



Economic Development and Workforce
Stakeholder Analysis

July 2013

The Plan for Opportunity

The Gulf Coast Plan for Opportunity is a collaborative planning project intended to guide the economic growth and development of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and to improve housing, employment and transportation opportunities throughout the region. The planning process is guided by a group of stakeholder committees which have been organized and expanded over the course of the plan to include city and county leadership, key community and public partners, and residents of the region.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast was one of 45 metropolitan regions nationwide to receive grant funding from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities to develop a regional sustainability plan. This is an agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to take a more holistic approach to better respond to the region's needs.

The overall goals of the plan are to:

- Lower transportation and housing costs by creating better connections between where people live and work;
- Develop in ways that value the natural environment, understanding that regional prosperity is dependent on our many environmental assets;
- Improve air quality by making buildings more energy efficient and reducing vehicle miles traveled;
- Create a broad range of employment and business opportunities by coordinating land use, transportation and infrastructure planning; and
- Improve regional health by ensuring that all communities have access to fresh food, safe recreation, open space, medical care, and clean air and water.

Economic Development and Workforce Subcommittee

Important elements of the Gulf Coast Plan are economic development and jobs. Early in the process, the Economic Development and Workforce (EDWF) Subcommittee was established to assess the economic landscape with particular focus on downtown development and barriers to workforce participation. Subcommittee members over the course of the project have included:

Sam Alsgood, Huntington-Ingalls

Scott Alsobrooks, Pearl River Community College

Charlie Beasley, MS Enterprise for Technology

Yolonda Boone, MS Department of Employment Security

Kim Compton, Hancock Co. Development Commission

Sandi Cutler, SMPDD, Twin Districts Workforce

Natalia Diaz, Jackson Co. Economic Development Foundation

Rick Duke, University of Southern MS

Bill Hessel, Harrison Co. Development Commission

Enrique Hurtado, MS State Port Authority

Guy Johnson, Coast Electric EPA

Wanda Land, MS Development Authority

Ron Magee, Stennis Space Center

Kimberly Nastasi, MS Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce

Jack Norris, Gulf Coast Business Council

Stephen O'Mara, Gulf Coast Renaissance Corp

Stacy Pair, MS Main Street Association

Pastor Anthony Thompson, Tabernacle of Faith

Chuck Ueltschey, MS Power Company

Clay Wagner, Hancock Bank

Monica Walker, SMPDD, Business Development

Bill Webb, MS Development Authority

Tish Williams, Hancock Co. Chamber of Commerce

Anna Faye Kelley-Winders, MS Gulf Coast Community College

Introduction

The Plan for Opportunity's economic development and workforce stakeholder analysis is a presentation of survey efforts, formal focus group meetings and general observations gathered from the work of other subcommittees. The stakeholder analysis is built on perceptions and behaviors as reported in the surveys and as discussed in the group settings. The information may not be factual in nature but rather reflects the thoughts and opinions of the targeted groups and not necessarily the region as a whole.

The stakeholder analysis along with the Regional Economic Development Assessment and the Downtown Profile and Assessment will be used to formulate the recommendations and strategies for economic development and workforce. The recommendations will then be fully vetted through multiple community engagement activities that address the *Plan for Opportunity* in its entirety.

The analysis is presented by section based on the following activities:

- Employment Participation Survey – Pascagoula RCAP
- Employment Participation Survey – Northwest Gulfport
- Main Street Managers Focus Group
- Downtown Business Survey
- Economic Developers Roundtable Discussion

Employment Participation Survey

Overview

The level of success in the economic development of a region is largely dependent on the workforce. There have been many discussions surrounding the challenges of finding gainful employment, so a survey was conducted to take a closer look at employment participation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Through a survey effort, individuals were asked questions related to employment problems and potential barriers to employment such as transportation or childcare issues, health concerns, substance abuse or mental health difficulties, a criminal history, or financial or housing worries.

The information from the survey provides a collective report on workforce conditions and will be used in formulating the recommendations and strategies from the Economic Development and Workforce Committee to the final *Plan for Opportunity*.

Survey Creation and Testing

The survey was created by the planning division of Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District (SMPDD). Input, especially as it relates to vulnerable populations, was provided by the Project Management Committee for the Gulf Coast Plan for Opportunity. Pastor Anthony Thompson of Behold the Lion of God ministry also provided guidance during survey question development. A fact sheet and survey instruction manual were drafted by visiting law students from the Mississippi Center for Justice. Job categories were taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and careful attention was given to the layout and response choices throughout the survey instrument.

Participants were informed both in writing and verbally that their answers would be combined with others to create a report on the workforce. It was explained that there would be no individual responses released or quoted and that the survey was intended to be reviewed only by Plan for Opportunity consortium members.

Methods

Initially, the survey was to be conducted only in northwest Gulfport by Pastor Anthony Thompson and other members of the clergy. It was intended to serve as a pilot project that could later be conducted in other communities/neighborhoods. During the survey process and while listening to reports from other elements of the Plan for Opportunity, it was determined that it may be useful to survey an area in Pascagoula identified as a Racially Concentrated Area of Poverty (RCAP). The STEPS Coalition, a part of the Plan consortium, agreed to conduct the survey for the Pascagoula RCAP.¹

Since racial and ethnic segregation can result in concentrations of poverty because of income gaps, it is important for the region to both identify and understand its RCAP. In total, there are five RCAPs within the region. Three RCAPs are located in Gulfport and one each in Biloxi, Harrison County, Long Beach and Pascagoula. The results discussed in the following section are for the RCAP area in Pascagoula, Jackson County, as shown on Figure 5.

The two survey areas are shown below and are referred to in this report as NW Gulfport and Pascagoula RCAP. The results may not be statistically valid but instead provide a snapshot of the problems, perceptions and opportunities that may be impacting workforce engagement.

Some surveys were completed by the survey team and others by the participants. The surveys were completed by hand and then entered into SurveyMonkey software by SMPDD.

Analysis - Pascagoula RCAP

General Characteristics

There were 119 survey participants. Only working age people (ages 16 and higher) were asked to complete the survey. 28% of the participants were 30 to 39 years of age and 27.1% were 21 to 29 in the Pascagoula RCAP. 15.3% were over 60 years old.

Females represented 66.9% of the respondents and 33.1% were male. 80% identified themselves as Black or African-American and 15.7% as Hispanic. 10.4% were White and less than 2% were Asian.

41% of the participants graduated from high school or obtained a GED. 20.5% had some college, 13.7% had an Associate or Technical/Vocational Degree and 5.1% had Bachelors or equivalent four year degree. 18.8% did not attend school beyond 11th grade with some completing less than that.

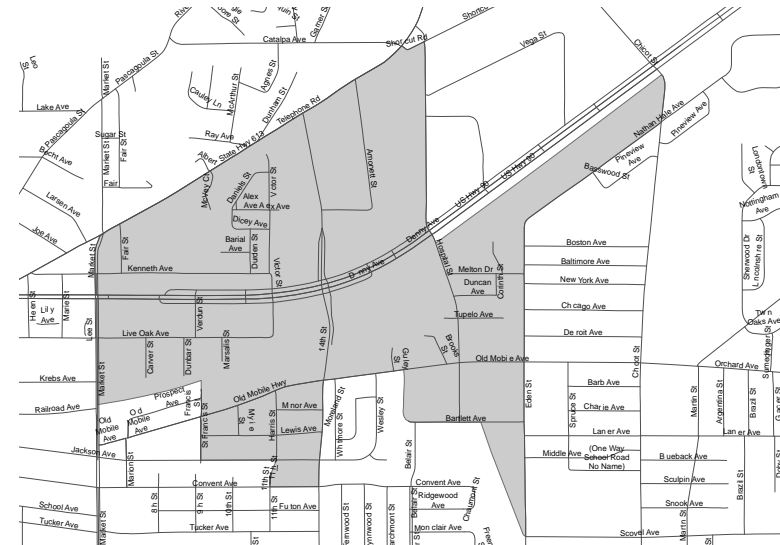
26.3% of the respondents reported being employed and working 40 or more hours per week. Another 26.3% said they were not employed and not looking for work. There were 19.5% of the participants not employed and looking for work. 12.7% were employed from 1-39 hours per week.

Employed

Of the employed, 23.5% described their job category to be Construction or Extraction and 15.7% reported Food Preparation and Serving. Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance jobs were represented by 7.8% of the employed respondents. 23.5% of the participants reported their current occupation as Other. Some of the "Other" categories written in included Welder, Housekeeper and Cashier.

25% of employed respondents earn an annual salary of \$10,000 to \$15,000, the largest of any wage category. 14.6% make less than \$10,000 and 12.5% make \$15,001 to \$20,000 or \$25,001-\$30,000. 25% of the employed report an annual salary of more than \$40,000. Union membership appears to be low with only 2 respondents identifying a specific union affiliation.

64.7% of the employed survey participants are satisfied with their current position. The remaining 35.3% are not satisfied. With the ability to choose multiple answers, wages are reported to be an issue for 76.5% of the respondents. 47.1% are not satisfied with their position and 41.2% have issues with hours and/or schedule. Management is also a problem as indicated by 29.4% of employed survey participants.



Not Employed, Looking for Work

50% of those reporting to be not employed but looking for work have been without a job for more than six months. 18.1% have been looking for work for a month or less.

59.1% of the unemployed but looking for work participants described the job search experience to be Below Average. 31.8% call the experience Average and 9.1% believe the process is Excellent.

68.4% have utilized job search and placement assistance at a local WIN Job Center. 15.8% have used the career and aptitude assessment services as well as resume preparation assistance. 21.1% report not using any of the WIN Job Center services.

When asked to choose among specific "barriers to employment," 31.8% responded that Transportation problems are an issue. For 18.2% Discrimination is an issue and 13.6% didn't identify any of the potential barriers listed in the survey. Other choices selected include Previous Work Experience, and Family Health Problems.

Not Employed, Not Looking for Work

There are more people unemployed and not looking for work than there are those unemployed and searching for jobs. Of those not looking for work, 33.3% say the primary cause is No Childcare. 22.2% have a Temporary Illness or Injury and another 22.2% are Caring for a spouse, parent or other family member. 11.1% are Enrolled in education or training program and 11.15% are Not interested in work.

Analysis - Northwest Gulfport

General Characteristics

There were 141 survey participants. Only working age people (ages 16 and higher) were asked to complete the survey. 34.09% of the participants were 21 to 29 years of age; 27.27% were 40 to 49; and 18.18% were 30-39 in the Northwest Gulfport survey area. 13.64% were over 60 years old.

Females represented 72.3% of the respondents and 27.27% were male. 87.5% identified themselves as Black or African-American and 7.5% as White. 5% were self-identified as Other. These were the only races/ethnicities reported.

38.64% of the participants graduated from high school or obtained a GED. 18.18% had some college, 11.36% had an Associate or Technical/Vocational Degree and 4.55% had Bachelors or equivalent four year degree. 13.64% did not attend school beyond 11th grade with some completing less than that.

19.86% of the respondents reported being employed and working 40 or more hours per week. Another 19.86% said they were working less than 40 hours per week. 35.46% described themselves as not employed but looking for work and 5.67% were not employed and not looking for work. 7.09% of the participants were self-employed.

Employed

Of the employed, 29.41% described their job category as Other. Occupations listed included Banking, Builder and Hairdresser. 19.12% reported working in Food Preparation and Serving jobs. Casino/Gaming jobs were reported by 10.29% of participants and 7.3% of them are in Healthcare Support jobs.

23.44% of employed respondents earn an annual salary of \$10,000 to \$15,000, and another 23.44% reported making less than \$10,000. 9.38% make \$15,001 to \$20,000 and 15.63% earn an annual wage of \$25,001-\$30,000. 9.38% of the employed report an annual salary of more than \$40,000. Union membership appears to be low with only 2.9% of respondents saying they currently were a trade union member.

56.92% of the employed survey participants are satisfied with their current position. The remaining 43.08% are not satisfied. With the ability to choose multiple answers, wages are reported to be an issue for 66.67% of the respondents. Management is a problem for 50% of the employed participants and 16.67% have issues with hours and/or schedule. The percentages for this particular question are overstated, being that it was answered by only 6 persons.

Not Employed, Looking for Work

53.85% of those reporting to be not employed but looking for work have been without a job for more than six months. 15.3% have been looking for 1 to 2 months and 15.38% have been looking for work for 3 to 4 months.

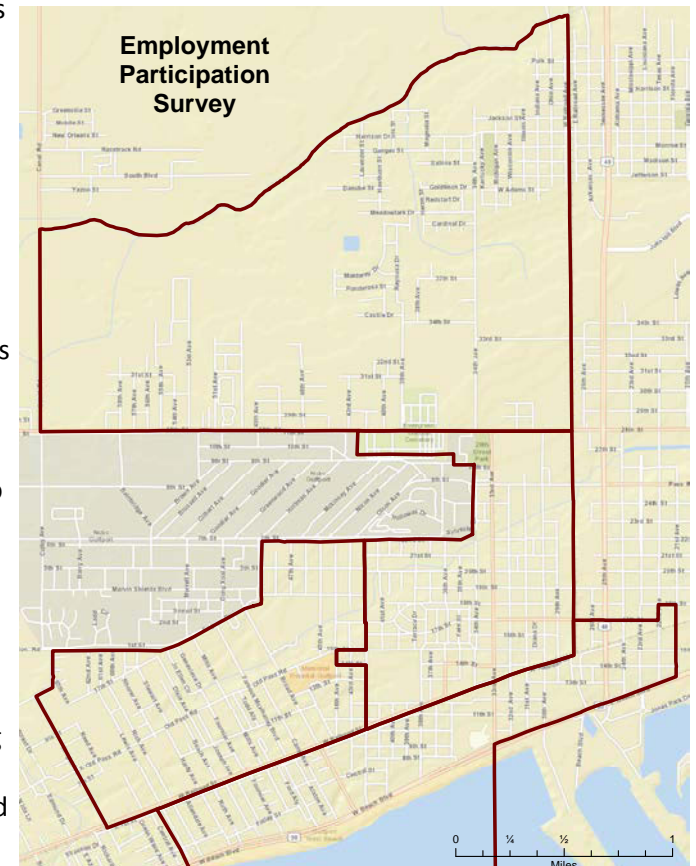
30.77% of the unemployed but looking for work participants described the job search experience to be Above Average. 30.77% call the experience excellent; 23.08% call it Average; and 23.08% say it is Below Average.

61.54% have utilized job search and placement assistance at a local WIN Job Center. 23.08% have used the Temporary Hiring Agency service and 23.08% report not using any WIN Job Center services.

When asked to choose specific “barriers to employment,” 35.71% said that Child Care Options are a problem. Credit /Financial issues, Criminal History, Education Level, Family Health Problems, and Transportation options were all listed as barriers by 14.29% of respondents. 28.57% didn’t identify with any of the potential barriers listed in the survey. The only other barrier selected was Previous Work Experience.

Not Employed, Not Looking for Work

With only 5.67% of the total respondents not employed and not looking for work, there were only a few participants who answered the “Why” question. Reasons identified included Care for Spouse, Parent, other family member, Enrolled in education or training program, and No transportation to and from work.



Economic Developers Roundtable

Discussion

In October of 2012, a small group of private and public sector individuals met as part of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee for the SMPDD. The committee membership is from the 15-county region and included representatives from the Plan for Opportunity 3-county region.

Based on the conversation the following perceptions were gathered:

- Many needs exist in vocational trades and they are critical to the region's industrial base.
- There is a general belief that out-of-state companies are recruiting graduates more aggressively than the local companies.
- There appears to be a disconnect between the available local jobs and the available local workers in a particular trade. For instance, there are many tech jobs available but graduates are not aware of them and leave the area instead.
- Some of the group believes graduates may be lured to other states for better job opportunities and higher paying jobs.
- Quality of life factors are the most important in recruiting workers, not necessarily money.
- Regional solutions should be considered to address retaining and recruiting the working-age population.
- Though unable to quantify, there is a general concern that a population of citizens exist who simply are disengaged from workforce and choose not to participate.
- There is a general concern that there is also a population that may be trainable and hireable but cannot maintain employment due to work ethic and/or ability to pass drug/alcohol screenings. For this reason, many employers are choosing to delay specific skills training until it is proven that an employee can show up on time and pass a drug test.
- "Soft skills" training must become a priority.
- Economic development professionals report that there is still a mismatch between jobs available and the skill sets of the existing workforce. This is being addressed through apprenticeship programs but should remain a major area of focus for the workforce training providers and local industry.
- Economic developers report that there is a shortage of welders and steel workers.
- Developers say that with a large percentage of the workforce in industrial trades nearing retirement age combined with a national trend away from technical college programs, there may soon be a large skills gap in the manufacturing/industrial job sector.
- It has been suggested that the region has the potential to take advantage of re-shoring activities --- jobs that had moved out of the country but are now returning to the USA. It is believed that many of the advanced positions can be lured back to the United States.
- While incomes on the Gulf Coast are higher than the statewide estimates, they are still low by national standards. Strategies need to be explored that will raise the income of the region.
- In order to raise incomes and pull people out of poverty, there should be a focus on adult education and job training.
- If the workforce is better skilled, the region can attract higher paying jobs.
- With Energy recognized as an economic development initiative by the Governor, local developers believe the region may have potential in biomass (forest products and other ag-related) and shale natural gas.
- Healthcare is another statewide economic development initiative and it should be explored by the region as a potential growth business sector.
- There may be underutilization of new water and sewer infrastructure on the Gulf Coast.
- Infrastructure improvements are costly and whenever possible, cooperation and consolidation of services should be considered.
- While the supply and demand for natural gas is good, developers noted that there can be difficulties in getting gas companies to run new lines from distribution point to new properties/industrial customers at an affordable cost.
- It is believed that energy policy and renewables will stay top-of-mind for economic developers in the region.

Main Street Managers Focus Group

With downtown as a major focus of the economic development component of the Plan for Opportunity, it was important to engage the Main Street Managers of the downtowns in an open and candid discussion. Therefore, a focus group meeting was hosted by SMPDD on August 7, 2012, where questions regarding downtown development could be discussed. Eight of the twelve coast cities were in attendance as well as a representative from the Mississippi Main Street Association.

The following questions were used as lead-ins to facilitate the conversation:

1. People often speak of mixed-use downtowns that include housing. Is that a realistic strategy for our downtowns?
2. In terms of being an economic development priority, how would you rank interest and investment from the 1) local government, 2) private sector, 3) residents and 4) county economic development office?
3. If you could pick one site for redevelopment, renovation or infill in your downtown, what site would that be?
4. How important are incentives to downtown development?
5. What are the barriers to downtown development, specifically infill, restoration and adaptive reuse?
6. Are there any tools/resources/methods you can identify to regionally overcome these barriers?

All of the managers were supportive of mixed-use downtowns and believe that housing should be included. They believe that housing is a realistic strategy and is possible with the appropriate investment. Managers report that it has been a struggle to find housing developers for downtown, but they are coming slowly.

It was recognized that interest and investment varies from city to city, but all managers agreed that downtown should be a top priority for city leaders and local economic development agencies. They would like to see more of these leaders engaged in downtown development efforts and suggested that more serve on local Main Street boards. It was reported that residents tend to have more of an interest in downtown if they live on the fringes of the city center. Otherwise, there doesn't appear to be much interest.

Managers see incentives, big or small, as key to attracting more small businesses to their city centers. There are also opportunities for large, empty buildings to be used as retail incubators for local artists, antiques, grocers

and other small business. It was also suggested that the "slabs" left behind by Hurricane Katrina be repurposed with outdoor furniture, community gardens and open-air flower shops. While most people like to see development downtown, managers said that locals can be very protective of how they remember downtown and can demonstrate some resistance to change.

Managers also said that cracked sidewalks, unsightly overhead utilities and crumbling infrastructure needs must be addressed by the jurisdictions and should be documented through formal downtown walking audits. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility is an important consideration in the audit process. Unfortunately, it appears most downtown revitalization offices/Main Street offices are understaffed and do not have the resources to conduct audit activities.

Fundraising efforts, walking tours, realtor and investor outreach were all discussed in depth. Examples of creative and successful local programs include grant programs where funds may be used for utility payment assistance or landscaping for downtown tenants. All managers agreed that they must find ways to keep the city centers relevant and to advertise the assets of downtowns. Biloxi has been particularly successful in promoting its downtown through investor fairs and realtor meet-and-greets.

Downtown Business Owner/Operator Survey

Overview

The committee believed input from additional stakeholders was necessary to fully assess downtown development. A business owner/operator survey was conducted to gain insight about downtown from the businesses themselves.

The information from the downtown survey provides a collective albeit limited report on the business environment in 12 downtowns or city centers along the Gulf Coast.

Survey Creation and Testing

The survey was created by the planning division of Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District (SMPDD). Created using Survey Monkey software, the questionnaire could only be answered online. Participants were informed in writing that their answers would be combined with others to create a report on the status of downtowns. It was explained that there would be no individual responses released or quoted and that the survey was intended to be reviewed only by Plan for Opportunity consortium members.

Methods

The survey was available online for approximately 30 days. Several outreach methods were used to let downtown tenants know about the survey: Survey link on Coast Chamber of Commerce and affiliates websites, Plan for Opportunity website, targeted emailing through local Main Street programs and city officials and informational flyers delivered directly to tenants in person in each town. The flyer gave a direct link to the online survey.

The survey participation was extremely low. So while the results may not be statistically valid, they do provide some insight into how some business owners and operators view the downtown business climate and will help in formulating recommendations to be included in the Plan for Opportunity.

Analysis

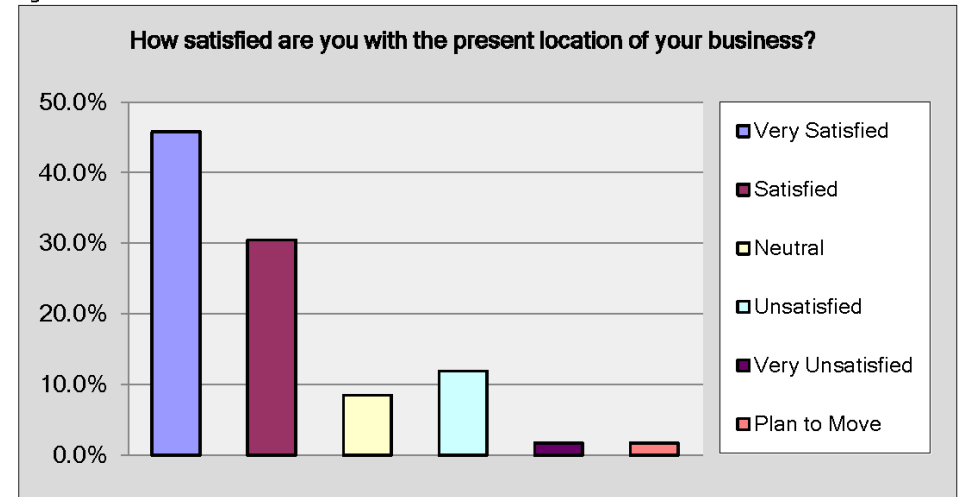
General Characteristics

There were 60 survey participants. Only businesses located in a City's defined downtown district were asked to participate. A breakdown of the number of participating businesses, by City, is as follows:

- Bay St. Louis – 9
- Biloxi – 10
- Diamondhead – 1
- D 'Iberville – 1
- Gautier - 0
- Gulfport – 7
- Long Beach – 0
- Moss Point - 0
- Pascagoula – 14
- Pass Christian – 8
- Ocean Springs – 9
- Waveland - 1

Of these business surveyed, 17 owned the buildings they are operating from while 43 leased the buildings, with 3 of those wanting to purchase the building in the future. When asked **“How satisfied are you with present location of your business?”** 46% responded that they were Very Satisfied, 30% were Satisfied, 9% were Neutral, 12% were Unsatisfied, 1.5% were Very Unsatisfied, and 1.5% Plan to Move.

Figure 1



The participants were asked to indicate how many years the business had: Been in Operation, Been at Current Location, and Been Under Current Ownership? A breakdown of the responses is available in figure 2.

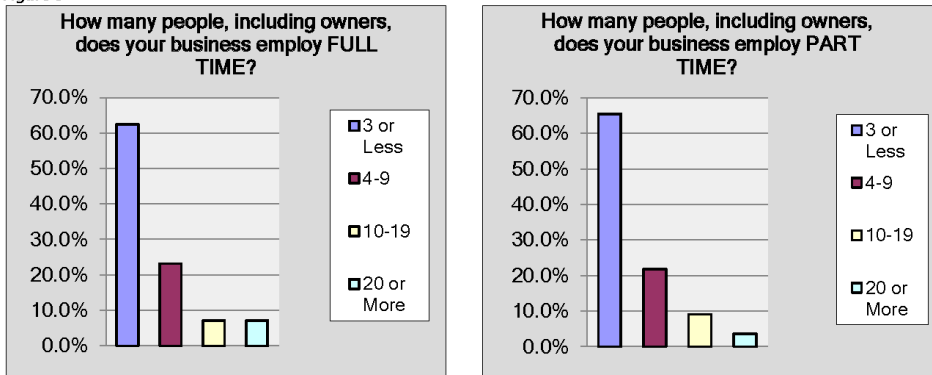
Figure 2

How many years has your business:			
	Been in Operation?	Been at Current Location?	Been Under Current Ownership?
Under 1	3	6	2
1-5	16	8	6
6-10	4	6	2
11-20	5	3	2
over 20	7	3	8

The businesses were asked “Do you have plans to expand or reduce operations of your business in the next year?”; 16 plan to expand products/ services or square footage downtown, 6 plan to expand products/services or square footage at a location outside the downtown, 5 plan to reduce products/ services or square footage downtown, and 31 don’t have any plans for changes in the next year.

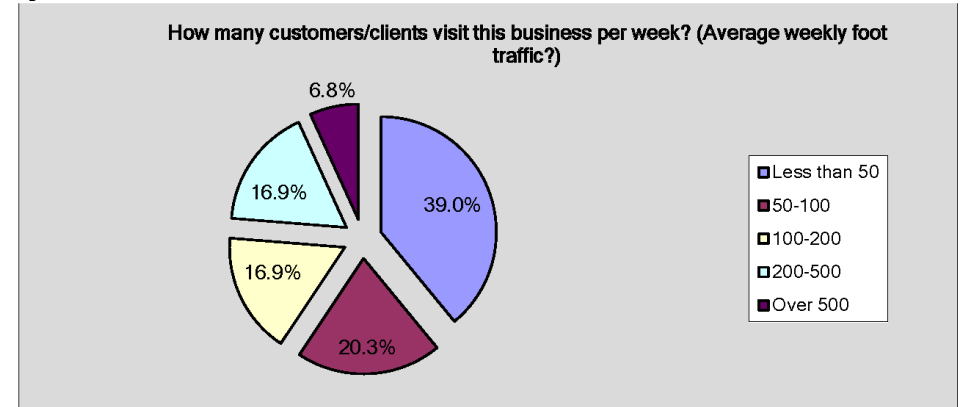
The businesses were asked to indicate the number of people (including owners) that were employed both full time and part time. The majority of businesses employed 3 or less people both full and part time. A full breakdown is available below:

Figure 3



Participants were also asked how many customers/clients visit their business per week to gauge the average weekly foot traffic in downtown districts. 39% indicated less than 50, 20% said they see 50-100 customers per week, 17% answered 100-200 per week, 17% answered 200-500 per week, and 7% of businesses see over 500 customers per week.

Figure 4



Busiest Times for Businesses

The survey asked participants the busiest times for their business by; time of day, day of week, and month of year. The results of these questions are shown below:

When asked “During an average week of the year, what are the busiest times for your business by day?” the results were as follows (participants were asked to pick two times per day):

Figure 5

During an average week of the year, what are the busiest times for your business by day?				
	Before 11:00 am	11:00 am - 2:00 pm	2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	After 5:00 pm
Monday	10 (23%)	28 (65%)	16 (37%)	8 (19%)
Tuesday	8 (17%)	31 (66%)	19 (40%)	8 (17%)
Wednesday	6 (12%)	36 (69%)	19 (37%)	12 (23%)
Thursday	5 (10%)	33 (67%)	21 (43%)	12 (24%)
Friday	5 (9%)	31 (58%)	27 (51%)	13 (25%)
Saturday	7 (16%)	26 (60%)	21 (49%)	11 (26%)
Sunday	2 (11%)	9 (50%)	5 (28%)	6 (33%)

Participants were also asked to indicate the busiest and slowest days of the week for their business. On average, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday were the **busiest** days for these businesses. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday were the **slowest** days for the businesses surveyed. Saturday, Sunday, and Monday were the days most selected as **closed for business** by participants. A full breakdown of the results is below:

Figure 6

What are the three busiest and slowest days of the week for this business?			
	Busiest Days	Slowest Days	Closed for Business
Monday	14 (27%)	26 (50%)	12 (23%)
Tuesday	10 (19%)	39 (75%)	3 (6%)
Wednesday	14 (30%)	33 (72%)	0 (0%)
Thursday	19 (50%)	18 (47%)	1 (3%)
Friday	44 (80%)	9 (16%)	2 (4%)
Saturday	35 (64%)	7 (13%)	15 (27%)
Sunday	9 (16%)	7 (13%)	41 (73%)

To determine the busiest times of the year for downtown businesses, participants we asked “**What are the three busiest and slowest months of the year for this business?**” In order, October, May, and December were selected as the **busiest** months for downtown businesses. Conversely, January, February, and August were the **slowest** months indicated by participants. A table showing the full results is below:

Figure 7

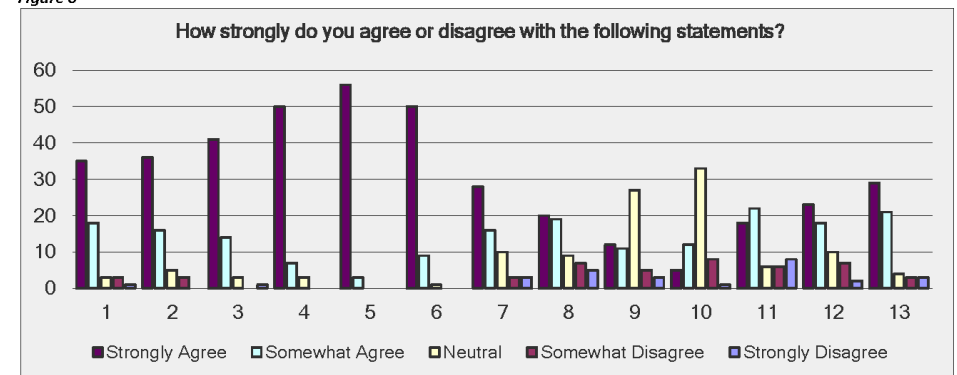
What are the three busiest and slowest months of the year for this business?		
	Busiest Months	Slowest Months
January	8 (17%)	38 (83%)
February	8 (20%)	33 (80%)
March	9 (43%)	12 (57%)
April	15 (65%)	8 (35%)
May	20 (74%)	7 (26%)
June	20 (61%)	13 (39%)
July	25 (71%)	10 (29%)
August	11 (38%)	18 (62%)
September	9 (39%)	14 (61%)
October	23 (79%)	6 (21%)
November	24 (71%)	10 (29%)
December	31 (74%)	11 (26%)

Downtown Business Owner Satisfaction

To gauge the satisfaction level of downtown business owner/operators with the current state of their downtown district, a series of questions were asked related to amenities, public services, business interaction, and other issues that affect the functionality of a downtown area. Participants were presented a list of statements and asked to rate that statement with options from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. A list of the statements and the corresponding results are below.

1. Local police protection is outstanding
2. I feel safe downtown even at night
3. Local fire protection is outstanding
4. I try to buy products and services locally
5. I try to direct customers to other local businesses
6. I seek ways to cooperate with other local businesses
7. The existing local business mix helps my business
8. The look and feel of downtown helps my business
9. Housing for employees is readily available
10. Childcare for employees is readily available
11. Downtown has a positive image that attracts customers
12. Downtown is an excellent place to have a businesses
13. Downtown has improved in the last 5 years

Figure 8

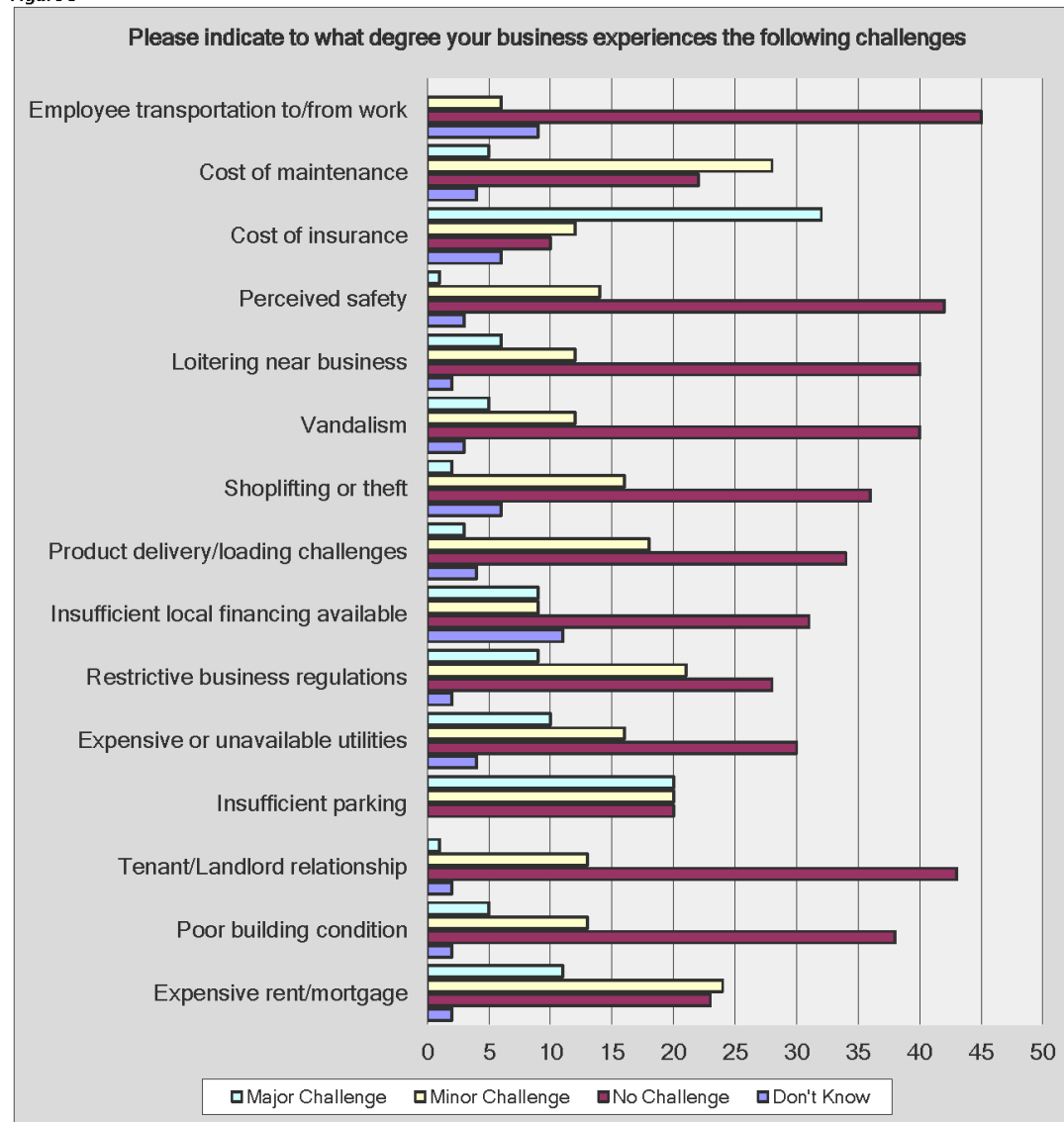


Downtown Business Challenges

To determine if downtown businesses were experiencing any challenges related to operating downtown, a series of challenging issues were presented and participants were asked to indicate how much of a challenge each issue was to their business. The choices available to select were: major challenge, minor challenge, no challenge, and don't know. A list of the challenges and the corresponding results are below:

1. Expensive rent/mortgage
2. Poor building condition
3. Tenant/Landlord relationship
4. Insufficient parking
5. Expensive or unavailable utilities
6. Restrictive business regulations
7. Insufficient local financing
8. Product delivery/loading
9. Shoplifting or theft
10. Vandalism
11. Loitering near business
12. Perceived safety
13. Cost of insurance
14. Cost of Maintenance
15. Employee transportation to and from work

Figure 9



Additional Businesses Downtown

The survey also asked what additional retail and service oriented businesses owner/operators would like to see in their downtown districts. Participants were asked to choose four types of businesses in both retail and service. A list of the top 5 of category is below:

Figure 10

Retail	Service
Bakery/Grocery	Coffee Shop
Book and News	Movie Theatre
Gift and Souvenir	Mail/Copy Service
Sporting Goods	Full Service Restaurant
Art Dealers	Bar/Grill

Local Events are Good for Business

To see what local events/festivals were perceived to have the greatest economic impact on downtown businesses, owner/operators were asked “Which local events (past or present) increase sales volume for your business, either before, during, or after the event?” Participants were asked to list up to five events that had the largest economic impact on their business. The results were then entered into Wordle, a word cloud generator, which gives greater prominence to the events that were mentioned the most by downtown business owners.



Conclusion

The stakeholder outreach activities detailed in this report allowed the committee to gather a variety of perspectives on the economic landscape of the region. The document will be used along with the *Regional Economic Development Assessment* and the *Downtown Profiles and Analysis* to establish economic development and workforce recommendations for inclusion in the final *Plan for Opportunity*.

ⁱ Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty (RCAP) is defined as census tracts that contain: 1. A family poverty rate greater or equal to 40 percent, or a family poverty rate greater or equal to 300 percent of the metro region’s tract average (whichever is lower); and 2. A majority (greater than 50 percent) non-white population.