



2017 BUSINESS PRIORITIES SURVEY

APRIL 18, 2017

BUSINESS PRIORITIES SURVEY

- Online survey was available from January 30 to February 17, 2017.
- Businesses were invited to participate via a link sent in an email.
- The survey was also advertised on the County website, on social media, in the Chamber and ABA newsletters and in the local newspaper.
- 168 responses were received.

BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS

- 89% operate one or two locations in the County.
- 24% are located in Carvel, 19% in Acheson.
- 67% respondents were the business owner.
- 46% have been in operation for 3-10 years (even split between 3-5 and 6-10).
- 37% are home based businesses, 21% industrial, 17% commercial/retail.
- 68% employ 1-9 employees, followed by 14% with 10-39 employees.

BUSINESS ECONOMY

- Top reasons for locating in Parkland County were:
 - Convenient location (18%)
 - Low/affordable taxes (16%)
 - Proximity to Edmonton (16%)
- What would make Parkland County a better place to operate a business:
 - More roads/infrastructure (14%)
 - Lower taxes (9%)
 - Improved Wi-Fi/Internet (8%)

BUSINESS ECONOMY

- 47% of businesses will be maintaining current staffing levels. 22% will be hiring.
- 40% of businesses reported that their workload will stay the same. 38% reported that their workload will grow or expand.
- More than half (55%) do not see any barriers to entry with doing business in Parkland County. Of those who do:
 - Six percent reported it was the restrictive rules/regulations
 - Five percent said it was a lack of support from County staff
 - Four percent said it was high taxes
- 57% of businesses do not feel the County is weak in any areas. Of those who do:
 - Three percent said the County was weak in regard to wifi/high speed internet
 - Two percent specified taxes
 - Two percent specified road maintenance

CORE VALUES

- Parkland County's commitment to its core values:
 - Respect (58% agreed)
 - Integrity (58%)
 - Customer Service (57%)
 - Transparency (46%)
- *89% of respondents did not indicate additional values for staff and officials to consider*
- These numbers are similar to the Resident Priorities Survey

PRIORITIES AND AREAS OF FOCUS

Community and Quality of Life

- Developing a long term plan for infrastructure and facilities (78%);
 - Developing a long term plan to support community groups (53%)
 - Strengthening Parkland County's identity (49%)
 - Investing in Hamlets(35%)
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- Order of importance was the same as residents; however, businesses did rate levels of importance as high.

PRIORITIES AND AREAS OF FOCUS

Economy

- Supporting local business (89%);
- Attracting new business (73%);
- Strengthening the digital economy (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%)
- Promoting a green economy (54%)

PRIORITIES AND AREAS OF FOCUS

Environment

- Protecting the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices (70%);
- Balancing industry with environmental responsibility (64%);
- Developing 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%)
- Use tax money to support environmental programs such as ALUS or Green Acreages (41%)

PRIORITIES AND AREAS OF FOCUS

Leadership/Governance

- Ensuring effective resident and business input (74%);
- Establishing Parkland County as being customer focused (71%)

**95% OF RESPONDENTS FELT THERE
WERE NO ADDITIONAL AREAS OF
FOCUS TO ADD**

COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS

- 91% were aware of provincial and federal plans for coal phase out
- Greatest areas of concern included:
 - Power/gas cost increase (26%)
 - Potential unemployment or loss of jobs (17%)
 - Lack of alternative plan (9%)

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.
 - In-person contact (39%)
 - Phone contact (38%)
- 84% of those who had contact with County Staff in the past year rated the service they received as “excellent” (41%), “very good” (27%), or “good” (16%)

CUSTOMER SERVICE

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

CUSTOMER SERVICE: WHERE CAN WE IMPROVE

- Those who did not agree with the six previous statements 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%).

COMMUNICATIONS

- Sources of information:
 - Parkland County website (81%)
 - Word of mouth (67%)
 - Roadside signage (56%)
 - Emails from Parkland County (42%)
 - Parkland Communicator (42%)
- 97% of businesses had no other methods of communication for the County to consider using.
- Most common suggestion for other methods of communication: radio (2%)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- 22% reported they had participated in public engagement opportunities in the last year
 - 68% of those were satisfied with the opportunity
 - Those that were not satisfied most often mentioned that their input and/or suggestions had not been acted on.

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

- Biggest issues facing Parkland County moving forward:
 - Taxes (55%)
 - Government legislation imposed by other levels of government (47%)
 - The Parkland County permit process (31%)
- The one improvement that could be made to create a better business environment would be the expansion of/building more roads and infrastructure (5%)
- Regarding funding provided for non-profits, 51% supported Parkland County's efforts