2017 Business Priorities Survey

Final Report

March 17th, 2017

Banister
Research & Consulting Inc.

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In 2017, Parkland County contracted Banister Research & Consulting Inc. (Banister Research) to conduct a web-based survey with businesses operating within Parkland County, with regards to the County's long-term vision and as a place to do business. A total of 168 businesses completed the survey. Key findings of the 2017 Business Priorities Survey included:

Business Characteristics

- The vast majority (89%) of respondents operated either one (1) or two (2) locations in Parkland County.

- Nearly one quarter (24%) of respondent businesses operated in Carvel, followed by 19% that operated in Acheson.

- Over two-thirds (67%) of respondents were business owners within their company.

    o Respondents most commonly held their role for 3 to 5 years (27%), or 11 to 20 years (27%).

- Businesses most often operated for 3 to 5 years (23%), or 6 to 10 years (23%). The mean length of operation for businesses in Parkland County was 12.57 years.

- Thirty-seven percent (37%) of respondent businesses were home-based businesses, followed by 21% that were industrial businesses, and 17% that were commercial and/or retail businesses.

- Over half (59%) of businesses employed 1 to 4 employees, followed by 14% that employed 10 to 39 employees, and 9% that employed 5 to 9 employees.

- Over half (56%) of businesses were home-based or small businesses. Forty-nine percent (49%) of businesses were headquarters or owner-operated.

- Nearly one third of businesses were located in Division 2 (31%) of Parkland County, followed by 19% that were located in Division 1, and 18% that were located in Division 3.

- Nearly one quarter (24%) of businesses operated in the trades, transport and equipment operators sector, followed by 18% that operated in natural resources or agriculture, and 17% that operated in sales and services.

Business Economy

- When asked what makes Parkland County a good place to operate a business, the top reasons reported were the fact that it is a good and/or convenient location (18%), has low or affordable taxes (16%), and its proximity to Edmonton (16%).

- When asked what would make Parkland County a better place to operate a business, the top reasons reported were building more roads/infrastructure (14%), lower taxes (9%), and improved internet/Wi-Fi services (8%).

- Nearly half (47%) of businesses reported that they will be maintaining constant staffing levels over the next year, followed by 22% that reported that they will be hiring.

- In terms of their demand or workload over the next year, forty percent (40%) of businesses reported that their workload will stay the same, followed by 38% that reported that their workload will grow or expand.

- When asked about barriers to entry, over half (55%) of businesses did not view anything as a barrier to entry. Six percent (6%) of businesses reported that restrictive rules and/or regulations are barriers to entry, followed by 5% who believed that a lack of support from County staff is a barrier, and 4% that believed high taxes are a barrier.

- Over half (57%) of businesses believed Parkland County was not weak in any competitive areas. Three percent (3%) of businesses specified that Parkland County was weak on internet/Wi-Fi services, followed by 2% that specified taxes (2%), and road maintenance (2%).

Core Values and Priorities

- Respondent agreement in regards to the County's commitment to each core value was as follows:

  - Respect (58% agreed, or provided ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5);
  - Integrity (58%);
  - Customer Service (57%); and
  - Transparency (46%).

- Businesses were next asked to rate the importance levels (using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant "not at all important and 5 meant "very important") of areas of focus within key themes of Parkland County's strategic plan. In terms of **community and quality of life**, the four (4) areas of focus garnered the following importance (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) ratings:

  - Developing a long-term plan for infrastructure and facilities (78% of respondents rated this as important);
  - Developing a long term plan to support community groups (53%);
  - Strengthening Parkland County's identity (49%); and
  - Investing in Hamlets (35%).

- In terms of **economy**, the eight (8) areas of focus garnered the following importance (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) ratings:

  - Supporting local business (89% of respondents rated this as important);
  - Bringing new business to Parkland County (73%);
  - Strengthening the digital economy (i.e. internet) (72%);
  - Diversifying the economy (67%);
  - Strengthening agricultural business, including farms (67%);
  - Supporting the longevity of non-renewable natural resource facilities (i.e. coal) (61%);
  - Promoting Parkland County as a destination (57%); and
  - Promoting a green economy (54%).

- In terms of **environment**, the seven (7) areas of focus garnered the following importance ratings:

  - Protecting the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices (70% of respondents rated this as important);
  - Balancing industry with environmental responsibility (64%);
  - Developing the lake and watershed plans (61%);
  - Protecting agricultural land through policies that support the producer (60%);
  - Providing access to environmental programs for agricultural producers (57%);
  - Reduction of permit fees for energy efficient building practices (53%); and
  - Use tax money to support environmental programs, such as ALUS or green acreages (41%).

- In terms of **leadership/governance**, the two (2) areas of focus garnered the following importance ratings:

    o Ensuring effective resident and business input (74% of respondents rated this as important); and
    o Establishing Parkland County as being customer focused (71%).

Coal-Fired Power Plants

- The vast majority (91%) of respondents were aware of the provincial and federal plans to phase out coal-fired power plants by 2030.

- Businesses were asked to rate their level of concern (using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant "not at all concerned" and 5 meant "very concerned") with the Province's plan to eliminated coal-fired power plants. Over three-quarters (76%) of businesses were somewhat or very concerned (ratings of 3 to 5 out of 5) with the Province's plans to eliminated coal fired power plants.

- When asked to specify their concern, those who were concerned (ratings of 3 to 5 out of 5) about the Province's plans to eliminated coal-fired power plants (n=127) were concerned with a power and/or gas cost increase (26%), followed by 17% who were concerned with unemployment, and 9% who were concerned with the lack of an alternative plan.

Customer Service

- Two-thirds (66%) of respondents reported that they had contact with Parkland County staff in the past year through phone, e-mail, online, or in-person.

- Businesses who had contact with County staff in the past year (n=110) most often had contacted staff in-person (39%), or through the phone (38%).

- Over four-fifths (84%) of those who had contact with County staff in the past year (n=110) rated the services they received from Parkland County staff as "excellent" (41%), "very good" (27%), or "good" (16%).

- Those who had contact with County staff in the past year (n=110) were asked for their agreement with various statements regarding Parkland County staff. Business agreement with each statement regarding County staff was as follows:

    o "The staff were polite" (88% agreed);
    o "The staff were knowledgeable" (82%);
    o "Staff provided a response within a reasonable time" (80%);
    o "The staff were willing to take action or to follow through quickly" (73%);
    o "The staff were able to refer you to the correct person if they couldn't help you" (63%); and
    o "You were able to complete your business in a single contact" (55%).

- Those who did not agree with all six (6) statements regarding Parkland County staff (n=42) reported that the customer service experience could be improved if staff improved their response time to requests (19%), or if staff were more knowledgeable and/or helpful (10%).

<u>**Communications**</u>

- When asked which of the following sources they referred to in order to receive information on Parkland County programs, services, and initiatives, businesses referred to the following:

  o Parkland County website (81% referred to this method of communication);
  o Word of mouth (67%);
  o Roadside Signage (56%);
  o E-mails from Parkland County (46%);
  o Quarterly Newsletter (Parkland Communicator) (42%);
  o Stony Plain Reporter (35%);
  o Spruce Grove Examiner (30%);
  o Parkland County social media accounts (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) (29%); and
  o Attending or watching Council meetings (10%).

<u>**Public Engagement**</u>

- Over one-fifth (22%) of businesses reported that they had participated in public engagement opportunities in the past year.

- Over two-thirds (68%) of those who had participated in a public engagement opportunity (n=37) were satisfied (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) with the opportunity.

  o Those who were not satisfied (ratings of 1 to 3 out of 5; n=12) most often mentioned that the input and/or suggestions provided were not acted on (n=4), or felt that the County was unknowledgeable (n=2).

<u>**Issue Identification**</u>

- When asked about the biggest issues facing Parkland County moving forward, over half (55%) of businesses reported that taxes were the biggest issue, followed by the government legislation imposed by other levels of government (47%), and the Parkland County permit process (31%).

- Businesses were then asked what one improvement they would make to create a better business environment in Parkland County. Businesses most often mentioned that they would look to expand and/or build more roads or infrastructure (5%).

- Over half (51%) of respondents supported (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) Parkland County's provision of funding to non-profit organizations.

1.0   STUDY BACKGROUND

In 2017, Parkland County contracted Banister Research to conduct Resident and Business Priorities Surveys in order to work towards setting a long-term strategic vision for the community. The primary purpose of the research was to ensure the priorities the County are developing are in line with the future vision, perceived opportunities, and potential challenges, as understood by its stakeholders. As part of the business component of the study, Banister Research conducted a web based survey with businesses in the County. This report outlines the results for the 2017 Business Priorities survey.

2.0   METHODOLOGY

All components of the project were designed and executed in close consultation with Parkland County (the County; the Client). A detailed description of each task of the project is outlined in the remainder of this section.

2.1   Project Initiation and Questionnaire Design

At the outset of the project, all background information relevant to the study was identified and subsequently reviewed by Banister Research. The consulting team familiarized itself with the objectives of the County, ensuring a full understanding of the issues and concerns to be addressed in the project. The result of this task was an agreement on the research methodology, a detailed work plan and project initiation.

Banister Research worked closely with the County in designing the survey instrument. All draft versions were submitted to the County for review and approval. A copy of the final questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

2.2   Survey Population and Data Collection

Banister Research programmed and hosted a web-based Business Priorities survey. Prior to beginning data collection, a preview link was shared with the Client Team for review and approval. The survey was available from January 30th to February 17th, 2017, over which time a total of 168 surveys were completed with Parkland County businesses. Parkland County provided Banister Research with the list of all businesses to be contacted for the survey. All contacts with valid e-mail addresses were sent an e-mail invitation to complete the survey online. Businesses that were not on the contact list were given the opportunity to complete the survey through public link which was promoted by the County (e.g. on the County website). Of the 168 total survey completions, 135 were completed through e-mail invitation and 33 were completed through public link. The survey was hosted on the Banister web server to ensure anonymity and the confidentiality of responses.

2.3   Data Analysis and Project Documentation

While data was being collected, Banister Research provided weekly progress reports to the Client. After data collection was completed, the lead consultant reviewed the list of different responses to each open-ended or verbatim question and then a code list was established. To ensure consistency of interpretation, the same team of coders was assigned to this project from start to finish. The coding supervisor verified at least 20% of each coder's work. Once the responses were fully coded and entered onto the data file, computer programs were written to check the data for quality and consistency.

Data analysis included cross-tabulation, whereby the frequency and percentage distribution of the results for each question were broken down based on respondent characteristics and responses (e.g. type of business, communities of operation, etc.). Statistical analysis included a Z-test to determine if there were significant differences in responses between respondent subgroups. Results were reported as statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Tabulations of the detailed data tables have been provided under separate cover. The reader should note that any discrepancies between charts, graphs or tables are due to rounding of the numbers.

3.0   STUDY FINDINGS

Results of the survey are presented as they relate to the specific topic areas addressed by the survey. It is important to note when reading the report that the term *significant* refers to "statistical significance". Only those respondent subgroups which reveal statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level (19 times out of 20) have been reported on.

3.1   Business Characteristics

Businesses were first asked a variety of questions identifying their business profile. First, businesses were asked how many locations they own or operate in Parkland County. As shown in Figure 1, below, the vast majority (89%) of businesses operated either one (1) or two (2) locations in Parkland County.

Figure 1

How many locations do you own or operate in Parkland County?

1 to 2 locations — 89%

3 to 5 locations — 4%

6 to 10 locations — 2%

n=168

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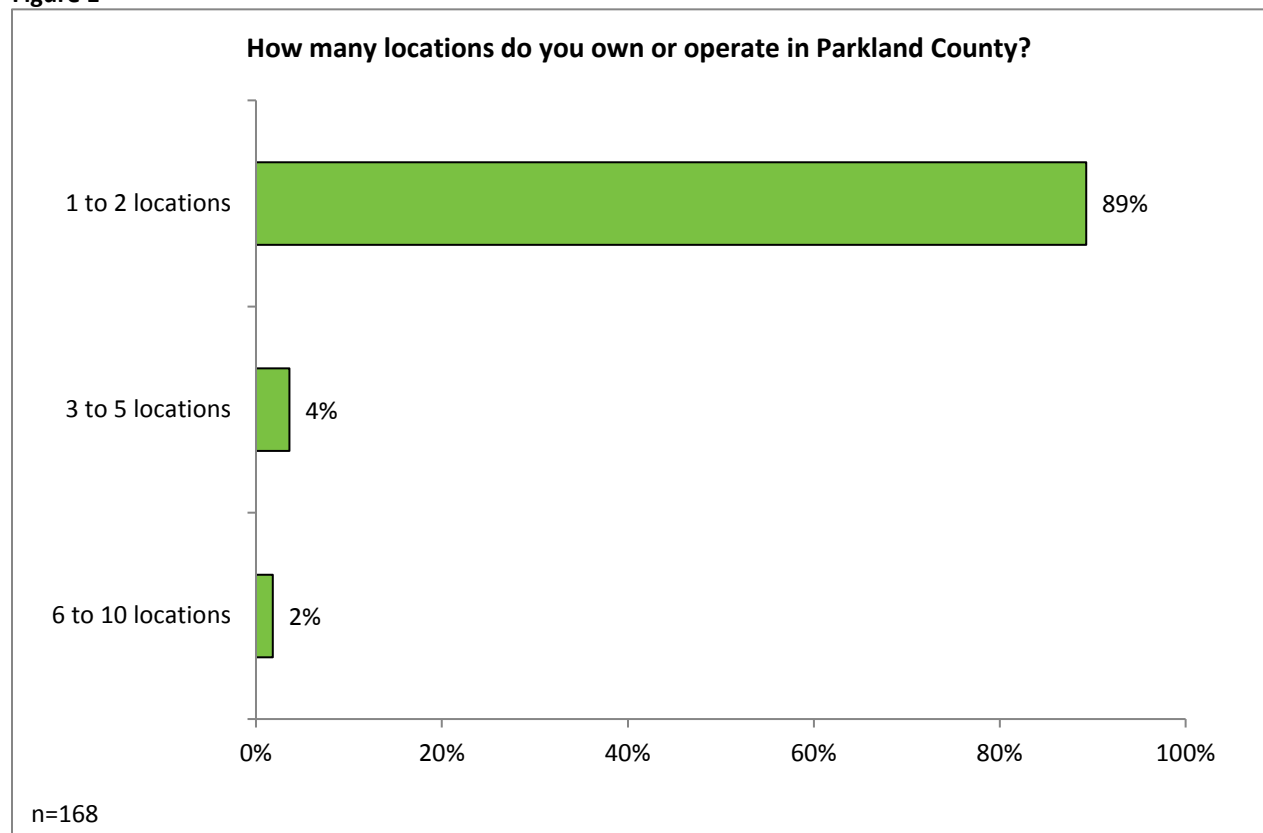
Next, businesses were asked which communities they operate in. Nearly one quarter (24%) of businesses reported that they operate in Carvel, followed by 19% that reported that they operate in Acheson. See Table 1, below.

Table 1

What communities does your business operate in?	
	Percent of Respondents* (n=168)
Carvel	24
Acheson	19
Duffield	17
Entwistle	17
Fallis	17
Parkland Village	16
Keephills	15
Tomahawk	14
Gainford	13
All areas/communities in Parkland County	12
Spruce Grove	11
Stony Plain	8
Edmonton	6
Other (3% or less of respondents)	18
Don't Know/Not stated	15

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Respondents were then asked what their primary role within their company was. Over two-thirds (67%) of respondents reported that they were the business owner of their company. See Figure 2, below.

Figure 2

What is your primary role within your company?

Role	Percentage
Business Owner	67%
Primary Manager	14%
CEO/President/VP	8%
Office Administrator	2%
Employee/Frontline Staff	2%
Human Resources	1%
Sales	1%
Marketing	1%
Other	2%
Don't Know/Not Stated	2%

n=168

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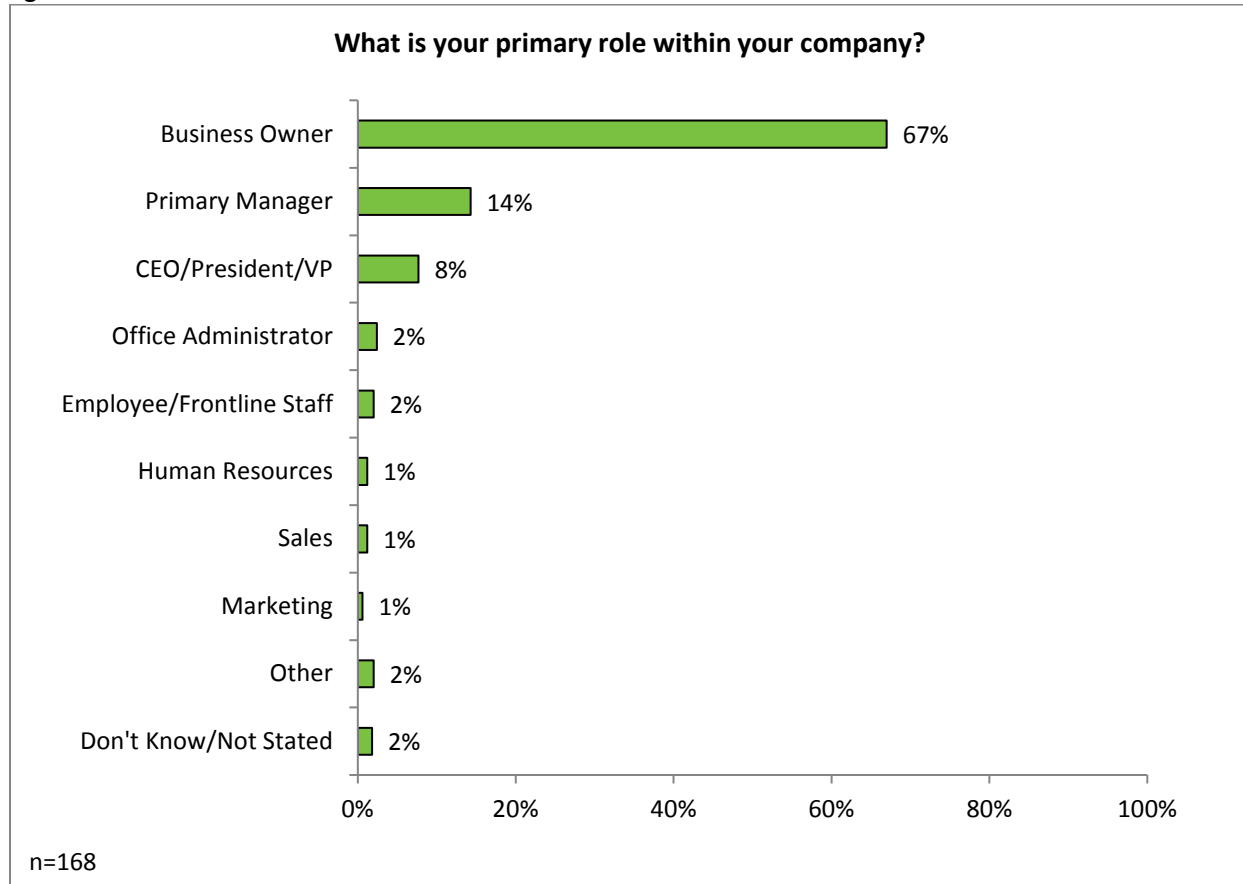
When asked how long they have served in their current role, respondents most commonly held their role for 3 to 5 years (27%), or 11 to 20 years (27%). Over one quarter (26%) of respondents held their role for 6 to 10 years, followed by 11% who have held their role for more than 20 years, and 10% who held their role for 1 to 2 years. See Figure 3, below.

Figure 3

How long have you served in your current role within your company?

- 1 to 2 years: 10%
- 3 to 5 years: 27%
- 6 to 10 years: 26%
- 11 to 20 years: 27%
- More than 20 years: 11%

2017 Mean = 11.14 years

n=168

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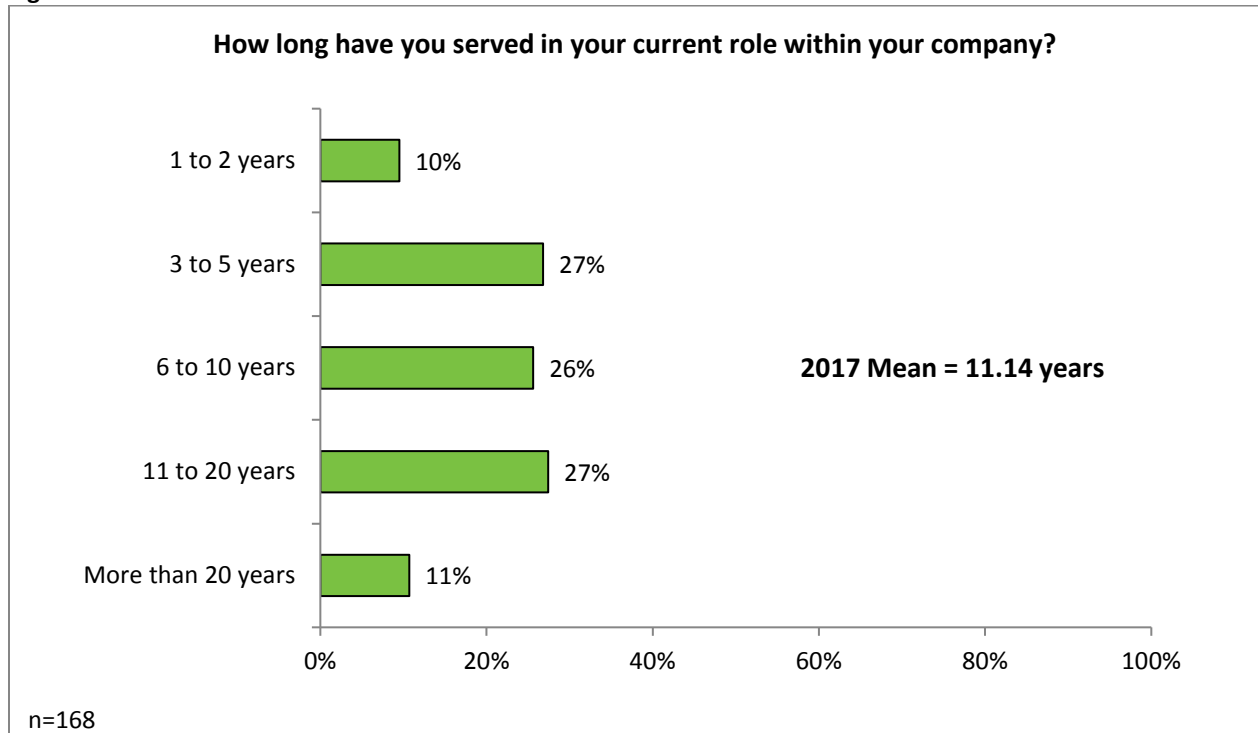
When asked to indicate how many years their business has operated in Parkland County, nearly one quarter (23%) of businesses reported operating for 3 to 5 years, or for 6 to 10 years (23%). One-fifth (20%) of businesses reported operating for 11 to 20 years. The mean length of operation for surveyed businesses in Parkland County was 12.57 years. See Figure 4, below.

Figure 4

How many years has this business operated in Parkland County?

Category	Percent
Less than 1 year	2%
1 to 2 years	14%
3 to 5 years	23%
6 to 10 years	23%
11 to 20 years	20%
More than 20 years	17%

2017 Mean = 12.57 years

n=168
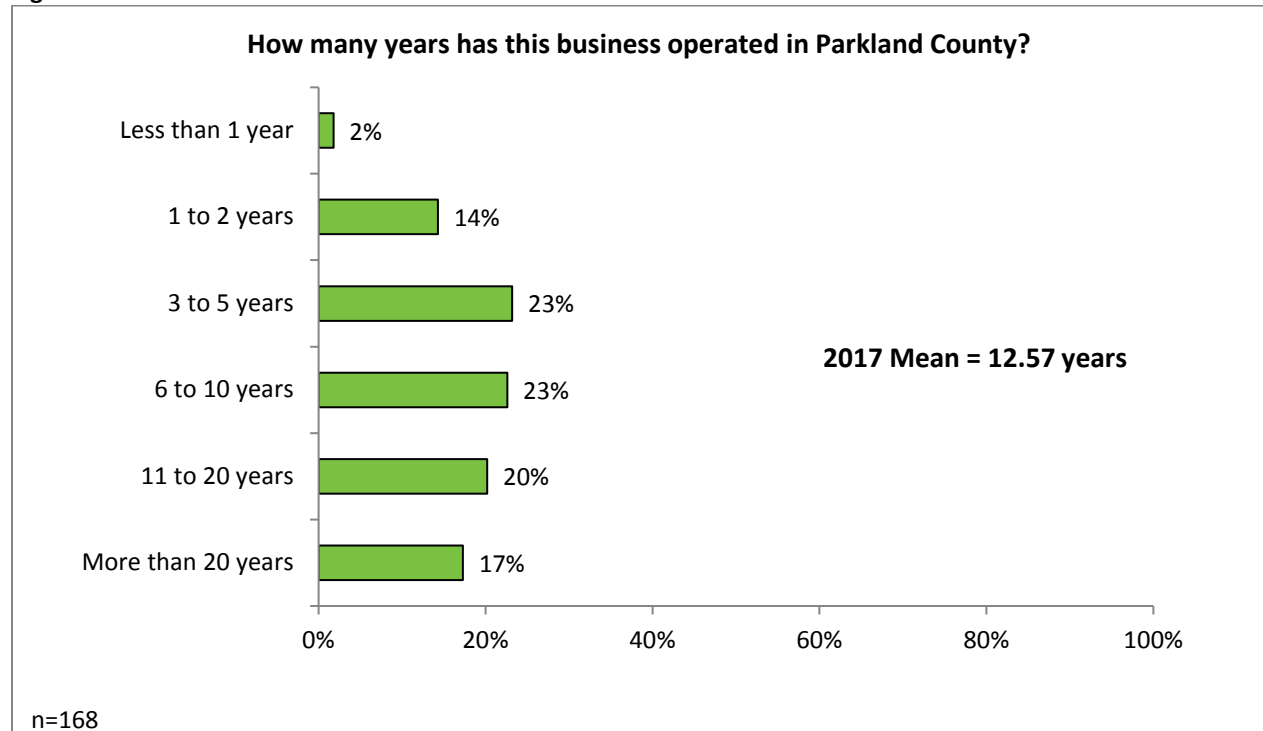
As shown in Figure 5, below, thirty-seven (37%) percent of businesses reported that their business is a home-based business, followed by 21% that were industrial businesses, and 17% that were commercial and/or retail businesses. It is important to note that four-fifths (20%) of businesses did not identify their business type.

Figure 5

Is this business...?

n=168

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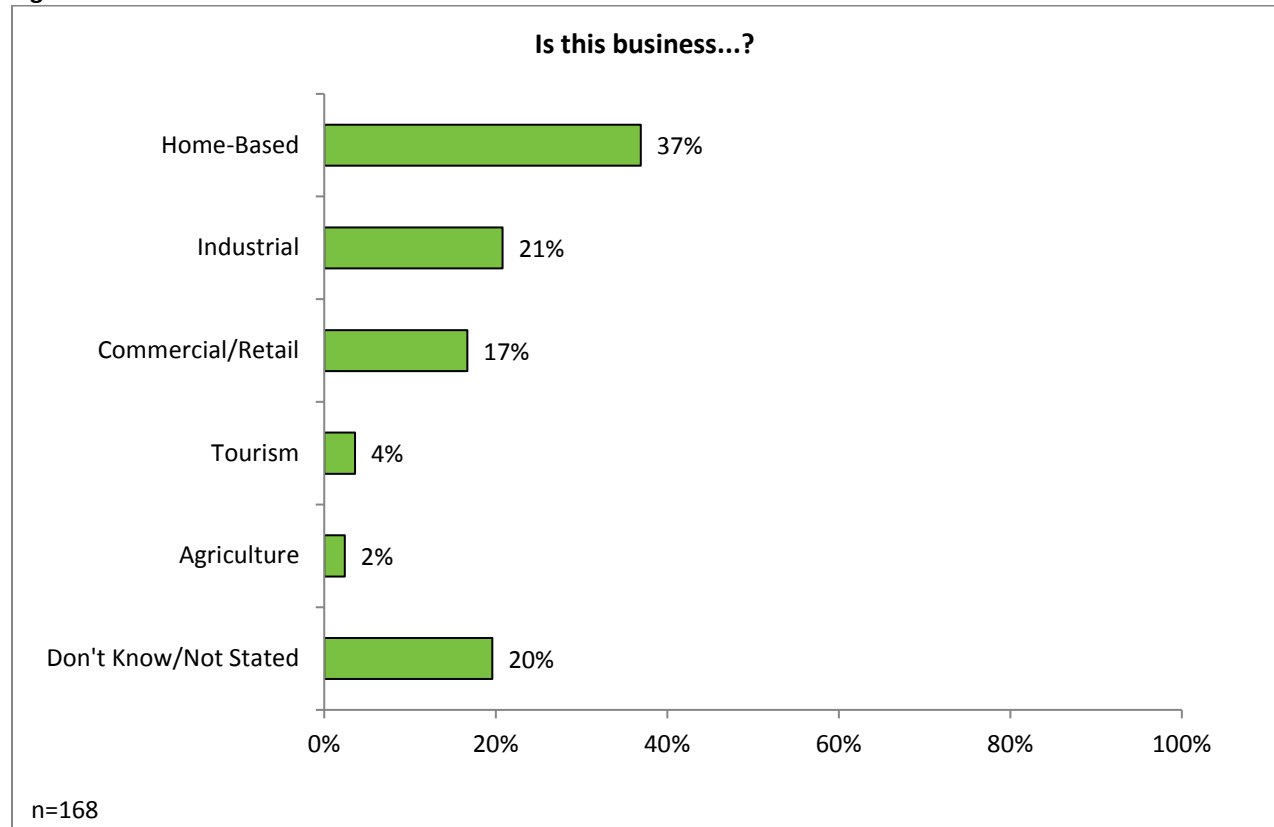
When asked how many employees are employed at their operations in Parkland County, over half (59%) of businesses reported that they employed 1 to 4 employees. Fourteen percent (14%) of businesses employed 10 to 39 employees. See Figure 6, below.

Figure 6

Number of Employees at Operations in Parkland County

Category	Percentage
1 to 4 employees	59%
5 to 9 employees	9%
10 to 39 employees	14%
40 to 69 employees	5%
70 to 99 employees	1%
100 to 250 employees	5%
More than 250 employees	1%
Don't Know/Not Stated	7%

n=168

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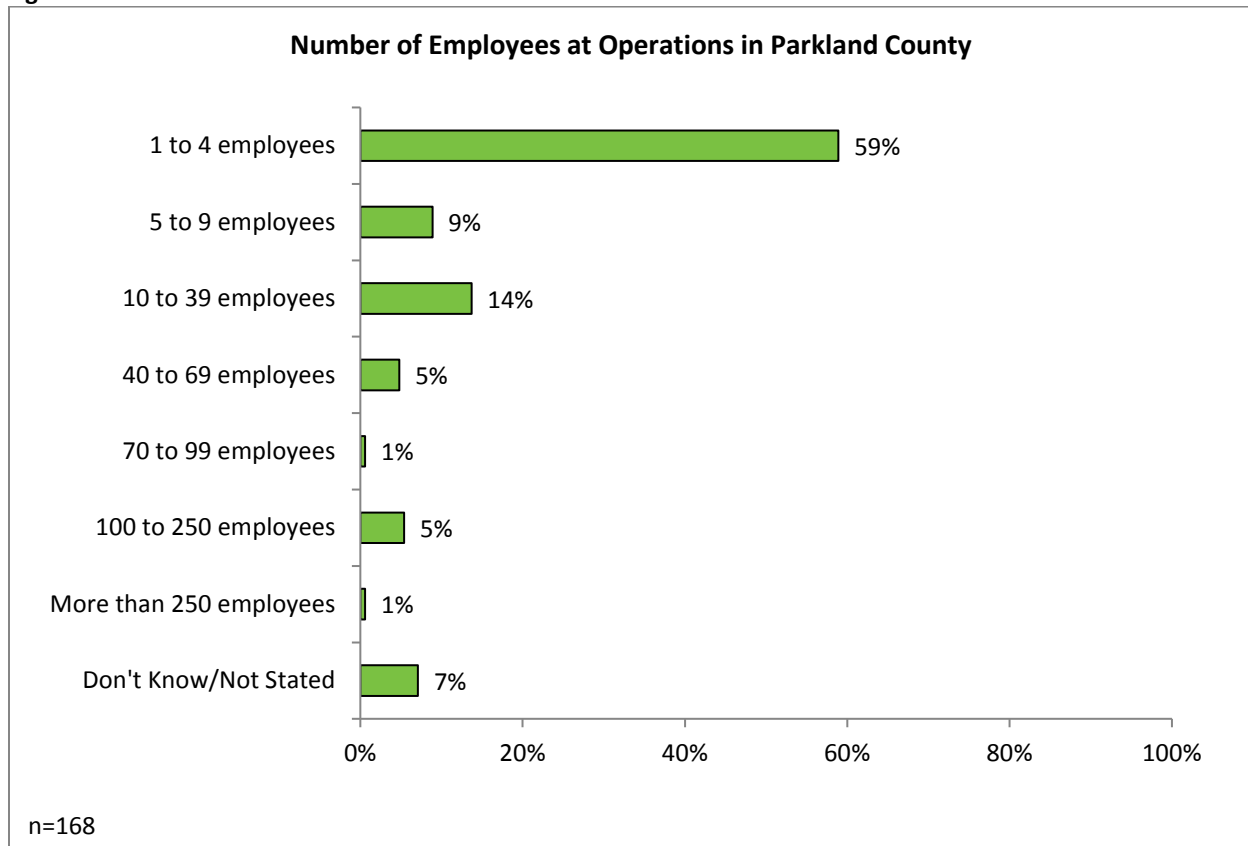
When asked what type of business they own or operate, over half (56%) of businesses reported that their business is a home-based or small business. Forty-nine percent (49%) of businesses reported that their business is a headquarters or owner-operated. Only 1% of businesses were franchise businesses. See Figure 7, below. Table 2, also below, offers a detailed breakdown of results.

Figure 7
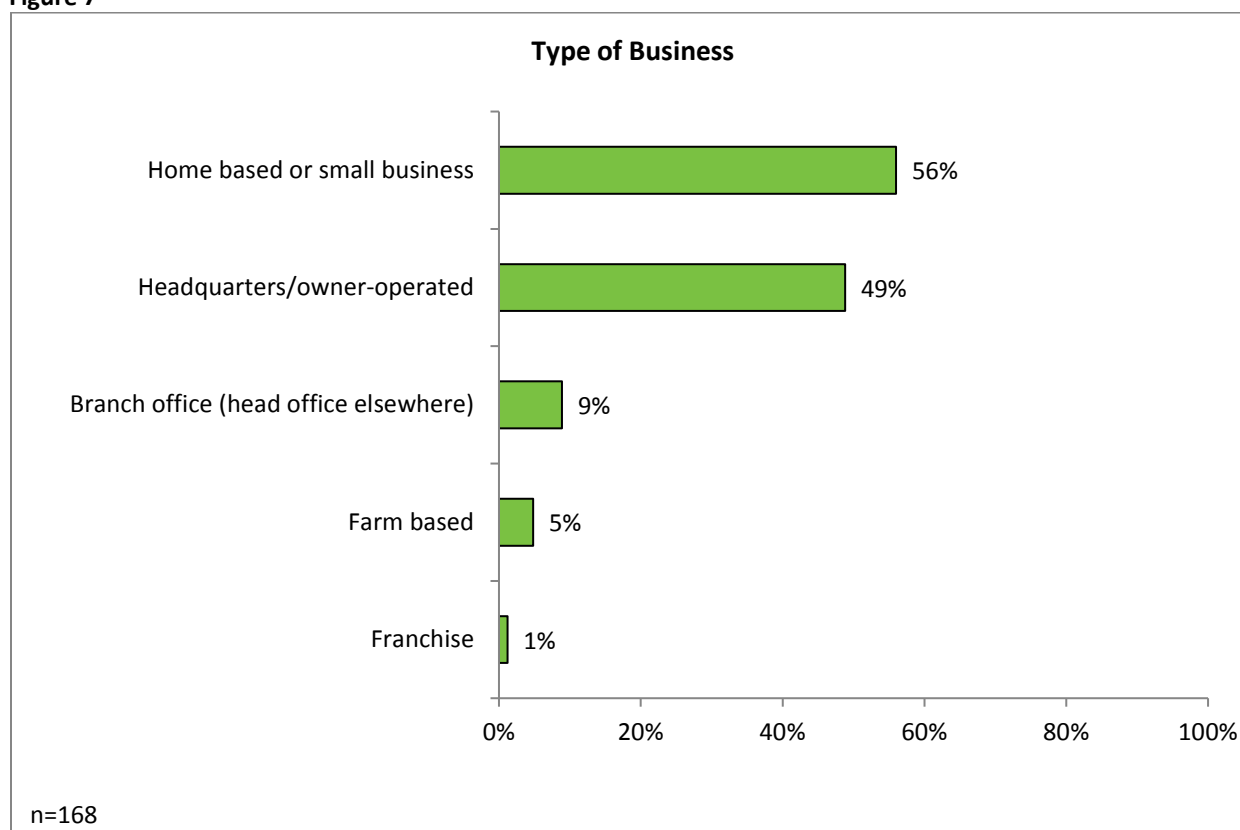
Table 2

Is this business a…?			
	Percent of Respondents (n=168)		
	Yes	**No**	**Don't Know/Not Applicable**
Home based or small business	**56**	13	32
Headquarters/owner-operated	**49**	17	35
Branch office (head office elsewhere)	**9**	40	51
Farm based	**5**	39	57
Franchise	**1**	42	57

As indicated in Figure 8, below, businesses were most often located in Division 2 (31%) of Parkland County, followed by 19% who were located in Division 1 and 18% who were located in Division 3.

Figure 8

In which division(s) is your business located?*

Division 1 — 19%
Division 2 — 31%
Division 3 — 18%
Division 4 — 15%
Division 5 — 14%
Division 6 — 11%
Don't Know/Not Stated — 10%

n=168
*Multiple responses
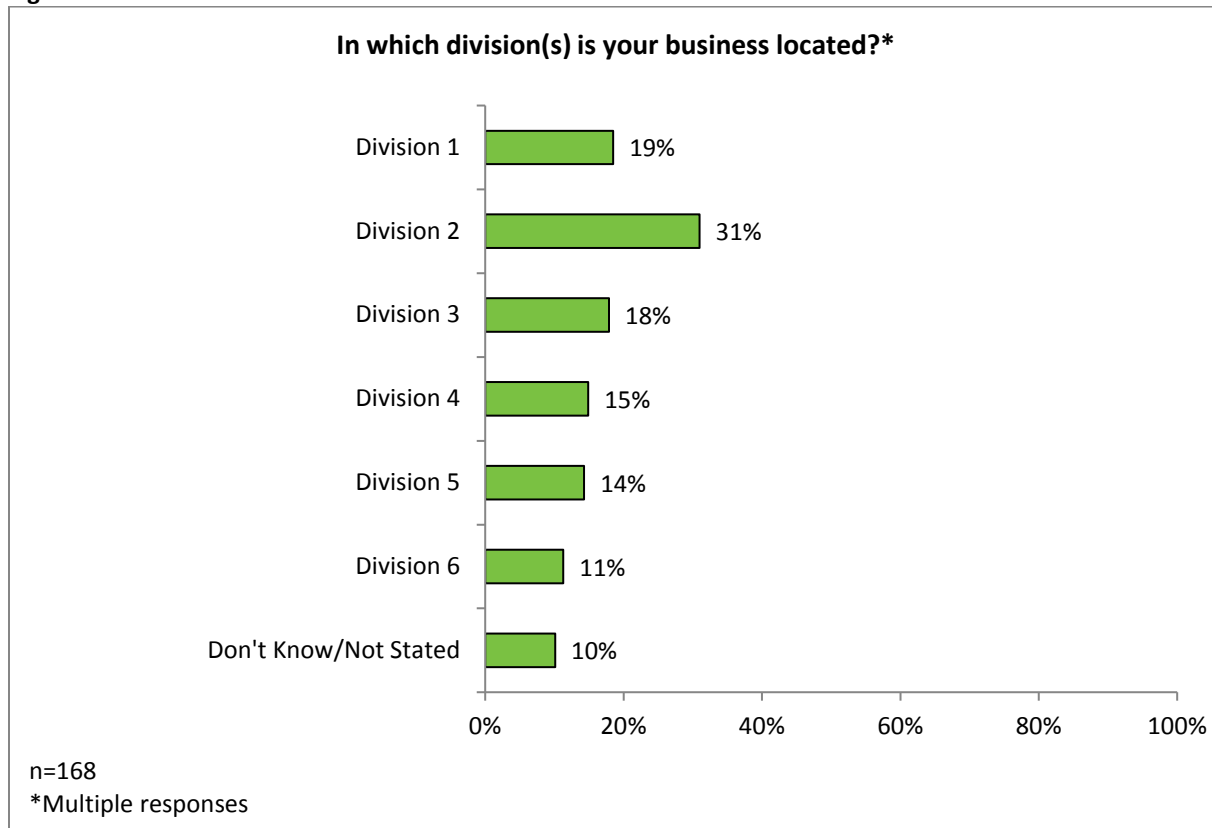
When asked to specify the industry or sector their business operates in, nearly one-quarter (24%) of businesses operated in the trades, transport and equipment operators sector. Eighteen percent (18%) of businesses operated in the natural resources or agricultural sector, and 17% of businesses reported that their business operates in the sales and services industry. See Figure 9, below.

Figure 9
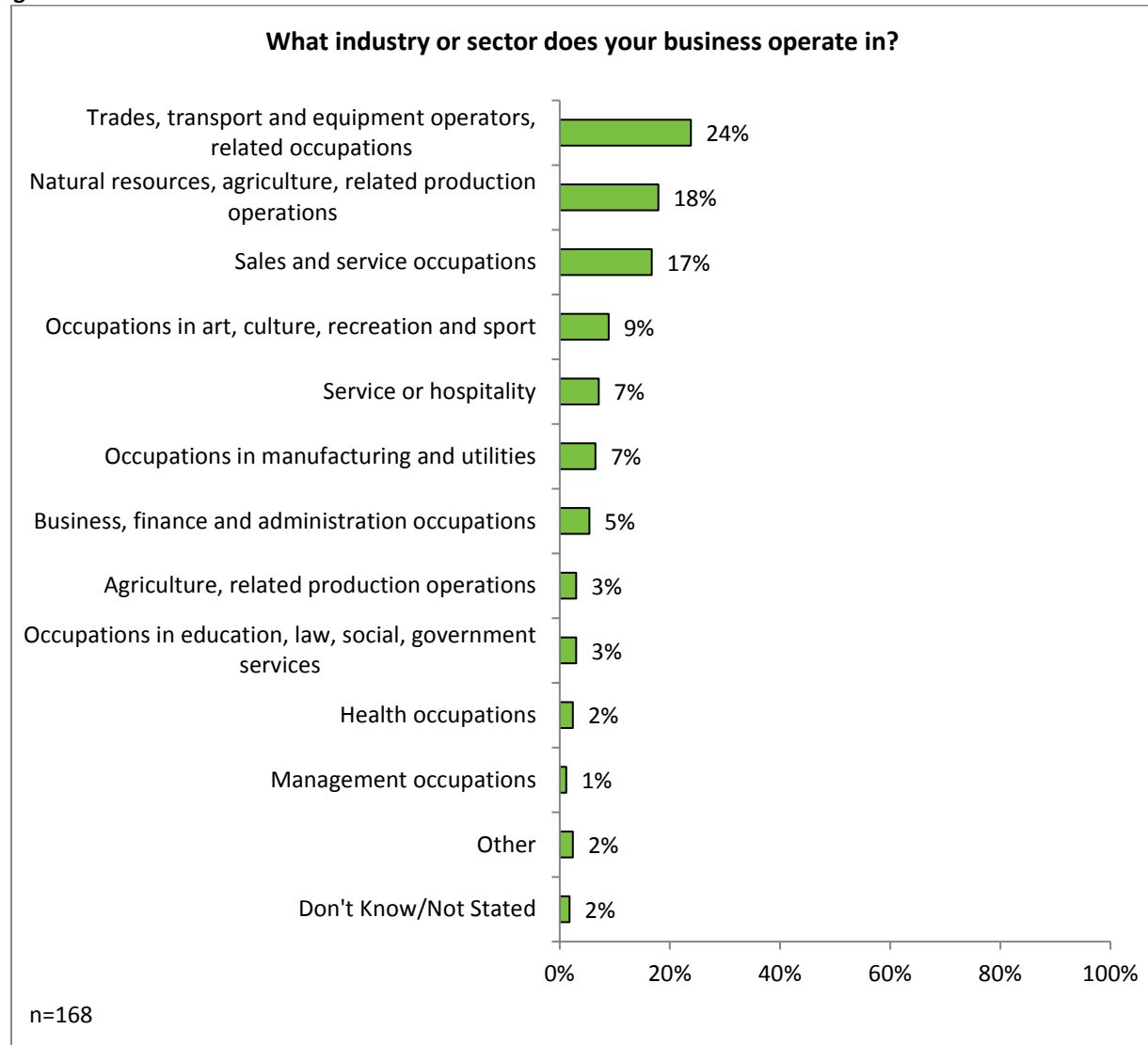

What industry or sector does your business operate in?

- Trades, transport and equipment operators, related occupations: 24%
- Natural resources, agriculture, related production operations: 18%
- Sales and service occupations: 17%
- Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport: 9%
- Service or hospitality: 7%
- Occupations in manufacturing and utilities: 7%
- Business, finance and administration occupations: 5%
- Agriculture, related production operations: 3%
- Occupations in education, law, social, government services: 3%
- Health occupations: 2%
- Management occupations: 1%
- Other: 2%
- Don't Know/Not Stated: 2%

n=168

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3.2   Business Economy

In this section of the survey, businesses were asked a variety of questions regarding the business economy of Parkland County. First, businesses were asked what makes Parkland County a good place to operate a business. The top three responses reported were the fact that it is a good and/or convenient location (18%), has low or affordable taxes (16%), and its proximity to Edmonton (16%). See Table 3, below.

Table 3

What are three (3) things that make Parkland County a good place to operate a business?	Percent of Respondents* (n=168)
Is a good/convenient location (in general)	18
Low/affordable taxes	16
Proximity to Edmonton/other cities	16
Proximity access to highway	12
Loyal/good customer base/support from the community	10
Ease of access/accessibility	8
Is where I/my family/friends live	8
Good/supportive County employees/Council/government	7
Free business licensing	7
Good/diverse population	7
Sense of community/good community spirit	4
Is spacious/lots of space	4
Diversity of businesses/services	4
Ability to work from home/operate home based business	3
Good/availability of resources	3
Availability of recreational activities/services/facilities	3
Other (2% or less of respondents)	34
Don't Know/Not stated	21

*Multiple responses

Businesses were next asked what would make Parkland County a better place operate a business. The top responses that businesses reported would make Parkland County a better place to operate a business was the building of more roads and/or infrastructure (14%), lower taxes (9%), and improved internet/Wi-Fi services (8%). See Table 4, below.
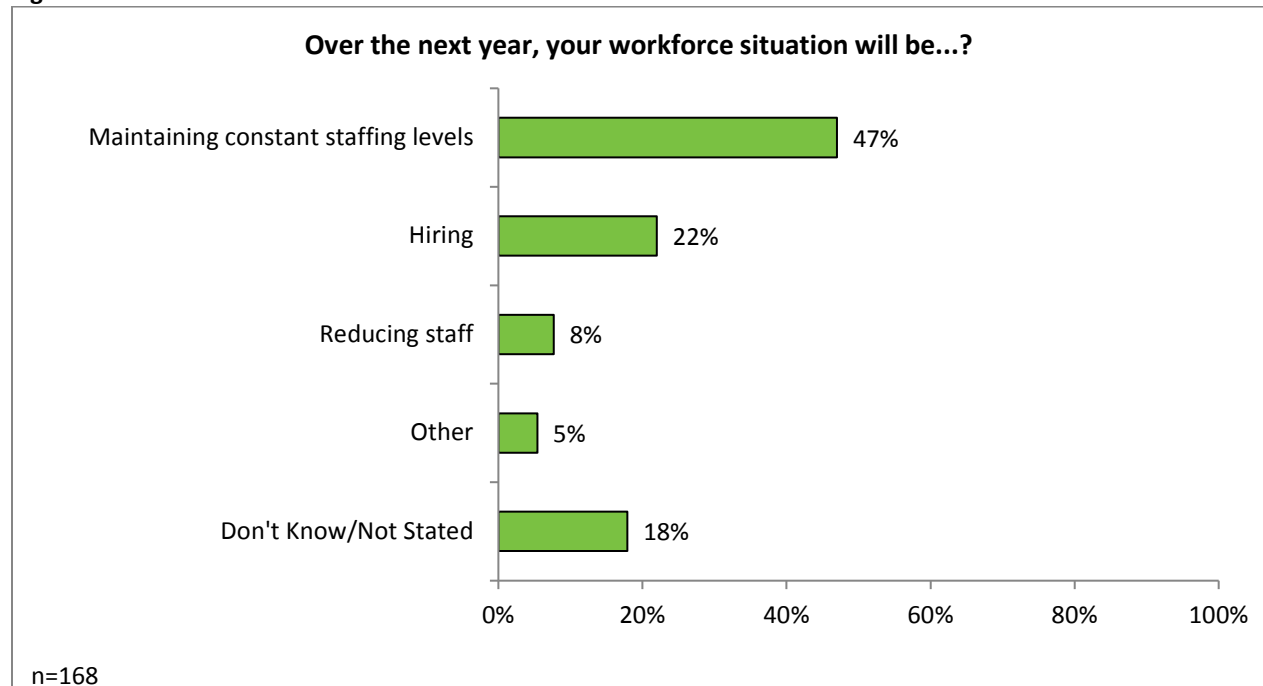
Table 4

What are three (3) things that would make Parkland County a better place to operate a business?	Percent of Respondents* (n=168)
Expand/build more roads/infrastructure/overpass	14
Lower/less costly taxes	9
Improve Internet/Wi-Fi services	8
Improve road maintenance/repairs/upgrades	7
Flexible/less strict rules/regulations	7
Increased advertising/public awareness of businesses	6
Less bureaucracy/red tape	5
More County business support/be more business friendly (in general)	4
Increased support for small/local/home based businesses	4
More friendly/helpful County staff/administration	3
Increased business/commercial development	3
Better access/accessibility to business	3
Other (2% or less of respondents)	36
Nothing/no suggestions	8
Don't Know/Not Stated	33

*Multiple responses

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When asked how their workforce situation looked moving forward into the next year, nearly half (47%) of respondent businesses reported that they will be maintaining constant staffing levels, followed by 22% of businesses who reported that their business will be hiring. See Figure 10, below.

Figure 10

Over the next year, your workforce situation will be...?

Category	Value
Maintaining constant staffing levels	47%
Hiring	22%
Reducing staff	8%
Other	5%
Don't Know/Not Stated	18%

n=168

Business subgroups **significantly** more likely to be **hiring over the next year** included:

- Those that accessed the survey through the public link (42%) versus those that accessed the survey through e-mail invitation (17%);

- Those that have been operating in Parkland County for 16 or more years (29%) versus those that have been operating for 6 to 15 years (13%); and

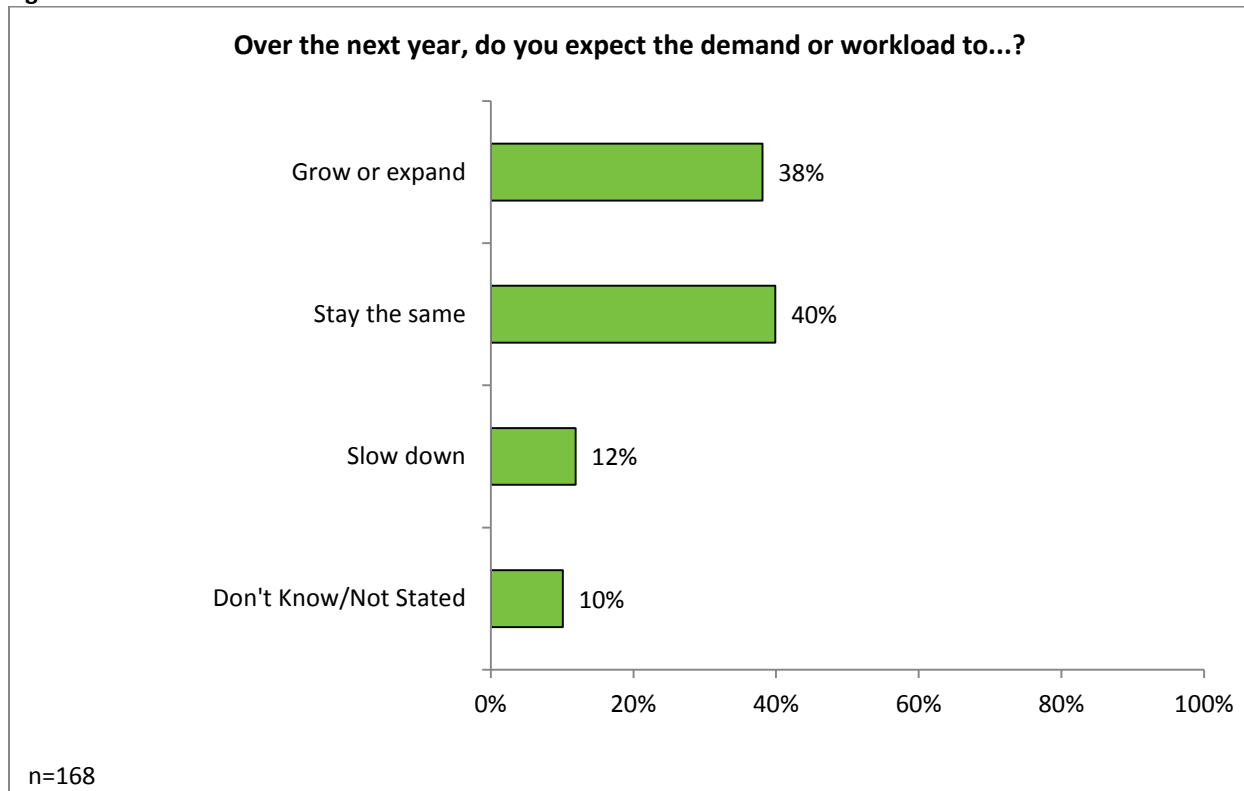- Industrial businesses (34%) versus home-based businesses (13%).

Business subgroups **significantly** more likely to **maintain constant staffing levels** included:

- Those that accessed the survey through the e-mail invitation (53%) versus those that accessed the survey through public link (24%);

- Those that did not have contact with County staff in the past year (60%) versus those that did have contact (42%); and

- Home-based businesses (57%) versus industrial businesses (34%).

Businesses that have been operating in Parkland County for 16 or more years (13%) were **significantly** more likely to **reduce staff** than those that have been operating in Parkland County for 5 years or less (3%).

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As shown in Figure 11, below, forty percent (40%) of businesses reported that they expect that workload will stay the same over the next year, followed by 38% of businesses that reported that their demand or workload will grow or expand. Twelve (12%) percent of businesses expected their workload to slow down.

Figure 11

Over the next year, do you expect the demand or workload to...?

Category	Percentage
Grow or expand	38%
Stay the same	40%
Slow down	12%
Don't Know/Not Stated	10%

n=168

Businesses that accessed the survey through the public link (64%) were **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to **expect demand to grow or expand** than those who accessed the survey through e-mail invitation (32%).

Businesses that accessed the survey through the e-mail invitation (46%) were **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to **expect demand to stay the same** than those who accessed the survey through public link (15%).

When asked about barriers to entry in regards to operating a business in Parkland County, over half (55%) of the respondent businesses did not view anything as a barrier to entry. Businesses that specified barriers to entry most often mentioned restrictive rules and/or regulations (6%), perceived lack of support from County staff (5%), and high taxes (4%). See Table 5, below.

Table 5

What do you view as barriers to entry in regards to doing business in Parkland County?	Percent of Respondents* (n=168)
Restrictive rules/policies/regulations	6
Poor/lack of support from County staff/administration/government	5
High/costly taxes	4
Planning and development department	2
High cost of land	2
Difficulty with permits/obtaining permits	2
Bureaucracy/red tape related barriers	2
Poor accessibility to business	2
Lack of advertising/public awareness of local businesses	2
Poor/lack of public transportation services	2
Other (1% or less of respondents)	11
None/no barriers to entry	55
Don't Know/Not Stated	13

*Multiple responses

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Next, businesses were asked about any competitive areas they feel Parkland County is currently weak. Over half (57%) of businesses did not feel that Parkland County was weak on any competitive areas. Those that specified competitive areas that Parkland County was weak on most often specified the Internet/Wi-Fi services (3%), taxes (2%), or road maintenance (2%). See Table 6, below.

Table 6

Are there any competitive areas that Parkland County is currently weak on?	Percent of Respondents* (n=168)
Internet/Wi-Fi services	3
Taxes	2
Road maintenance/repairs/upgrades	2
Operational costs/fees	1
Promotion/awareness of business	1
Public transportation services	1
Other (single mentions)	10
None/no competitive areas of weakness	57
Don't Know/Not Stated	26

*Multiple responses

3.3   Core Values and Priorities

In this section of the survey, businesses were asked a variety of questions regarding Parkland County's core values and priorities. First, businesses were asked about Parkland County's commitment to their core values. Respondents were asked to rate, using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 meant "strongly disagree" and 5 meant "strongly agree", how much they agreed that County staff and Council are committed to each core value of Parkland County. Over half of respondents agreed (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) with the following:

- Respect (58% of respondents agreed);
- Integrity (58%); and
- Customer Service (57%).

See Figure 12, below. Table 7, on the following page, offers a detailed breakdown of results.

Figure 12

How much do you agree that the County is committed to...?*

Respect	58%
Integrity	58%
Customer Service	57%
Transparency	46%

n=168
*Respondents who agreed (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) that the County is committed to each core value

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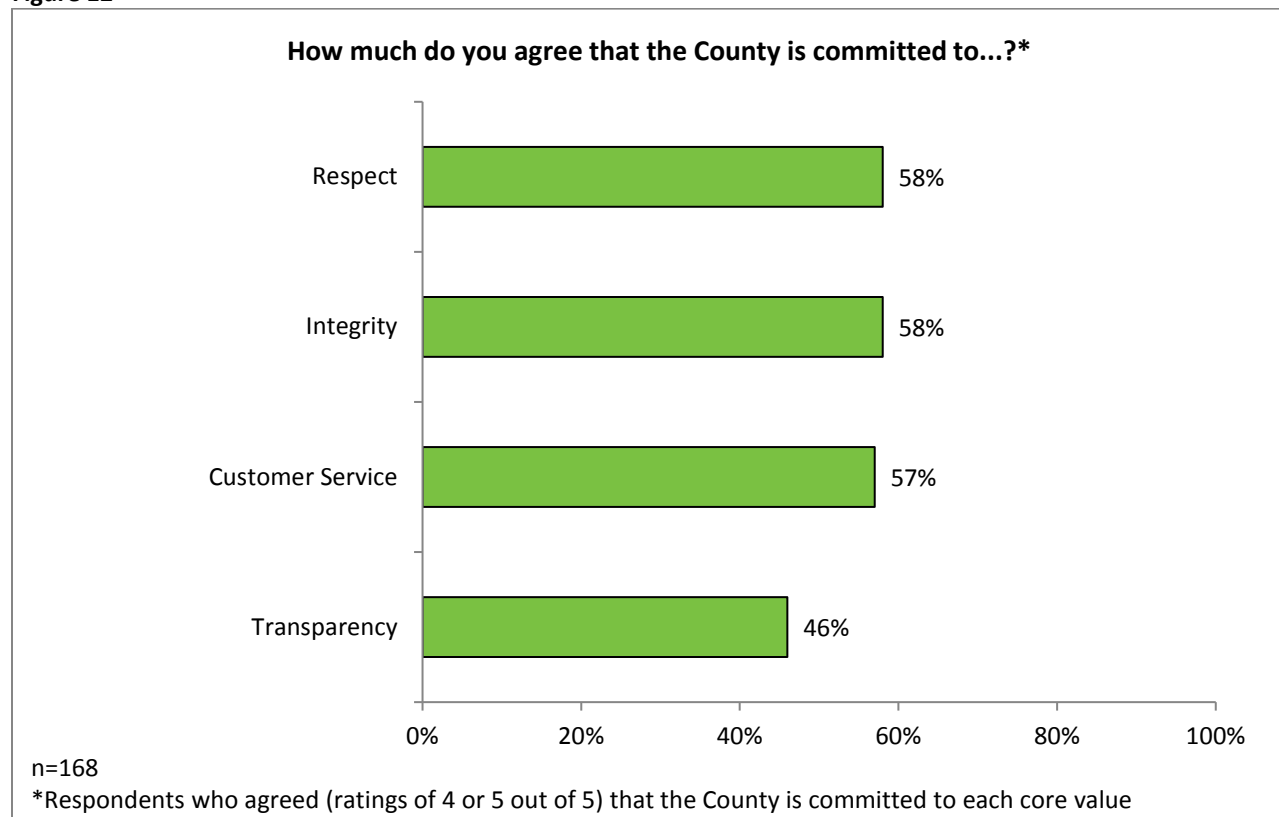
Table 7

How much do you agree that the County is committed to…?							
	Percent of Respondents (n=168)						
	1 Strongly Disagree	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5 Strongly Agree**	**Don't Know**	**Mean (Out of 5)**
Integrity	5	7	12	20	38	19	**3.98**
Respect	8	5	14	20	39	16	**3.91**
Customer Service	8	8	13	20	37	14	**3.79**
Transparency	5	8	19	14	32	22	**3.76**

Business subgroups **significantly** more likely to have agreed (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) that Council and staff are committed to **integrity** included:

- Those that had contact with County staff in the past year (62%) versus those that did not have contact (44%); and

- Those that participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year (73%) versus those that did not participate (54%).

Business subgroups **significantly** more likely to have agreed that Council and staff are committed to **respect** included:

- Those that have been operating in Parkland County for 5 years or less (68%) versus those that have been operating in Parkland County for 6 to 15 years (55%);

- Those that had contact with County staff in the past year (65%) versus those that did not have contact (40%); and

- Those that participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year (73%) versus those that did not participate (55%).

Business subgroups **significantly** more likely to have agreed that Council and staff are committed to **customer service** included:

- Those that have been operating in Parkland County for 5 years or less (68%) versus those that have been operating in Parkland County for 16 or more years (46%); and

- Those that had contact with County staff in the past year (62%) versus those that did not have contact (40%).

Next, businesses were asked if there were any additional values they thought were important for staff and officials to consider. The majority (89%) of businesses either did not have any additional values for staff and officials to consider (41%) or were unsure/did not provide a response (48%). Other values mentioned included accountability (2%), responsibility (1%), and common sense (1%). See Table 8, below.

Table 8

Are there any values you think are important for staff and elected officials to consider, outside of the four (4) core values (integrity, transparency, respect, and customer service)?	Percent of Respondents (n=168)
Accountability	2
Responsibility	1
Common sense	1
Other (single mentions)	10
No other values	41
Don't Know/Not Stated	48

Businesses were next asked to rate the importance, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant "not at all important" and 5 meant "very important", of a series of focus areas regarding Parkland County's key themes within their strategic plan. The first key theme was **community and quality of life**. Over half of businesses believed that the following areas of focus regarding community and quality of life were important (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5):

- Developing a long-term plan for infrastructure and facilities (78% of respondents rated this as important); and
- Developing a long term plan to support community groups (53%).

Conversely, less than half of respondents felt the following were important:

- Strengthening Parkland County's identity (49%); and
- Investing in Hamlets (35%).

See Figure 13, below. Table 9, on the following page, offers a detailed breakdown of results.
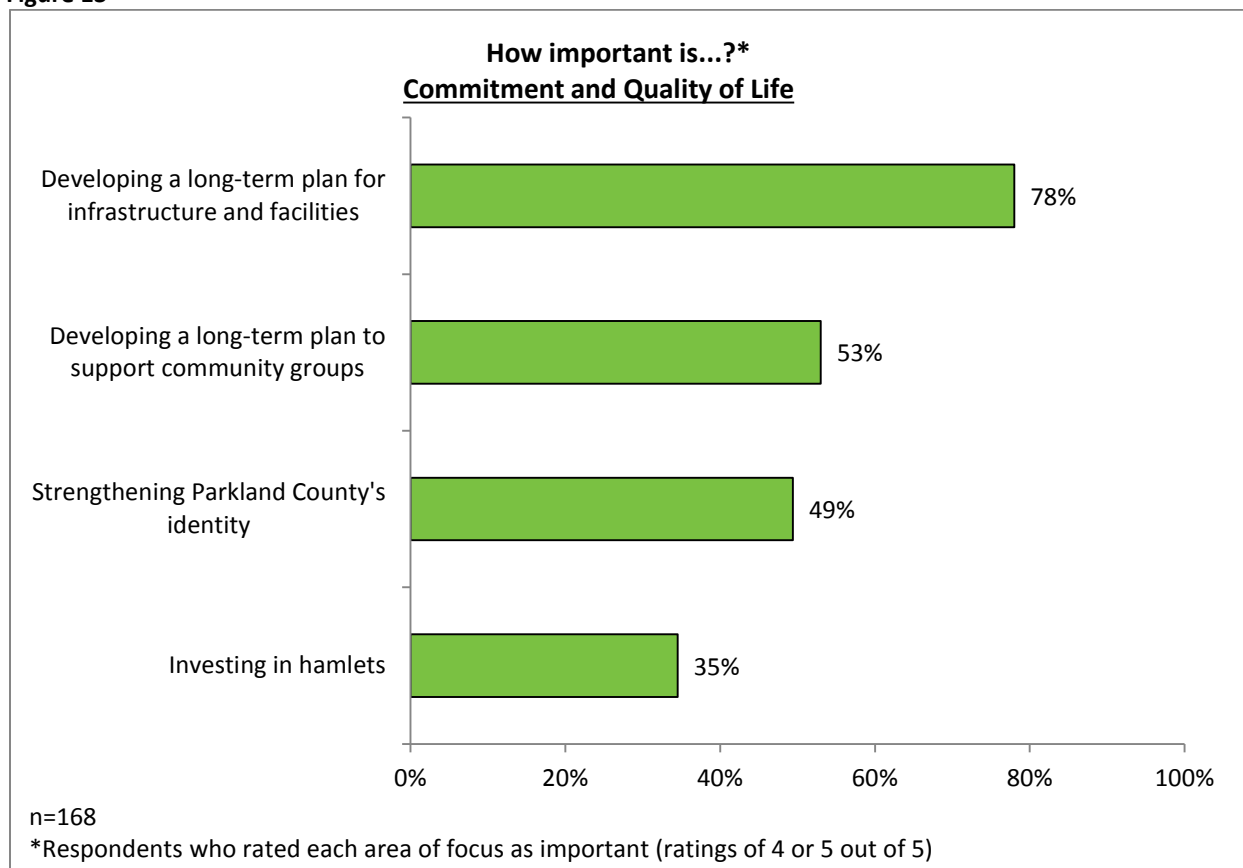
Figure 13

n=168
*Respondents who rated each area of focus as important (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5)

Table 9

How important is…?							
	Percent of Respondents (n=168)						
	1 Not at all important	2	3	4	5 Very important	Don't Know	Mean (Out of 5)
Developing a long-term plan for infrastructure and facilities	3	1	12	24	54	6	**4.32**
Developing a long-term plan to support community groups	8	7	21	21	32	11	**3.68**
Strengthening Parkland County's identity	10	12	23	21	28	5	**3.48**
Investing in Hamlets	13	13	27	16	19	13	**3.18**

Businesses that operated in Division 2 were **significantly** more likely than businesses in Division 1 or 3 to have rated the following areas of focus as important:

- "Strengthening Parkland County's identity" (62% versus 39% in Division 1);

- "Developing a long-term plan for infrastructure and facilities" (90% versus 74% in Division 1 and 73% in Division 3); and

- "Developing a long-term plan to support community groups" (58% versus 30% in Division 3).

Businesses that participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year (65%) were **significantly** more likely to have rated the area of focus **"strengthening Parkland County's identity"** as important than those that did not participate (44%).

Industrial businesses (89%) were **significantly** more likely to have rated the area of focus **"developing a long-term plan for infrastructure and facilities"** as important than home-based businesses (69%).

Businesses that have been operating in Parkland County for 6 to 15 years (42%) were **significantly** more likely to have rated the area of focus **"investing in hamlets"** as important than those that have been operating for 16 or more years (23%).

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Next, businesses were asked about the key theme of **economy** in Parkland County's strategic plan. At least half of respondent businesses rated all eight (8) areas of focus regarding economy as important (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5). Over two-thirds of respondents rated the following areas of focus as important:

- Supporting local business (89% of respondents rated this as important);

- Bringing new businesses to Parkland County (73%);

- Strengthening the digital economy (i.e. internet) (72%);

- Diversifying the economy (67%); and

- Strengthening agricultural business, including farms (67%).

See Figure 14, below. Table 10, on the following page, offers a detailed breakdown of results.
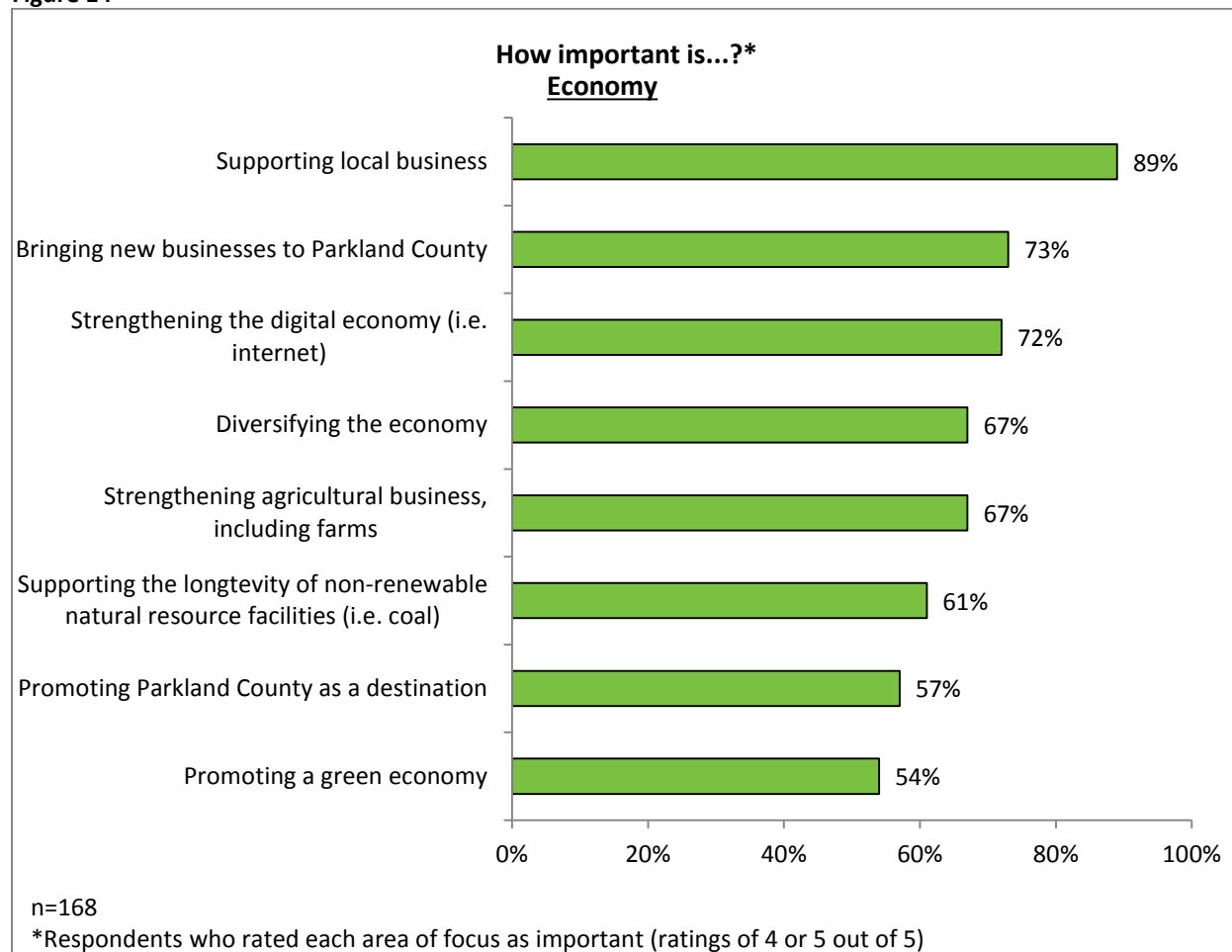
Figure 14

How important is...?*
Economy

Supporting local business	89%
Bringing new businesses to Parkland County	73%
Strengthening the digital economy (i.e. internet)	72%
Diversifying the economy	67%
Strengthening agricultural business, including farms	67%
Supporting the longtevity of non-renewable natural resource facilities (i.e. coal)	61%
Promoting Parkland County as a destination	57%
Promoting a green economy	54%

n=168
*Respondents who rated each area of focus as important (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5)

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Table 10

How important is…?							
	Percent of Respondents (n=168)						
	1 Not at all important	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5 Very important**	**Don't Know**	**Mean (Out of 5)**
Supporting local business	1	2	4	25	64	4	**4.54**
Strengthening the digital economy (i.e. internet)	4	4	16	14	58	5	**4.25**
Bringing new businesses to Parkland County	4	4	17	30	42	2	**4.05**
Diversifying the economy	3	4	21	29	38	5	**4.01**
Strengthening agricultural business, including farms	5	4	17	27	40	7	**3.98**
Supporting the longevity of non-renewable natural resource facilities (i.e. coal)	7	5	17	21	40	10	**3.90**
Promoting Parkland County as a destination	11	10	20	25	32	2	**3.59**
Promoting a green economy	8	13	21	26	28	4	**3.57**

Businesses that had contact with County staff in the past year (74%) were **significantly** more likely to have rated the area of focus **"strengthening agricultural business, including farms"** as important than those that did not have contact (52%).

Business subgroups **significantly** more likely to have rated the area of focus **"supporting local business"** as important included:

- Those that have been operating in Parkland county for 5 years or less (94%) versus those that have been operating in Parkland County for 16 or more years (79%); and
- Home-based businesses (94%) versus industrial businesses (77%).

Business subgroups **significantly** more likely to have rated the area of focus **"supporting the longevity of non-renewable natural resource facilities (i.e. coal)"** as important included:

- Those that accessed the survey through the e-mail invitation (64%) versus those that accessed the survey through public link (46%); and
- Those that operated in Division 2 (72%) versus those that operated in Division 1 (42%).

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Business subgroups **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have rated the area of focus **"strengthening the digital economy (i.e. internet)"** as important included:

- Those that accessed the survey through the e-mail invitation (76%) versus those that accessed the survey through public link (58%); and

- Home-based businesses (86%) versus industrial businesses (63%).

Businesses were then asked about the key theme of **environment** in Parkland County's strategic plan. Businesses were asked to rate importance on seven (7) areas of focus. In terms of environment, the only area of focus which garnered an importance (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) rating of less than 50% was:

- Using tax money to support environmental programs, such as ALUS or Green Acreages (41%).

See Figure 15, below. Table 11, on the following page, offers a detailed breakdown of results.
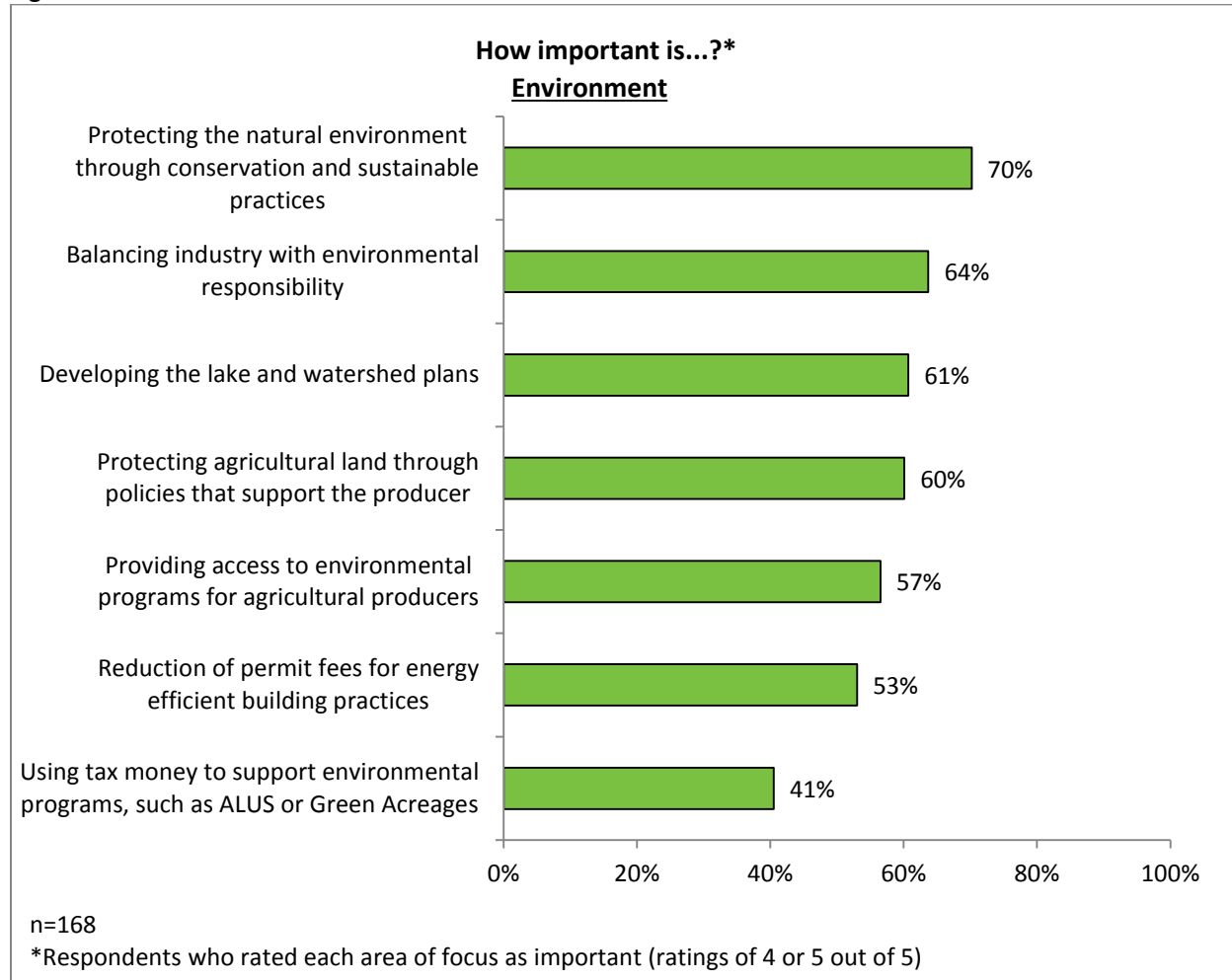
Figure 15

How important is...?*
Environment

Area of Focus	%
Protecting the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices	70%
Balancing industry with environmental responsibility	64%
Developing the lake and watershed plans	61%
Protecting agricultural land through policies that support the producer	60%
Providing access to environmental programs for agricultural producers	57%
Reduction of permit fees for energy efficient building practices	53%
Using tax money to support environmental programs, such as ALUS or Green Acreages	41%

n=168
*Respondents who rated each area of focus as important (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5)

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Table 11

How important is…?							
	Percent of Respondents (n=168)						
	1 Not at all important	2	3	4	5 Very important	Don't Know	Mean (Out of 5)
Protecting the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices	1	7	18	31	39	4	**4.04**
Protecting agricultural land through policies that support the producer	5	8	18	26	35	8	**3.82**
Developing the lake and watershed plans	5	8	19	19	42	8	**3.92**
Balancing industry with environmental responsibility	3	7	23	29	35	4	**3.89**
Providing access to environmental programs for agricultural producers	6	8	22	25	32	7	**3.73**
Reduction of permit fees for energy efficient building practices	8	8	23	20	33	8	**3.66**
Using tax money to support environmental programs, such as ALUS or Green Acreages	16	12	23	18	23	9	**3.22**

Businesses that had contact with County staff in the past year (65%) were **significantly** more likely to have rated the area of focus **"protecting agricultural land through policies that support the producer"** as important than those that did not have contact (46%).

Business subgroups **significantly** more likely to have rated the area of focus **"developing the lake and watershed plans"** as important included:

- Those that have been operating in Parkland County for 6 to 15 years (76%) versus those that have been operating in Parkland County for 5 years or less (56%) or for 16 or more years (50%); and

- Home-based businesses (68%) versus industrial businesses (43%).

Finally, respondents were asked about the key theme of **leadership/governance** in Parkland County's strategic plan. Over two-thirds of respondents rated both areas of focus regarding leadership/governance as important (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5):

- Ensuring effective resident and business input (74% rated this as important); and

- Establishing Parkland County as being customer focused (71%).

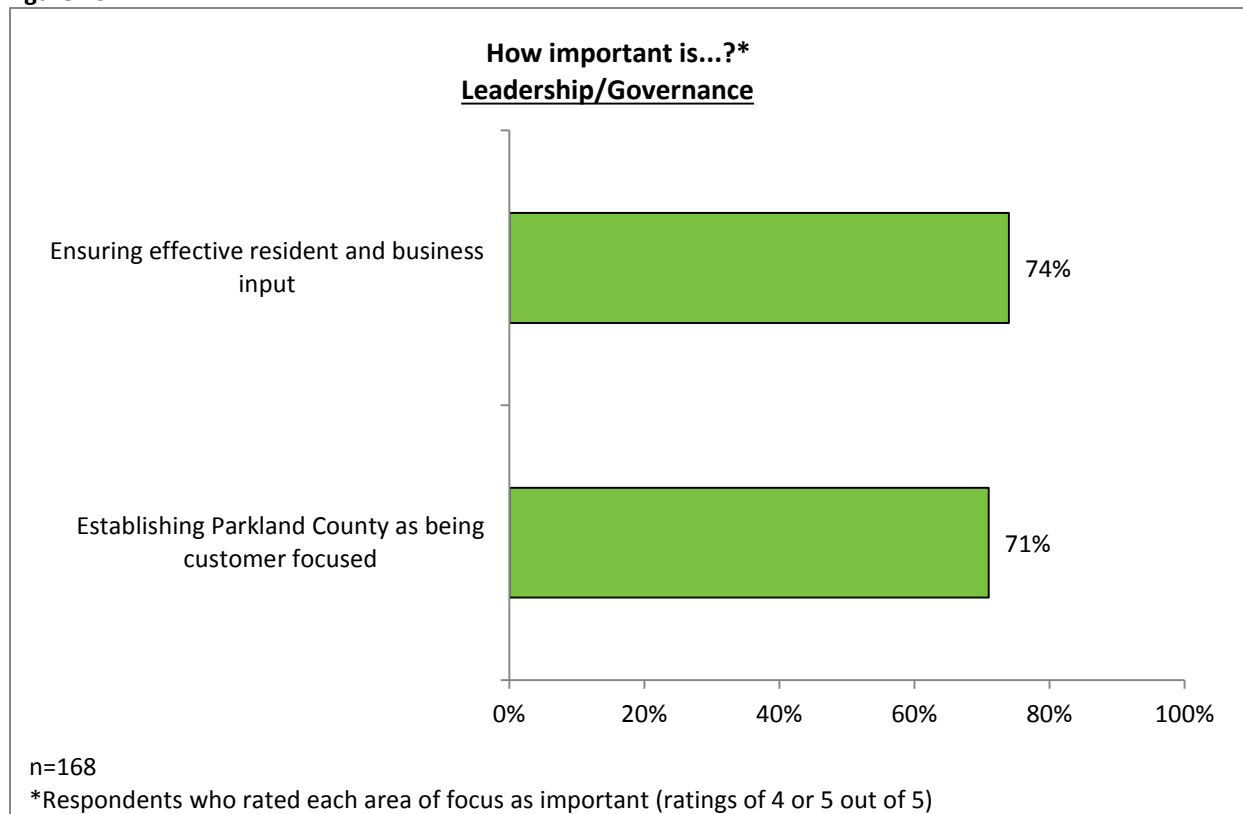See Figure 16, below. Table 12, on the following page, offers a detailed breakdown of results.

Figure 16

n=168
*Respondents who rated each area of focus as important (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5)

Table 12

How important is…?							
	Percent of Respondents (n=168)						
	1 Not at all important	2	3	4	5 Very important	Don't Know	Mean (Out of 5)
Ensuring effective resident and business input	1	2	13	32	42	10	**4.23**
Establishing Parkland county as being customer focused	2	2	14	31	41	10	**4.18**

Businesses that had contact with County staff in the past year (79%) were **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have rated the area of focus **"establishing Parkland County as being customer focused"** as important than those that did not have contact (58%).

Businesses that had participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year (89%) were **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have rated the area of focus **"ensuring effective resident and business input"** as important than those that did not participate (71%).

When asked if there were any areas of focus that may be missing from the list, the vast majority (95%) of businesses either felt nothing was missing (45%) or did not provide a response (50%). See Table 13, below.

Table 13

Are there any areas of focus that you think are missing from this list?	
	Percent of Respondents (n=168)
Future County growth/development	2
Road/traffic safety	1
Road maintenance/repairs	1
Police services/enforcement	1
Fiscal responsibility/spending within budget	1
Aboriginal relations	1
Recreational facilities/programs	1
Parks/green spaces	1
No/nothing is missing from this list	45
Don't Know/Not Stated	50

3.4   Coal-Fired Power Plants

In this section of the survey, businesses were asked various questions regarding the future of coal-fired power plants in Alberta and Parkland County. Businesses were first asked if they were aware of government plans to phase out coal-fired power plants by 2030. As shown in Figure 17, below, the vast majority (91%) of respondents were aware of the Provincial and Federal plans.
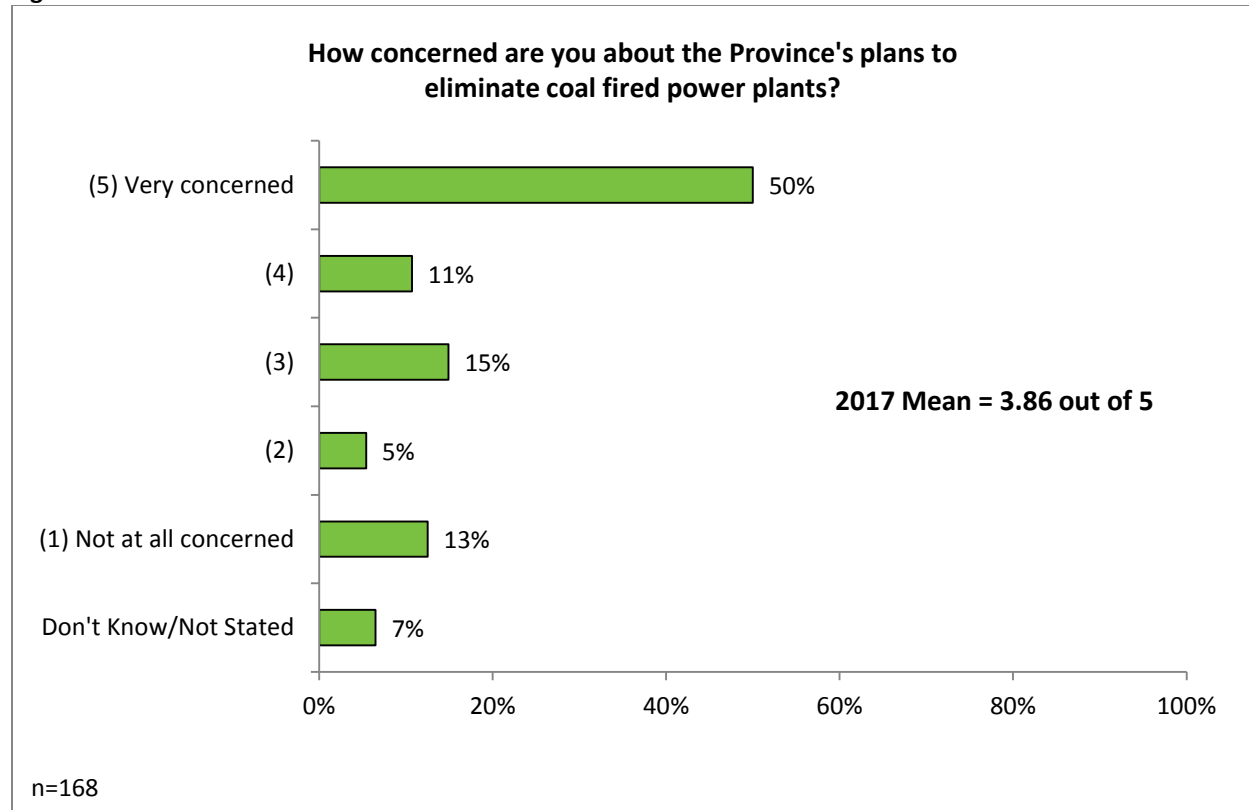
Figure 17
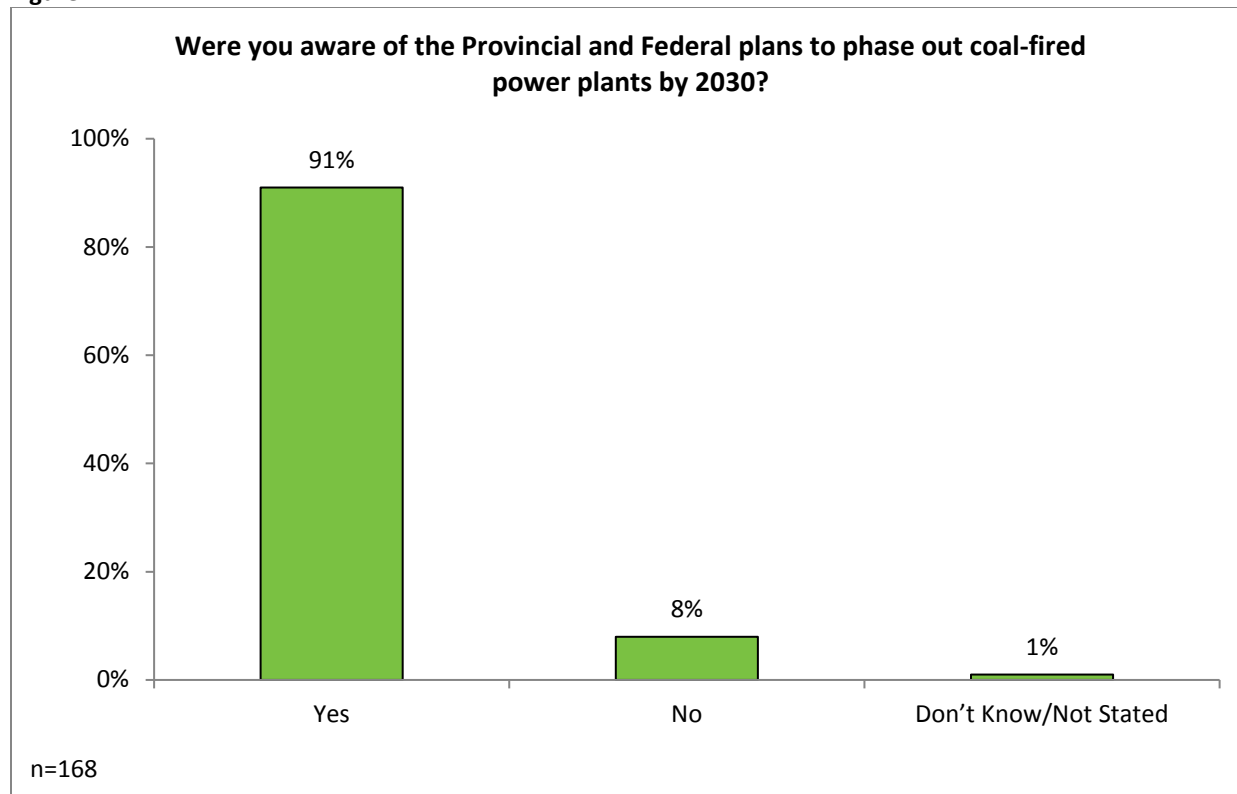
Businesses that had participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year (100%) were **significantly** more likely to have been aware of the Provincial and Federal plans to phase out coal-fired powered plants than those who had not participated in a public engagement opportunity (88%).

Businesses that did *not* have contact with County staff in the past year (14%) were **significantly** more likely to have *not* been aware of the Provincial and Federal plans to phase out coal-fired power plants than those that did have contact (5%).

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Businesses were next asked to rate their level of concern with the Province's plans to eliminate coal-fired power plants, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant "not at all concerned" and 5 meant "very concerned". Over three quarters (76%) of businesses were somewhat or very concerned (ratings of 3 to 5 out of 5) with the Province's plans to eliminate coal fired power plants. See Figure 18, below.

Figure 18

How concerned are you about the Province's plans to eliminate coal fired power plants?

(5) Very concerned	50%
(4)	11%
(3)	15%
(2)	5%
(1) Not at all concerned	13%
Don't Know/Not Stated	7%

2017 Mean = 3.86 out of 5

n=168

Industrial businesses (77%) were **significantly** more likely to be concerned with the Province's plans to eliminate coal-fired power plants than home-based businesses (57%).

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Businesses that were concerned (ratings of 3 to 5 out of 5) about the Province's plans to eliminate coal-fired power plants (n=127) were asked if they had any specific concerns about the Province's plans to eliminate coal fired power plants. Over one quarter (26%) of businesses were concerned with power and/or electricity cost increases, followed by 17% that were concerned about potential unemployment. See Table 14, below.

Table 14

Do you have any specific concerns about the Province's plans to eliminate coal fired power plants?	
Base: Respondents who were concerned (ratings of 3 to 5 out of 5) about the Province's plan to eliminate coal-fired power plants	Percent of Respondents* (n=127)
Power/electricity/gas cost increase	26
Unemployment/loss of jobs	17
Lack of alternative plan/need to know what will replace coal-fired plants	9
Should not eliminate coal-fired plants/is a bad idea	6
Will negatively affect the economy	6
Need to find cleaner/more environmentally friendly way to burn coal	4
Tax increase related concerns	4
Current coal burning practices are clean/environmentally friendly	4
Concerned about cost of eliminating coal-fired plants	4
My organization does business with coal-fired plants	2
Timeline/plan is unrealistic	2
No/None	28
Don't Know/Not Stated	10

*Multiple responses

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3.5   Customer Service

In this section of the survey, businesses were asked various questions regarding Parkland County customer service. Businesses were first asked if they had any contact with Parkland County staff in the past year. As shown in Figure 19, below, two-thirds (66%) of respondents reported that they did have contact with Parkland County staff through phone, email, online, or in-person.

Figure 19
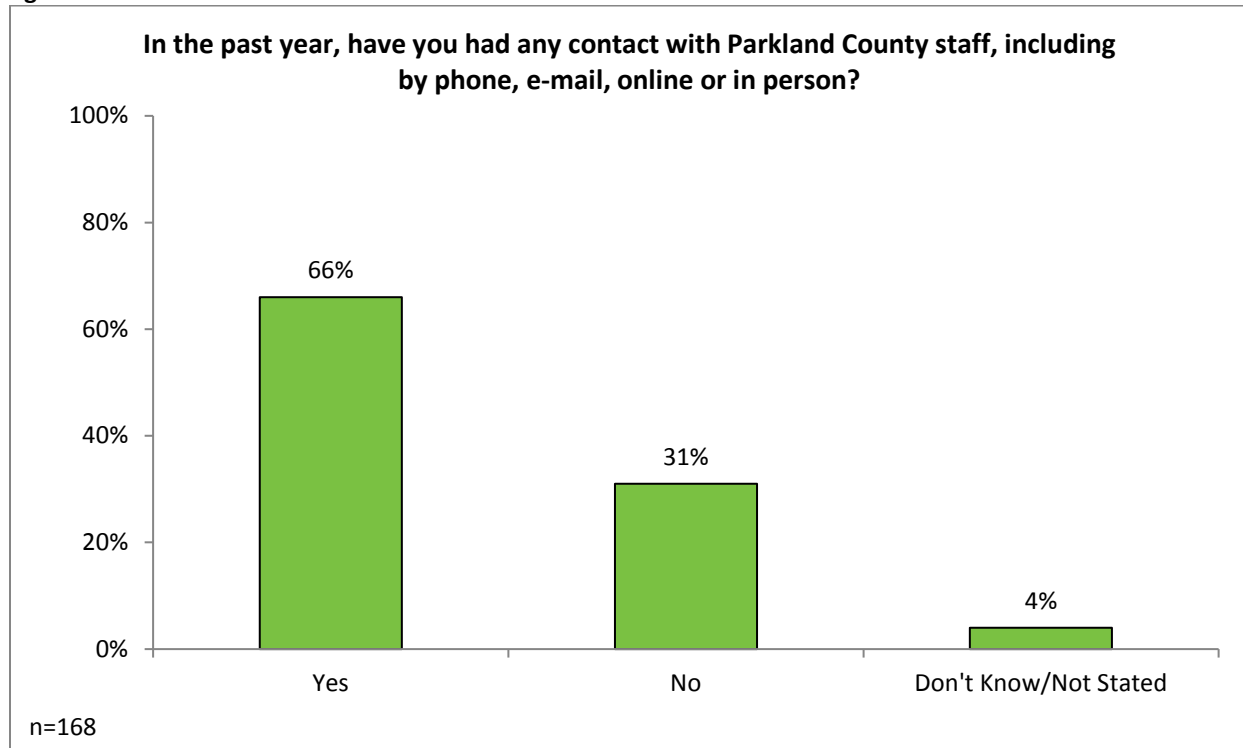
Business subgroups **significantly** more likely to have had contact with County staff in the past year included:

- Those that have been operating in Parkland County for 16 or more years (83%) versus those that have been operating in Parkland County for 16 years or less (55% to 62%);

- Those that participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year (89%) versus those that did not participate (59%).

When asked how they last had contact with the County, businesses that had contact with County staff in the past year (n=110) most often had contact in-person (39%) or through the phone (38%). Twenty-one percent (21%) of businesses had contact with the County through e-mail. See Figure 20, below.

Figure 20

n=110
Base: Respondents who had contact with County staff in the past year
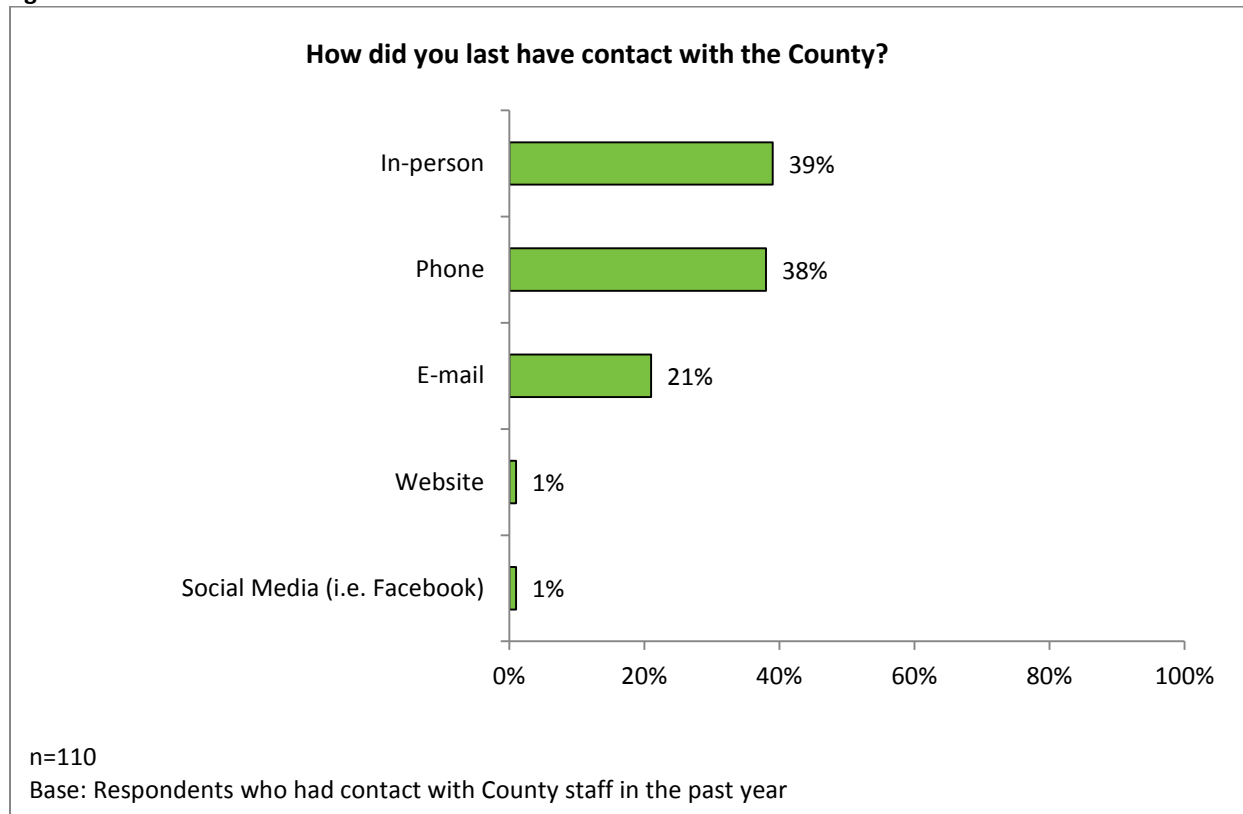
Businesses that participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year (55%) were **significantly** more likely to have contacted County staff **in-person** than those that did not participate (33%).

Businesses that did not participate in a public engagement opportunity in the past year (44%) were **significantly** more likely to have contacted County staff by **phone** than those who did participate (21%).

Table 15, below, provides a detailed breakdown of businesses' most recent communication method with the County by **business geographic operation** (e.g., of those who most recently had contact with the County in-person [n=43], 33% operated in Carvel).

Table 15

How did you last have contact with the County?					
Base: Respondents who had contact with County staff in the past year, excluding those that indicated "other" areas of operation	Percent of Respondents*				
	In-person (n=43)	Phone (n=42)	Email (n=23)**	Website (n=1)**	Social Media (n=1)**
Carvel	33	17	26	-	-
Duffield	19	14	13	-	-
Entwistle	21	19	9	-	-
Fallis	23	17	17	-	-
Gainford	16	14	4	-	-
Keephills	19	14	13	-	-
Tomahawk	21	14	4	-	-
Parkland Village	19	14	13	-	-

*Multiple responses
**Use caution interpreting results when n<30

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Table 16, below, provides a detailed breakdown of businesses' most recent communication method with the County by **County division** (e.g., of those who most recently had contact with the County in-person [n=43], 21% operated in Division 1).

Table 16

How did you last have contact with the County?					
Base: Respondents who had contact with County staff in the past year	**Percent of Respondents***				
	In-person (n=43)	**Phone (n=42)**	**Email (n=23)****	**Website (n=1)****	**Social Media (n=1)****
Division 1	21	17	26	-	-
Division 2	26	33	26	-	-
Division 3	16	17	26	-	100
Division 4	16	14	22	-	-
Division 5	19	10	22	100	-
Division 6	14	10	26	100	-

*Multiple responses
**Use caution interpreting results when n<30

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Businesses that had contact with County staff in the past year (n=110) were then asked to rate the services they received from Parkland County staff, overall. Over four-fifths (84%) of businesses reported that they received "excellent" (41%), "very good" (27%), or "good" (16%) service from Parkland County staff. See Figure 21, below.

Figure 21

Overall, how would you rate the service you received from Parkland County staff?

- Excellent — 41%
- Very Good — 27%
- Good — 16%
- Fair — 6%
- Poor — 10%

n=110
Base: Respondents who had contact with County staff in the past year
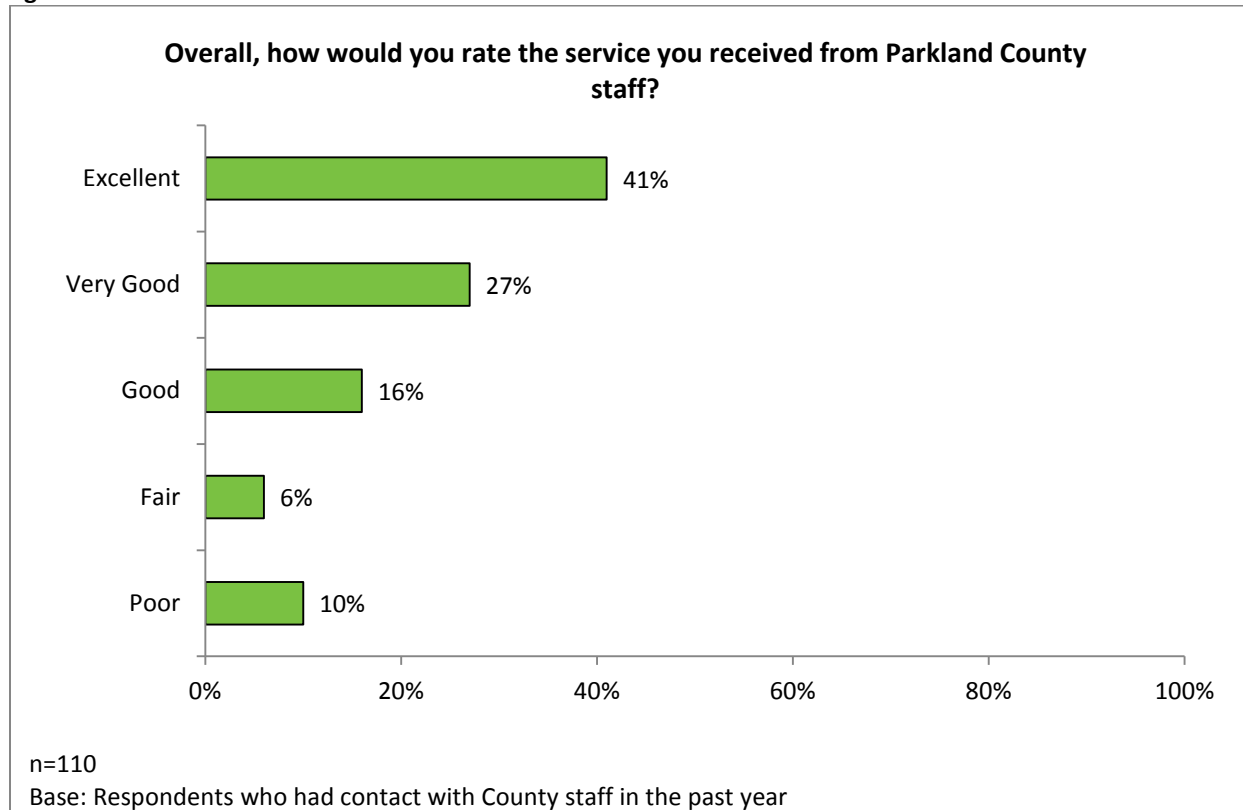
Next, businesses that had contact with Parkland County staff (n=110) were asked if they agreed with various statements regarding Parkland County staff. At least 80% of businesses agreed with the following statements regarding County staff:

- The staff were polite (88% agreed);

- The staff were knowledgeable (82%); and

- Staff provided a response within a reasonable time (80%).

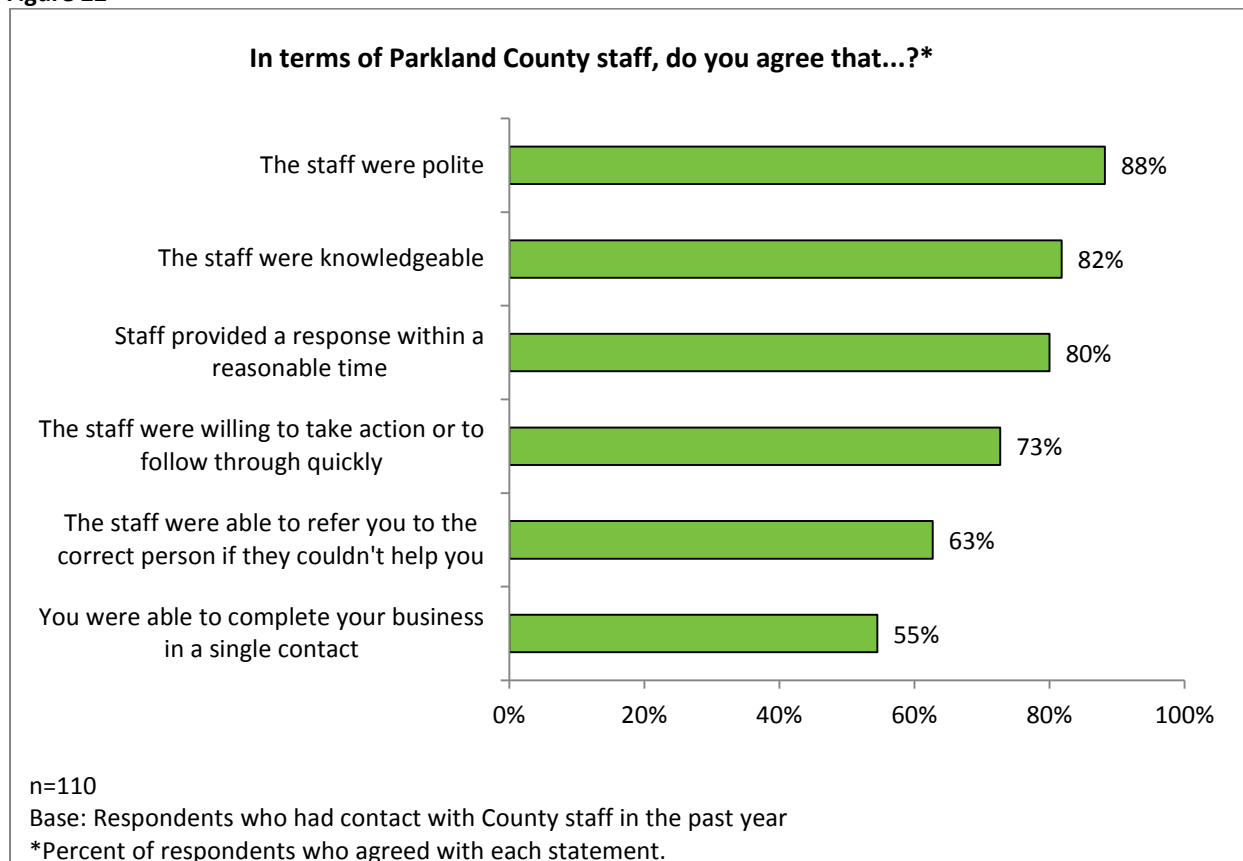See Figure 22, below. Table 17, on the following page, offers a detailed breakdown of results.

Figure 22

n=110
Base: Respondents who had contact with County staff in the past year
*Percent of respondents who agreed with each statement.

Table 17

In terms of Parkland County staff, do you agree that…?			
	Percent of Respondents (n=110)		
	Yes, agree	**No, do not agree**	**Don't Know/Not Applicable**
The staff were polite	**88**	6	6
The staff were knowledgeable	**82**	14	5
Staff provided a response within a reasonable time	**80**	16	4
The staff were willing to take action or to follow through quickly	**73**	16	12
The staff were able to refer you to the correct person if they couldn't help you	**63**	9	28
You were able to complete your business in a single contact	**55**	36	9

Businesses that participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year (21%) were **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have *disagreed* with the statement **"the staff were able to refer you to the correct person if they couldn't help you"** than those that did not participate (4%).

Businesses that did not agree with all six (6) of the statements regarding Parkland County staff (n=42) were asked how Parkland County could improve the customer service experience. Nineteen percent (19%) of businesses reported that staff should improve their response time to requests, followed by 10% that reported that more knowledgeable and/or helpful staff would improve the customer service experience. See Table 18, below.

Table 18

How could Parkland County staff improve the customer service experience?	
Base: Respondents who did not agree with all six (6) statements regarding Parkland County staff	**Percent of Respondents* (n=42)**
Improve/faster response time to requests/questions	19
More knowledgeable/helpful staff	10
Be more engaged/involved/productive in their jobs (in general)	7
More friendly/polite staff	5
Better trained/more experienced staff	5
Listen/respond to resident concerns/input/suggestions	5
Better protection of private property	2
Improve/increase communication with residents	2
Reduce level of bureaucracy/red tape	2
Improve hold/wait time to speak to right person/department	2
Follow through on requests/promises	2
Be more supportive to small/local businesses (in general)	2
Don't Know/Not Stated	38

*Multiple responses

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3.6   Communications

Next, businesses were asked questions regarding Parkland County's communication with its businesses. First, business respondents were asked which sources they referred to in order to receive information on Parkland County programs, services and initiatives. Businesses most often received information through the Parkland County website (81%), followed by 67% who received information through word-of-mouth and 56% who received information through roadside signage. Attending or watching Council meetings was the least frequently used method, with only 10% of businesses attending. See Figure 23, below. Table 19, on the following page, offers a detailed breakdown of results.
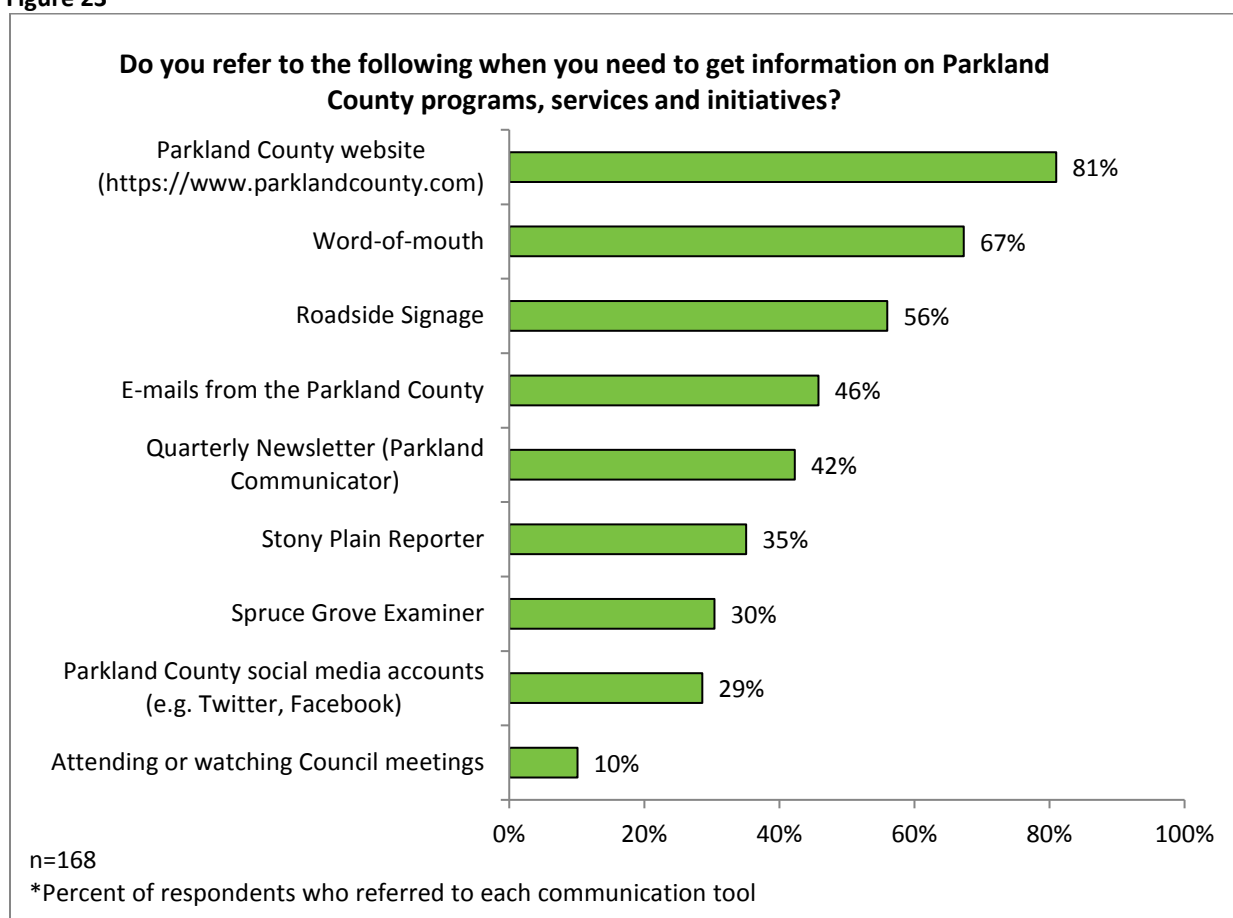
Figure 23

Do you refer to the following when you need to get information on Parkland County programs, services and initiatives?

n=168
*Percent of respondents who referred to each communication tool

Table 19

Do you refer to the following when you need to get information on Parkland County programs, services and initiatives?	Percent of Respondents (n=168)		
	Yes	**No**	**Don't Know/Not Stated**
Parkland County website (https://www.parklandcounty.com)	**81**	10	9
Word-of-mouth	**67**	20	13
Roadside Signage	**56**	28	16
E-mails from the Parkland County	**46**	36	18
Quarterly Newsletter (Parkland Communicator)	**42**	41	17
Stony Plain Reporter	**35**	49	16
Spruce Grove Examiner	**30**	49	21
Parkland County social media accounts (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	**29**	54	18
Attending or watching council meetings	**10**	69	21

Business subgroups **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have **attended or watched Council meetings** included:

- Those that accessed the survey through the public link (21%) versus those that accessed the survey through e-mail invitation (7%);

- Those that have been operating in Parkland County for 16 or more years (19%) versus those that have been operating in Parkland County for 15 years or less (6%); and

- Those that participated in a public engagement opportunity (38%) versus those that did not participate (2%).

Business subgroups **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have referred to the **quarterly newsletter (Parkland Communicator)** included:

- Those that have been operating in Parkland County for 16 or more years (52%) versus those that have been operating in Parkland County for 5 years or less (32%);

- Those that had contact with County staff in the past year (48%) versus those that did not have contact (31%); and

- Those that participated in a public engagement opportunity (60%) versus those that did not participate (36%).

Businesses that had contact with County staff in the past year (87%) were **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have referred to the **Parkland County website** than those that did not have contact (71%).

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Businesses that operated in Division 2 (73%) were **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have used **word-of-mouth** to get information than those that operated in Division 1 (52%).

Businesses that participated in a public engagement opportunity (68%) were **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have referred to **e-mails from the Parkland County** than those that did not participate (39%).

Business subgroups **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have *not* referred to the **Stony Plain Reporter** included:

- Businesses that operated in Division 1 (71%) versus those that operated in Division 2 (48%);
- Businesses that have been operating in Parkland County for 5 years or less (59%) versus those that have been operating in Parkland County for 6 to 15 years (40%).

Business subgroups **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have *not* referred to the **quarterly newsletter (Parkland Communicator)** included:

- Those that operated in Division 3 (47%) versus those that operated in Division 1 (23%); and
- Those that operated in Parkland County for 5 years or less (52%) versus those that operated in Parkland County for 6 to 15 years (30%).

Business subgroups **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have *not* referred to **roadside signage** included:

- Those that operated in Division 3 (40%) versus those that operated in Division 2 (17%); and
- Those that have been operating in Parkland County for 5 years or less (30%) or 16 years or more (42%) versus those that have been operating in Parkland County for 6 to 15 years (13%).

Businesses were then asked if there were any other communication tools they felt would be effective in order to stay informed with County programs, services and initiatives. The vast majority of businesses (97%) either could not think of any other communication methods (76%) or did not provide a response (21%). The most common method of communication mentioned was local radio stations (2%). See Table 20, below.

Table 20

Are there any other sources of information or methods for communication that would be effective, in terms of informing you about County programs, services and initiatives?	
	Percent of Respondents (n=168)
Radio/local radio stations	2
Information in the mail/mail-outs	1
Telephone	1
None/no other sources	76
Don't Know/Not Stated	21

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3.7   Public Engagement

In this section of the survey, businesses were asked about public engagement opportunities. When asked about participation in public engagement opportunities, nearly one quarter (22%) of respondent businesses reported that they have participated in public engagement opportunities in the past year. See Figure 24, below.

Figure 24
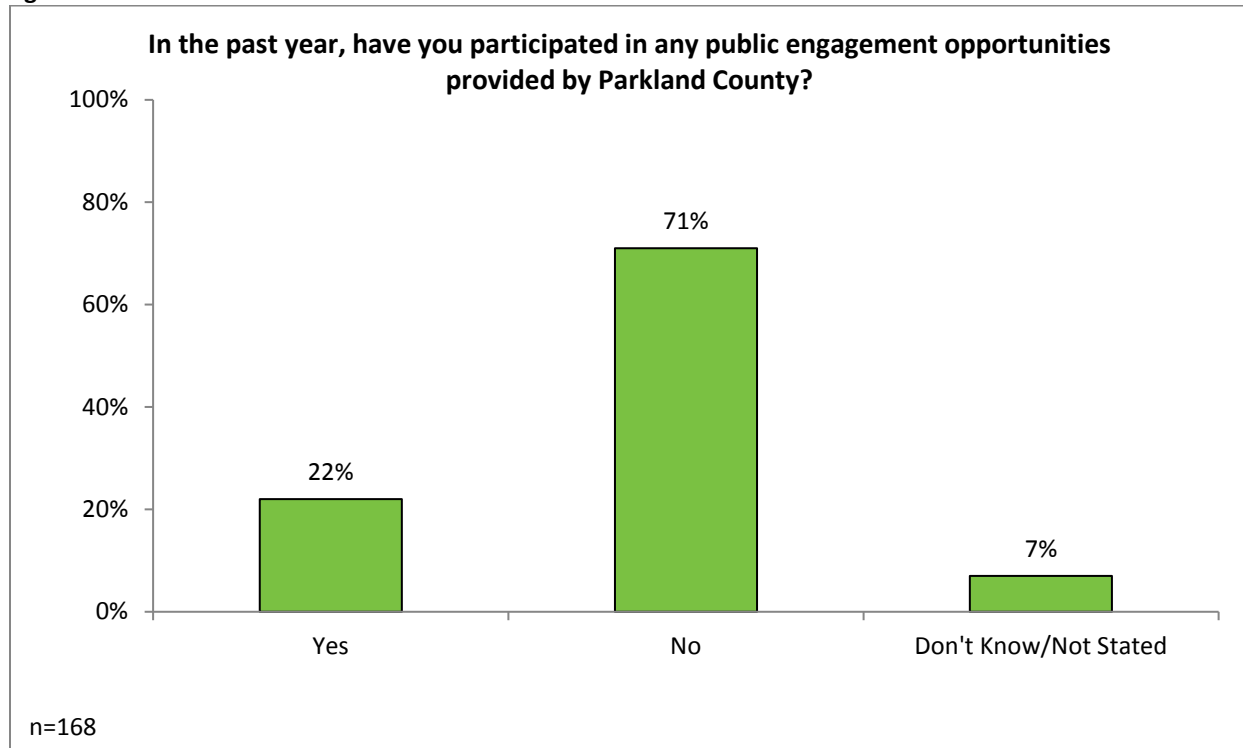
Businesses that have had contact with County staff in the past year (30%) were **significantly** <u>more likely</u> to have participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year than those that did not have contact (8%).

Next, businesses were asked to rate their satisfaction with public engagement opportunities. Business respondents who had participated in public engagement opportunities (n=37) were asked to rate their satisfaction with the public engagement opportunities they participated in, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant "very dissatisfied" and 5 meant "very satisfied". Over two-thirds (68%) of businesses were satisfied (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) with the public engagement opportunities. See Figure 25, below.

Figure 25

How satisfied were you with the public engagement opportunities you participated in?

n=37
Base: Business respondents who participated in a public engagement opportunity in the past year
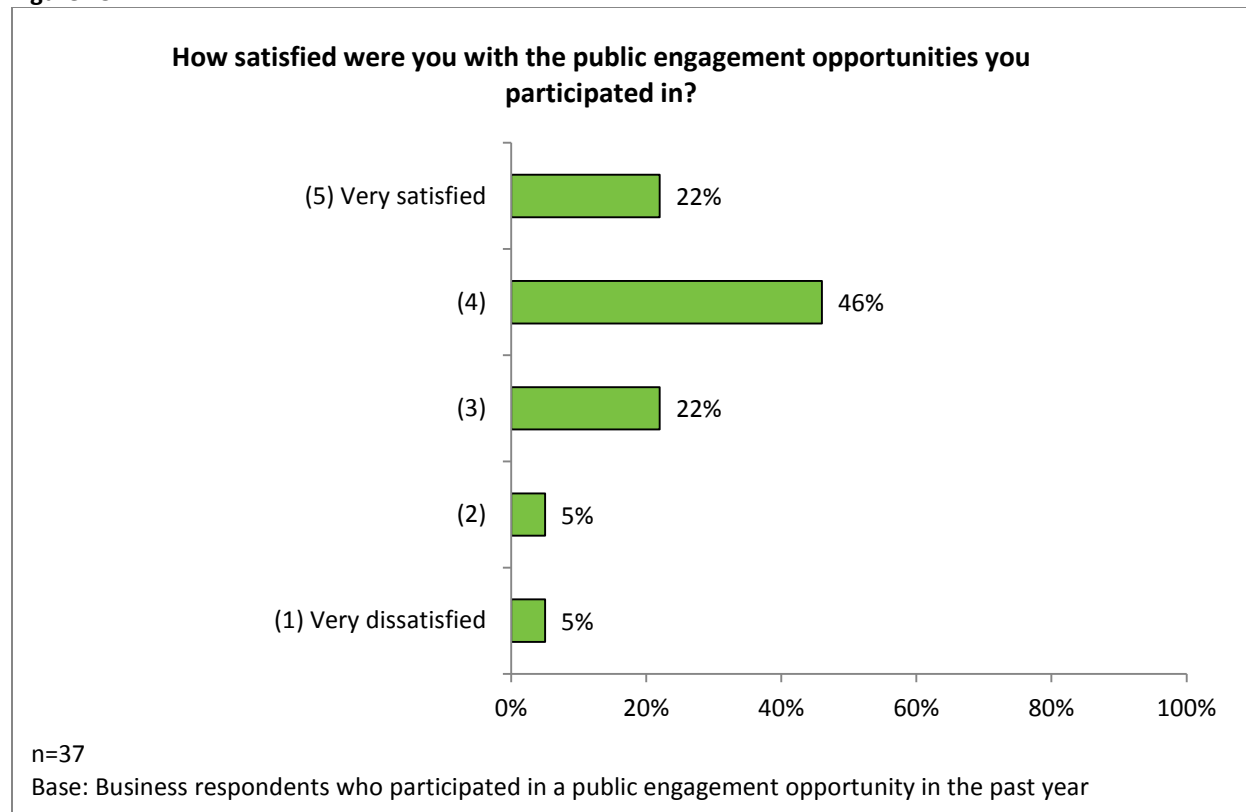
Business respondents who were not satisfied (ratings of 1 to 3 out of 5) with the public engagement opportunities they participated in (n=12) were asked why they felt that way. Respondents most often mentioned that the input and/or suggestions provided are not acted on (n=4), followed by respondents who believed that County staff were not knowledgeable or could not answer questions, in general (n=2). See Table 21, below.

Table 21

Why did you provide that response?	
Base: Respondents who were not satisfied (ratings of 1 to 3 out of 5) with the public engagement opportunities they participated in	Number of Respondents* (n=12)**
Input/suggestions are not acted on/have not seen any results	4
County staff were not knowledgeable/unable to answer questions	2
County is not sincere in their public engagement	1
Lack of listening to/addressing resident concerns/suggestions	1
Lack of/poor advertising of public engagement opportunities	1
Lack of solutions offered to issues/concerns	1
Don't Know/Not Stated	3

*Multiple responses
**Use caution interpreting results when n<30

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3.8   Issue Identification

Next, businesses were asked questions regarding issues facing businesses in Parkland County. When asked about the biggest issues facing Parkland County moving forward, over half (55%) of businesses reported that taxes were the biggest issue. Government legislation imposed by other levels of government was the second most mentioned issue (47%), followed by the County permit processes (31%). See Table 22, below.

Table 22

Going forward, what do you think will be the three (3) biggest issues facing businesses in Parkland County?	Percent of Respondents* (n=168)
Taxes	55
Government legislation imposed by other levels of government (i.e. Provincial and Federal)	47
Parkland County permit processes	31
Cost of land	21
Cost of labour	21
Access to capital (money to grow your business)	20
Cost of office/commercial/industrial space	16
Availability of labour	16
Cost of advertising	14
Availability of land	11
Cost of office/commercial/industrial space	10
Access to affordable child care	7
Access to local professional services	7
Availability of retail/commercial/industrial space	5
Other (2% or less of respondents)	7
Don't Know/Not Stated	10

*Multiple responses

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Businesses were then asked what one improvement they would make to create a better business environment in Parkland County. Business respondents most often mentioned that they would look to expand and/or build more roads or infrastructure (5%). See Table 23, below.
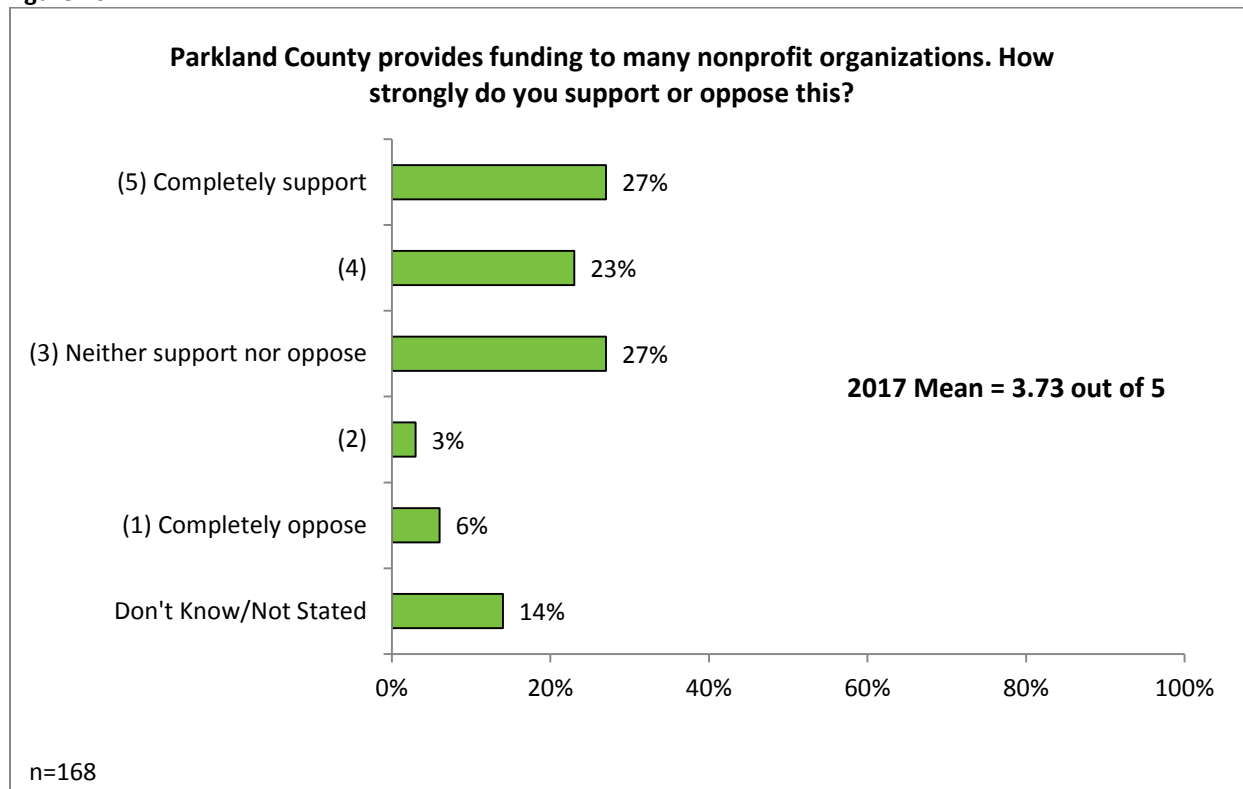
Table 23

What one improvement would you make to create a better business environment in Parkland County?	Percent of Respondents* (n=168)
Expand/build more roads/infrastructure/overpass	5
Increased advertising/public awareness of businesses	4
Flexible/less strict rules/regulations	4
Lower/less costly taxes	4
Improve Internet/Wi-Fi services	4
Make it easier to obtain permit (in general)	2
Increased support for small/local/home based businesses	2
Improve road maintenance/repairs/upgrades	2
Less bureaucracy/red tape	2
Provide business networking/programs/opportunities	2
More County business support/be more business friendly (in general)	1
Provide mentorship programs/resources for new business owners	1
Improve County postal/mail delivery service	1
Increase job/employment opportunities in County	1
Increased police presence/enforcement	1
Increased business/commercial development	1
Other (single mentions)	12
Nothing/no suggestions	31
Don't Know/Not stated	52

*Multiple responses

When asked to rate their support of Parkland County providing funding to non-profit organizations, using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 meant "completely oppose" and 5 meant "completely support", over half (51%) of businesses supported (ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5) Parkland County's efforts. Over one quarter (27%) of businesses neither supported nor opposed Parkland County's efforts, and 9% of businesses did not support (ratings of 1 or 2 out of 5) their efforts. See Figure 26, below.

Figure 26

Parkland County provides funding to many nonprofit organizations. How strongly do you support or oppose this?

- (5) Completely support — 27%
- (4) — 23%
- (3) Neither support nor oppose — 27%
- (2) — 3%
- (1) Completely oppose — 6%
- Don't Know/Not Stated — 14%

2017 Mean = 3.73 out of 5

n=168

3.9   Final Comments

Finally, businesses were asked if they had any additional comments regarding the topics in the survey. The vast majority (90%) either did not have any additional comment (66%) or did not provide a response (24%). The most common feedback provided was that businesses were thankful for the opportunity to provide input (2%), and that businesses were satisfied with the County (2%). See Table 24, below.

Table 24

Do you have anything else you would like to add regarding the topics in this survey?	
	Percent of Respondents (n=168)
Is thankful for the opportunity to provide input/feedback	2
I am satisfied with the County/services provided by county	2
Should not eliminate coal-fired power plants/is a bad idea	1
Need more support for small/local/home based businesses	1
Other (single mentions)	5
No additional comments	66
Don't Know/Not Stated	24

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

2017 Business Priorities Survey

Web Introduction

Banister Research & Consulting Inc. has been retained by Parkland County to survey businesses on their thoughts on the County's long-term vision and as a place to do business. Results from the survey will be used to help develop a long-term strategic direction for the County and evaluate the progress towards its strategic goals. The survey will take **approximately 12 to 15 minutes** to complete.

Your participation in the survey is entirely voluntary; you may withdraw your participation at any time. All information you provide will be kept in strictest confidence and will be used only for the purposes of Parkland County. All responses will be reported in aggregate. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act s.33 © governs Parkland County's collection of this information.

If you have any questions about the validity of this survey, or the collection or use of information, you may contact Sarah Mate at smate@parklandcounty.com.

If you have any **technical issues** while accessing the survey, please contact Banister Research at survey@banister.ab.ca or by phone at 780-451-4444.

I agree with the terms and conditions of data collection and data use, as detailed above [**MANDATORY**]

1. Yes
2. No   [**TERMINATE**]

A. To confirm, is your business or organization located within Parkland County? **Please note this refers to the physical location of your business, and <u>not</u> the mailing address (e.g. if you pick up your mail at a P.O. Box). [MANDATORY]**

1. Yes
2. No [**THANK AND TERMINATE**]

B. How many locations do you own or operate in Parkland County? [**MANDATORY**]

   Note: Parkland County **excludes** the following communities:
   - Betula Beach
   - Enoch Cree Nation
   - Paul First Nation
   - Seba Beach
   - Spring Lake
   - Spruce Grove
   - Stony Plain
   - Wabamun

   1. _____ # locations

C. Which communities does your business operate in? (select all that apply)

   1. Carvel
   2. Duffield
   3. Entwistle
   4. Fallis
   5. Gainford
   6. Keephills
   7. Tomahawk
   8. Parkland Village
   9. Other; specify: _____

D. Below is a list of roles that are found within companies. Please select the one that **best** describes your primary role within your company or place of employment.

   1. Business Owner
   2. CEO/President/VP
   3. Primary Manager
   4. Sales
   5. Marketing
   6. Office Administrator
   7. Human Resources
   8. Employee/Frontline staff
   9. Finance and/or Accounting
   10. Other; specify: _____
   F5. Don't Know

E. How long have you served in your current role within your company?

   1. _____years
   F5. Don't Know

Please try to answer all of the questions. However, if you do not have enough information or feel that you can't respond to a question, you may select "Don't Know" or skip it and continue to the next question. A variety of headings and scales appear throughout the questionnaire; read each question/statement carefully and select the response that **best** represents your point of view.

Section 1: Business Characteristics

1) Number of years this business location has operated in Parkland County:

   1. _____ Years

2) Is this business…?

   1. Industrial
   2. Commercial/Retail
   3. Agriculture
   4. Tourism
   5. Home-based
   F5. Don't Know/Not Stated

3) Current number of employees at your operations in Parkland County:

   1. 1 to 4 employees
   2. 5 to 9 employees
   3. 10 to 39 employees
   4. 40 to 69 employees
   5. 70 to 99 employees
   6. 100 to 250 employees
   7. More than 250 employees
   F5. Don't Know/Not Stated

4) Is this business a…?

   1. Yes
   2. No
   F5. Don't Know/Not Stated

   a) Franchise
   b) Headquarters/Owner-operated
   c) Branch Office (Head office elsewhere)
   d) Farm based
   e) Home based or small business

5) In which division(s) is your business located? (select all that apply) [**LINK TO MAP**]

   1. Division 1
   2. Division 2
   3. Division 3
   4. Division 4
   5. Division 5
   6. Division 6
   F5. Don't Know/Not Stated

6) In what industry or sector does your business operate?

   1. Management occupations
   2. Business, finance and administration occupations
   3. Natural and applied sciences and related occupations
   4. Health occupations
   5. Occupations in education, law, social, government services
   6. Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport
   7. Sales and service occupations
   8. Trades, transport and equipment operators, related occupations
   9. Construction occupations
   10. Natural resources, related production operations
   11. Agriculture, related production operations
   12. Occupations in manufacturing and utilities
   13. Service or hospitality
   14. Other; specify: _____
   15. Not applicable
   F5. Don't Know/Refused

Section 2: Business Economy

7) What are the three (3) things that make Parkland County a good place to operate a business?

   1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
   F5. Don't Know

8) And, what three (3) things would make Parkland County a better place to operate a business?

   1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]

9) What is your workforce situation over the next 12 months?

   1. Hiring
   2. Maintaining constant staffing levels
   3. Reducing staff
   4. Other; specify:_____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
   F5. Don't Know

10) Thinking about your business over the next 12 months, do you expect the demand or workload to…?

1. Slow down
2. Stay the same
3. Grow or expand
4. Other; specify:_____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
F5. Don't Know

11) What do you view as barriers to entry in regard to doing business in Parkland County?

1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
2. None/no barriers to entry
F5. Don't Know

12) Are there any competitive areas that Parkland County is currently weak on?

1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
2. None/no competitive areas of weakness
F5. Don't Know

Section 3: Core Values & Priorities

13) Council and staff are committed to the following core values: **integrity, transparency, respect,** and **customer service**. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these?

1. Strongly disagree
2. …
3. …
4. …
5. Strongly agree
F5. Don't Know

a) Integrity
b) Transparency
c) Respect
d) Customer Service

14) Are there any other values you think are important for staff and elected officials to consider, outside of the 4 core values (integrity, transparency, respect, and customer service)?

1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
2. No
F5. Don't Know

15) Parkland County has 4 key themes that guide decision-making within their strategic plan, each of which includes a number of different areas of focus:

- Community and Quality of Life
- Economy
- Environment
- Leadership/Governance

For each of the following County areas of focus, please indicate how important it is to your business or organization, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "not at all important" and 5 means "very important."

1. Not at all important
2. …
3. …
4. …
5. Very important
F5. Don't Know

Community and Quality of Life

a) Strengthening Parkland County's identity
b) Developing a long-term plan for infrastructure and facilities
c) Investing in Hamlets
d) Developing a long-term plan to support community groups

Economy

e) Promoting Parkland County as a destination
f) Bringing new businesses to Parkland County
g) Supporting local business
h) Strengthening agricultural business, including farms
i) Supporting the longevity of non-renewable natural resource facilities (i.e. coal)
j) Promoting a green economy
k) Strengthening the digital economy (i.e., Internet)
l) Diversifying the economy

Environment

m) Balancing industry with environmental responsibility
n) Protecting the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices
o) Providing access to environmental programs for agricultural producers
p) Protecting agricultural land through policies that support the producer
q) Developing lake and watershed plans
r) Use tax money to support environmental programs, such as Alternative Land Use Service (ALUS) or Green Acreages
s) Reduction of permit fees for energy efficient building practices

Leadership/Governance

t) Parkland County is customer focused
u) Ensuring effective resident and business input

16) Are there any areas of focus that you think are missing from this list?

1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
2. No
F5. Don't Know

Section 4: Coal-Fired Power Plants

The next couple of questions are about the future of coal-fired power plants in Alberta and Parkland County.

As you may be aware, under the Government of Alberta's new Climate Leadership Plan and the recent Federal Government announcement, there will be no coal-fired electricity generation by 2030. Under this plan, all coal-fired plants will be shut down by 2030 and potentially replaced by other power generation, including renewables. In Parkland County, the plants that will be directly impacted by the Climate Leadership Plan include:

- Keephills 1
- Keephills 2
- Keephills 3

[**PHONE**: If respondent wants further information: http://www.alberta.ca/climate-coal-electricity.aspx]

[**WEB**: For more information, please refer to http://www.alberta.ca/climate-coal-electricity.aspx]

17) Prior to completing this survey, were you aware of the Provincial and Federal plans to phase out coal-fired power plants by 2030?

1. Yes
2. No
F5. Don't Know

18) Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "not at all concerned" and 5 means "very concerned," how concerned is your business or organization about the Province's plans to eliminate coal-fired power plants?

   1. Not at all concerned
   2. …
   3. …
   4. …
   5. Very concerned
   F5. Don't Know

19) [**ASK IF Q18=3-5/Concerned**] Does your business have any specific concerns about the Province's plans to eliminate coal-fired power plants?

   1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
   2. No/none
   F5. Don't Know

Section 5: Customer Service

The next few sections focus on customer service and County communications with businesses.

20) In the past 12 months, have you had any contact with Parkland County staff, including by phone, e-mail, online or in person?

   1. Yes
   2. No
   F5. Don't Know

21) [**ASK IF Q20=Yes/1**] When you last had contact with the County, was it by…?

   1. Phone
   2. E-mail
   3. In-person
   4. Website
   5. Social media (i.e. Facebook)
   F5. Don't Know

22) [**ASK IF Q20=Yes/1**] Thinking about your last contact with Parkland County staff, how would you rate the service you received, overall?

   1. Poor
   2. Fair
   3. Good
   4. Very Good
   5. Excellent
   F5. Don't Know

23) [**ASK IF Q20=Yes/1**] Thinking again of your most recent experience with Parkland County staff, please indicate whether or not you agree with each statement.

    1. Yes, agree
    2. No, do not agree
    F5. Don't Know/Not Applicable

   a) Staff provided a response within a reasonable time
   b) The staff were knowledgeable
   c) The staff were polite
   d) The staff were willing to take action or to follow through quickly
   e) You were able to complete your business in a single contact
   f) The staff were able to refer you to the correct person if they couldn't help you

24) [**ASK IF Q23=2/DO NOT AGREE ON ANY**] How could Parkland County staff improve the customer service experience?

    1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
    F5. Don't Know

Section 6: Communications

25) For each of the following, please indicate whether or not your business refers to it when you need to get information on Parkland County programs, services and initiatives.

    1. Yes
    2. No
    F5. Don't Know

   a) Stony Plain Reporter
   b) Spruce Grove Examiner
   c) Attending or watching Council meetings
   d) Parkland County website (https://www.parklandcounty.com)
   e) Parkland County social media accounts (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)
   f) Word-of-mouth
   g) E-mails from the Parkland County
   h) Quarterly Newsletter (Parkland Communicator)
   i) Roadside Signage

26) Are there any other sources of information or methods for communication that would be effective, in terms of informing your business or organization about County programs, services and initiatives?

    1. Other; **specify**: _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
    2. No/None
    F5. Don't Know

Section 7: Business Engagement

27) Have you participated in any public engagement opportunities provided by Parkland County in the past 12 months?

    1. Yes
    2. No
    F5. Don't Know

28) [**ASK IF Q27=1/Yes**] How satisfied were you with the public engagement opportunities you participated in?

    1. Very dissatisfied
    2. …
    3. …
    4. …
    5. Very satisfied
    F5. Don't Know

29) [**ASK IF Q28=1-3/Dissatisfied**] Why did you provide that response?

    6. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
    F5. Don't Know

Section 8: Issue Identification

30) Going forward, what do you think will be the three (3) biggest issues facing businesses in Parkland County?

    1. Taxes
    2. Cost of office/commercial/industrial space
    3. Parkland County permit processes
    4. Availability of retail/commercial/industrial space
    5. Cost of land
    6. Availability of land
    7. Cost of office/commercial/industrial space
    8. Access to affordable childcare
    9. Availability of labour
    10. Cost of labour
    11. Access to capital (money to grow your business)
    12. Cost of advertising
    13. Access to local professional services
    14. Government legislation imposed by other levels of Government (i.e. Provincial and Federal)
    15. Other; specify:_____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
    F5. Don't Know

Parkland County
2017 Business Survey

Final Questionnaire
Banister Research & Consulting Inc.

31) What one improvement would you make to create a better business environment in Parkland County?

    1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
    F5. Don't Know

32) **Parkland County provides funding to many nonprofit organizations.** How strongly do you support or oppose this? Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "completely oppose," 3 means "neither support nor oppose," and 5 means "completely support."

    1. Completely oppose
    2. …
    3. Neither support nor oppose
    4. …
    5. Completely support

Section 9: Final Comments

33) Do you have anything else you would like to add regarding the topics in this survey?

    1. _____ [**RECORD VERBATIM**]
    2. No additional comments
    F5. Don't Know

That concludes the survey. We thank you very much for your participation in our research.