

THE CORPORATION OF THE  
**CITY OF WHITE ROCK**  
CORPORATE REPORT



**DATE:** May 10, 2021  
**TO:** Mayor and Council  
**FROM:** Carl Isaak, Director, Planning and Development Services  
**SUBJECT:** Economic Development Strategic Plan - Survey Results

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

THAT Council:

1. Receive for information the Business and Resident Economic Development Plan Survey results; and
  2. Direct staff to:
    - a) Share the survey results with the community via the talkwhiterock.ca page and on the City's social media channels.
    - b) Conduct virtual workshops with members of the Economic Development Advisory Committee, a group of volunteer residents, a group of volunteer business owners or managers, and a group of City employees.
    - c) Identify priority strategies and action plans to be included in the updated Economic Development Strategic Plan.
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In support of Council's 2021-2022 strategic priority to "update the City's Economic Development Strategy," staff are working on reviewing and updating the 2009 Economic Development Strategic Plan. Input has been obtained from businesses and residents regarding their views on the future of economic development in White Rock via an online survey on TalkWhiteRock.ca as well as a hard copy provided directly to businesses. A summary of the results of the survey is included in this report (Appendix A with the results from businesses, Appendix B with the results from residents).

Staff are presenting the results to Council for information and requesting endorsement to move forward with staff sharing the results with the community via the City's various communication channels (sharing "what we heard" to allow participants and others in the community to see what others are thinking about this topic), and conducting workshops with various groups to identify priority strategies and action plans to be included in the updated Economic Development Strategic Plan.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION**

On January 25, 2021, Council passed the following resolution [2021-029]:

THAT Council refer the draft Economic Development Strategic Plan update surveys for business and for residents to the Economic Development Advisory Committee for review, prior to distributing the surveys.

## **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

The City last updated its Economic Development Strategic Plan in 2009. Council identified economic development and the updating of this plan as a high priority for 2021-2022. Council chose to complete the update in-house by hiring an Economic Development Officer, which was successfully done in September 2020.

Thereafter, staff created and distributed two economic development surveys, one for businesses and one for residents and has received and tabulated the results.

### **Business Survey Results**

The Business Survey was completed by 56 business owners/managers and included businesses operating in the fields of healthcare, personal care, professional services, food/beverage services and retail. There was representation from businesses located in the Town Centre, at Five Corners and on Marine Drive.

Over 56% of businesses are completely or somewhat satisfied with White Rock as a place to do business. The top three strengths identified for doing business in the City are:

1. Small town atmosphere, friendly sense of community.
2. A strong, loyal customer base.
3. Increasing population, growing White Rock / South Surrey community.

The top three challenges associated with doing business in White Rock are:

1. Parking issues.
2. Increased cost of doing business, financial concerns (i.e. high rent, taxes).
3. Transportation issues (i.e. transit, congestion, distance to other municipalities).

Respondents identified businesses related to Arts & Culture, Health & Wellness and Food/Beverage services as being the most likely to be successful in White Rock. Retail and Water Sports / Outdoor Activities were also ranked high.

More than 73% of businesses had contact with the City in the past year, and 53% rated their experience as completely or somewhat satisfied. Satisfaction ratings were relatively high for:

- Access to Municipal Information via the Website.
- Business License Processing and Fees.
- Customer Service when dealing directly with the City.

Ratings were relatively lower for:

- Municipal Tax Rates, Infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, public safety, etc.).
- Planning & Development Services.

More than 62% of businesses identified “Making it easy for Businesses to Navigate Government Services, Regulations and Programs” as the most important thing the City can do to support the growth and expansion of business.

Verbatim written comments from the Business Survey are included at the end of Appendix A.

### **Resident Survey Results**

The Resident Survey was completed by 277 respondents, 161 of whom are retired or semi-retired, 74 who work part time and 35 who live in Surrey.

Most respondents identified “Attracting more Businesses to White Rock” and “Protecting against the Negative Impacts of Growth” as being their top goals for Economic Development. They described their vision for the economic future of White Rock as being:

- Environmentally Sustainable/Responsible.
- Creative/Innovative.
- Vibrant and Unique.

As the economy develops, they desire an:

- Improved Quality of Life (more entertainment, arts & culture, and amenities).
- Better Selection of Shops & Services.
- Lower Environmental Impact.

More than 65% of residents identified “The Pier and the Waterfront” as the City’s most important asset, followed by “Local, Independent Businesses” and then “Arts & Culture.” Residents would specifically like to see more grocery options, more craft breweries, more general retail, and more fitness options (including water sports / outdoor activities) and believe that these are the types of businesses that will be successful in White Rock.

Residents provided numerous pages of thoughtful written comments which are included at the end of Appendix B. Recurring themes include a strong desire for the revitalization of the Waterfront including the development of water sport / outdoor activity type businesses and facilities, requests for a bold move with infrastructure (funicular, day-time marina, promenade extension to Crescent Beach, hotel/convention centre, etc.), interest in the creation of an Arts & Culture Corridor, a wish to see more public and private spaces for social gatherings and additional outdoor venues for concerts and markets.

### **Next Steps**

Staff will seek additional input from the City’s Economic Development Advisory Committee (including the White Rock Business Improvement Association and the South Surrey and White Rock Chamber of Commerce), residents and select businesses, via a series of virtual workshops. The workshops will focus on identifying priority strategies and action plans to be included in the updated Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Building on the survey results, these workshops, and ongoing review of economic data pertaining to White Rock, the EDO will identify priority strategies and action plans to be included in the updated Economic Development Strategic Plan.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Publicly communicating survey results and conducting workshops with businesses and residents ensures that community members are informed, consulted, and involved in the creation of the City's updated Economic Development Strategic Plan.

### **INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS**

This project has involved the support the Communications and Government Relations Department. The Recreation and Culture Department has also been involved in advising on aspects of the arts and culture community that relate to economic development.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

Conducting workshops with businesses and residents regarding the results of the economic development surveys directly supports Council's 2021-2022 strategic priority to "update the City's Economic Development Strategy."

### **OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES**

Council may consider other ways to obtain further input from businesses and residents, including:

1. Hire an external consultant to conduct the workshops.
2. Seek input to identify key themes and strategies through additional surveys.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff are providing the results of the Economic Development Survey (for businesses and residents) with Council for information and seeks endorsement to move forward with staff sharing the results with the community via the City's various communication channels, and conducting workshops with various groups to identify priority strategies and action plans to be included in the updated Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Staff has evaluated the options available to obtain additional community input and finds conducting the workshops in house to be the most viable in terms of cost and quality of response.

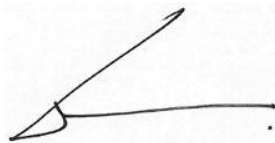
Respectfully submitted,



Carl Isaak  
Director, Planning and Development Services

## **Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer**

I concur with the recommendations of this corporate report.



Guillermo Ferrero  
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix A: Economic Development Survey for Businesses Results

Appendix B: Economic Development Survey for Residents Results