

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### An Introduction

The Town of Okotoks, within its Economic Strategic Plan, has set business retention and expansion (BRE) as a priority. A BRE program helps to ensure that the existing businesses in Okotoks continue to survive and grow, resulting in a healthy economic environment which will attract future investment. Traditional BRE activities include surveys of the business community, either online or as individual interviews. The strategic plan also identified specific target sectors with the most optimal opportunity for growth. The Economic Development Business Center decided to hold roundtable discussions for each sector, allowing for discussion of issues, challenges and solutions relevant to each participant.

The roundtable structure provides an opportunity for Economic Development to connect with businesses to determine what is working and not working within their business sector, provide potential solutions and learn their future plans for expansion. This information validates activities and priorities for Economic Development, while taking into account the strategic plan, and helps foster improved communication between the Town and the business community.

A roundtable session for Home Based Businesses was held in the Town Municipal office on July 24, 2019. A total of 39 people attended the in-person event. The first of six roundtable meetings was for Commercial Developers and Commercial Realtors and held on July 10, 2019.

This report does four things:

1. Provides a summary of themes, ideas, and potential solutions to ensure the town maintains a supportive small business climate.
2. Provides the transcribed notes and questionnaire data from the roundtable session.
3. Provides feedback to the Town of Okotoks as to how they can assist and partner with industry sectors to achieve success and reduce “red tape”.
4. Provides an action plan for Economic Development for Business Retention and Expansion projects.

**A note to readers:** Thank you to all that participated in these conversations. We are grateful to those who shared experiences, ideas and solutions in this process and helped deepened our understanding of the complexities.

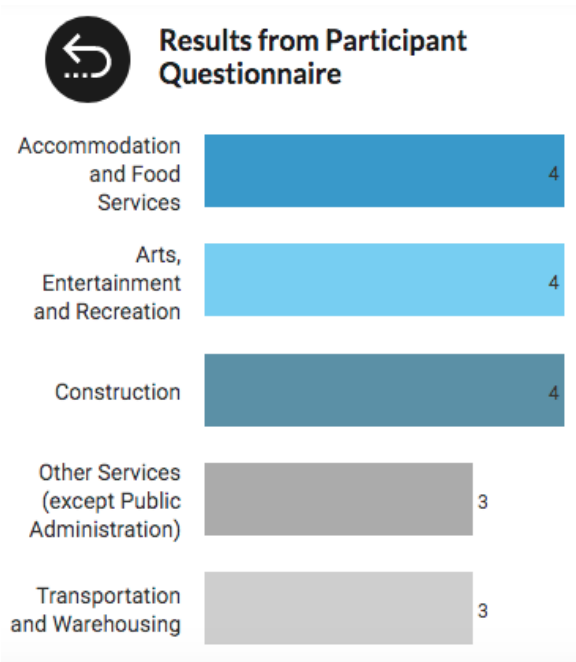
### Who Participated?

The Town of Okotoks defines Home Occupation (or Home Based) Businesses as:

**Businesses with a physical location in Okotoks Town limits/boundaries where the business is operated from a home occupied by the owner/operator for residential purposes.**

There are 664 Home Occupation businesses in the Town of Okotoks as of July 24, 2019. At the July 24 roundtable session we collected specific business information via a questionnaire to help us better understand individual business needs and who was providing input (complete questionnaire data can be found in **Appendix B**). We asked participants, “In what industry or sector does your business operate?”

The top 5 sectors represented were as follows:  
N = 27



Other industry sectors represented included:

- Administration and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services (1)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (2)
- Manufacturing (2)
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (2)
- Retail Trade (2)

# What We Heard Report

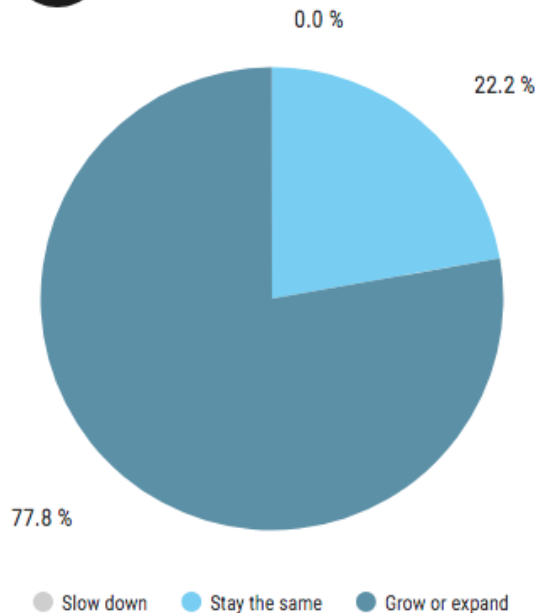
## Okotoks Economic Development

The majority of respondents (78%) also told us they expect their demand or workload to grow or expand over the next 12 months.

N = 27



### Results from Participant Questionnaire



## What We Asked

There were several key topic areas that we wanted to better understand:

1. Advantages and challenges experienced in working from home
2. Understanding stakeholders' perceptions of Minor and Major Home Occupation and suggested changes
3. Raw material inputs purchased within Okotoks and the gaps that exist for business owners
4. Limitations Home Occupations have in growing their businesses
5. Suggestions for regulatory changes including Land Use Bylaw updates
6. Connection to the Okotoks business community and communication improvements
7. Local organizations or events used to grow business skills
8. Economic Development's role in supporting Home Occupation businesses' growth

Within these topic areas we aimed to understand what is working, what is not, what barriers exist and gather feedback on possible solutions. Participants also provided new ideas and suggestions that we have incorporated into the summary data.

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### What We Heard

Participants were asked to share their experiences, ideas and challenges regarding the key topic areas. The following section details what we heard, the themes that emerged and analysis of the feedback provided. The transcribed notes from the session can be found in **Appendix A**.

#### Question 1

#### **What are the advantages of working from home?**

##### **Cost Savings**

We heard from participants that cost savings is one of the major advantages of working from home. Participants cited lower overhead costs such as no lease or rental fees, no business taxes and tax benefits or write offs that come with owning a Home Occupation business. Another key cost savings is not having to pay for childcare.

##### **Family Experience**

A number of respondents stated that their family experience is enriched when working from home because they are more available to their families and children, they are close to home and have a flexible schedule.

##### **Business Owner Experience**

Home Occupation business owners shared several benefits related to “being their own boss.” These included doing what they love, achieving personal success and reducing stress which contributes to positive mental health. One participant shared that working from home allows them to impact their community positively by being on “neighbourhood watch” during daytime hours.

From a regulatory standpoint, many participants shared that there is less “red tape” and an easier licensing process for Home Occupation businesses.

##### **Customer or Client Experience**

Home Occupation business owners shared that the customer or client experience is less formal, provides a personal touch and allows for faster rapport building. The lack of “office politics” also contributes to a positive client and business owner experience.

##### **Flexibility and Portability**

Another theme identified from participant input was the flexibility and portability advantage of owning a Home Occupation business. Business owners can control the pace of growing their business, have flexible working hours and vacation time resulting in a positive family experience.

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### No Commute and Environmental Advantages

Several participants told us that not having to commute is an advantage to working from home. Along with the benefits of saving time and money, participants shared they felt positive about lessening their environmental imprint.



### Question 2

**What are the challenges faced from working at home?**

#### Work-Life Balance

Participants cited a number of challenges relating to work-life balance when owning a Home Occupation business. Time management was a key challenge including working later, longer hours, emails, texts and phone calls always “on” and the feeling that work is always “there.” Working from home can leave business owners feeling like they are always connected. Some participants spoke about a tension they feel with a lack of discipline in keeping regular business hours but wanting to service clients and customers when requested.

Participants also told us that household distractions like lawn care, dishes and housework are another work-life balance challenge.

#### Marketing and Advertising

Home Occupation business owners are challenged in finding marketing and advertising solutions that work and increase their business. Participants shared a variety of reasons for this including:

- Limitation on signage imposed by Town regulations
- Lack of foot traffic
- Lack of awareness about their business within the community
- The perception that the Town provides more support to brick and mortar businesses



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

- Time spent looking for clients is greater than time spent actually working with clients
- “Old” ways of advertising (for example, Yellow pages) not working and business owners looking to social media

**Participants offered potential solutions to marketing and advertising challenges. They included:**

- Listing Home Occupation businesses on the Town’s website
- Joint marketing between Home Occupation businesses and the Town of Okotoks
- Increasing promotion of Home Occupation businesses and home based business events by the Town of Okotoks

### **Impact to Neighbours and Neighbourhoods**

Home based business owners are aware of the potential impacts to their neighbours and neighbourhoods and find this aspect of working from home challenging. Increased traffic flow due to customers and deliveries and parking issues were among the challenges raised. Safety was another concern we heard which included speeding in residential neighbourhoods and customers knowing where you live.

### **Town Policy Restrictions**

Some challenges participants are experiencing relate to Town policies and regulations. Parking restrictions in residential neighbourhoods impact Home Occupation business owners as they struggle to find adequate parking for clients and customers. Signage restrictions and limitations were another challenge cited by participants.

### **Connectivity**

Participants find the lack of connectivity with working from home a challenge. There are less opportunities to meeting and mingle (in comparison to working downtown) which makes it harder to network. This lack of socialization can leave business owners feeling isolated as well as impact business promotion and sales.

### **Other Comments**

Additional feedback about challenges included:

- Lack of privacy
- Customers not respecting working hours and just “showing up”
- Reduction in home living space
- Negative perception of Home Occupation businesses

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 3

**The Land Use Bylaw dictates what businesses can operate from what location. Home occupations fall under General Land Use Regulations and Provisions. Discuss what the differences are between a Home Occupation – Minor, and a Home Occupation – Major.**

In order to understand if there are any knowledge gaps between what Home Occupation Minor and Home Occupation Major are, we asked participants to discuss the differences. Several distinctions were made including the number of staff or employees, client visits per day, deliveries and parking spaces available. We also heard:

- Cost of licensing
- Square footage of office space
- Zoning
- Renovations or accommodations to the home

Participants had the opportunity to review the language in the Land Use Bylaw and were provided a document that outlined the differences.

Participants voiced the desire for everyone to be treated equally siting businesses that are operating illegally or questionably. One participant asked for the process to be clarified so that the differences in Minor and Major are more easily understood.

#### **We heard this question:**

*How do I move past Major? What are the next steps?*

There is an opportunity for the Town to provide educational information about the differences between Minor and Major as well as what to do when their business surpasses the Home Occupation Major designation.



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 4

#### Do you have any suggestions regarding these definitions?

Participants provided a number of suggestions for the Home Occupation designations. The table below outlines the themes, specific points related to the theme as well as the frequency of comments.

Theme	Participant Comments
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more information via email/mail for businesses in grey area (ie. seasonal)</li> <li>• Education for people so they know more about HO businesses</li> <li>• A webpage with information to educate residents on HO businesses</li> <li>• Technology for people to electronically file a complaint – a confidential and user friendly</li> <li>• If we're taking the "open for business" approach and we have NIMBYs we need strategies to address this</li> <li>• More defined definitions for Minor and Major</li> <li>• Guidelines to minimize impacts in residential neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
<b>Parking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove parking restrictions</li> <li>• Designated parking on street with signage</li> <li>• Apply for customer parking space on public street</li> <li>• Commercial vehicles rules for HO –allow one commercial vehicle in front of home</li> <li>• Parking and number of clients has to change</li> <li>• Change to parking bylaw</li> </ul>
<b>Signage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control of sign options</li> <li>• Allow extra space in neighbourhoods for standardized signage</li> <li>• Allow temporary signs (portable) with parameters</li> <li>• More specific information regarding signage (email notification, send a link or send with license in mail)</li> <li>• HMU sign restrictions</li> <li>• Let them have a sign that can be seen – more options</li> </ul>



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

Additional regulatory suggestions we heard included allowing retail from private homes to increase number of clients as well as instituting a review process for business license renewals to ensure businesses still meet the requirements of their Minor or Major designation.



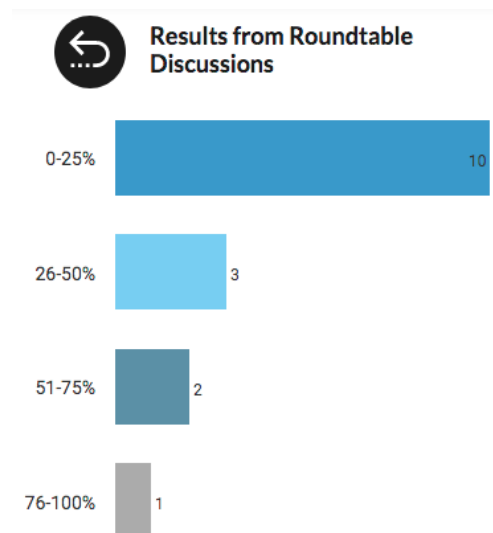
# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 5

**What percentage of inputs - raw materials, supplies/goods and services – does your business purchase in Okotoks?**

N= 16



The majority of respondents (63%) stated that they purchase 0-25% of inputs in Okotoks. Less than one percent of respondents told us that they buy 76-100% of inputs in Okotoks.

Participants did offer some important distinctions in terms of what they are purchasing. One participant shared that they purchase 51-75% of services in Okotoks while only 0-25% of supplies. Another business owner specified buying 51-75% of produce for preserves locally in Okotoks. We also heard that business owners go elsewhere for wholesale art supplies, business supplies, trades and raw materials.

Other raw material gaps identified included:

- Parts supplies – no industrial parts warehouse, all purchased in Calgary. Plumbing, electrical, packaging, massage supplies
- Construction material
- Food packaging supplies
- Picture frames
- Pencil cases/men's clothing
- Printing
- Business supplies

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

The most significant barrier to purchasing raw inputs in Okotoks is cost. Many participants shared that buying in Calgary or online is more cost effective. Other participants identified the lack of available inputs in Okotoks thus outsourcing some supplies and services are necessary. One participant did share that, in their experience, insurance was cheaper locally rather going outside of Okotoks. We also identified a knowledge gap as to what inputs are actually available locally and how and where to find those businesses.

**To encourage business owners to source locally, participants made these suggestions:**

*Create a list of “online” stores in Okotoks.*

*Create a “home based business discount” to keep shopping local.*





# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 6

**What limitations do you have in growing your business? Include any barriers due to Town regulations.**

We heard three major themes tied to business growth limitations.

#### **Town Processes**

The most frequent comments relate to internal Town processes. Participants see the need for a simplified step by step process along with clarity and consistency of information. One participant stated, “There is confusion between departments. Business licensing process is less than clear.” A need was identified for education on permits and change use as well as a desire for Council to educate themselves on new methods of building and equipment. Participants also shared that timelines for getting permits are too lengthy. “Took a year and a half to get a Development Permit,” was one example shared in group discussions.

#### **Town Support of Home Occupation Businesses**

Participants want to see the Town support and nurture both commercial and home based businesses in order to contribute to a vibrant community. One participant felt that Town support would have a positive and reciprocal effect which could grow more resident support for Home Occupation businesses.

#### **High Costs**

We heard from participants that costs are prohibitive in growing their businesses. These costs included moving from home based to a storefront, leasing space, licensing and permits as well as childcare costs. One participant highlighted the lack of available and affordable, right sized spaces as a limitation.

#### **Other Comments**

Many other participants’ comments have already been addressed in this report so we have briefly outlined the additional comments about limitations below:

- Advertising and marketing – highlighting businesses on social media, signage restrictions
- Lack of connection with community and other home based businesses, connectivity
- Town lack of support in utilizing more technology (ie. online platform)

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 7

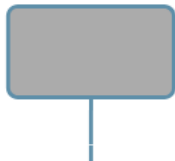
**The future of work is changing. More people will work from a home office. Retail is changing as more people buy online. Technology based tools are changing the face of some industries. What should the Town of Okotoks consider as the Land Use Bylaw is being updated and changed?**

Participants provided legislative feedback for the Town to consider when updating and changing current policies. The themes fell into the following three categories:



### PARKING

- Relax or remove parking restrictions
- Allow commercial parking
- Maximize current parking
- Town purchase additional land for parking
- Allow commercial vehicle parking



### SIGNAGE

- Review signage restrictions
- Relax signage restrictions
- Allow signage positioned at the entrance of each neighbourhood
- Develop a partnership with Town to brand signs and logos



### LIMITATIONS

- Do not count delivery of products as part of the business visitor limit
- No restrictions with employee numbers
- Ease operation hours restrictions
- Allow “pop up” shops like coffee and food trucks

Another point for consideration is for the Town to differentiate if the business owner works from home to provide service or if they are a “mobile” business.



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

The questionnaire also provided information about the types of locations that would best suit growing businesses. We asked participants the following question:

### ***What type of location best suits the needs of your growing business?***

Of the nine respondents that told us they would be interested in moving their business to a storefront, three of them chose incubator space as their preferred option (which would specialize in growing new and start-up businesses). **Appendix B** highlights more detailed information.

### Question 8

#### **Do you feel connected to the Okotoks business community? What are your suggestions for increasing communication?**

Roundtable participants shared many suggestions for fostering connection and increasing communication with the Okotoks business community. The ideas and feedback fell into four main categories: Online, Face-to-Face, Promotion and Additional Tools and Tactics.

#### **Online**

Participants told us that the Town website is a vital resource for business owners. Ideas for improvement included a “one stop online shop” for permits and processes, a catalogue of available commercial space and available real estate, an updated events calendar for posting all business related events and a list of networking groups with contact information.

Social networking was another online theme that was seen as a means to increase connection and communication. Suggestions included a social media page or group, a forum to ask questions and the Town increasing their online promotion of local businesses. One participant also suggested that an online group used for communication should be a closed group where members have to ask to join.

#### **Face-to-Face**

The Home Occupation business owners shared a strong desire for more face-to-face connection opportunities. Participants suggested more roundtable discussions, opportunities for one on one discussions, extended after hours “one stop shop”, meet and mingle events, conferences, gatherings at community businesses like Main Street Market and the opportunity for home based businesses to showcase themselves at Town events. One participant proposed that the Town create an incubator or connector for businesses and three others echoed this sentiment on the questionnaire.

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Promotion

The theme of promoting, marketing and advertising was evident in many key topic areas and it fell into the increased communication and connection bucket as well. The sentiment was Economic Development needs to promote Home Occupation businesses as being “equally successful as storefront businesses.” Some participants stated that they never intend to expand beyond their home and the Town’s support and promotion will assist in growing their businesses.

### Additional Tools and Tactics

Participants shared specific tactical ideas they would like the Town to consider in order to increase communication and connection. They included:

- Mentor/mentee program
- Updates on what the Planning Department is doing
- Updates on what Economic Development is doing
- Include with business licenses a list of all resources and business organizations for new business owners



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 9

#### **What local organizations or events do you use to grow your business skills?**

Participants shared input about what they need to grow their business skills and three main themes emerged.

#### **Continuing Education**

Participants suggested several topic areas where they would like to learn and grow their skills. They included:

- Accounting and bookkeeping courses
- Retirement planning
- Technology education and workshops
- Food sanitation and safety classes
- Merchandising including packaging and labeling

#### **Marketing and Advertising**

Marketing and advertising have been identified throughout this report as a need in several areas and it also fits into the growth category. We heard from several participants that there is a need for education on using social media. Some business owners are currently using social media but would like to learn how to use it intentionally and more effectively on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Other participants acknowledged that not everyone is on social media so there is a need to reach those potential customers and clients as well. Business owners have a desire to learn about marketing strategies and growing their communication skills.

#### **Business Expansion Related Growth**

Many participants told us they are interested in expanding their business and need specific strategies to do so. Some of the expansion related feedback included:

- General information about growing a business
- Target market data and understanding demographics to better market to each group
- Pitches, proposals and bids
- Point of sale systems and what the best options are
- Product market knowledge and how to buy
- Business advisor guidance

Participants also highlighted that there are many varied needs dependent on the business sector. It was suggested the Town sessions specifically target groups such as catering and service businesses like construction and landscaping.

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 10

#### **How can Economic Development support your business?**

Many of the support ideas participants shared have been included in other key topic areas. The new ideas we heard for Economic Development support are listed below:

- Help keep the Town of Okotoks accountable
- Licensing and Development Permits must have timelines
- Regulate cost on rent and leased space to keep costs reasonable
- Share business ideas, leads and initiatives with local business owners
- List available co-working spaces
- Business “feature stories” for promotion
- Continue to foster and grow relationships/network
- Encourage shopping locally

### Considerations for Future Engagement

Our engagement processes will be adapted for each of the four remaining roundtable meetings. It is important that the Town team have an understanding of how groups want to be engaged in the future. Although this group was not asked specifically about future engagement, it is a priority for public engagement sessions to model best practices. These best practices include:

- Being transparent and clear about the goals of engagement and how input will be used
- Recognizing the value and contribution of business stakeholders and the business community
- Building relationships first
- Modelling the behaviour you would like others to use
- Closing the feedback loops so stakeholders understand how their feedback was used and considered in decision-making

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Feedback on the Roundtable Process

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire so the Town could gather additional information. In order to collect feedback on the roundtable process we asked participants to answer this question:

**Did this roundtable meet your expectations? What would you improve? What worked well?**

Of the 14 responses, 10 participants shared positive comments while four comments were regulatory suggestions. A sampling of the responses is listed below:

***Was an incredibly informative event. Was a good opportunity to discuss openly challenges that are faced by owning a home based business.***

*Great opportunities for networking and to voice some concerns regarding home based businesses.*

***It was fantastic!***

*Yes, it was very interesting and inspiring. Thank you! The EcD team seems very approachable and I will make sure to reach out. Thank you!*

***Great discussion. Great start - need to continue.***

*Very good info discussed. Small groups worked well.*



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### What's Next?

Economic Development will be meeting with 4 other stakeholder groups from August to November 2019. Additional “What We Heard” reports will be compiled from participant feedback. Participants and Internal staff will have an opportunity to review the draft document prior to going to Council for review.

Contact info:

Angela Groeneveld,

Economic Development Manager

[agroeneveld@okotoks.ca](mailto:agroeneveld@okotoks.ca)

403-938-8907

Leslie Warren, Economic Development

[lwarren@okotoks.ca](mailto:lwarren@okotoks.ca)

403-995-6336



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### APPENDIX A

#### Transcribed Notes

##### Question 1

##### **What are the advantages of working from home?**

Reduce overhead/costs

Convenience

No childcare – more family time

Portability – can work from anywhere

Flexibility of schedule and dress code

No commute

Comfort of space

Cost saving on space rental

Time flexibility

Less overhead

Less interruptions from walk in clients

Childcare – don't have to pay for it

Tax benefits – write offs

Privacy – control environment/personalization

Childcare – closer to family

Flexibility – control pace of business

Shared costs

Lowers costs versus storefront

Ease of location/access at anytime

Environment – no driving

No need for childcare

No commute

Flexible schedule

Home – write off

No lease/business tax – saving money

More personal/intimate – less “formal”, higher retention, building rapport faster

No office politics

No commutes – reduction in carbon

No additional expenses

Lower overhead

Convenience to have products at home

Less “red tape”

Easy to get licensed – less regulations

Licensing had more steps than Black Diamond, High River, Turner Valley, Foothills County

No childcare or limited

No commuting (lower carbon footprint)

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

Storefront costs high, low overhead  
Doing what you love  
Personal success  
Write off expenses  
Flexible working hours  
More environmentally conscious – less packaging, more recycling, less waste  
Available to kids  
Flexibility – helps with start up, vacation and hours of work  
Less overhead  
Better to be home based for my type of business – no need for brick and mortar  
Personal touch provided by home based  
In current economy home based allows me to work for more than one employee  
Autonomy – like being my own boss  
Contributing to lessening environment footprint  
Reduces stress – helps with mental health  
Neighbourhood watch when at home

### Question 2

#### **What are the challenges faced from working at home?**

Structure – distractions  
Comparing to storefronts – people assume should be cheaper because at home  
Life/work balance – working later, work is always there  
Emails, texts, phone calls always on  
Training clients to respect working hours  
Work is always there, not able to get away  
Reduction in the use of home space  
Sometimes people just “show up”  
Have heard that there could be safety risks  
People (customers)/couriers have driven too fast in residential areas  
Customers know where you live  
Have heard neighbours might not like traffic  
Advertising, marketing – lots of time spent looking for best solutions  
75% of time spent looking for clients, 25% working with clients  
Town provides more to business that is brick and mortar  
Would like to see Town provide more promotion of Home Occupation (HO) businesses, home based business events  
Combined advertising for HO from Town of Okotoks  
Change perception of HO businesses  
Challenged with setting work schedule for HO business license  
Downtown parking issue eliminated with clients coming to HO businesses

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

Can be challenge to meet when clients need you to work – have to work whenever clients request service

Always connected/at home

Lack of privacy

Parking – increase in traffic, hazards

Work life balance

Signage

Socialization

Time management/always “on”

International clients (clock, time difference)

Perception/HO cause you couldn’t make it

Never have lunch/different structure

Promoting/getting people in the door

Signage – limitation on size (by Town)

Parking restrictions – Elma St. specifically, nobody parks in the alley or knows about it

Discipline with regards to hours worked

Lack of connection (“awareness of”) with community

Lists business groups on Town website

Yellow pages not working – looking to social media for advertising

Licensing costs increase

Budget

Harder to network

Ties you to the home

Finding and paying for outsourcing, finding IT help, etc.

Large deliveries, unable to deliver to residential

Long hours – balancing home life/work life

Foot traffic – no visual awareness, regulations on signage

Household distractions – lawn, dishes, etc.

Not having set hours, not being able to “shut it” off

Parking for client visits

Networking – not being downtown to meet and mingle

Lack of networking for home based businesses

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 3

**The Land Use Bylaw dictates what businesses can operate from what location. Home occupations fall under General Land Use Regulations and Provisions.**

**Discuss what the differences are between a Home Occupation – Minor, and a Home Occupation – Major.**

Lots of illegal/questionable

Major – more traffic

Minor – 3 per day/15 a week

How do I move past major?

Number of employees

Foot traffic (number of people, clients there)

Parking spaces

Number of deliveries

Cost of licensing

Square footage of office space

More ‘traffic’ – visitors/customers, deliveries, parking

Number of complaints from neighbours

Number of client visits per year/day

Number of employees

Square footage

Let’s talk to Bylaw

Commercial vehicles rules for HO –allow one commercial vehicle

Clarify the process – major versus minor

Remove parking restrictions

Everyone needs to be treated the same

Minor – traffic 4-5 visitors/day, major is more

Major – involves land use, development permit, restrictions with fire code

Number of minor employees

Number of customers to home

What service you offer

Minor – low impact to residential area, parking

Zoning

Major – check in with neighbours, hours for client visits

Major- open up retail from home, many more clients

Minor – 3 clients or less, hours of operation, space occupied, parking

Major – more than 3 clients coming to your home

Staff/employees

Renovations or accommodations to the home



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 4

#### **Do you have any suggestions regarding these definitions?**

Allow extra space for neighbourhoods for standardized signage

“Fine Home Based Business in this community”

Control of sign options

Designated parking on street with signage

Apply for customer parking space on public street

Allow temporary signs (portable) with parameters

Simplify bylaws relaxation – allow exemptions where/when warranted/grated

Clear bylaws

Specifically, more information regarding signage (email notification – send link, send with license in mail)

Who do we call when we have questions about minor and major?

Have a review process when renewing license

Provide more information – email/mail for businesses in grey area (ie. seasonal)

Education for people so they know more about HO businesses

A webpage that explains and residents have access to information and can go and look

Technology for people to electronically file a complaint, confidential, more approachable and user friendly

If we’re taking the “open for business” approach and we have NIMBYs we need strategies to address this

Remove parking restrictions

Still need minor guidelines

Want guidelines to still minimize impact to residential area

Need HO business licenses to adhere to hours of operation

Major – more defined definition

Cannot control amount of deliveries

Help on what to do after I surpass a major HO

HMU sign restrictions

Let them have a sign that can be seen – more options

Parking and number of clients has to change

Change to parking bylaw

Separate policy around mobile businesses

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

### Question 5

**What percentage of inputs - raw materials, supplies/goods and services – does your business purchase in Okotoks?**

1. 0-25% - 10
2. 26-50% - 3
3. 51-75% - 2
4. 76-100% - 1

More based on supplies than services, lots of services are here not as much for supplies

Services – 51-75%

Supplies – 0-25%

We go elsewhere for wholesale art supplies, business supplies, trades

Raw materials are minimal

Most said A

51-75% (produce for preserves)

### Gaps

Parts supplies – no industrial parts warehouse, all purchased in Calgary. Plumbing, electrical, packaging, massage supplies

Food packaging supplies

Knowing what is available and where/how to find them

Help to grow my business

Costs between Okotoks and Calgary is high – outsourcing to Calgary for lower costs. It is available here but it is more expensive

Okotoks is too expensive for business supplies, Calgary or online is less expensive

Create a list of “online” stores in Okotoks

Maybe create a “home based business discount” to keep local shopping

Buy other places due to cost

HO business license purchased all products locally, prefers to shop local

Sometimes have to use out of town wholesaler – picture frames

Second hand purchases made online are cheaper

HO business licenses have to be thrifty

Rent for storefronts is more expensive in Okotoks, lease/rent costs means storefronts needs to charge more

Dependent on business need for supplies is different

Marketing – local

Not cost effective to always use local

Use local for some things (produce)

Local doesn't always store products needed

Some bigger local businesses won't deal

Insurance was more cost effective locally

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

Online is very convenient/cost effective  
Pencil cases/men's clothing (cost)  
Stores carry all the same  
Pickup supplies because of cost  
Small market – Okotoks  
Construction material – Calgary pricing is better  
Wholesalers for material come from Calgary  
Printing costs – people go to Vistaprint or Calgary  
Business not understanding the difference between wholesale and retail  
Cheaper in Calgary – printing, baking, construction material

### Question 6

**What limitations do you have in growing your business? Include any barriers due to Town regulations.**

Signage – relax the signage regs  
Advertising and promotion – home address listed? Can you?  
Lack of connection with community and other home based businesses  
Advertising and marketing  
Financial feasibility – moving from home to storefront too expensive  
Cost of childcare  
Allowances for signage  
Not being tech savvy  
Networking  
Balancing work/home life  
Licensing and permits takes longer here, costs  
Marketing/signage  
Confusion between departments – business licensing process less than clear  
Convoluting process in getting a development permit  
Lack of step by step process  
Cost of leasing space  
Availability of affordable, right sized space  
AHS – Alberta Health Services regulations  
Advertising – signage  
Knowledge of process – need education on process, costs of permits, which permits, information on change use if choosing storefront  
Signage on lawn versus relators? Too small  
Fear of dealing with Town  
Double standards with building codes, Development Permits (DP)  
Took a year and a half to get DP  
Lack of willingness for Council to educate themselves on new methods of building/equipment  
Relax major license regulations/restrictions

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

Parking restrictions remove

Town support HO so that residents give more support

Vibrant community and commercial business and HO – support each other and Town support this relationship

Listen to small business

More tech platform to use together – Town support

Highlight business on social media

### Question 7

**The future of work is changing. More people will work from a home office. Retail is changing as more people buy online. Technology based tools are changing the face of some industries. What should the Town of Okotoks consider as legislation such as the Land Use Bylaw is being updated and changed?**

Coworking spaces – would prefer not having to pay to use coworker space

Our business licenses were not restricted by Land Use Bylaw

Town put up advertising board

Town to help with the cost associated with advertising – suggestion – charge more for HO license then Town could do some HO advertising

Idea – community events – have HO tables available

Remove parking restrictions, limitation of visits

Do not count delivery of products as part of the business visitor limit

Review signage (ie. back lit signs)

Signage positioned at the entrance of each neighbourhood – “branding it” with colours and logos

Develop a partnership with Town to brand signs and logos

No restrictions with employee numbers

Council needs to visit sites to better understand their rules/regulations they are enforcing

Parking – commercial

Networking availability

Want to see an online business directory for services not just products – under licensing, helps with our marketing by connecting customers to us, they know we are legit (not a scam)

Defining the difference between commercial vehicle looking at the restrictions, ei(-), size and weight restrictions

Are we maximizing the parking that is currently available and can we be flexible on the sign bylaw to make people aware?

Town purchasing land to allow for parking

Home based business Facebook page/group

Reach out to the businesses that has closed and find out why

More communication with local groups, Town, Chamber, government

Promote Okotoks as a place to come for small business

Redefining the term “Home Based Business”

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

Do you work from home to provide your service or are you a “mobile” business?

Resources for commercial kitchen space

Ease up on signage/parking

Not business related but consider public transportation

Hours – why so restricted?

Allow “pop up” shops – coffee, food trucks

### Question 8

**Do you feel connected to the Okotoks business community? What are your suggestions for increasing communication?**

Town of Okotoks Ec Dev website – have list of available commercial spaces, real estate listings

One stop shop on website – for application process/connections/regulations

Ec Dev needs to promote HO businesses as being equally successful as storefront businesses may never want to expand/move to storefront

Update website – keep it current

Free tables at markets – paid for by Town?

Update type of business codes, some feel they are not categorized properly

Social media page/group

A list of networking groups and who to contact

Forum to ask questions for newcomers

More roundtables

Post all business related events on Town website/events calendar

List all business organizations for new businesses

Include with business license a list of all resources and business organizations that new business owners don't necessarily know about

Feel connected through social media

Also places like Main Street Market

“Zone” for home based businesses to showcase at Town events

Suggestions for increasing communication – more opportunities for one on one communication, closed group for communication, should have to ask to join

Four businesses at table had lots of flexibility to not have to “look at four walls” all day – opportunity is there as HO business to be out in the community

Businesses should investigate networking groups, Chamber is expensive not supportive of HO business license

Town of Okotoks organization does not make businesses feel connected to Okotoks

Suggestion – more roundtables

Better website – more social media connections, Seattle has great Ec Dev site

Co-worker initiative – would like follow up

Yes as 22% of customers are Okotoks business

A “one stop shop” that has extended hours (after hours)

Member of C of C – great network opportunity



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

No – clients aren't always local, Okotoks residents don't shop local  
Town of Okotoks to create an incubator/connector  
For market research allow street vendors  
More social media promoting local businesses  
Update on what Planning is changing regarding parking  
What is Economic Development doing?  
Businesses need to evaluate their business model  
Shop local  
Build trust  
Meet and mingle every couple of months – connection with Town and community  
There are local Facebook pages  
Conferences?  
Mentor/mentee program

### Question 9

#### **What local organizations or events do you use to grow your business skills?**

Education – tech upgrades/workshops  
Retirement planning  
How to expand with pitches, proposals, bids  
Marketing/advertising  
Accounting – bookkeeping courses  
Town to address with specific groups different issues (ie. have session for HO catering groups, have session for HO services businesses- landscape/construction)  
Common denominator is HO business – from there many differences need to provide sessions to specific “types” of businesses  
Social media – how to best utilize  
Better access to target market data  
Financial – product market, how do I pay myself, business advisor, how to buy supplies/equipment the smart way, growth potential – staff, consultant  
How to grow business and have a life, balance, how do I retire and not work forever?  
Raise awareness of future skills that other countries are using, “info sessions”  
How best to use social media  
What about those who don't use social media – how do we reach those?  
Town of Okotoks is not connected to the younger generation. Where are those 20-30 at these sessions? They don't belong and how to reach them  
Understand demographics to better market to each age group  
Food sanitation and safety classes  
Social media training – how to use to advantage  
Merchandising – packaging and labeling  
Showcasing product  
Social media – how to be effective (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

- Sales- pricing products, closing deals
- Effective communication
- Marketing strategies
- POS systems – what? Costs? Square, banks, options available
- Mentorship to get involved and learn about what your business needs to know to see success in Okotoks
- What is available in Okotoks – resources
- Provide a list of community mentors and connection opportunities
- Accounting information on how to manage your books

### Question 10

#### **How can Economic Development support your business?**

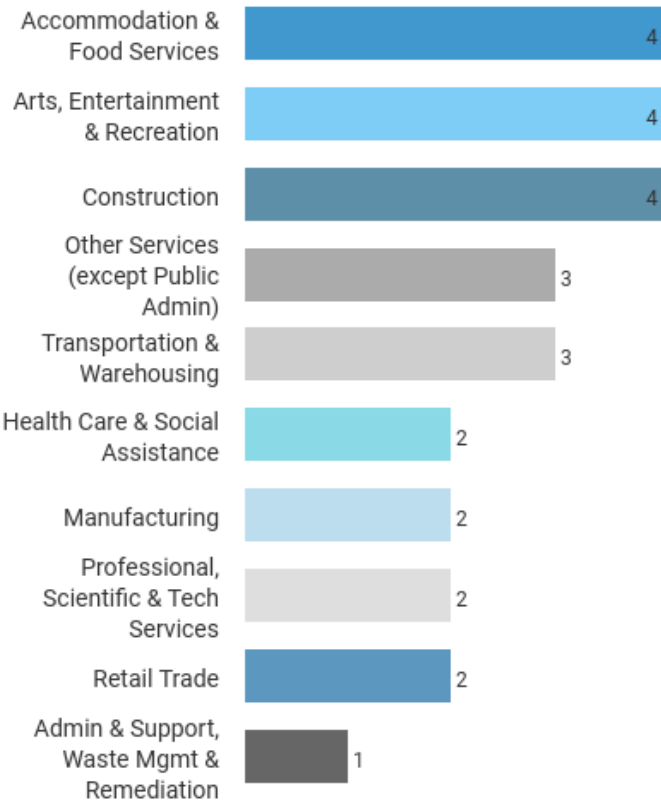
- List of available space
- Ec Dev separate website from the Town's website
- Create one stop shop
- Address the issues of the population and workforce in Okotoks and figure out a way to service the arrant business community
- Continue to foster and grow relationships/network
- Tradeshow specific to home based business
- Encourage to shop locally
- Don't take too long to make things happen
- Help keep Town of Okotoks accountable
- Licensing and DP "must" have timelines, everyone else does
- Regulate cost on rent/leased space – not sure if that is possible but its so expensive to rent/lease in Okotoks
- Find better ways to communicate with businesses, not information is easily fond or understood
- Relax zoning to allow various businesses to coincide and collaborate
- Have a list of co-working spaces available
- Updated website information
- More roundtable discussions – 2 or 3 a year
- Business "feature stories"
- Share business ideas/leads/initiatives – local should have done Hustle Co, why does it have to come from outside?
- You are!
- List of available office spaces
- Directory of local businesses offering other services or products
- Mentor/mentee program

APPENDIX B

Home Occupation Business Questionnaire Results

Twenty-seven respondents completed the Home Occupation Business Questionnaire. A summary of the results is provided below. Please note: any personal and demographic information has been removed.

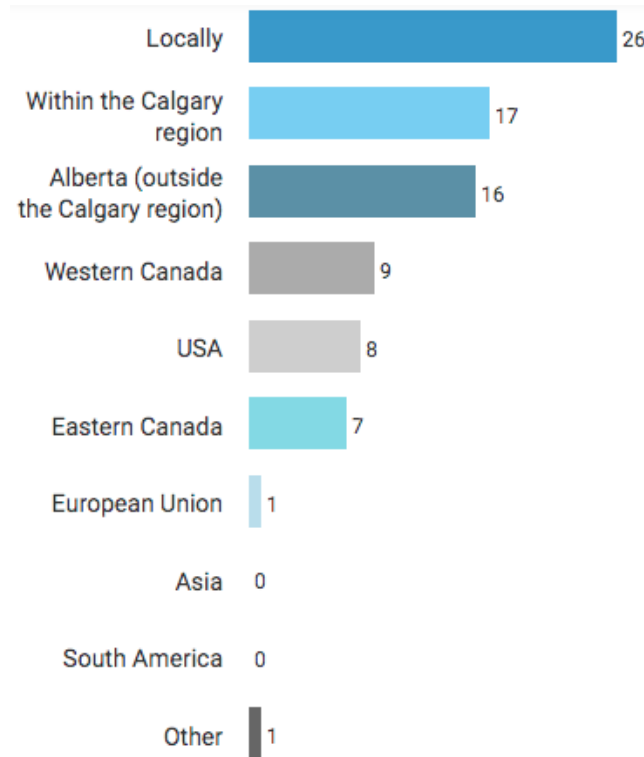
*In what industry or sector does your business operate?*



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

***Where are you selling products or services? Choose all that apply.***

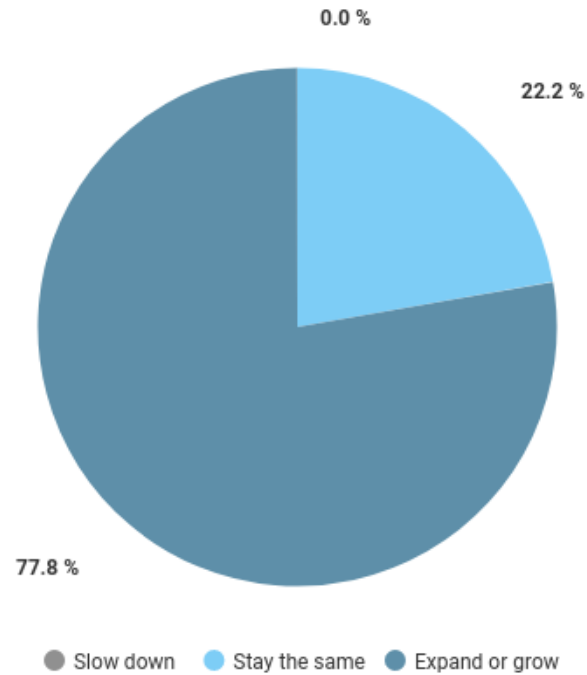


*Other: Foothills County, Black Diamond, Turner Valley and High River*

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

***Thinking about your business over the next 12 months, do you expect the demand or workload to:***

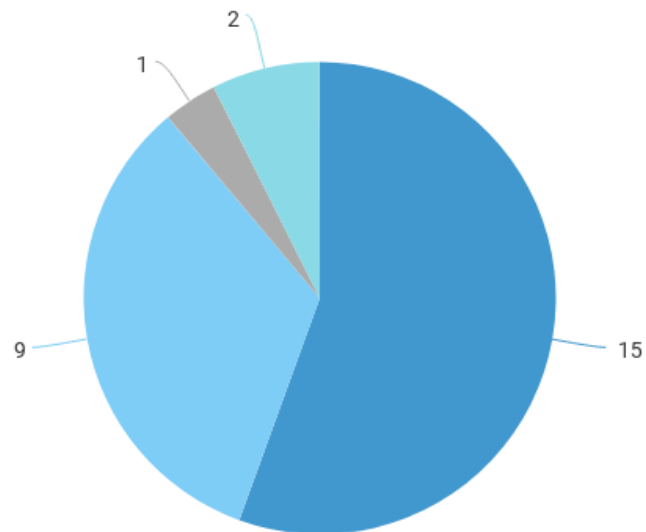




# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

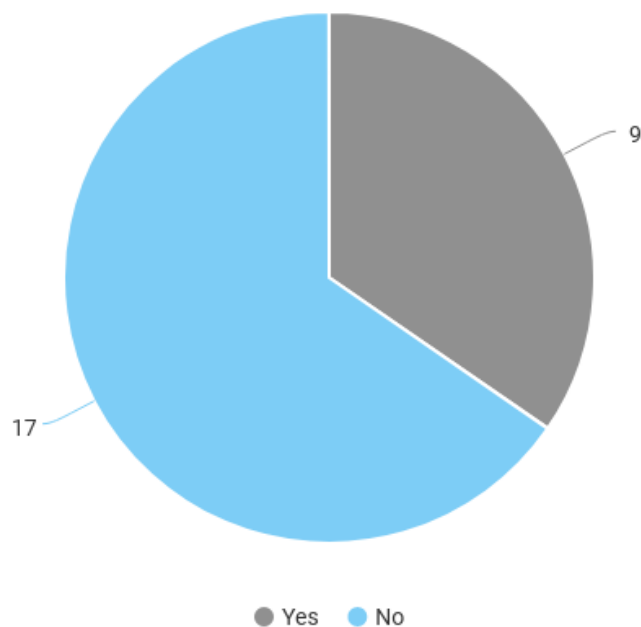
***What percentage of your sales are outside of the Calgary region?***



● 0-25% ● 26-50% ● 51-75% ● 76-100%

*Numbers represent value not percentage.*

***Does your business sell goods/services online?***



● Yes ● No

*Numbers represent value not percentage.*

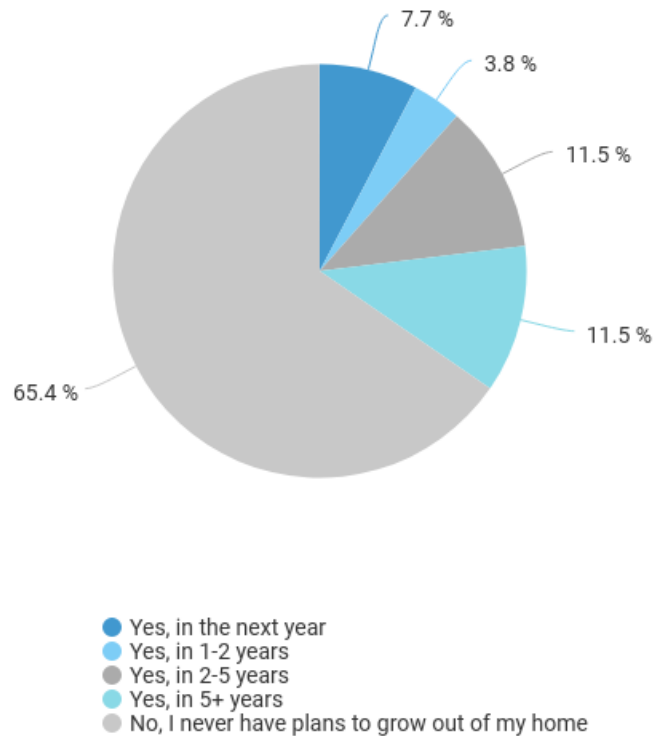
# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

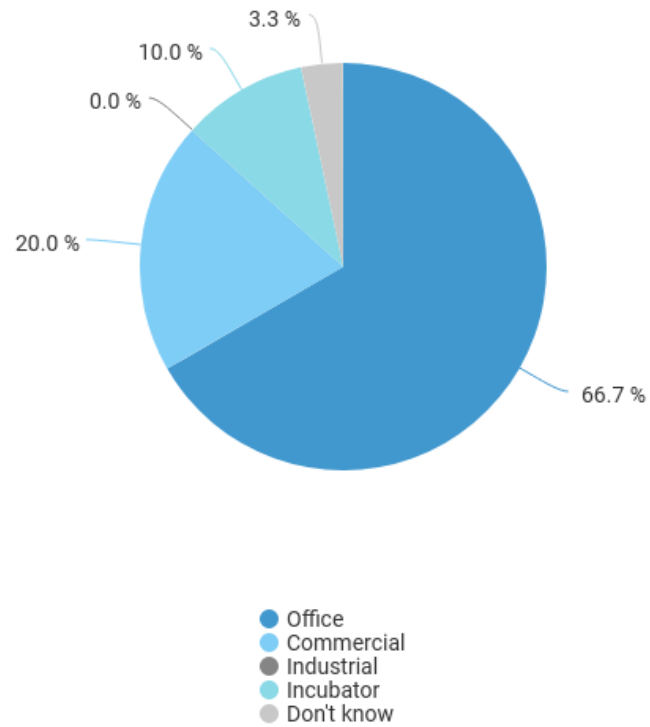
***Are you interested in moving your business from your home to a store front (office, commercial, industrial or incubator) location?***



***What type of location best suits the needs of your growing business?***

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

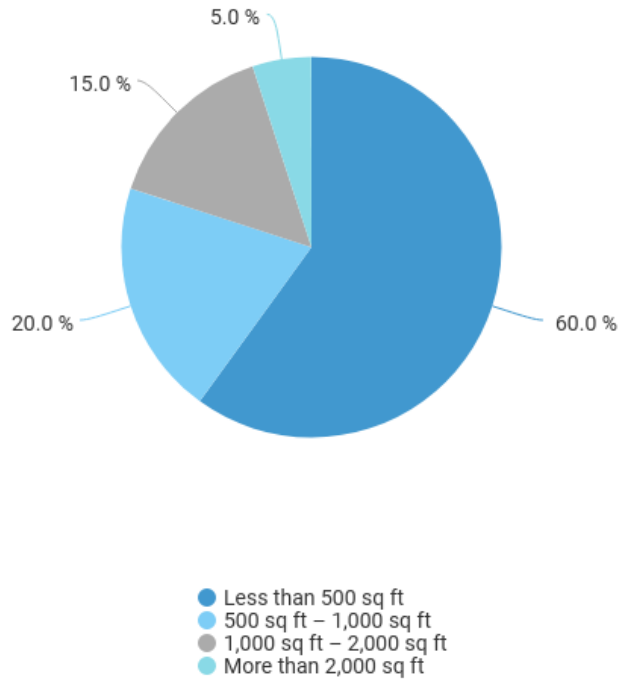


# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

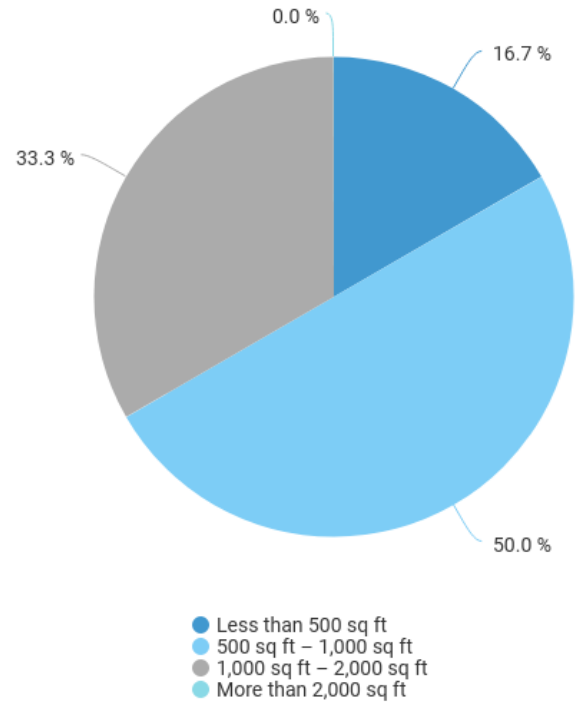
### OFFICE SPACE SIZE

*N = 20*



### COMMERCIAL SPACE SIZE

*N = 6*



### INDUSTRIAL SPACE SIZE

*N = 0*

*No responses*



# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

***What are the greatest challenges you face in making the move to a storefront location?***  
***[MULTIPLE RESPONSES – CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]***



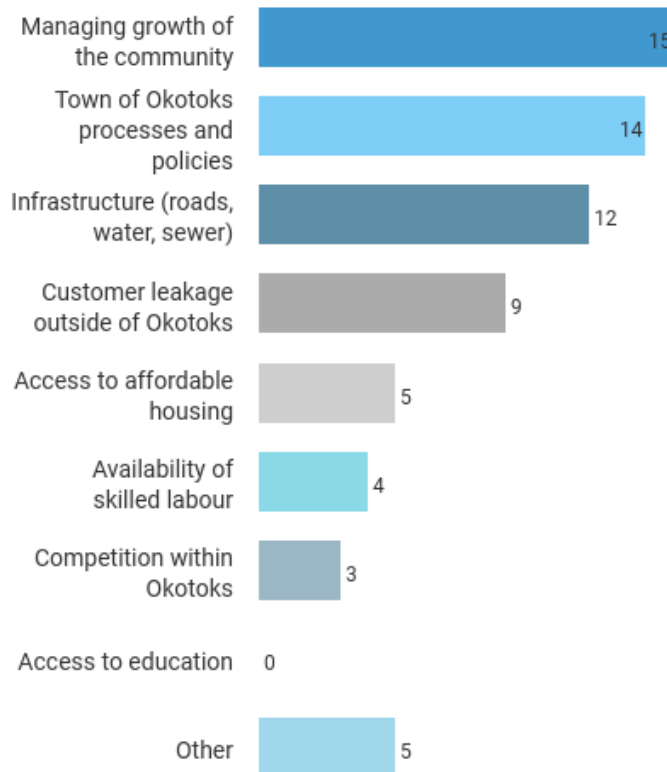
***Other responses included:***

- Committed hours, necessity of staff. Downtown property tax assessments - speculative? Is it based on the maximum that could be in that space?
- Our business is not in a position to move
- Our business model not suitable to storefront
- Our business model more suited to home based
- Do not need to expand to storefront for my business or to reach clients
- Childcare/availability to my family
- Need warehouse storage
- Not needed
- I don't really need storefront space
- Town's red tape
- No desire to move to brick and mortar. It is not required for me to grow and earn money for my home based business

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

***What do you think are the three most important issues facing Okotoks economy today?***  
***[THREE RESPONSES]***



***Other responses included:***

- Costly for start up business
- Cost to small business, lack of discounts or promotions, lack of advertising or promotion of home based businesses
- Loyalty to shop and support local business owners
- Access to affordable commercial and office rental space. Defining appropriate categorization of businesses (ie. accountant - designated CA, CMA, CGA vs non-designated booker, tax preparer). Certified trades versus non
- Bring traffic downtown

# What We Heard Report

## Okotoks Economic Development

***Did this roundtable meet your expectations? What would you improve? What worked well?***

- Was an incredibly informative event. Was a good opportunity to discuss openly challenges that are faced by owning a home based business
- Great suggestion: to provide signage allowance for communicating about parking options (customer parking in the rear)
- Allow signage for parking spots. Increase signage size allowance (0.2m is too small). Allow illumination (tasteful). Website - list of resources, mentors for business, open spaces to rent for casual meetings/office work/events, grants available for growth
- Informative. Nice to meet other people. Can we allow pop up shops - kiosks, permanent busking areas - not just for special occasions?
- Very informative! Thank you
- Great opportunities for networking and to voice some concerns regarding home based businesses
- It was fantastic!
- Great resource. I would like to know more about who, how and where to contact support
- Yes
- I do consider growing and going commercial but commercial lease in Okotoks is seemingly at a prime and not affordable. Online - planning to in next 1-3 years (intellectual property). Yes, make it an annual opportunity for feedback. Include a 15-30 min guest speaker. Very interactive, great networking
- Yes, it was very interesting and inspiring. Thank you! The EcD team seems very approachable and I will make sure to reach out. Thank you!
- Great discussion. Great start - need to continue
- Very good info discussed. Small groups worked well
- Yes. Want OED to support continued support of home based business working within current land use minor bylaws