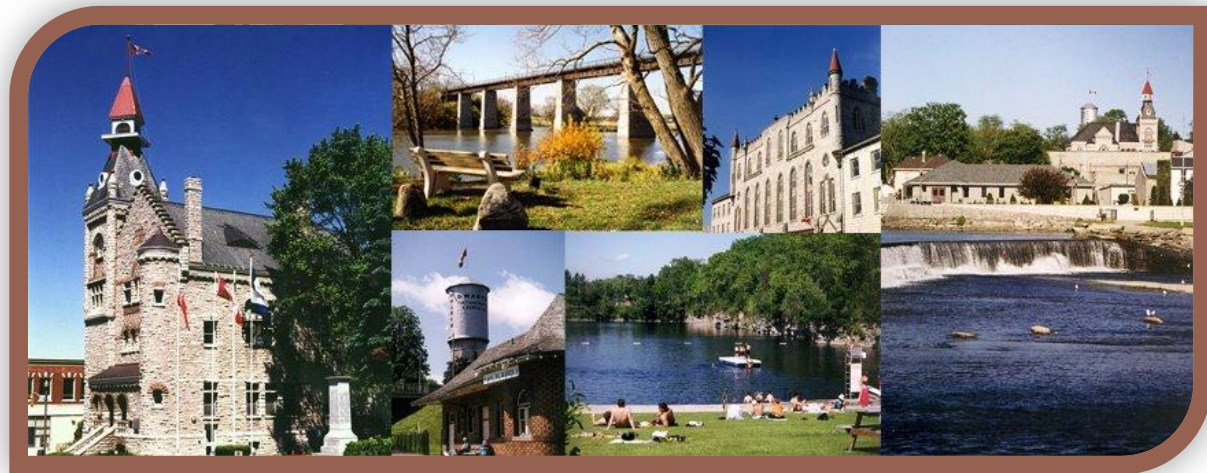




St. Marys Business Retention and Expansion Project: Final Report



St. Marys, Ontario
June 2012

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Background

Although St. Marys' history dates back to the mid-1800s, formal economic development is a relatively new concept for the Town and Council. The Town completed a Community Based Strategic Plan and an Economic Development Strategy in 2010. Both leadership documents highlight the importance of economic development and more specifically the downtown as an economic engine for not only St. Marys but for the region as well.

The BR+E was seen as the logical initiative to implement the Town's Community Based Strategic Plan recommendations and build capacity within the community. The St. Marys Strategic Plan highlights five goals in the plan. Two goals highlight the need for the community to build a "Prosperous Local Economy" and a "Strong and Vibrant Downtown". Specific actions within these plans focus on the importance to: build a stronger relationship with the business community and understand their needs; encourage linkages between education, business and government; develop branding and marketing plans around downtown re-development, and tourism and investment opportunities.

Strengths

Through the BR+E project, the business community reported St.Marys strengths: quality of life and sense of community, location, assets (the Pyramid Recreation Centre, St.Marys Memorial Hospital, The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame), spirit of collaboration, word of mouth advertising and a stable workforce. Ultimately, the community must capitalize on its strengths and minimize its barriers. This report details each and outlines action plans decided on by the BR+E Task Force group.

Economic Barrier

St. Marys has been hit hard by the recent changes in the economy. Over the last few years St. Marys has lost over 25% of its labour force through plant closures, reductions in labour force and closure of many of our downtown retail enterprises. The Town hopes to work closer with its business community. The BR+E project is a tool to identify issues and and develop a path forward.

Business Retention and Expansion Project Overview

Business retention and expansion is an economic development strategy with a focus on supporting businesses already existing in the community. A structured business survey is used to encourage dialogue with local businesses with the intent of identifying issues, concerns and potential opportunities and taking action where appropriate. The Town of St. Marys and the St. Marys Business Improvement Area partnered to implement the BR+E project. With funding contributions from the Town of St.Marys and the St.Marys BIA, an application was submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Rural Economic Development (RED) program and this funding contribution was matched by the province to cover the project costs.

Below are the objectives that were established for the St.Marys BR+E survey project.

Short-term Objectives of St.Marys BR+E project

- Develop a strong relationship with the business community and understand their needs and requirements through a formal Business Retention and Expansion Strategy and Program
- Support the needs of the business community
- Identify and act on key issues raised by the business community that are a disincentive to business operation/growth

Long-term Objectives of St.Marys BR+E project

- Increase the competitiveness of local businesses
- Enhance our Strategic Plan and Economic Development Strategy
- Embrace the opportunities that the new economy presents to St. Marys
- Increase local capacity for economic development
- Growth of existing businesses and employment
- Attraction of new businesses and employees
- Growth and attraction of businesses in the “cultural sector”
- No vacancies in the downtown
- More employees in the downtown
- More investment in renovations and new construction
- More people living in the core
- A healthier town and downtown



The St.Marys BR+E project conducted a cross-sector Business and Retention and Expansion survey from November 2011 to March 2012. Project coordinator Esther DeYoung visited businesses in person where possible. Several respondents filled out the survey themselves and returned the completed survey to the coordinator. Sixty-five businesses were randomly selected and invited to participate. Student Riley Richardson assisted survey data entry.

A Leadership Team, formed in fall 2011, guided the process. The Leadership Team met in person and provided feedback by email and phone on survey strategies, community resources, problem solving and public meeting planning. The Leadership Team was an invaluable resource for generating awareness of the BR+E project and gaining community and business support.

Leadership Team

- ▶ Ken Telfer, retired business person
- ▶ Sue Hyatt, Business Owner (BIA)
- ▶ Charlie Hammond, Business Owner (BIA)
- ▶ Gemma Mendez-Smith, Executive Director, Four County Labour Market Planning Board
- ▶ Robert Brindley, former Chief Administrative Officer, Town of St.Marys
- ▶ Grant Brouwer, Manager of Development, Town of St.Marys
- ▶ Bob Wilhelm, Business Owner
- ▶ Bill Osborne, Town of St.Marys Councillor

Task Force

Following survey completion, task force meetings were scheduled April 2, April 23 and May 28, 2012 to examine the preliminary report. A task force of community leaders worked together to identify themes and opportunities in order to prioritize the top issues affecting the local business community.

The Task Force group was comprised of members of the St.Marys Economic Development Advisory Committee, municipal staff, town councillors and the Leadership Team. The Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) formed in 2010 and meets monthly. The EDAC group was a natural fit for the Task Force. EDAC's mandate is "to encourage a positive business, industrial, and tourism climate for the benefit of St. Marys and area". It promotes a diversified economy and supports business retention by making recommendations to Town staff and council. The Task Force also included town staff from the planning and building departments, the CAO, Mayor, and several town councillors. Scott Crawford of The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame also participated in the task force meetings.

The BR+E project was completed June 2012.



St.Marys Business Retention and Expansion Project Task Force Group

- ▶ Bart Algra, Business Owner
- ▶ Mayor Steve Grose
- ▶ Councillor Carey Pope, Councillor, Business Owner
- ▶ Councillor Tony Winter
- ▶ Greg Thompson, Business Owner
- ▶ Al Strathdee, Business Owner
- ▶ Ian Ball, Business Owner
- ▶ Dick MacPherson, Business Owner
- ▶ Kevin McLlwain, CAO-Clerk
- ▶ Esther DeYoung, BR+E Project Coordinator
- ▶ Jasmin Ralph, Municipal Intern
- ▶ Susan Luckhardt, Planning Coordinator
- ▶ Scott Crawford, The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame
- ▶ Brendan Ginty, Business Manager
- ▶ Cathy Forster, Business Owner
- ▶ Stephen Habermehl, Business Owner
- ▶ Councillor Lynn Hainer
- ▶ Len Hawkins, Business Owner

Vicki Luke and Daryl Ball from the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) facilitated the discussion and action planning at the task force retreats.

Profile of Businesses Surveyed

The following chart categorizes the businesses surveyed using the North American Industrial Classification System.

NAICS sector	# surveyed
Agriculture	1
Construction	3
Manufacturing	5
Wholesale Trade	2
Retail Trade	18
Transportation/Warehouse	1
Finance/Insurance	3
Rental Leasing	3
Professional Services	5
Health Care	4
Arts/Entertainment	2
Accommodation/Food	6
Other Services	12

Company Information

1. Which of the following best describes your business?

Responses	Number	%
Corporation	41	49
Sole Proprietorship	15	19
Non-Profit Corporation	1	1
Co-operative	1	2
Limited Liability Corporation	1	1
Limited Liability Partnership	1	2
Partnership	8	11
Franchise	3	5
Home-based business	2	4
Other	2	4

2. How many years has your company been in operation?

Responses	Number	(%)
1 to 3 years	8	12%
4 to 10 years	16	25%
11 to 25 years	23	35%
26 to 35 years	6	9%
Over 35 years	12	18%
Total	65	100%

There are a significant percentage of long-term businesses in St.Marys, while 12% have been in business one to three years.

3. How many employees work at this location?

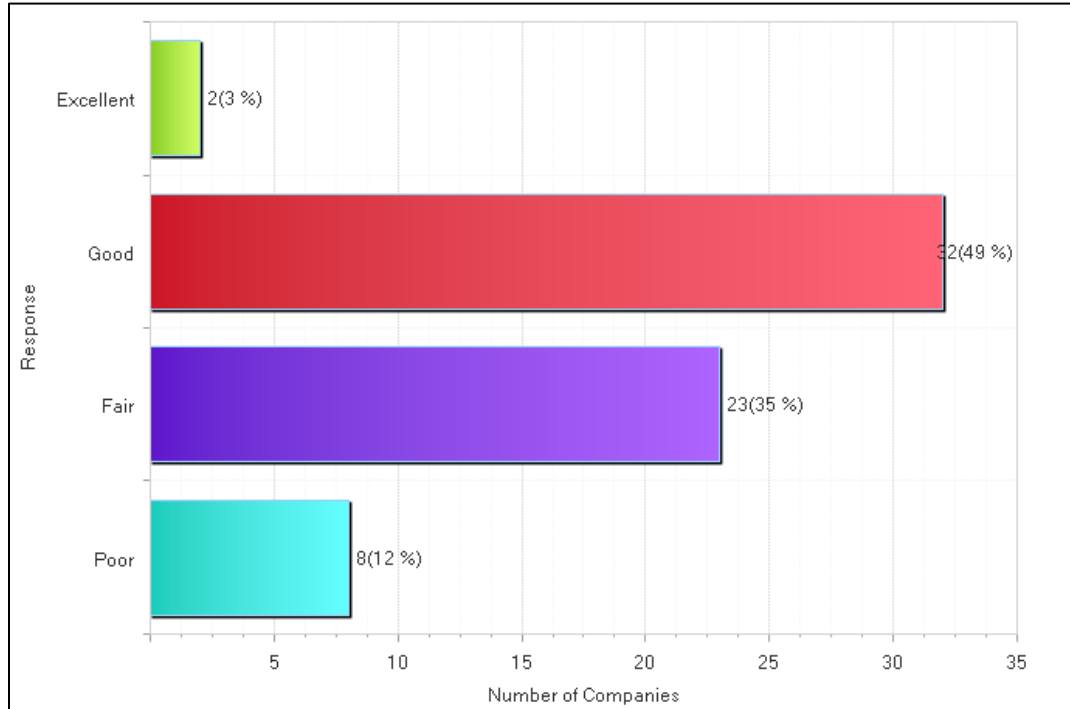
Responses	Number	%
1 - 4	30	45
5 - 9	18	27
10 - 14	6	11
15 - 19	2	3
20 - 29	2	3
50 - 99	3	5
100 - 299	3	5
300 or more	1	2

Nearly two-thirds of businesses surveyed employed less than 10 people with 7 employing between 50 and 300 or more people.

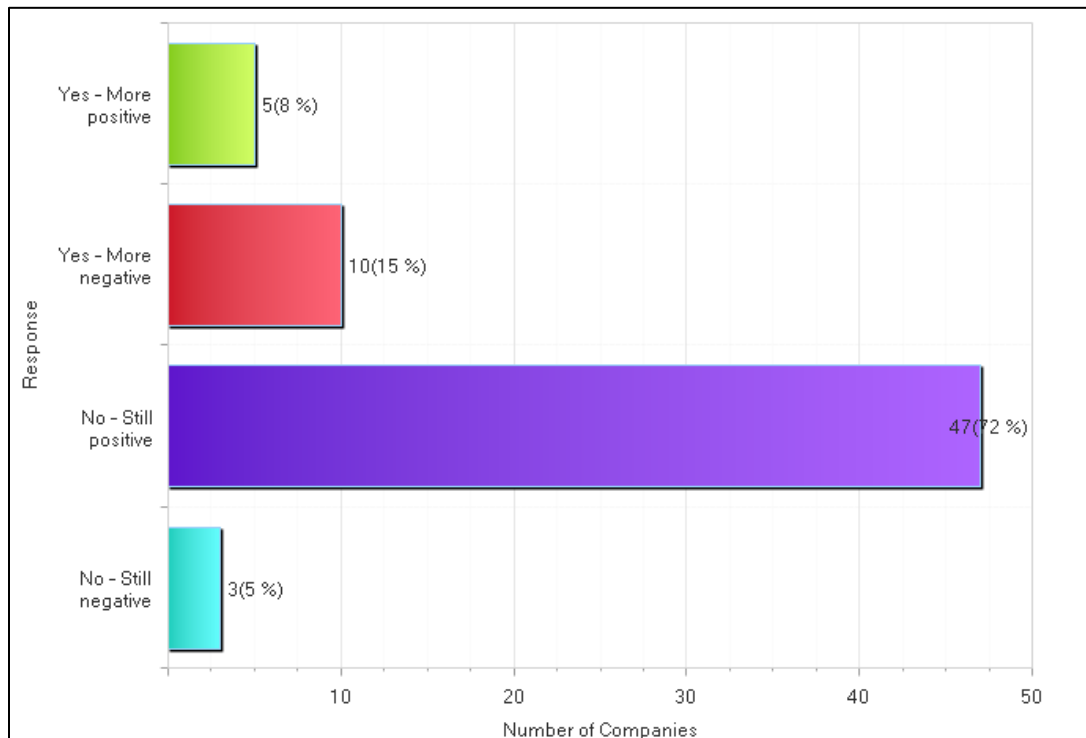
Business Climate

4. Please rate the local business climate

Survey respondents were asked to rate the local business climate and to assess, over the course of the last 3 years, whether their opinion had remained the same or grown more, or less, negative or positive.



5. In the past 3 years has your attitude about doing business in this community changed?



Survey respondents were asked their opinions on opportunities and challenges facing the local business climate and specific recommendations to improve the local business climate.

6. What is the biggest opportunity for the local business climate in this community?

Responses include filling downtown stores, clarifying permits and by-laws, more and better festivals, residential development, better collaboration, attracting retirees, attracting unique businesses, capitalizing on the Pyramid Recreation Centre and the hospital. See [Appendix A](#) for complete responses.

7. What is the biggest challenge facing the local business climate in this community?

Responses include competition with larger centres, people leaving town to shop, increasing awareness of local products and services, attracting new businesses, “red tape” and deterioration of the downtown. See [Appendix A](#) for the complete responses.

8. What are your specific recommendations to improve the local business climate?

Responses include business networking sessions to include the entire business community, Sunday shopping increase, better communication with the Town, business recruitment, boosting awareness of local shopping opportunities, and better marketing of the town. See [Appendix A](#) for the complete responses.

9. Describe the barriers to expansion of existing and new business in the community?

Top Barriers

Businesses were asked to select barriers to the expansion of existing and new business. The top seven from each category are listed.

Existing business

1. Business taxes
2. Utilities-cost
3. Resistance from local business
4. Business insurance
5. Lack of proactive business recruitment
6. Approvals process
7. Availability of skilled labour

New business

- Lack of proactive business recruitment
- Business taxes
- Availability of serviced land
- Utilities-cost
- Approvals process
- Resistance from local business
- Business insurance

Please see [Appendix B](#) for complete responses.

10. Have you accessed any Federal or Provincial programs/services within the past 2 years?

Responses	Number	(%)
Yes	11	18
No	49	82%
Total	65	100%

11. Are you planning on accessing any Federal or Provincial program/services?

Responses	Number	(%)
Yes	14	23%
No	47	77%
Total	65	100%

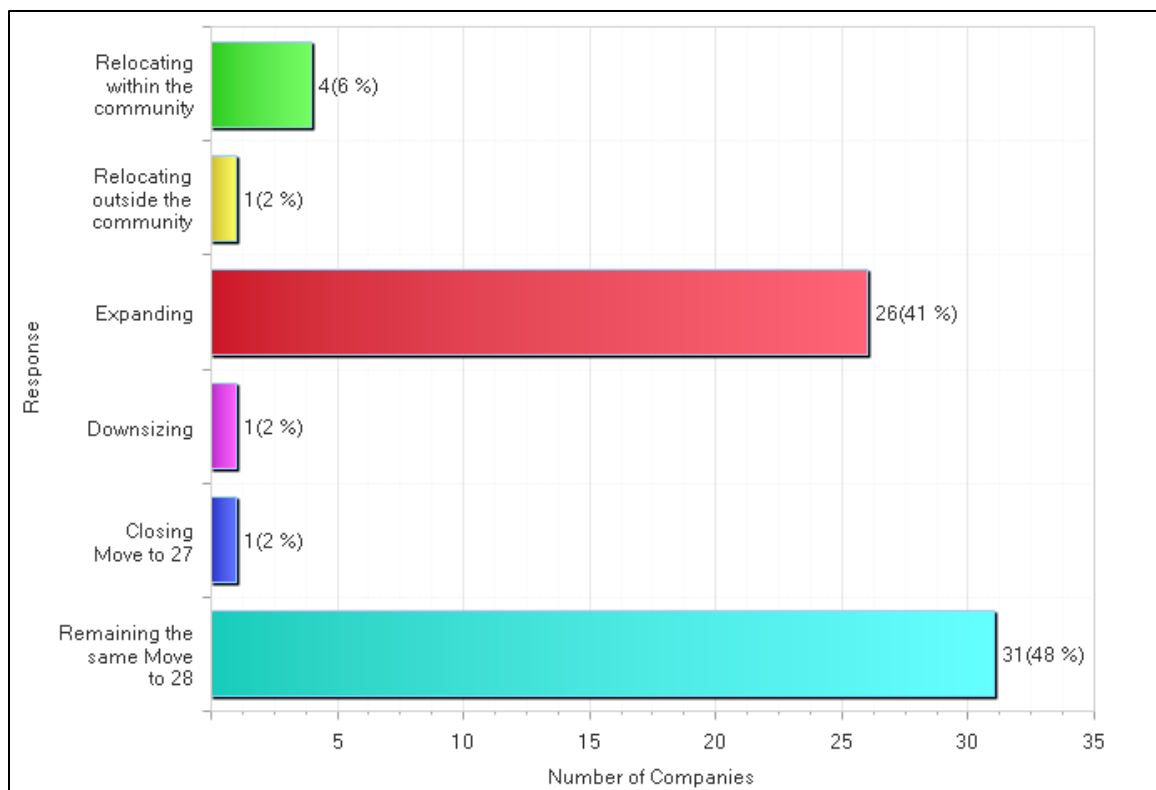
12. Would you like to receive any information on Federal or Provincial programs/services?

Responses	Number	(%)
Yes	21	42%
No	29	58%
Total	65	100%

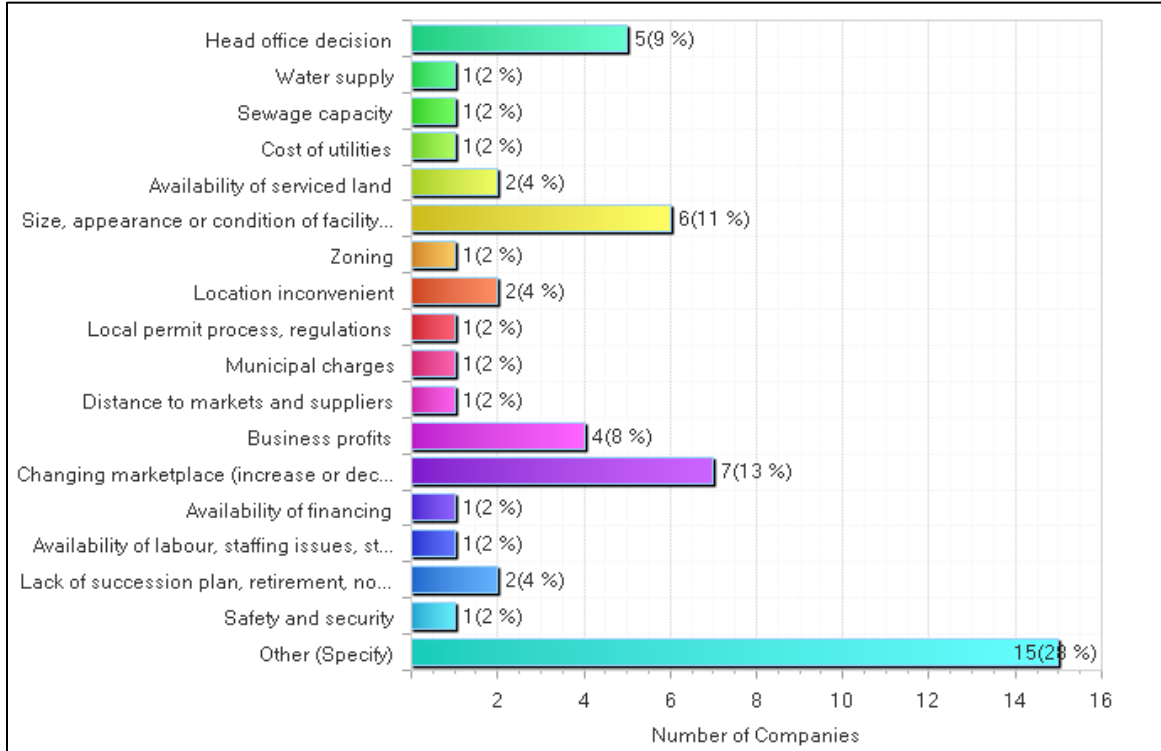
Future Plans

Next, respondents were asked to predict business growth over the next 3 years. The majority of businesses expect to expand (41%) or remain the same (48%). One business will experience a takeover and one predicts downsizing due to slowing sales related to the recession. One business is considering relocating outside the community due to lower tax rates in the neighbouring county. Four businesses hoping to relocate inside the community have either outgrown their current space, would like a building with a parking lot or wish to purchase their own buildings. Town of St.Marys senior staff have been made aware of business future plans and will follow up accordingly.

13. Which would best describe your plans for your business over the next 3 years?



14. What would be the main reason for your answer to the above question?

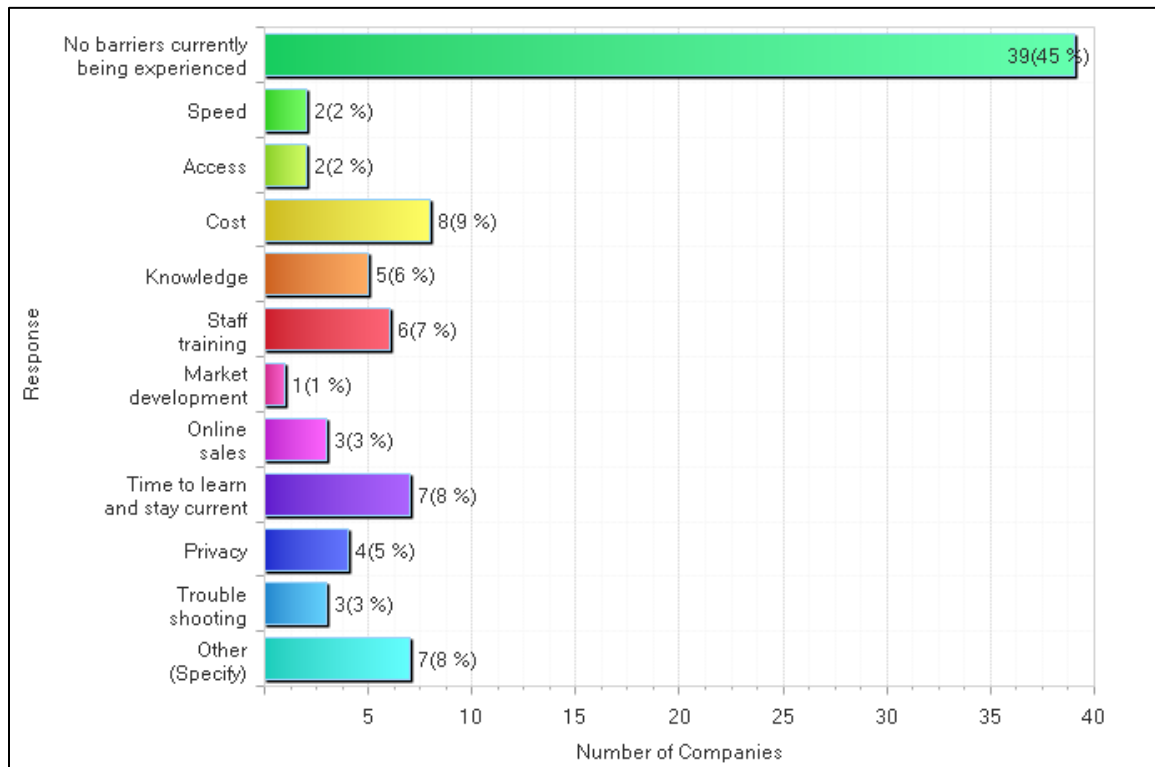


Business Development

15. Would your business benefit from receiving information about exploring alternative energy sources or more appropriate energy sources?

Responses	Number	(%)
Yes	25	38%
No	40	62%
Total	65	100%

16. Which of the following factors related to your use of IT/Internet, if any, are barriers to your business?



When businesses were asked about their use of Information Technology and the Internet, there were several mentions of brown outs and power surges affecting business operations. As well, several respondents noted, for highly-skilled operations, they must seek IT resources outside of the community. Cost, knowledge, and time to learn ranked highest for a question on barriers related to use of IT and the internet.

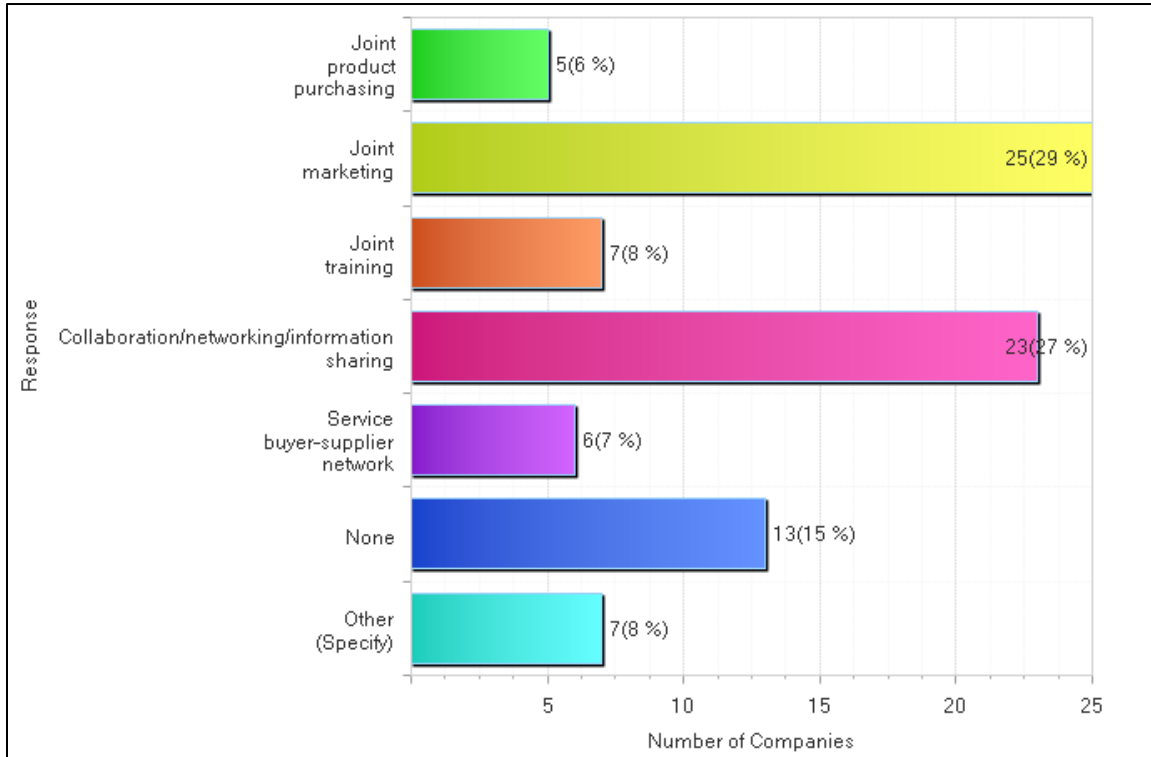
17. What products or services would you like to purchase locally that are now being purchased outside of the area?

Top responses included office supplies, everyday necessities, and grocery items.

Please see [Appendix C](#) for a complete list.

18. Are you interested in working cooperatively with other businesses in your community to pursue any of the following?

When businesses were asked to choose how they would like to work cooperatively with businesses, joint marketing (29%) and collaboration/networking/information (27%) came out on top.



19. Are you aware of complementary business opportunities in your community that would allow your business to grow?

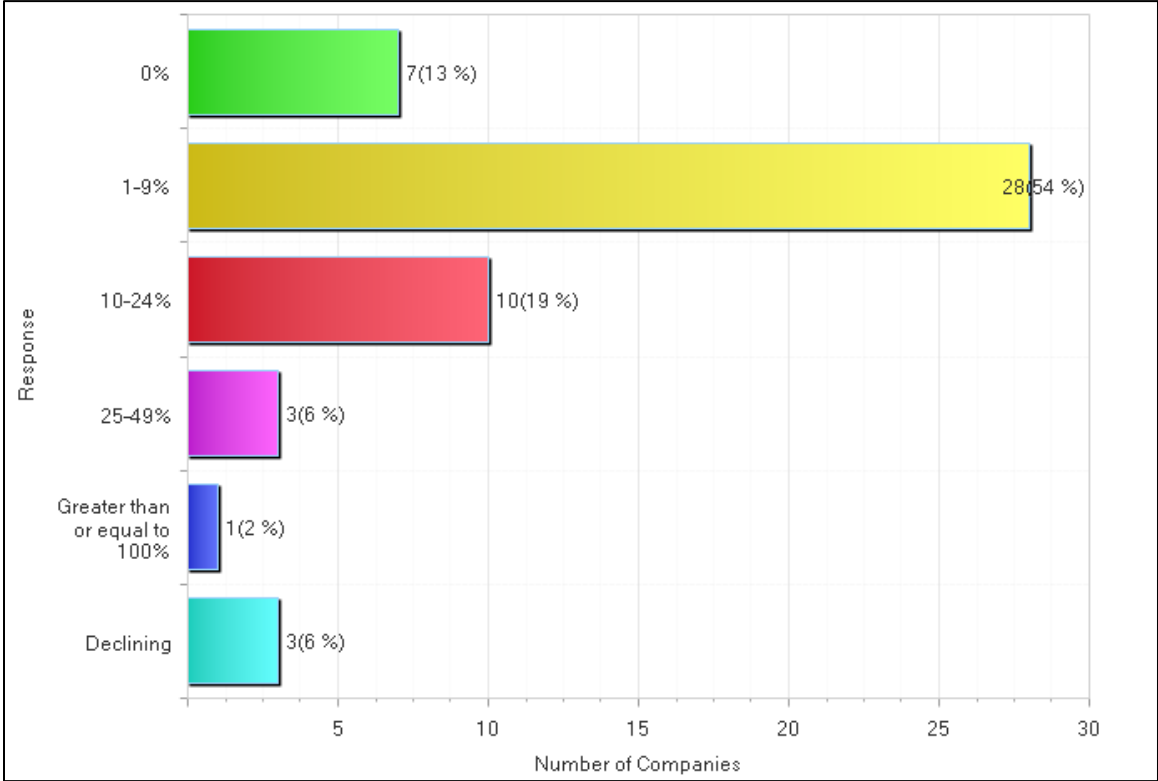
Responses	Number	(%)
Yes	14	22%
No	51	78%
Total	65	100%



Business Development Markets

20. What is the projected sales growth in the next year at this company?

There is a stable growth pattern in St.Marys with relatively few businesses predicting, over the next year, that sales growth will decline or stay at 0%. The majority of businesses expected to grow 1% to 9% with a moderate percentage expecting to grow at 10 to 24%.



21. What do you feel is the reason for this?

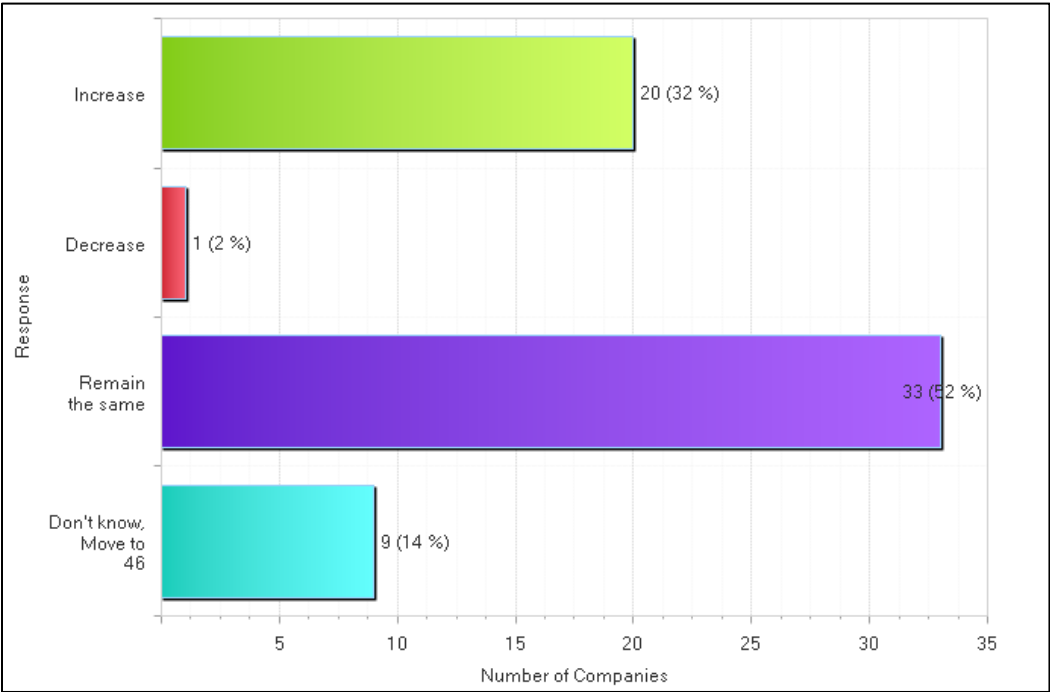
Please see [Appendix D](#).



Workforce Development

22. During the next 3 years, do you think the number of employees in your business will increase, decrease, or remain the same?

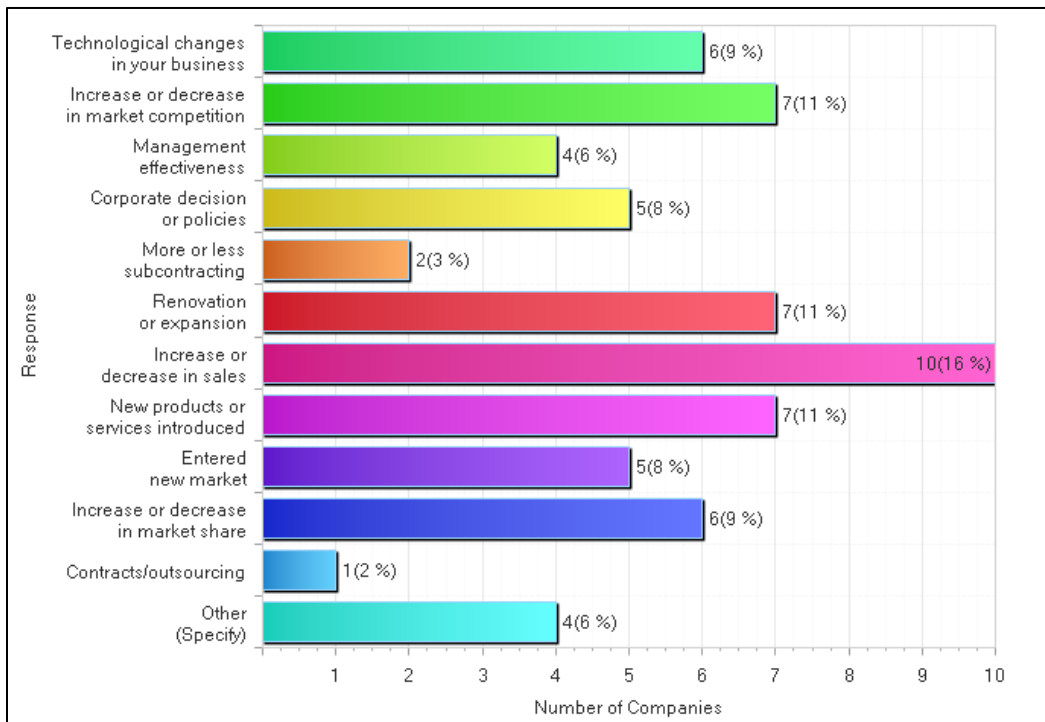
The majority of businesses expected, over the next 3 years, their workforce to grow or remain the same.



Nineteen businesses expect to add employees to their workforce. Fourteen businesses provided estimates on how many employees they hoped to add. Eleven businesses expected to grow by 1-3 employees, and three businesses planned to add between 10-22 employees.



23. What factors are responsible for this?

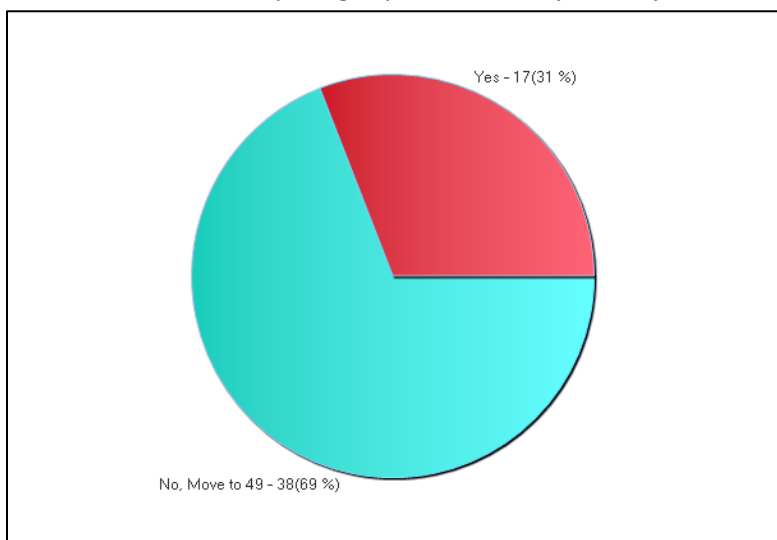


The answers for the “Other” option were: nominal growth, adding rooms, tourism increase, outgrowing space, taxes, adding more services and outgrowing current location.

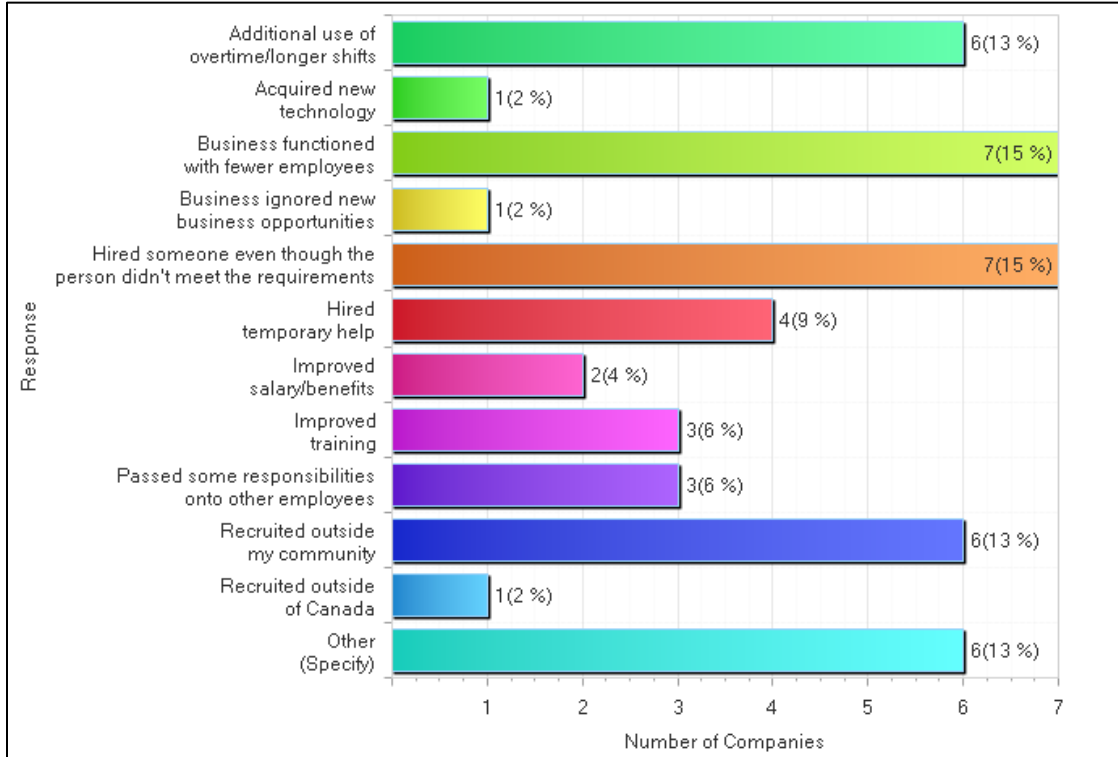
24. Has your business had difficulty hiring?

A third of business respondents experience hiring difficulties. When asked to pick the reason for hiring difficulties, top responses were lack of specific skills or training, too few applicants, lack of relevant experience and lack of motivation/poor attitude.

Of 26 businesses anticipating expansion, nearly half experience hiring difficulties.

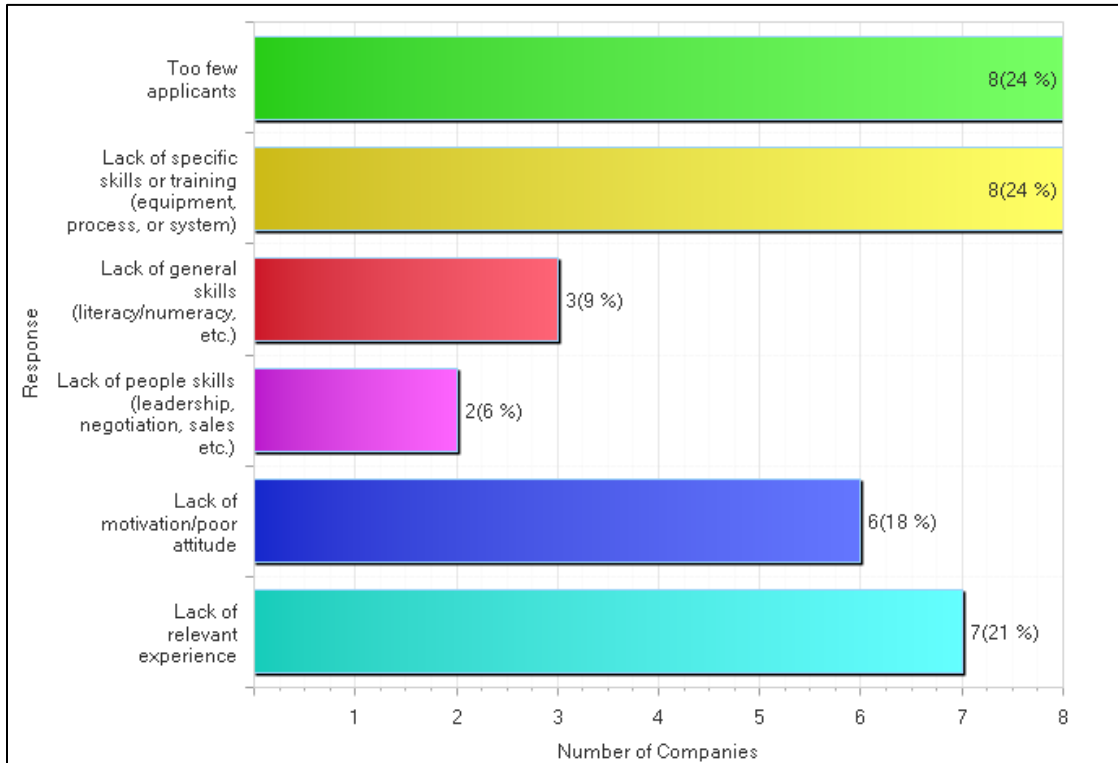


25. How did you overcome the hiring difficulties?

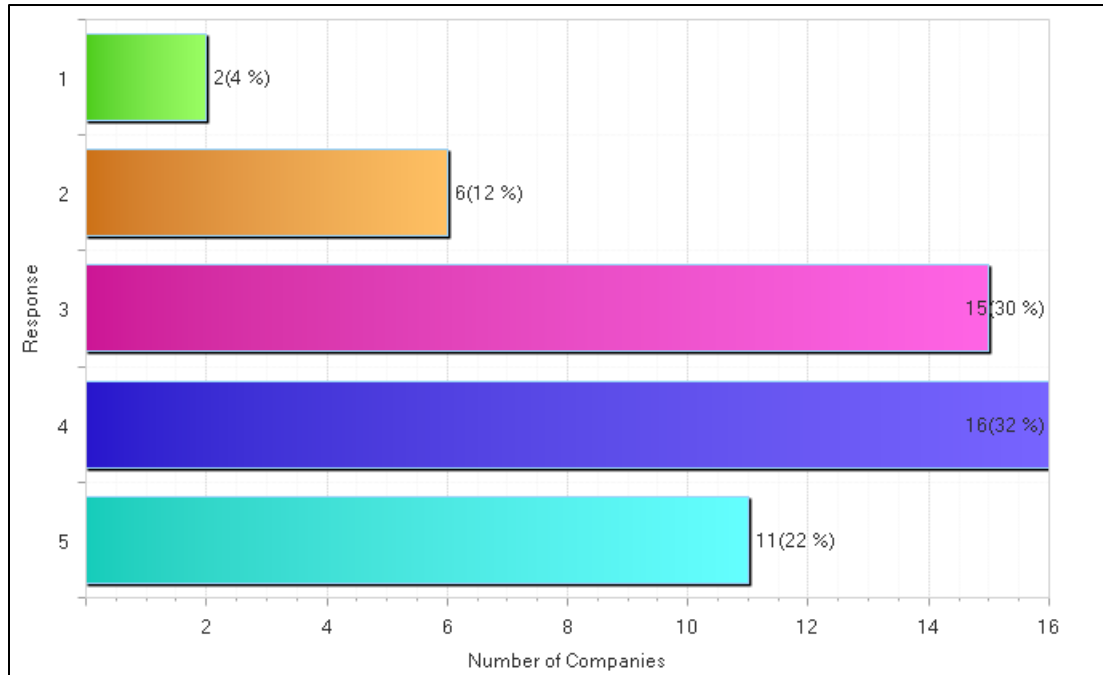


The answers for the “other” options were: waited it out, used family members, and hadn’t yet dealt with it.

26. How would you describe your company’s hiring challenges?

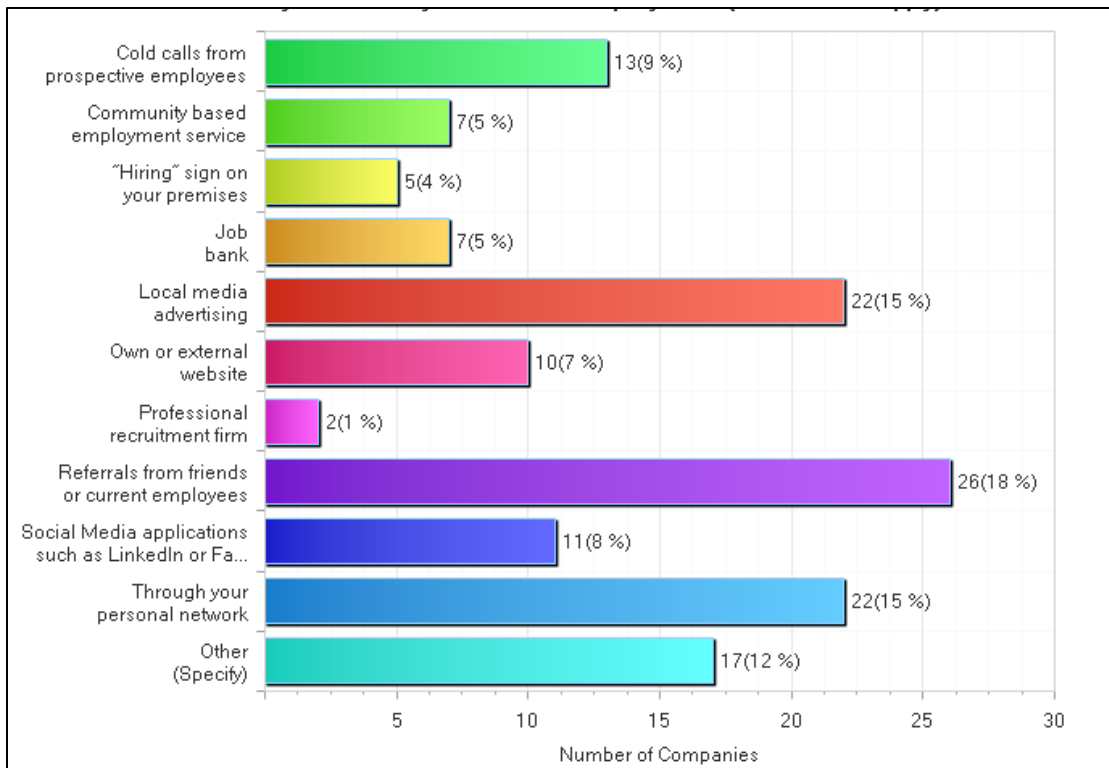


27. On a scale of 1-5 rank the skill profile of your company's workforce, where 1 indicates the majority of the jobs are relatively low skilled and 5 means that the majority of the jobs are highly skilled.



Fifty-four percent of businesses responding to this question rated their employees at a 4 or 5 out of 5 for skill level.

28. How do you currently recruit new employees?



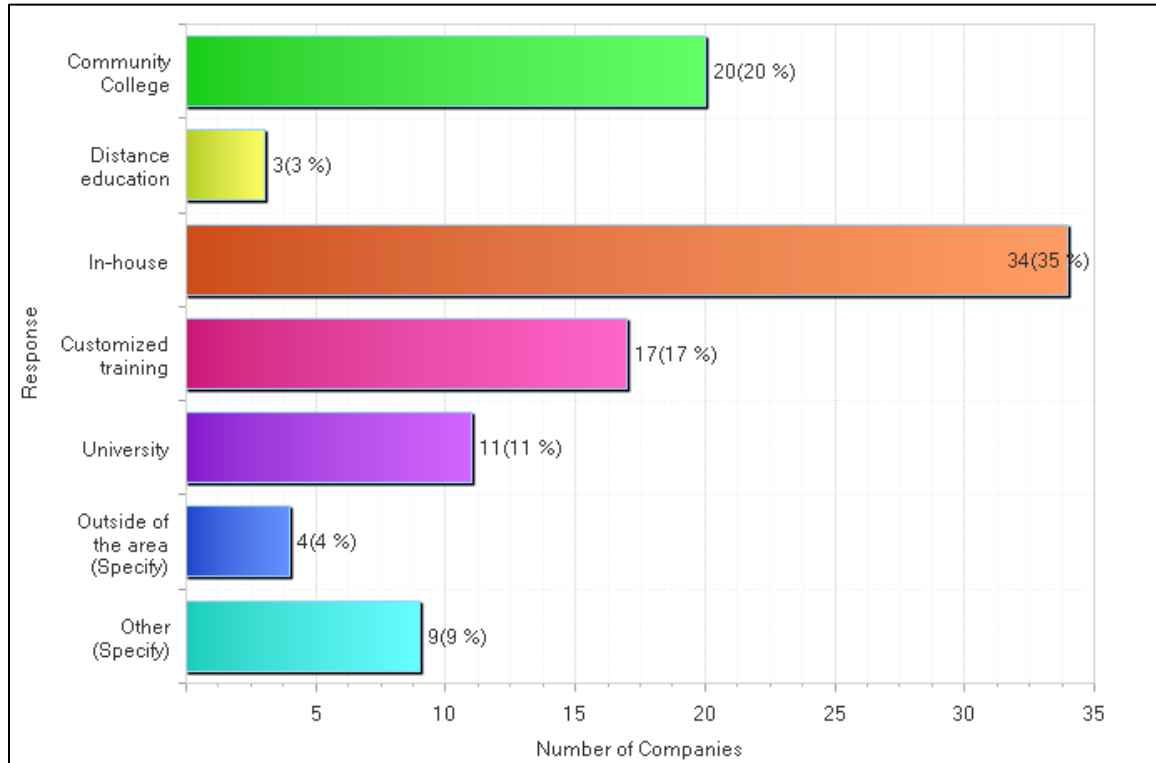
The answers for the "other" options were: recruit from area community college, Kijiji, recruit from local high school, recruit in the community, use own bank of resumes, internet ads

29. Do you offer new employees from outside the area any assistance with relocation or integration into the community?

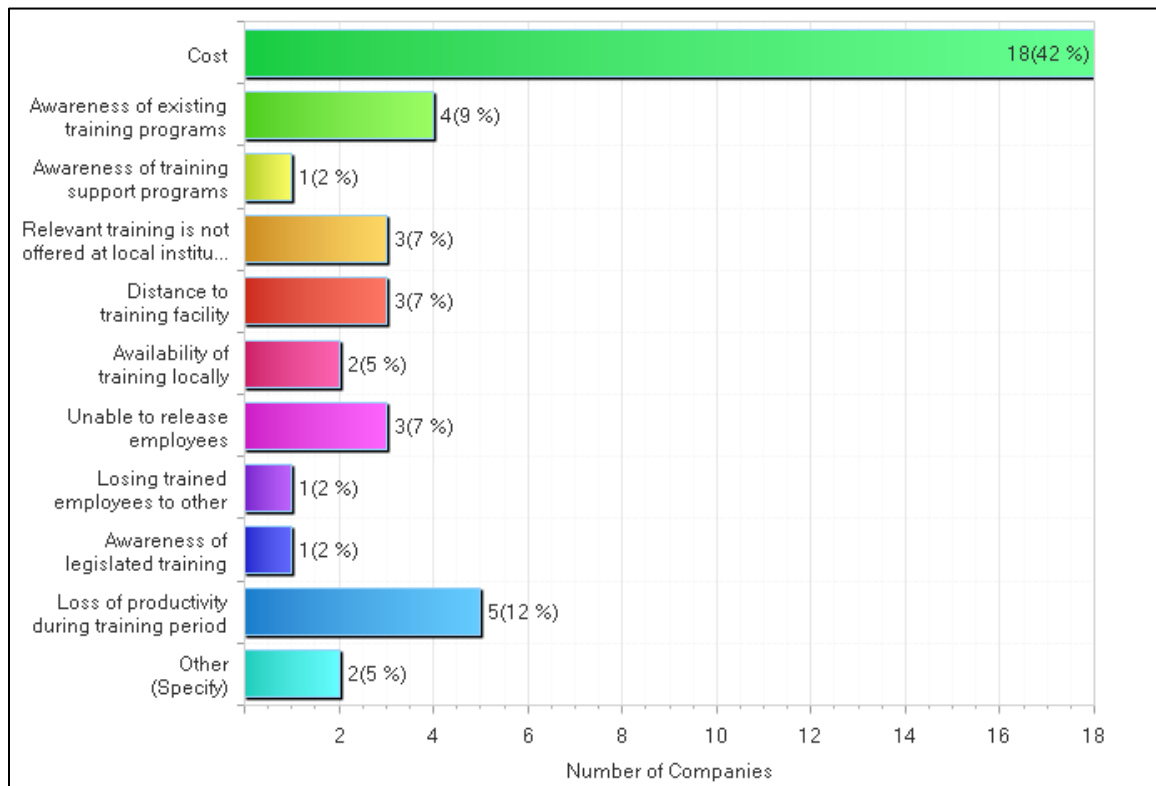
Responses	Number	(%)
Often	1	3%
Sometimes	5	15%
Rarely	5	12%
N/A	24	71%



30. Where do your employees currently receive training?



31. What are the most significant barriers to your employees receiving the necessary training?



Business Development Community

32. List the community's 3 advantages as a place to do business.

Responses include small and friendly town, easy word of mouth advertising, beautiful town, good services, good pool of unskilled labour, cooperation among retailers and professionals, good place to raise a family, cost effective, close to major cities. Please see [Appendix E](#) for the complete responses.

33. List the community's 3 disadvantages as a place to do business

Responses include lack of business recruitment, low retail flow, bureaucratic red tape, high downtown rents, high taxes, zoning, limited options for expansion, lack of returning tourists, locals shop out of town, small catchment. Please see [Appendix E](#) for the complete responses.

34. Which new businesses, services or products would you like to see added to this community?

Responses include clothing stores, educational classes, department stores, more restaurant options, shoe store, gas stations, cheaper grocery stores, bakery, Chamber of Commerce, fast food, niche shops, tourism at the Flats. Please see [Appendix F](#) for the complete responses.

35. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 means poorly and 5 means ideally, how well positioned is your community to attract new immigrant employees?

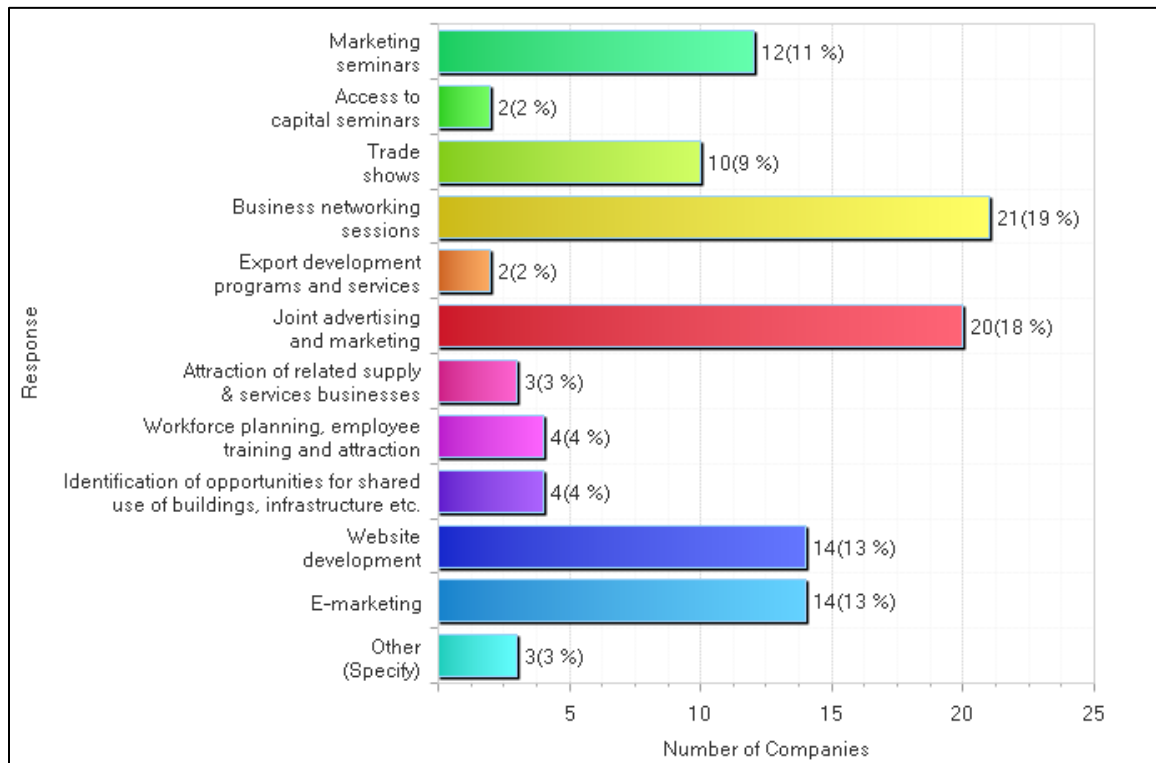
Responses	Number	(%)
No Response	12	19%
1 (poorly)	16	25%
2	17	27%
3	14	22%
4	4	6%
5 (ideally)	1	2%

36. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 means poorly and 5 means ideally, how well positioned is your community to attract and retain employees under the age of thirty?

Responses	Number	(%)
No Response	10	16%
1 (poorly)	4	6%
2	21	33%
3	22	34%
4 (ideally)	7	11%

See [Appendix G](#) for comments on attracting immigrant employees and retaining employees under the age of thirty.

37. What assistance, if any, could the business community, local government or economic development organizations give to support your business?



38. In terms of overall impact on this community's economic development, what is the most significant change, positive or negative, that you have witnessed in your community in the past five years?

Please see [Appendix H](#).

39. In terms of overall impact on this community's economic development, what is the most significant change that you would like to see in your community in the next five years?

Please see [Appendix H](#).

Top Priority Issues and Action Plans

The task force group met on three separate occasions to identify top issues from the preliminary report. The task force was divided into 5 groups and returned to a larger group setting to pare down the list to 23 issues. The group then voted on the top issues. Out of this came four top issues. The top four Priority Issues have a corresponding action plan. The remaining issue list, at this point in the BR+E process, are either currently being addressed or hopefully will be in the future.

- **Priority Issue #:1 Promotion of town assets and strengths, clarifying identity (2 issues combined)**
- **Priority Issue#2: Capitalizing on unique St.Marys assets to respond to competition from larger centres**
- **Priority Issue #3: Attracting outsiders (London, Stratford,USA)to the downtown**

# 1-ACTION PLAN- Promoting town assets and clarifying identity				
Activity	Task	Responsibility	Timeline	Resources
-Identify customer demographics and analyze data to determine who shops in St.Marys and why	-Place a short survey in downtown shops for locals and visitors to fill out; employ digital surveys where possible -Identify what local, regional, global customers want	-Town staff (IT department, program coordinator) - Businesses and their marketing	-Survey by season. Begin in summer 2012	-Use hard copy surveys but explore online and/or smart phone applications

This action plan would help local merchants discover who is visiting downtown St.Marys. A survey administered by local merchants would help store owners learn who is shopping in St.Marys, how much they are spending and why they are visiting. By extension, when visitors are asked why they visit St.Marys, we will learn the top reasons people travel to St.Marys, which can help inform future marketing initiatives and help solidify St.Marys' identity. The OMAFRA Downtown Revitalization program could assist this initiative and the OMAFRA economic development advisor for St. Marys, Daryl Ball, can be contacted for more information on this program. This action plan would also assist in addressing issue #7 (**Lack of tourism and tourism retention**).

#2-ACTION PLAN- Capitalizing on unique St.Marys assets to respond to competition from larger centres				
Activity	Task	Responsibility	Timeline	Resources
-Baseball Hall of Fame	-Use Hall of Fame facilities for concerts and community activities	-Volunteers and Baseball Hall of Fame staff	TBD	
-RV Hook up	-Find suitable land to situate an RV park for short-term tourists. Charge \$10/day	-Town staff	TBD	
-Speak with farmer's market	-Advertise at area campgrounds	-Volunteers		
-Idea: Amazing Race historical scavenger hunt		-Volunteers		

This action plan seeks to capitalize on St.Marys existing assets. The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum opened in 1998 and sits on 32 acres of land donated by St.Marys Cement. The CBHFM board and staff would need to be approached to explore using the grounds for increased community activities.

It is well-known that accommodations in St.Marys are often booked up in the busy summer months. A space for recreational vehicles to park for a short term (2-3 day) stay, ideally close to the downtown, would allow for a new type of tourism in town.

#3- ACTION PLAN- Attracting outsiders (London, Stratford,USA)to the downtown				
Activity	Task	Responsibility	Timeline	Resources
-Develop a marketing plan based on town identity	-Assistance to town staff by community members and coordination across whole municipal organization	-Town staff -Steering Committee- (CBHFM, museum, library, community members etc)	-Following activities to establish and approve a town identity	-Steering committee would complement town departments to create consistency
-Paddle boats/bike rentals	-Coordinate a group to develop events and branding	-Summer youth jobs program	-Summer	-Youth employment grants
-Capitalize on Monday's (businesses in neighbouring communities often close on Monday's	-Be open on Monday	BIA; Downtown Merchant's Association	ASAP	Regional Tourism organization; joint marketing pieces
-Historical stories	-Internet	-Museum -CBHFM	-ASAP	-Museum -CBHFM
-Package bundles- stay/eat/shop	-Speak with Perth County Visitors Association (PCVA)	-BIA/DMA -Town of St.Marys Tourism	-ASAP	-Town funds -Volunteers

The final action plan will require team work and communication among local groups to produce a coordinated effort. The action plan includes developing a marketing plan by combining the efforts of local stakeholders to streamline goals and priorities to attract tourists to St.Marys. As noted throughout the report, St.Mary possesses unique national treasures such as the Quarry and The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, and a formal steering committee encompassing key representatives would benefit everyone.

Actions to date

A desire for networking to include the entire business community emerged as a survey trend. As a result, prior to the presentation of the BR+E survey results, the “Names & Faces Networking Event”, was held June 7, 2012 at the St.Marys Pyramid Recreation Centre. Approximately 70 people attended representing all local business sectors. Attendees were able to meet and greet the new Town of St.Marys CAO, the Mayor, Town Councillors, and senior staff. This event hoped to begin to address priority issues #11 (**Improve Town of St.Marys relationship with business**) and issues #18 (**Increased networking opportunities**). The event received generally positive feedback and comments it be held on a regular basis. Fifty-two people stayed for the BR+E presentation and listened to local and regional speakers present on employer incentives, adult education and tourism. The Town of St.Marys partnered with the Four County Labour Market Planning Board, and its Executive Director Gemma Mendez-Smith, also a BR+E leadership committee member, to organize the speakers. Speakers came from the following agencies: Perth County Visitors Association, Conestoga Career Centre, Ontario Ministry of Training, College and Universities (MTCU) Apprenticeship Branch , Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, Partners in Employment, Perth Community Futures and the QUILL Learning Network. Partners in Employment in particular, a Perth County employment services agency with an office on Wellington St. in St.Marys, helped address Issue #21 (**Not using community based hiring resources**).

During the networking portion, a slideshow featuring local business photos and descriptions played in a section of the networking space. Both the Leadership Committee and EDAC have discussed possibly implementing a tradeshow style event for local business.

June 7, 2012 Names & Faces Networking



June 7, 2012 BR+E Presentation- Mayor Steve Grose kicking off the presentations



Further, the Town of St.Marys plans to organize a “Power Breakfast” where representatives of local services will present an overview of their businesses to local industry. Traditionally, the Power Breakfasts have targeted solely local industry, but the Town hopes to offer networking event open to all business on a more regular basis.

The Perth- Stratford Centre for Business, upon review of the preliminary report, stated their plan to offer Lunch and Learns and networking breakfasts in St.Marys. In particular, they noted they would like to offer social media and marketing lunch and learns, which help address Issues #10 (**Training opportunities for business**). The Centre for Business held a successful first St.Marys Business Networking Breakfast on May 23rd.

The Town of St.Marys is exploring bylaw enforcement services which will address Issue #14 (**Lack of parking**).

Finally, the Economic Development Advisory Committee will be a key group to champion the implementation of the action plans that developed from the BR+E survey project going forward.

Information Follow-up

Based on the survey results, one of the recommended actions is to provide additional information as requested by the businesses. The survey showed there is a high percentage (42%) of business people who want more information on federal and provincial incentives. Thirty-eighty percent of respondents would like to know more about alternative energy sources. While only a small percentage of respondents experienced a barrier for information technology and the internet, service disruption to any degrees for businesses is a cause of concern and should be addressed.

Complete List of Issues

1. **Not promoting town assets** (quality of life, visual beauty, personal service, small town experience, PRC, hospital) **and identity confusion**
2. **Competition from larger centres**
3. **Attracting outsiders** to the downtown – London, Stratford, U.S., we don't glean from Stratford
4. **Attracting and recruiting businesses** - the right mix, filling downtown stores, need to attract family business, need business and economic diversity
5. **Landlord issues**-vacant downtown buildings controlled by out of town landlords
6. **Selection of goods** – lack of, perception that we do not have certain goods in town (as many goods noted as needed in the survey results are in fact available in town)
7. **Lack of tourism/tourists**, low shopper and tourist retention or turnover for downtown merchant area
8. **Manufacturing decline**
9. Interest in **joint marketing**, cross sector marketing, assistance in marketing
10. **Hours of operations** are inconsistent
11. **Training** opportunities needed by businesses:
 - a. Weakness in Information Technology (IT) training and development
 - b. Assistance in marketing
 - c. Social Media
 - d. Human Resources
12. **Town of St. Marys relationship with business** can be improved (i.e. by-laws, communications), too much “red tape”, town's relationship with existing businesses
13. **Buy Local** - need to raise awareness and promote
14. **Lack of parking** – downtown
15. **Value added agriculture** economy improved

16. **Matching skilled labour with industry**
17. **Lack of room to grow** (availability of serviced land, buildings, rental properties)
18. **Marketing to new Canadians** and potential newcomers
19. Interest in **business networking** opportunities
20. Lack of **awareness of growth opportunities**
21. **Not using community based hiring resources**, lack of education about other recruitment services
22. **Lack of volunteers**
23. **People leaving-** residents

Appendix A

Question 6- What is the biggest opportunity for the local business climate in this community?

Business needs more clout in this town. People overlook the impact business has in the community. Business people contribute as volunteers etc, and there is a big hole if a business leaves.

Town needs to differentiate itself from other communities. We need to accentuate our differences. Need to attract more residents and need more affordable sized lots.

Focusing on retirees, serving retirees rather than manufacturing. The town has good bones, people want to stay here.

Residential development- it's prohibitive for outsiders. It's good for people to live here, and it makes for healthier and happier people.

Tourism

Creating a buffer for when WalMart/Target start in Stratford

Getting people to stay in town.

Hard to say because the community lost Dana and there's been nothing to replace Dana.

Somehow filling stores, more stable downtown

Try and maintain shopping locally. Locals not shopping, in trouble

Need to move outside the box, reinvent themselves if there's been a struggle, it is easy to feel beat down.

It can be 2-3 years before money starts being made at a new business.

How peaceful the town is and what we have is picturesque

Diversify the focus--from reading the paper, sees manufacturing focus but need to look elsewhere.

Niche manufacturing ie. Inno Tech seem like the best bet.

Owners live here. Better interest in ensuring people are invested in community and what's going on.

People are spending money in town.

There isn't one, we have to weather the storm of the recession the same as any other town.

Population growth

Survival

More festivals to bring people in

Seniors

Capture the people that live and work here to increase. Tourism doesn't make a difference, should change the focus from tourism to local shoppers

Target people to buy local

Cooperation and networking of merchant. Working close together and collaborating.

To attract outside customers because locals shop elsewhere

Small town, friendly atmosphere

To be open weekends, tourists expect things to be open on Sunday

Build on to the hospital. Retiring population. Piggy-back onto economic changes going on in Stratford.

Getting regular shoppers to come in from Stratford and London. Catering to our demographics (over 40). Having great customer services and taking advantage of being smaller stores. Collaborate and have cross-over with other downtown stores.

Try and maintain people shopping. Locals are not shopping here and the downtown is in trouble.

Tourism and shop locally

Diversified, local connections. History in the town. Biggest opportunity to get people to stay local and come in to the businesses.

Political leaders and the administration need to be sensitized, not very dynamic and hands on or entrepreneurial

Serving the needs of the aging population

Word of mouth advertising

Keeping people here and not from going into London

To build on our beautiful Victorian downtown and natural beauty of location

Listen to people- give them what they need so they keep shopping in town.

Attract unique businesses and become a trendy community A tourist area with an attractive waterfront. Port Perry is a good example of that.

Proximity to bigger centres. Filling the stores

Having people move to St.Marys. Schools and the PRC.

To be service-based. And Knowledge-based. An example business is Human Synergistics.

The potential streetscape of the downtown, the historic architecture, the bucolic setting should be taken advantage of. Anything that makes St.Marys attractive to walk around and spend sometime would be beneficial to retail

St.Marys is a good place to establish a family business. Pyramid Centre, hospital and new school make this a desirable place to live.

Question 7- What is the biggest challenge facing the local business climate in this community?

Competing with London & Stratford. The mindset has been to go out of town. There is expertise in the town and this has to be known.

Remaining relevant- using social media, competing against big box chains.

Retail-base. Community is not growing and is stagnant so you can't expect business to grow. We only support a population base ten miles out. Thinks there is a high business tax rate.

Recruitment and retention- for skilled positions, need to recruit from London. The Town needs services to keep employees here, such as the PRC.

Too much red tape. Not enough organization and communication.

Big box stores and the economy in general

Hard to get people to know company exists, even with advertising.

Turn over. PRC.

Attract a good mix of businesses especially kids clothing, basics necessities (ie shoes)

Cost of overhead of doing business. Rents downtown especially if landlords don't live in St.Marys

Provincial government red tape. Ridiculous rules which means have to satisfy different groups, not coordinated

Barrier of transportation, being close to markets because oil not getting any cheaper. Downtown struggles—competition with Stratford and London -issue in recruiting professionals -there is a high unemployment rate at 9%

No large stores, encourages people to shop elsewhere.

We can't change our location, we can't attract industry and we have to stop barking up the wrong tree because we are never going to land a huge manufacturer, we aren't close enough to major highways

Population size

Economic downturn.

Younger minds

Locals stay here. They can actually get here

Embracing new opportunities.

Trying to be competitive with service and products, right mix to keep people -a balance to attract but not too expensive to use

Getting locals to stay in town. Education to residents. Highway #7 traffic

Number of closed shops

Not open on Sunday. Snow removal in winter

Taxes. Red tape (bankrupt PRC, planning, zoning)

Awareness of what the store has

Getting people to know the products.

Lack of retail- necessities. Services on main street but there shouldn't be.

Lack of commitment from the town to facilitate business growth

No parking in the downtown, only the street to park for their business

Market size never seems to increase

Federal red tape

The lack of selection and in many cases total lack of product. The bypass allows most people to ignore St.Marys

Drawing in the locals. Cost of rent, taxes and utilities. Home-based businesses versus retail.

Taxes in Perth South are cheaper

Seniors apartment idea in the downtown. No taxes paid by small businesses

Getting more people in from out of town. Drawing people in on event days.

Not enough large employers, people leaving

London "creep" as it develops farther north. Will St.Marys be able to develop from Stratford.

Because we're small, we may have to go outside of St.Marys to find more business.

Getting programs and changes implemented. Many recommendations have been made in the past in various studies, but few have actually been carried out. Lack of money and political will may be the biggest challenge.

Bigger business is coming in. Government policies that are not supportive to small business. Hard to keep updated on regulations and online training

Breaking people's habits and getting them to try something new.

Attracting families, loss of manufacturing jobs

Question 8-What are your specific recommendations to improve the local business climate?

There should be an opportunity to promote shopping in St.Marys. Begin and host business networking.

There is not an opportunity for businesses to meet together of the BIA, when they are outside the core.

Non-service businesses need to grow. Need to service outside the community. Services are maxed out.

Manufacturing is not going to return to Canada. The population is well-educated. Wealthy people are retiring here and we should embrace the trend. We need to market our strengths and be a town that fits our needs. We shouldn't focus on mixed use.

The town needs to ensure they are providing services that are cost effective against other communities.

Cut the red tape. It hinders ideas from getting off the ground. There are too many by-laws.

Town assumes every downtown business has unlimited funds to spend. The regulations and by-laws assume unlimited cash. Council should take a positive role for downtown instead of passing it off to the BIA. A trickle down effect from top to bottom. Perhaps the Town could implement this idea- create a new stamp with the new town logo and give it to businesses for free, it would be free advertising.

Stratford is more of a destination. Disappointment on Sundays when stores aren't open. St.Marys lacks a draw.

Networking needed beyond the BIA. Need more business recruitment. A push from local government to support local business.

More consistent hours

Town has to take an active role, currently inactive

More variety of businesses but that's a challenge. Need to attract new people to St.Marys. A way to support new business. Subsidies from Town Hall, landlord reduce rates

Need new ideas for young people to spend their any ideas ie computer, video games

Strengthening the planning process

More variety of commercial stores, there's not enough selection

Define where we are and what we want our future to be. Accept that we won't be a leading industry attracter. We have to find what our niche market is and go after that.

Advertising to surrounding communities.

Lower business taxes.

Improve the downtown core. Lower rent.

Collaborate, add packages on

Imitate Stratford

Expanding downtown parking for staff not just customers. Allow more retail.

Zoning concerns. Lack of concentration and bringing merchants together. Continuity of shopping hours.

Tax breaks for downtown merchants. Advertising for tourism since locals don't support. Lack of communication from town for basic services such as garbage bag tags.

Winter can be closed could but stay opened 12 to 4pm

Local chamber of commerce is St. Marys driven. Get rid of BIA and restructure to include the whole community. Get a better economic-development office formed. Need progressive thinking, hire a PR planning firm for the town.

More businesses and the right ones

Town has to take an active role, it is currently inactive.

No place downtown for the basics and shoes store, so people leave downtown. I would carry most if he could, but space is inhibiting.

Main streets, there are five stores that are empty and the owner doesn't live in St.Marys

Senior staff don't live here and they should to be directly engaged with business

Need an anchor for people to stay, no fast food, no Shoppers Drug Mart All this drives a younger population outside the city

More development in the housing market

Incentives to shop locally. Proactive search for new businesses. Marketing campaign.

There are too many downtown area groups (BIA, DMA) that it gets confusing, then others go and do their own thing.

Advertise as secondary destination from Stratford.

Banks should help entrepreneurs. Stop giving tax breaks to owners with empty buildings. Empty buildings need work- there are bricks falling off the backs of buildings

Focus on community involvement for residential and industry

Municipal support of local businesses especially for first-time business owners

Town council needs to take a bigger role in business, in comparison to Stratford

We need to sell on our geography and proximity to London. We are central and need to sell that to residents that live here.

Being more "open" with newer type of business. For example, Happy Hoots

For retail, improve the look and feel of the downtown. Continue the facade improvement program, redesign the streetscape, get the big trucks out of the downtown.

Appendix B

Question 9- Barriers to expansion of existing business (top responses highlighted in red)

Barrier	Existing	New	
Utilities: Cost	15	8	
Utilities: Capacity and Access	3	2	
Availability of Serviced land	4	11	
Resistance from local business	9	6	
Lack of proactive business recruitment	8	15	
Availability of zoned land	3	5	
Availability of diff.sized parcels	3	5	
Approvals process	7	7	
Development charges	4	4	
Business taxes	17	15	
Business insurance	9	6	
Availability of skilled labour	6	5	
Availability of unskilled labour	1	1	
Availability of financing	6	3	
Road & Highway system	5	3	
Water access	1	1	
Transportation & Distribution	4	5	
IT capacity	5	4	
Policing/fire	1	1	
Availability of space for rent or lease	4	3	
Health & medical services	4	4	

Appendix C

Question 17-Which products or services would you like to purchase locally that are now being purchased outside of the area?

Computer hardware, HVAC systems

Try to get everything they can locally.

Forced to go to Stratford/London

Office supplies- ie toner

Cheap produce.

Hard to shop locally at grocery stores because they are expensive.

Food suppliers/wholesalers are from Windsor.

IT services- never did in-house, moving to Stratford. Goes to Stratford for printing. Goes to the Stratford Business Centre. Has to go out of town to do big printing jobs

TV/appliances and office support material

Must go outside of area ie can't buy directly from Solis, must get from Kitchener or Sarnia

Everything bought locally if possible

Try to get everything locally

Buy products in Stratford

High-tech services are accessed in London and that wouldn't change

Anything that can be purchased locally->fair trade certified company

Necessities- socks and underwear

Everyday necessities, have to leave town to get necessities

Skilled trades

Camera equipment

Children's clothing, shoes (other than sports shoes), butcher, jeweler

Packaging materials

Paper supplies

Kids clothes

Appendix D

Question 21-What do you feel is the reason for this? (growth)

Cautiously optimistic. It's a new business.
New initiatives. Staging a leadership conference
Expansion of product line
Creativity, innovation, employee dedication.
Cost of inflation and volume growth
Too many restaurants and a slower economy
Expansion
Tough for small business to compete with larger business. The Town has to improve. Locals need to know.
Depends on economy and tourism
Staying the same.
The marketplace and increased regulations. The trend for smaller/rural agencies to amalgamate. There is a push by the Ontario government for non-profits to be more efficient.
Changes made in marketing
Exposure to more clients
Slow economy
Laundry business will increase for the summer this year.
Ontario government legislated lower pricing in products, not necessarily less profits
Market here is saturated
Maxed out room and staff
Goes up and down, there are too many variables
Increase in tourism
Familiarity with new products
Merchandising, marketing, added products
Good service, and good products
Developing a preferred card, have a good website that they keep updated. Have deals of the month and in-store specials and are using Facebook.
Loyal customers
Sales have dropped over the years. Lack of people coming downtown and visiting the store
Agricultural economy is strong and the business is looking to expand into a new territory
Hired a public relations person in Toronto to gain coverage, drives internet traffic
Economy
Can't predict with retail
There is a new general manager in place with new plans for 2012
No specific plan
Based on long term funding
Growth depends on the population of the town, will it increase?
Infrastructure deficit in the province
Better marketing
Expanding business
General state of the economy
Prices will be increasing over next five years

Appendix E

Question 33-List community's 3 advantages as a place to do business?

1

Sense of community
 Small town advantage- it's a safe place to raise family
 Geographic location
 Retirement community- existing market
 Business friendly- accommodating to new business
 Small community
 Availability of space in the downtown
 Safe community
 Small community where everyone knows everyone
 Small town environment
 Skilled workforce
 Aesthetics of the town draw people
 Beautiful town, good for attracting guests, surrounded by nature
 Established business so there's not a lot of competition
 Other professionals here, lots to offer
 Small town
 Safe
 Quality of life- proximity to culture
 It is a nice looking town
 Geographical location
 Nice place to live
 Form relationships easily
 Work and live here
 No competition for big stores
 Hospital and doctors
 People want to shop local
 Aesthetics of the town draws people. People always say what a nice it is but why aren't stores open on Sunday.
 Personal- from town
 Good people
 Stable workforce
 Stable
 Adequate residential
 Good location, far enough away so people do stay
 Plenty of room to unlock best kept secret
 Schools
 Hospital
 Good services that are local
 People
 Businesses within walking distance
 Networking, people know each other in a small-town
 Lifestyle, good place to live
 Good getting emails from Julie- feel in the loop with the Downtown Marketing Association

2	3
<p>Cross promotional, word of mouth advertising from Other businesses, people sending them over to her store</p> <p>Close enough to urban centres- London and the hospitals and schools</p> <p>Quality of life</p> <p>Good services in town to service lifestyle- well balanced</p> <p>People who live here and don't leave</p> <p>Increasing population</p> <p>Quality of life with schools and the rec centres</p>	<p>Quality of life- there is a lack of anonymity</p> <p>Voice can be heard ie. can send a letter to the editor, can have direct access to the mayor</p> <p>Attractive community with a distinctive charm</p> <p>Welcoming community</p> <p>Choice of what you can do here</p> <p>Impressive workforce</p>
<p>Great location</p> <p>People are friendly, even teenagers</p> <p>People always need food</p> <p>Small town but close</p> <p>Pride of supporting local businesses</p> <p>Small</p> <p>Good pool of unskilled labour</p> <p>Easy access from residence</p>	<p>PRC- vibrant community and quality of life, also the hospital contributes to this</p> <p>People would be supportive if they knew what the need was</p> <p>Verbal recommendations</p> <p>Location</p>
<p>Relatively inexpensive rent</p> <p>Character</p> <p>Many amenities (hospital, golf course, pyramid center, etc.)</p> <p>Small town- word of mouth</p> <p>Overhead</p> <p>Friendly</p> <p>Central core cluster of stores</p> <p>Rail business</p> <p>Relationships within community able to developed in St.Marys</p> <p>Good area for products/services</p>	<p>Architecture</p> <p>Close to London and Toronto</p> <p>Small amount of direct competition</p> <p>spirit of cooperation among retailers</p> <p>Helping people we know</p> <p>Proximities to larger towns</p> <p>Can provide small town service</p> <p>Everything is close by- hospital and rec facilities</p>

Family businesses and the people he serves are his friends

Safety/security for employees

Adequate industrial

Beautiful town

Recreation

Schools

Convenient accessibility

Appearance

Good personal service

Travel is accessible

Lots of resources available because we are separated and have a smaller government system

A trusting community, knows people well

Location to the 401

Great place to live, great place for family and a good way of life

Better word of mouth

Close-knit

Small town atmosphere

Cooperation and help when dealing with town administration

Good location

Friendly and good customers, down to earth and easy to talk to

Low crime rate

Networking- gets referrals from other health practitioners

Good town for families

Proactive

Adequate rural

Housing

Rec facilities, baseball diamonds

Availability of what people need

Cost effective to be in a town and stay in town- stable taxes

Develop relationships with consumers

Safe place

Friendly, small town community

Development fees are reasonable; tax base is competitive

Close to major cities

Relative proximity to Stratford and London

Small which creates a community feeling

Nearness to Stratford

Question 34-List the community's 3 disadvantages as a place to do business

1	2	3
Lack of traffic, number of people downtown	Snow removal	Parking
Location, not off of the 401	Size of the community- certain businesses won't come here because of the population	Cement Plant- people outside of the community comment on it and it has a negative public image with the environment
Off the beaten path, not on any major arteries or highway Recruitment is an issue Small community Town- rules and regulations Small population base Restriction is what's available-small community Competition from larger centres	Market is saturated for local services Proximity is a double edged sword Being close to Stratford Competition is close	Hard for a small business to set up shop in a small town, could choose London over St.Marys Unreasonable rents for stores in downtown Economic climate- more closing
Customer service training could be good in downtown core Population means a smaller market Shredding can't be done in town Small town Small	High rents and bureacratic red tape- take a long time to get things done Not a lot of room to expand	Zoning for new businesses
Proximity to highways is lacking Small population	Very little variety for shopping Labour force- relatives at same company, 1 problem in a family can make for 3 disgruntled employees Uneducated about specialty services	
Low retail flow	High taxes	Limited parking
Appropriate spaces for retail	Downtown retail parking	Perception that you can't tear down a building to put a new one there
Too small for businesses	Taxes too high	
Cost of things are higher	Downtown has issues	

here so people leave Transport challenges What the town has to offer a business- ie tax levys, bag tags	Retail continuity downtown	Options for expansion
Small Lack of participating in being open Sundays Better retail mix Location- works both ways because people come from out of town Stores aren't open on Sundays for tourists	Don't have everything people are looking for Lack of variety of business Services Need returning tourists.	No competitive pricing Parking
Small- people go elsewhere for necessities Nature of the business, hard with connections Disconnected leadership Parking Off the beaten path Property tax could be lower Land availability and ensuring the land is ready to go Lack of customer base No variety Improving road access	Not many that only sell in town Farming community Bureaucracy Bedroom community Appropriate and inexpensive store Expensive Corporate tax rate a bit high	No anchors here
Can't buy necessities Off the main corridor	People go to food basics to avoid the two grocery stores here, we must be more competitive Limited resources If you aren't a local, it can be hard to adapt	Proximity to larger centres
Retail situation	Town taxes	Utility
Recruitment of new businesses	Size of the town population wise	Sometimes small-minded community
Not on the 401 corridor	Close to major cities Close-knit	Streetscape needs to be improved.
Small Word of mouth in a small town Downtown looks empty	Property and business taxes	
Being a small town		

Weather--for employees
who commute it can stop
clients and workers from
getting to the business
Small town and people are
set in their ways
Distance to 401

Closer to London/Kitchener and may
use the services from these larger
communities
Need to gain momentum if you don't
do a lot of advertising
Size can't compete with London

Smaller catchment



Appendix F

Question 35-Which new businesses, services or products would you like to see added to this community?

Tennis courts, kids clothing
 Classes- pottery classes, classes not just for seniors, language
 Continuing education classes for all groups
 Basic computing classes- training
 Businesses- men's clothes, shoes, baby clothing, electronics/appliances
 Grocery stores with more variety and better prices; can't buy clothes here
 Need to increase the industrial base to avoid becoming a bedroom community
 IT services; restaurants that serve healthy, mid-range priced food that is simple.
 Try to attract sports focused businesses beyond the PRC that would enhance the community.
 Develop businesses that cater to the demographic of 45 and older.
 More manufacturing, more tourism-related activities.
 Men, women, children clothing
 Kids clothes
 Manufacturing; fast food
 Giant tiger in St.Marys, necessities, men's store, IKEA in the Dana Factory, bakery
 More specialty shops downtown, downtown viability-
 Downtown needs to set itself apart
 Visitors like the main street so we need more specialty shops
 Better clothing stores, kids/teens/adults, all types of products, toys, gloves/boots, jeans, electronics
 Large stores; more variety
 Postal service delivery. We pay for it the same, we should get delivery.
 Giant Tiger type store
 Anything other than restaurants and hair salons.
 Variety is needed.
 Bakery, butcher
 TV appliances
 Pool and dart club
 More take-out restaurant options
 Depends on focus of community
 Department store for basic and essential items.
 Be like St. Jacobs, unique, charming, people spending money all day.
 Men's stores
 Shoes and clothing stores
 Shoes, appliances, men's clothing, better to have 2 of the same businesses
 Have BIA bucks.
 Have a joint venture with Stratford.
 Look to develop a parking lot.
 Work on more joint promotion
 Discount department store
 Just almost anything expect more hairdressers, restaurants, food, drugs or sports stores or non-retail
 Services like insurance
 Children's clothing, toy store
 Gift ware

Men's clothing- shoes

Bakery

Diversification of industry- maybe add food industry because auto industry is so up and down

Menswear; shoes; department store

Friday the 13th in Port Dover is an example of what small towns can do with niche tourism.

Art gallery

Taking advantage of the Flats by having paddleboats

Items for kids

A better Chamber of Commerce, to be kept in the loop of community activities

Fast food chain ie KFC, Burger King

Gas stations with cheaper prices

Grocery store with more reasonable prices

Kids clothing store

Large manufacturer

Men's clothing store

More niche market shops.

Naturopath, kids stores, more ethnic food

Appendix G

Question 37 part 1- On a scale of 1-5, where 1 means poorly and 5 means ideally, how well positioned is your community to attract new immigrant employees?

- Pretty good here, just need more of a resource centre where you can get basic information.
- Small town people are welcoming. You will be noticed and are not anonymous.
- No ethnic base to come to; small town cliques
- Not a diverse community. Most immigrants are afraid of small towns.
- Cost issue- not as open to accepting new people. Struggle to integrate into St.Marys. People have left because they can't deal with it. Harder because small towns are insular.
- Small town prejudice
- St.Marys is just a small dot on the map. No reason for people to come here.
- No local support
- Are there jobs in town? Jobs are leaving London.
- There's a good network of people.
- Lots of Dominicans work here. St.Marys is receptive.
- Lack of public transit
- No stores, no housing, no transit, no place of worship
- St.Marys is close to London where some immigrants settle.
- We need to employ our own.
- No diversity here, not a lot to offer
- Everyday necessities
- Why would an immigrant live here? No innovation or programs
- Not diverse enough
- Don't come unless they are married to locals
- Go to larger cities
- Immigrants working for construction companies
- We have been good at welcoming people at the Friendship Centre
- Must assimilate if they did move here
- Not a lot for new immigrants in small towns
- St.Marys can attract immigrants, we are close to London.
- We are not a major city but we do have industry
- StMarys is a WASPy community

Question 37, part 2- On a scale of 1-5, where 1 means poorly and 5 means ideally, how well positioned is your community to attract and retain employees under the age of thirty?

- Potential is there. Not enough non-sport activities for young people to do.
- It's a lovely town to raise a family

- Very few people here between age 20 to 30, most people leave. There are a lot of people between age 45-55.

- Need to use Ingersoll's Fusion Youth Centre as an example of what would be good in St.Marys.

- Should try to take advantage of high tech in area for a high-tech spinoff

- Limited professional opportunities.

- Not a lot of activities for young people. There's no coordination within St.Marys and it's a disadvantage to business and residents. ie fundraising events happening at the same time. Needs to be a single calendar somewhere to see when other things are happening

- No variety of positions

- Not a lot here, younger people go to larger centres for entertainment

- For those filling low-skilled occupations

- Business hired 2 coop students they used from local school, a positive

- Depends on in if they have a family or are single. Sports are a major consideration.

- Young people want big cities and nightlife.

- PRC for young families

- A great place to live

- Lots of factories

- People move away from ages 20-30 for excitement. We have good services and recreation and a low cost of living.

- Lots of factory jobs, not a lot of anything else

- We have employees in this demographic but they generally don't choose to live in St.Marys

Appendix H

Question 39-In terms of overall impact on this community's economic development, what is the most significant change, positive or negative, that you have witnessed in your community in the past five years?

Downsizing in health care, trend for the last 25 years. No OB in St.Marys

Closing of Dana symbolic of what's happening in Canada. The Canadian dollar is too high. Factories are consolidating products in cheaper locales.

Elementary school and the PRC have been positive

Loss of manufacturing jobs- negative. Loss of retail in the downtown.

There is a lack of an action plan for the downtown, just a lot of talking. It is a positive to have someone like Ken Telfer trying to organize the downtown and get feedback.

Loss of Bob Searles, loss of Dana.

Perhaps the PRC could have gone to a town vote (Not a company opinion). Jamie Hahn was proactive in attracting business.

Loss of critical retail. Overall appearance of the downtown gets a little worse each year.

The tone of the St.Marys Independent has improved which is better for our overall image. Town Council process seems to lend itself to being a team. Good to have strategic plan process. Green Committee- idle free zone signs aren't up 3 years later- a huge delay.

A lot more closed businesses. The new ice pad is good to host higher capacity tournaments.

Seen a change in museum, seen more activity there. Stewart Books has been positive for the town. Culture- related to art show downtown.

Nothing to identify the community as a special place to live. Businesses are closing, we need to weather the storm -barking up the wrong tree trying to attract industry -don't put all eggs in one basket

Many little shops have closed on the main street.

The loss of large facilities

The PRC has been negative

Businesses leaving, neighbours of the store have come and gone within 3-6 months.

More services and stores within driving distance to attract locals

Rec centre. 4 new businesses for retail have recently opened in the downtown and they are manned by young people, hopes they can make a go of it.

New mayor-positive development

Facade improvement in the downtown has been positive. Loss of Dana has been negative

Ghost town on Sundays, but their best days are Sundays because they are one of the few places open.

The empty stores downtown, however ones that are full have friendly staff

Downtown stores turn over

Positive- attempts by last CAO to have an economic development plan. Negative- attempts to heritage designate whole downtown business area - no change or innovation

Loss of critical retail. Overall appearance of downtown less than it should be. Vacant buildings deteriorating, landlords have to help out the town to keep the buildings in shape.

Second ice pad at the PRC was good, wish yong people had pushed for a track. We need to keep our hospital, emergency hours, population is getting older. Young people will be turned off and move elsewhere.

Growth of town organization, number of employees has increased. People need to run a tight ship.

Haven't seen any change

Dana was a big loss The future of the hospital seems uncertain Rural school closings

Loss of industry and businesses

Pyramid Centre has been positive and will help keep people in the community and draw business to the community

Stores have closed down. Colours should be coordinated in the downtown

More empty buildings, need to encourage businesses to come

Recognizing new businesses by the town has improved. Council and the mayor do a better job of greeting new businesses, when their business was first in town, there was no greeting

Tourism- out of towners coming to St.Marys

-Manufacturing -Pyramid Centre

Positive= hospital retention, PRC, Little Falls public school Negative- Dana closure Heritage Festival- good community spirit and brings outsiders into town

I think people are more open to change

Closure of factories and layoffs Tourism benefits everyone The senior population is good for business.

Deterioration of the downtown

Over all depression of the economic market. Motor vehicle legislation, private cuts to both.

Their business has got busier in the time they've been in St.Marys

Question 40-In terms of overall impact on this community's economic development, what is the most significant change that you would like to see in your community in the next five years?

Downtown development- has to be a concern for the town. People look to the downtown when they are moving. When they look at the downtown, can't as a family buy things here that are family essentials.

There needs to be development off of James St. The town needs to move towards the highway and increase awareness of what is here. We need to develop towards the highway so people can see part of St.Marys when they drive by. We need to fill the empty stores downtown.

Need cohesiveness in the downtown core, we need it to look historic and beautiful because it's the heart of the community. What's happening downtown is not working. The town should provide incentives for the exterior of buildings to look the same. An example of a town that does this is Niagara-on-the-Lake. It would take lots of work but unified storefronts are needed.

Greater residential development. Needs more people for community, integrating diversity, community events

Grows as a tourist and manufacturing town. Need to focus on both.

There needs to be a concrete plan so something definite can be reached.

Business growth needed in the downtown.

Being a part of the Chamber of Commerce; doesn't feel like he is part of the community because he is not in the core.

More full stores to attract business downtown.

Business attraction. Heritage Festival, Storytelling Festival are all good for St.Marys.

Hopes plan doesn't sit on shelf as new CAO arrives. When doing a change process, need quick fixes to give momentum to a process, makes change easier and encourages people.

Understand capacity. Do something with the Dana plant.

More support for businesses that are local. Better downtown.

We need a large employer, this will benefit us all

Try and set the town apart -the Xpark is a good example of a positive initiative It provides something for kids to do which make their parents want to live here.

Taxes lowered and stop making commitments to projects we can't afford. The PRC is an example.

To encourage businesses to our community, we should lower taxes and offer incentives.

Cadzow Pool should stay open.

Tourism, more street festivals Need people to shop here. More awareness

I think a solid plan needs to be made public for the economic development of the town

Parking, retail space- employees are parking on the main drag.

Provincial and municipal taxes

Downtown stores filled and capitalizing on "seedling" opportunities. More retail needed downtown than services.

Promote what we have that nobody else has: hall of fame and quarry

Getting people to shop locally, Awareness of what can be brought here

Have serviced industrial land available. Diversity industry Piggy back onto Stratford Technology sector

Need return tourists, not just one-time tourists.

Stores replaced

Would like to develop a website, online promoting and presence.

There is still land for sale so we need to attract new industry

Develop a strategy that is meaningful to develop a solid town organization. need to be able to make St.Marys entrepreneurial and committed to community.

More residential and commercial development. More anchors. Loosening of zoning violations.

Basic necessity items. A Walmart

More land available

Downtown to move in a direction or complementing what remains of our Victorian heritage to beautify it and adjacent areas. Much more visible arts community needed! A viable downtown able to supply all local purchasing needs.

More cultural awareness- there is no cultural alliance anymore. There was an attempt to revive the Mercury Theatre but it fell through.

The Town should invest more money in advertising to promote the community. There needs to be a real effort to draw industry into St.Marys, we need to sell people on our infrastructure. The town should provide tax breaks for 2-3 years to offset start up costs.

Developing the waterfront, do something to maximize the little falls. Could have a restaurant that overlooks the falls.

Business directory could be improved. Need better signage.



Increase in tourism, increasing awareness

Downtown growth. Gas station. Town participating in energy efficiency programs

Active/aggressive business recruitment- sell the cost of coming here, that we have attractive taxes, attract business development and get people building here. The east end has lots of closed businesses, and how can we help a struggling business. Make it cost effective to have a business.

More people becoming open to "newer" ideas

Year round tourism.

Would love to see building owners be forced to make the buildings in the downtown core usable properties.

Improving the streetscape of the downtown. A truck route or some means of reducing the number of big trucks going through the downtown.

Advertising the town. Reduced rate of coupons.

Making PRC more sustainable and keeping all tax levels competitive. Facelift to the downtown a la Orangeville.

Push to attract technology based businesses.

More industry
