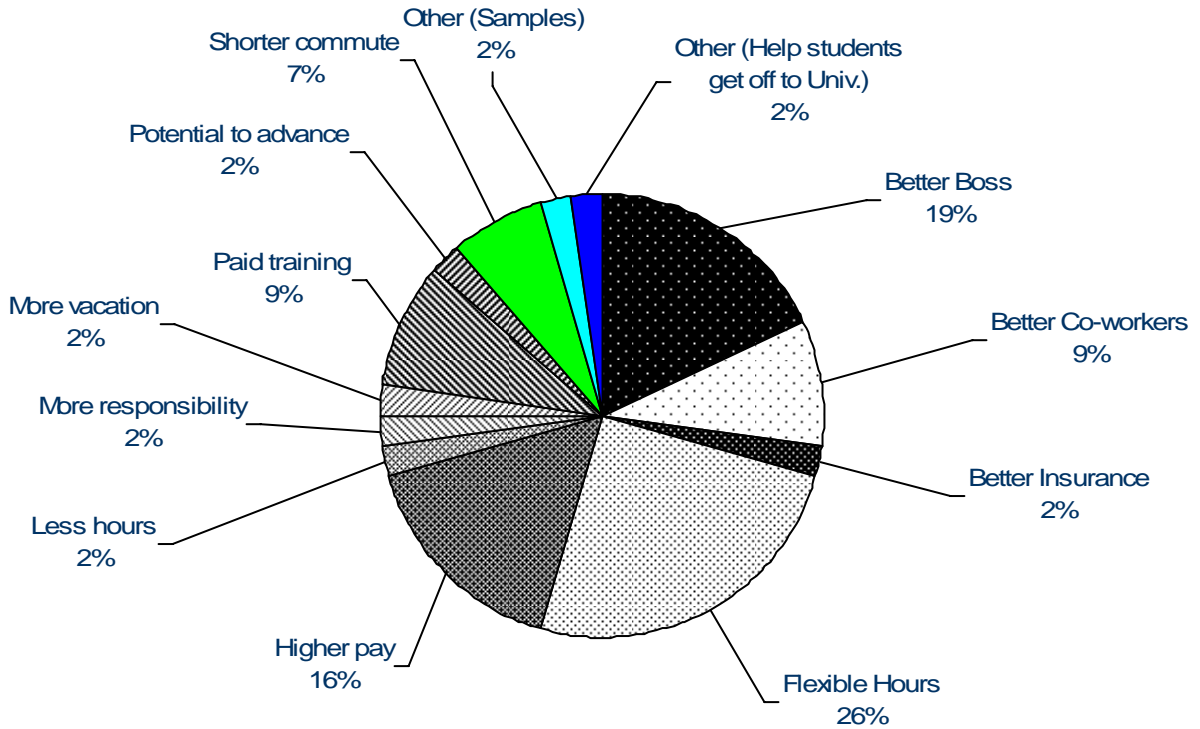
With their business in mind, respondents were asked to indicate up to four businesses that they would most like to see available downtown. Businesses said:

<b>What businesses would most like to see available in downtown Stirling</b>		
Jewellery Store	Tim Hortons	Shoe Store
Drug Store	Hardware store	Waring House (see Picton)
Giant Tiger	Home Depot	Giant Tiger
Foodstore	Restaurants	Building supplies
Affordable women's clothing	Shoe store	Box Stores
Drug Store	Convenience store	Canadian Tire
Children's clothing	Optometrist	Drug store
Zazu (as in Campbellford)	Casa Lucis (as in Bloomfield)	Florist Shop (see Port Hope)
Another grocery store	Another Theatre (i.e. cinema, alternative)	Shoe Store
Trendy (reasonably priced clothing store)	Discount Clothing store	Fabric land
Reasonably priced clothing store		

Businesses were asked about parking downtown. Most businesses said that their customers typically park either on the street within 1 block of the business, on the street right in front of the business or in a customer parking lot that they own or rent. Employees typically park in an employee parking lot.

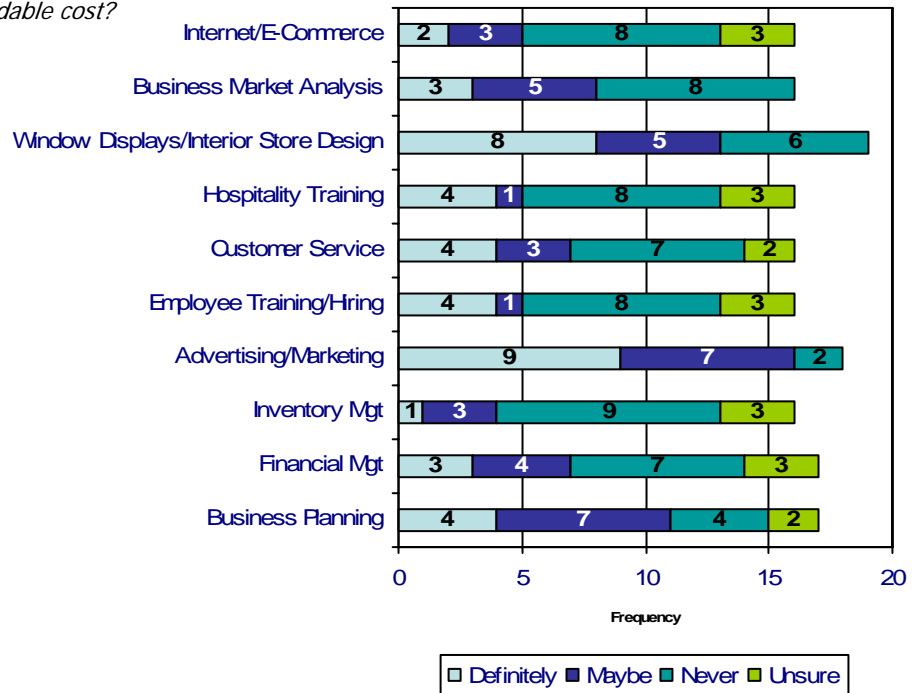
Businesses were asked to select, from a list, the employee benefits that their business offers compared to competitors. They could mark more than one, and as shown in the chart below, the benefits noted the most were Flexible hours, Higher pay, Better co-workers, Paid training and Shorter commute.

➤ Question: Which employee benefits does this business offer compared to its competitors?



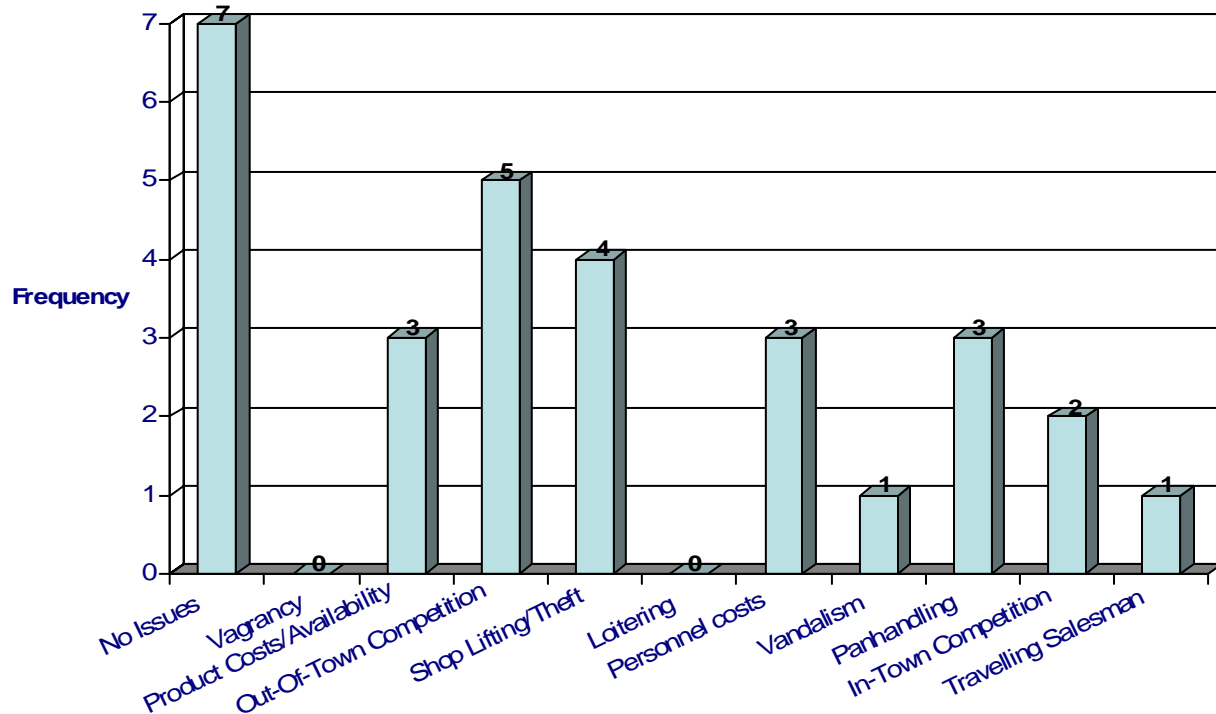
Business owners were asked if they or an employee would attend business training workshops if held locally at an affordable cost. They were given a list to select from and asked to select all that apply. From the graph below, it is observed that Window Displays/Interior Store Design, Advertising/Marketing and Business Planning are all popular workshops.

➤ Question: How likely will you or an employee attend the following business training workshops if held locally at an affordable cost?



Businesses were asked if they are experiencing any issues. From the graph below, a number of businesses appear to be experiencing either No issues, or if they are, it is Product Costs/Availability and Shop Lifting/Theft.

➤ Question: Is your establishment experiencing any of these particular issues?



Businesses were given a set of statements and asked to select whether they Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree or Strongly Disagree. As observed in the chart below, which provides the frequency of responses for each, it is observed (based on responses) that there could be more parking downtown, and businesses seem to think that the look and feel of downtown Stirling needs improving as well as their building façade.

➤ Question: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Statement	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I always try to buy products and services locally	8	11	1	1
I always direct customers to other downtown businesses	16	5	0	0
The existing downtown business mix helps this business	9	8	3	0
There is plenty of convenient parking downtown	3	2	10	6
Downtown is an excellent place to have a business	10	8	2	1
There are plenty of good workers available here	7	9	3	0

I would support a new retail promotions event	13	6	0	0
The look & feel of downtown helps this business	5	9	7	0
My building façade draws customers into this business	5	13	1	1
My window and store displays help this business	9	7	3	0
This business is open when customers want to shop	10	10	1	0
Employees of this business show great customer service	17	4	0	0
I feel safe downtown, even at night	14	6	1	0

### Strengths

Following a review of the preceding findings, there are a few positives worth mentioning. Firstly, Stirling appears to be a good place in which to have a business. A fairly good percentage of employees live locally and businesses themselves are locally owned with owners involved in the day-to-day operation. Businesses are fairly satisfied with the current site of their business and businesses rate Stirling's proximity/location to nearby urban centres and the size of the town (friendly atmosphere) as advantages.

Businesses would like to see workshops on Advertising/marketing and on Window displays/Interior store design.

Businesses gave a high rating to skilled labour, labour costs, availability of utilities, support from residents and other businesses.

### Weaknesses

Only about half the businesses interviewed have either a succession, business or marketing plan in place. This could use improving. More needs to be done to keep businesses informed of Economic Development efforts and coincidentally the Municipality needs to take a more adequate role in business and economic development. Likewise, business owners could do more as well as not enough business owners are willing to act as Business Ambassadors on behalf of the community.

Parking is an issue for businesses and they think that parking spots need to be improved. Businesses would also like to see public washrooms located in the downtown, more walking and bike trails and more directional signs.

The BIA and Economic Development Committee could do more to assist with Joint Advertising and Marketing (almost 90% request). It is also suggested that Stirling needs more hotels and accommodations, an improved streetscape and a focused downtown revitalization strategy.

It is apparent from the research that storefront facades need improving as well as uniform hours of operation and advertising campaigns.

Water and sewer capacity was given a "poor" rating.

July, 2005

Dear Downtown Business Owner:

I am pleased to introduce Mr. Andrew Redden as the new Project Coordinator for the recently launched Main Street Revitalization Initiative in our community. You may have heard about this initiative already. The "main street" approach is an integrated approach – it produces short and long-term actions in 4 key streams of activities:

- organizational/community engagement elements;
- physical design component;
- an economic development component and,
- a marketing/promotion/communications component.

The Main Street Initiative is supported by a management committee in Stirling-Rawdon consisting of key players – citizens, elected representatives, business people and community agencies. They are working hard together to identify the issues confronting them and to learn as much as possible about the local economic and social situation. Once armed with this knowledge, they will be in a position to make informed choices, bring into focus an overall vision of the community's future development and pinpoint common objectives directed at achieving workable and lasting results. Furthermore, they will be in a position to revitalize the main street.

Most certainly the committee wants to hear from you and to identify the needs of our existing businesses. That is why we are launching a formal and confidential Business Survey. Specifically, the objectives of the project are to:

1. Identify the needs, concerns and opportunities of existing local businesses in order that, where appropriate, local action can be taken to respond to the businesses' needs or development opportunities.
2. Learn of the future plans of the area's local businesses with respect to expansion, relocation, and/or retention and assess where assistance can be provided.
3. Demonstrate the community's pro-business attitude and develop an effective means of communication with local businesses.
4. Have the community actively involved in economic development.

The Business Survey will indicate **the future plans / needs of local businesses and how businesses view the community as a place to do business.** In turn, this survey information will be used to formulate a main street revitalization strategy with everyone's needs in mind.

.../2

The only person who will see your responses is Andrew Redden and he will be the person who interviews you. He will also sign a confidentiality contract. A summary of the survey results and recommendations for future development efforts will be shared with the volunteer management committee, however, **no businesses will be identified**. We will just share the aggregate data.

I respectfully invite you to participate in the Business Survey. Your input will be a valued addition to the initiative, and your responses to the survey questions will be kept confidential.

Enclosed is a copy of the survey that will be used. Andrew will be in contact with you again in the near future to schedule a time for your survey to be completed. The interview should take approximately 1 – 1 ¼ hours. The surveys are being completed in July and August.

I would greatly appreciate your cooperation with this community effort.

Sincerely,

Peter Kooistra  
Mayor

Encl.