

Business in White Rock 2025

WHITE
ROCK **BIA**

Land Acknowledgement



The White Rock BIA gratefully acknowledges that we work and support our members who do business on the unceded traditional territories of the Semiahmoo First Nation and the broader territory of the Coast Salish Peoples.

Forward

The Business in White Rock report is a snapshot of the challenges that our members face as well as the opportunities that are before all of us to improve the economic landscape of our community.

This report is the first of its kind- blending demographic data, contextual information, quantitative metrics, and qualitative observations from businesses and customers- to tell the story of business in White Rock.

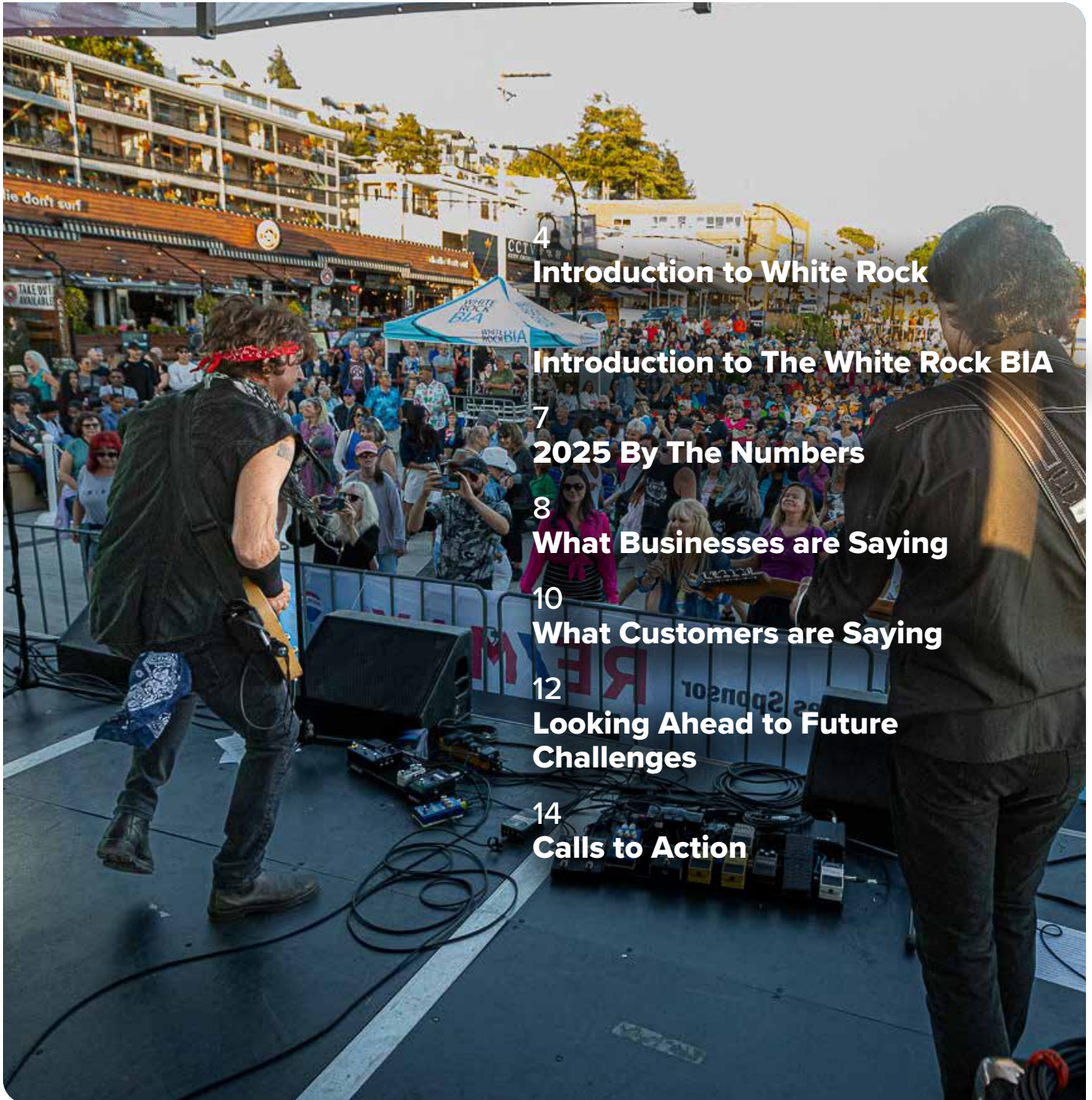
We intend for this to be an annual report. This will allow us to track trends and highlight data for the businesses, residents, and decision-makers who call White Rock home.

White Rock businesses are seasonal and rely on day-tourism to survive. And survive they do- we have an exceptionally low vacancy rate in comparison to other communities. However, we believe that the annual Business in White Rock report will help this community that we all love to not just survive- but thrive.

Please read this report, share it, and reach out to our team should you have any questions.



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Introduction to White Rock

Demographics

	White Rock	Metro Vancouver
Population	21,939	662,248
Median Age	58	41
Median Household Income	\$73,000	\$88,928
Residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher	47.6%	35.2%
Households earning over the Metro Vancouver Average Income	17.4%	15.5%

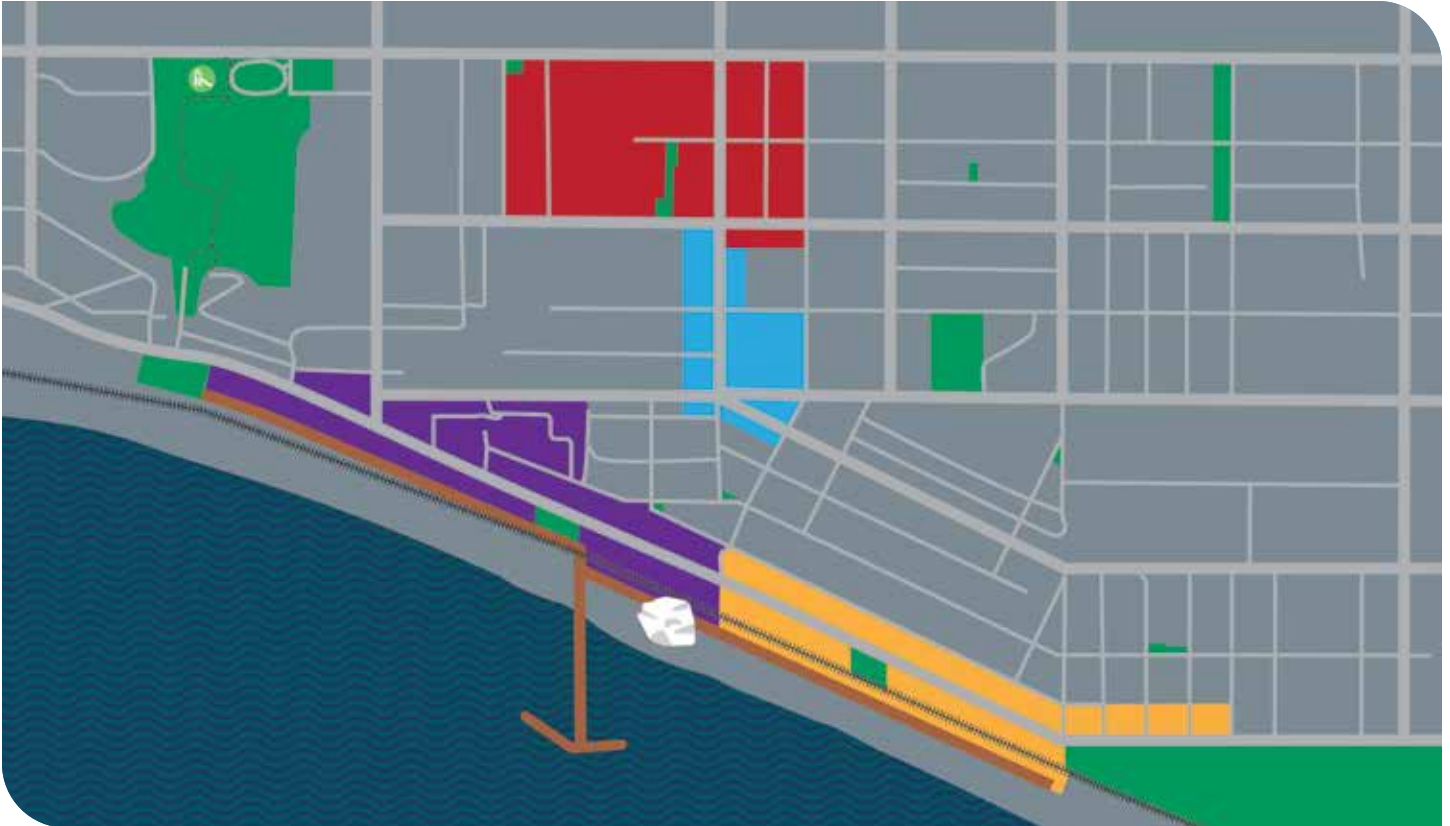
	White Rock	British Columbia
Residents Renting Their Home	35.2%	32.8%

White Rock is older and more educated compared to other communities in Metro Vancouver. While our median household income is lower than Metro Vancouver's median income, we have a slightly higher percentage of households earning more than Metro Vancouver's median income.

With the 8th smallest population of any Metro Vancouver municipality, White Rock businesses are reliant on day tourism to survive.



Introduction to the White Rock BIA



The White Rock Business Improvement Association (White Rock BIA) is a non-profit that drives business success and community vitality to create a destination where commerce, creativity, and community thrive.

“The BIA does a good job of supporting local businesses” - 2025 Business Survey

We support new and existing businesses through marketing and promotions, events, beautification, and advocacy.

With a staff of two, an ongoing contractor team of seven, and a Board of Directors of eleven, we are a small organization that works tirelessly to advance our mandate.

“Thank you White Rock BIA for everything you are doing to keep White Rock rocking!!!” - 2025 Business Survey

2025 By The Numbers

58.8%

White Rock Businesses surveyed graded White Rock **B** or better or higher as a place to do business

43.24%

White Rock businesses surveyed saw business revenues decline from 2023

89.19%

White Rock businesses surveyed saw business expenses grow from 2023

25,000

People attended the Concerts at the Pier, Presented by TD Ready Commitment

72%

Concerts at the Pier attendees surveyed went to a White Rock business before/after the concert

71%

Concerts at the Pier attendees surveyed live outside of White Rock

\$900 000

Economic activity from the Concerts at the Pier (assuming a conservative spend of \$50/ person who went to a White Rock business)



Commercial Vacancy Rates by City as of March 2025

Location	Commercial Vacancy Rate (%)
Downtown Victoria	10.9%
Vancouver	9.9%
White Rock	6.5%
Sidney	5.03%

Average Permit Processing Times by City (2020–2024)

Location	Average Permit Processing Time
White Rock	5.6 months
Burnaby	4.5 months
Surrey	3.6 months
Vancouver	3.3 months

What Businesses are Saying

The top three Main Challenges reported by White Rock businesses are:

#1 **65%**
Parking

#2 **38%**
Labour
Availability

#3 **35%**
Construction
Impacts



Of all the challenges reported, the top three biggest challenges (rated as either the first or second biggest challenge) are:

#1 **47%**
Parking

#2 **44%**
Construction
impacts

#3 **31%**
Cost or Shortages
of Labour

65%

White Rock business owners surveyed live on the peninsula (White Rock or South Surrey)

46%

White Rock businesses identified the community as the reason why they like doing business in White Rock



White Rock businesses enjoy our community and take pride in it- even businesses that don't benefit from events cite that they love a vibrant community and see events as a crucial part of making White Rock a great place to live, work, play, and visit.

As the survey results shows, parking is a major issue facing White Rock businesses. When speaking with businesses, the challenges are two-fold: there is a lack of parking in Uptown and Five Corners (as well as on Marine Drive from June-August) and the parking costs on Marine Drive are extremely high (the summer rate starts when it is still winter and continues through mid-Autumn).

Permit times and permitting processes are also a concern. Long permit wait times and confusing processes make it challenging for businesses to succeed. Permitting issues hurt businesses at the time when they are most vulnerable- when they are just starting up.



What Customers are Saying

Top Five Reasons People Like Visiting or Living in White Rock:

89%

Natural Beauty

72%

Very Walkable

47%

Great Outdoor Activities

46%

Great Events

44%

Great Businesses



Top Five Reasons People Don't Like Visiting or Living in White Rock:

60%

Cost of Parking

40%

Lack of Parking

26%

Construction

18%

Lack of Transit

3.13%

Lack of Businesses That Interest Them

Events Attended by People Surveyed:

38%

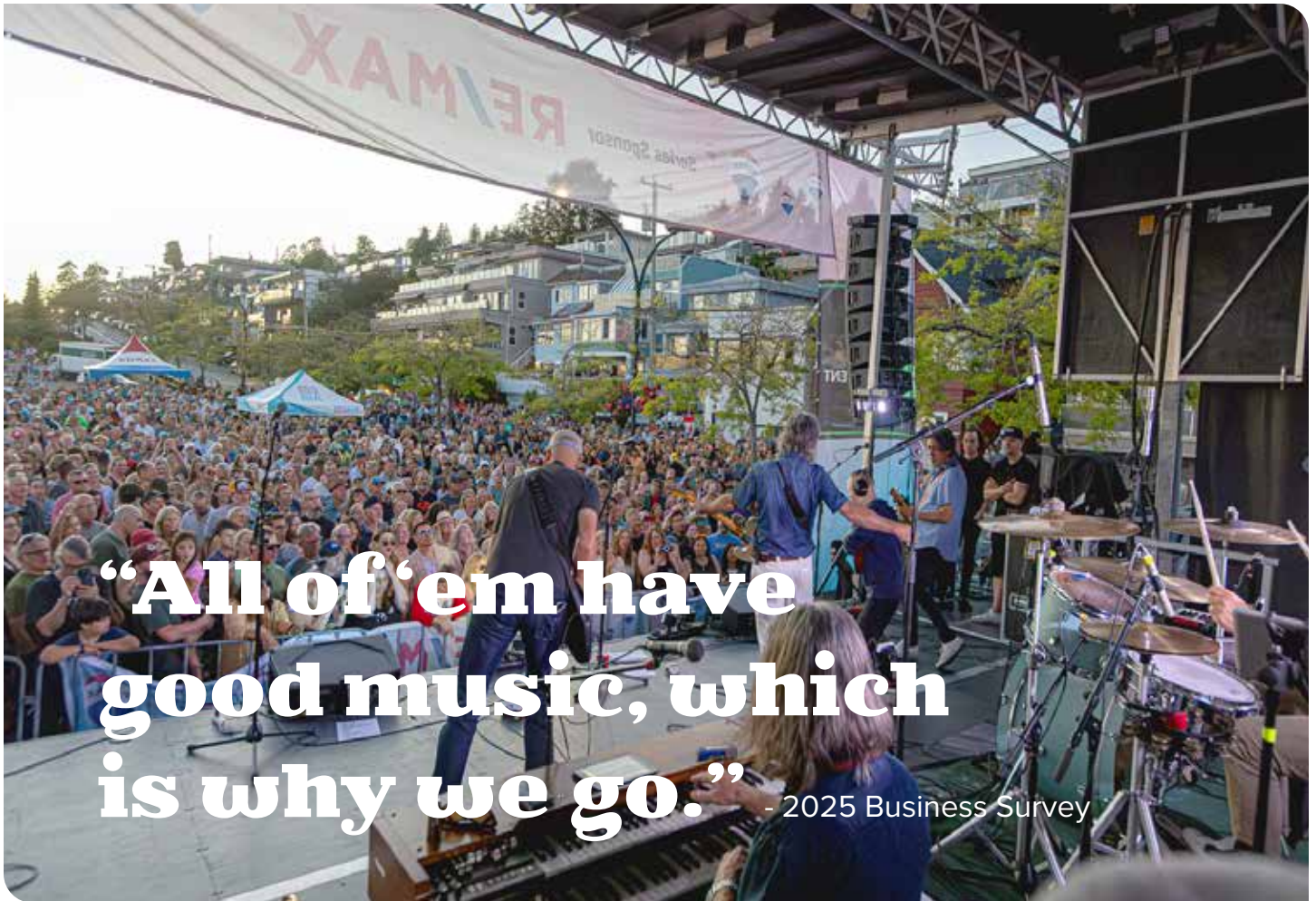
Concerts at the Pier

16%

White Rock Sea Festival
& Semiahmoo Days

12%

Canada Day by the Bay



Customers are clear about what they like about White Rock: the natural beauty, our great events and activities, and the fantastic local businesses make our community special.

That said, they identify the same issues that businesses have in their survey: parking and construction. Given the rising cost of living, it shouldn't come as a surprise that people are challenged by extraneous costs like parking.

We should continue to lean into our strengths. White Rock is truly gorgeous, and our events and businesses give people a reason to visit. and ameliorate our challenges. mainly access to our community.

Looking Ahead to Future Challenges

While the surveys captured important information, they are limited in their scope due to the limited number of questions we can effectively ask- and, by their very nature, they are a snapshot in time. For example, the survey was taken before the impact of the Trump Administration's tariffs took effect. It is important to step back and look at what challenges are hiding around the corner.

We see four other major challenges, in addition to the ones identified in previous sections of this report:



First Challenge: General Economic and Global Uncertainty

While RBC is still forecasting economic growth through 2026, fears of a recession alongside the uncertain economic impact of tariffs and trade wars have made businesses and people wary of investing and spending. Instead, they seem to be holding on to their pennies- even successful, long-tenured White Rock businesses have reported that they are holding off on any extraneous expenditures.

This will likely continue to drive down revenues for White Rock businesses and, should the early reported fiscal impacts of the Trump Administration's tariffs continue, drive up business expenses.

Second Challenge: Cost of Land

The cost of land is causing commercial lease rates to be set at a level that does not make fiscal sense for businesses.

When investors purchase commercial spaces, they do so expecting a certain return on investment. To get that return, the property owners set lease rates that make it challenging- and in some cases impossible- for businesses to be profitable.

Third Challenge: Governmental Processes and Regulations

While this was touched upon with the permit wait times, from conversations with businesses we know that they consistently find it challenging and/or costly to navigate permitting, licensing, and taxation.

We should be clear that this is not just a municipal issue- provincial industry licensing (including rules around liquor) and federal taxation (and the tax code) have been identified as hindering and obstructing business.

Every minute that businesses spend on navigating government regulations is a minute not spent on making their business successful. For us to improve economic growth, we must make sure that regulations are easy to understand, simple to navigate, and quick to implement. For every regulation, we also need to ask the following question: what is the purpose of this regulation? If not for safety, why do we have it? And is there a simpler way to achieve the purpose?

Fourth Challenge: Climate Change

While this challenge may come as a surprise, it shouldn't. Consider the past five years:

- The June 2021 Heat Dome forced many White Rock businesses to temporarily shut down.
- The December 2021 flooding destroyed infrastructure across BC, cutting off Metro Vancouver from the rest of Canada by road and rail. This forced us to ration gasoline and caused billions of dollars in damage- like all government expenses, it is ultimately borne by taxpayers.
- Extreme weather events- droughts, heatwaves, and extreme cold snaps- have caused shortages in a variety of crops, including olive oil, coffee, chocolate, and fruit. This has resulted in prices skyrocketing, which impacts both costs for restaurants and their revenues (as people have less disposable income as their grocery bills rise).

We are currently at ~1.28 Celsius of warming, and the world is on track for 2.8 Celsius of warming by 2100.

Climate change is an economic weight that will damage infrastructure, drag down growth, hamper businesses, and hammer families.

Calls to Action

White Rock BIA: Leverage community to drive business success. Maintain current, focused events program to drive customers into our businesses.

White Rock BIA and Municipal Government: Maintain natural beauty of the community.

Municipal Government: Consider impact of parking charges on businesses and re-evaluate the lack of shoulder season rates and the removal of free weekday parking November-January.

Further implement ways to minimize impact of construction to businesses, residents, and visitors including the impact on the transportation system, parking, and street access.

Provincial Government and Federal Government: Fight climate change and help individuals, businesses, and municipalities mitigate the impacts of global warming. Reduce interprovincial trade barriers to open up new markets for our businesses.

Federal Government: Expand trade and make Canada a great place to invest.

All Levels of Government: Re-evaluate regulations and licensing/permitting processes. Reform both to make them easily understood with simple applications and quick approvals.

All of Us: Figure out how to drive down the cost of land to improve affordability for households and businesses.





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