



2013 Business Walk Report

The Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce conducted its first ever Business Walk on January 31, 2013 across several industries and areas of the community. The Business Walk was designed to gain a better understanding of the local business community and to see how the Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce could help businesses be more successful. This face-to-face survey reached 450 businesses with a 62% completion rate (279 businesses).

Local business and community leaders, government officials, Chamber member businesses and staff participated in the Walk, asking business owners and managers the following three questions which focused on the local economic climate and areas of opportunity:

- 1) How is Business?**
- 2) In your opinion, what could be done to improve local business conditions?**
- 3) What one thing would your business need to be more successful?**

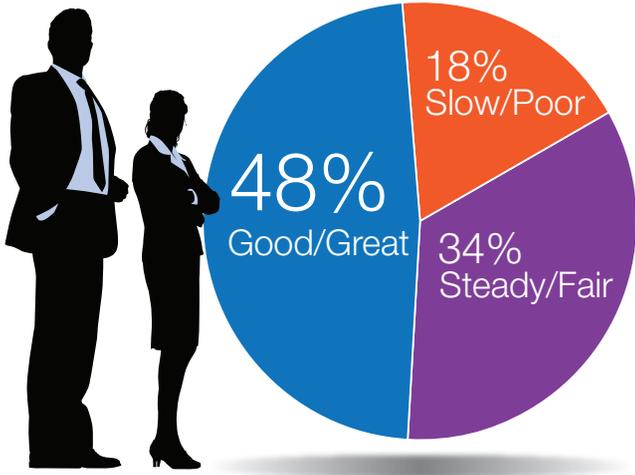
Summary Results

Overall, local businesses were optimistic about the business environment with 82% of them noting that business was either steady/fair and/or good/great. The results appeared to fluctuate based on the area in which the business was located. Downtown area businesses noted parking as a concern. A number of businesses had concerns that were related to the economy at a local and state level. Some businesses reported a fluctuation in sales due to the weather or seasonal changes.

Most owners and managers responded that fewer regulations and taxes, cleanliness of their area and reduced crime, allowing customers to feel safe, would improve local business conditions.

Despite these concerns, the data shows numerous businesses are growing, busy and experiencing increased sales over previous years.

The remainder of this report provides additional information regarding each of the three questions asked..



Question 1: How is Business?

(271 businesses responded to this question)

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Good/Great | 48% (131 businesses) |
| Steady/Fair | 34% (92 businesses) |
| Slow/Poor | 18% (48 businesses) |

This question produced the most responses of the three questions asked, with responses varying from “2012 best year since the crash in 2008” to “sales down from two years ago due to parking.”

Good/great comments:

- Increased sales
- Busy
- Business has been great
- Customers are growing and we are growing right along with them

Steady/fair comments:

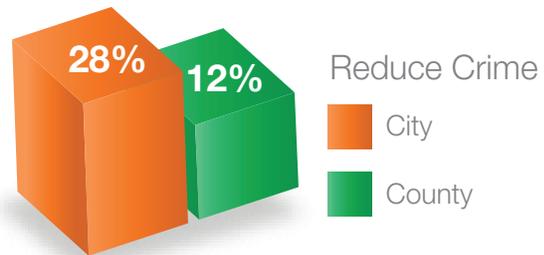
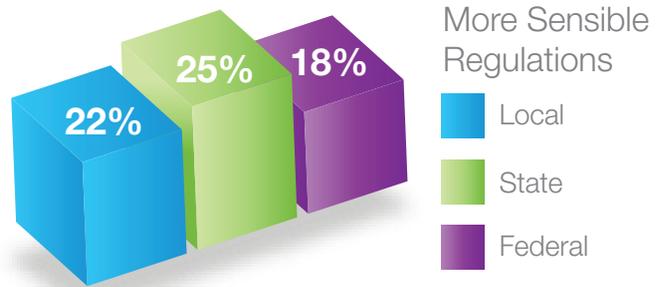
- Picking up from last few years
- Improves with weather
- Will be better in 2013
- Weather/season
- Economy
- Infrastructure issues (traffic, parking and street access)

Slow/poor comments:

- Economy
- Time of the year (or business cycle)
- Lack of customers
- Industry not as strong
- Parking, crime and regulations/taxes

Question 2: In your opinion, what could be done to improve local business conditions?

(259 businesses responded to this question)



More sensible regulations: 40% (104)

Reduced crime: 39% (102)

Improved processes for licensing/permitting/inspections: 20% (53)

Comments noting need for more sensible regulations :

- Taxes have caused an unease of spending
- Taxes are too high for small business
- Always have issues with State taxes

Comments citing need for reduced crime:

- Burglary/theft
- Homeless issues
- Graffiti

The businesses that reported crime as a concern, also noted that high crime, or the perception of an unsafe area, was a deterrent for customers and they would like assistance in reducing the negative image. Some agreed police are active in the area; however businesses recognize that there are not enough police on the streets to respond in a timely manner.

Nearly one quarter of the businesses interviewed (53 of the responses) asked for improved processes for licensing, permitting, or inspection.

- Businesses are frustrated with the amount of time they must invest into the licensing or permitting process
- Businesses are frustrated by the business licensing “red-tape”

Though businesses are frustrated at a local and state level, many believe the local/ City area is responsible for most of these problems and as a result offer the best chance for resolving the issues.

Suggestions/comments to resolve licensing/permitting issues:

- Make bids/contracts more easily accessible
- The procedures are redundant
- The building permit process has seemed to improve, but regulatory issues persist
- Too many licensing costs

General comments about what could improve business:

- Improved parking
- Street conditions are a deterrent to business and causes potential clients to become impatient
- Traffic related issues are a concern, with numerous comments focusing on freeway needs or the construction of the freeway taking too long
- Uncertainty of final freeway routes makes it difficult to determine business relocation
- Homeless issues--eliminate panhandlers and loitering as it scares customers
- Air quality--keeps away other quality businesses and employees, deters visitors and stops relocation
- City cleanliness--litter, graffiti, street trash, bus stop litter, alley issues
- Street access to businesses needs improvement
- Business support--shop local campaigns, easier local business strategies
- Sign regulations are an issue in the City of Bakersfield. Greater visibility would help, yet sign regulations are too restricted

Question 3: What one thing would your business need to be more successful?

(213 businesses responded to this question)

More marketing and advertising: 45% (126)

Financial assistance/resources/access to capital: 18% (49)

Education/training: 14% (38)

Comments (marketing and advertising)

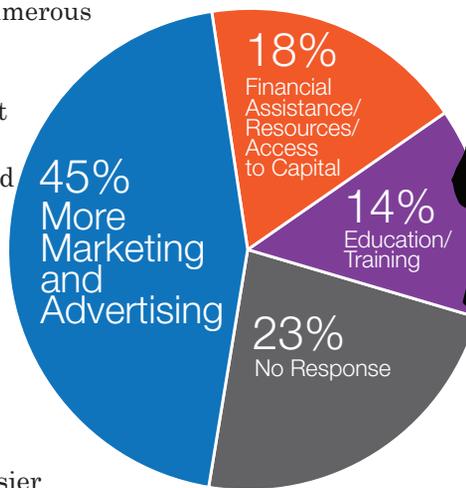
- Common marketing goal--obstacle with different positioning statements of Downtown
- Remove stigmas
- Advertising is expensive
- Bad image of Bakersfield from outsiders is hurting recruitment of outside professionals
- Word of mouth is primary method, need more
- Not allowed to market because of regulations

Comments (financial assistance/resources/access to capital) (provide more comments)

- Businesses report they are unsure how to expand business
- Unsure they can financially support expansion

Comments (education/training)--respondents noted need for training in the following areas:

- Communication: written and verbal
- Marketing
- Customer service
- Personnel



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2013 Business Walk Volunteers

Elected Officials

Mayor Harvey L. Hall
Supervisor David Couch
Supervisor Leticia Perez
Councilmember Russell Johnson
Councilmember Terry Maxwell
Councilmember Bob Smith
Field Representative for Senator Jean Fuller
Field Representative for Supervisor Mick Gleason
Field Representative for Councilmember Zack Scrivner

Businesses Volunteering

All Homecare
Bakersfield Blaze
Bakersfield Country Club
Bakersfield Jazz Workshop
Bakersfield Pet Food Pantry
Bakersfield Police Department
BARC-Bakersfield ARC
Buck Owens Productions
Business Initiatives
Cafe Med Restaurant & Deli
Chad Hathaway LLC
Citizens Business Bank
City of Bakersfield
Community Action Partnership of Kern
Comverge, Inc.
Continental Labor and Staffing Resources
County of Kern
Creative Concepts/Saba Agency
Darlene Denison State Farm Agency
Dignity Health Mercy & Memorial Hospitals
Downtown Business Association
Dreams 2 Reality
Edward Jones Investments
Fresno Pacific University

Garden Pathways
Global CTI Group, Inc.
Grimmway Enterprises Inc. dba Grimmway Farms
Indoff Commercial Interiors
Jim Burke Ford Lincoln
Kern Assistive Technology Center
Kern Community College District
Kern Economic Development Corporation
Kern Federal Credit Union
Kern Insurance Associates, Inc.
Kern Schools Federal Credit Union
Kern Valley Printing
Kuka's
Kwik Sign, Inc.
L P Automation
Mary Kay Cosmetics
Melaleuca
Mendez Media Marketing, Inc.
Merrill Lynch
Michael Monji & Assoc.
New York Life
Ordiz-Melby Architects, Inc.
Owens Valley Career Development Center
Pacific Advisors
Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Principal Financial Group
Quad Knopf, Inc.
Rabobank, N.A.
San Joaquin Community College
SCORE
SendOutCards
Small Business Development Center
State Farm Insurance
Stewards Inc.
The Lynn Company
Tri Counties Bank
TWIW Insurance Services
UEI College
Ultrex Business Products, Inc.
Union Bank
University of LaVerne
Westec



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