

Escondido Business Walk

September 25, 2014



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Economic development is a top priority for the City of Escondido. Successful business retention and expansion strategies must include establishing and maintaining strong lines of communication between business leaders and city officials. To enhance that communication, the City of Escondido partnered with the Escondido Chamber of Commerce to hold Escondido's first Business Walk.

Started by the City of Vista in 2011, the business walk concept takes business retention efforts to the next level by combining the resources of the City and Chamber to accomplish in one day what would typically take months.

Event Summary

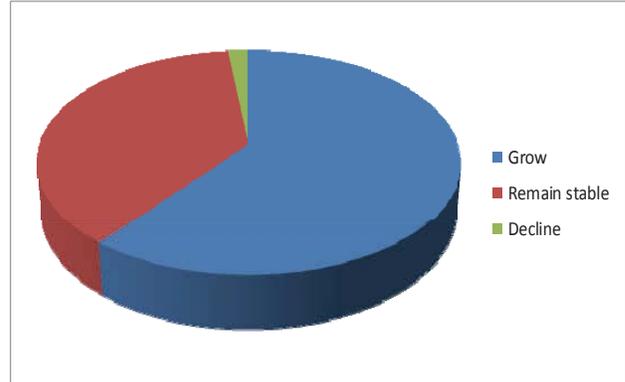
The Escondido Business Walk was held on September 25, 2014 from 9 a.m.– 2 p.m. Two dozen volunteers comprised of City and Chamber representatives participated. In pairs, these volunteers personally visited 53 businesses, conducting a brief survey of business retention and expansion related questions. Several more businesses that were unavailable on the day of the Business Walk responded to the survey after the fact.

The survey included questions covering topics such as whether the business anticipated an increase in growth or hiring, whether they conducted business internationally, what obstacles might be impeding their progress and how the City and Chamber could better help them succeed.

Key Findings

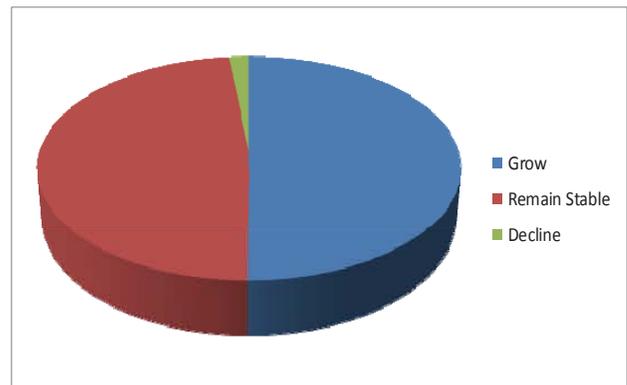
The most significant, and positive, finding from the Business Walk survey was that over half of the businesses surveyed (59.6%) expect to grow during the next three years. Additionally, fewer than 2% of businesses surveyed expected their business to decline in either revenue or employee size.

Anticipated GROWTH over the next three years:



About half of the businesses surveyed expect their workforce to grow over the next three years, and 47% expect their workforce to remain stable.

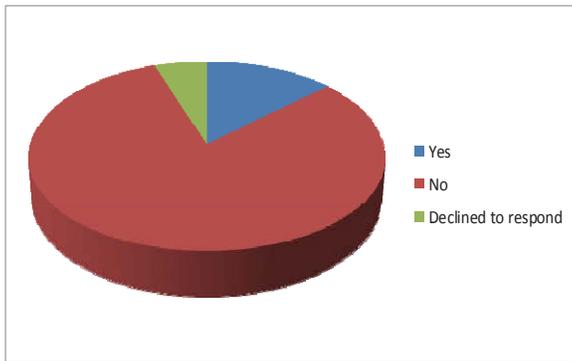
Anticipated HIRING over the next three years:



These results reveal opportunities for the City to provide businesses with expansion assistance such as site selection, consultation on the development process and connections to workforce resources. Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce can assist expanding businesses with marketing efforts and opportunities to become more involved in the community.

The surveys also asked whether the company planned to relocate. A vast majority (73.6%) responded that they have no plans to relocate. A few respondents indicated that they will be relocating to a new and/or larger facility and staying in Escondido. City staff is following up with the handful of respondents who said they are planning to relocate out of Escondido to determine whether retention efforts might motivate them to stay.

Plans to relocate business:



Another finding from survey data is the relatively low number of international companies in Escondido. Only 17.5% of the businesses surveyed conduct business outside the U.S.

While many of the businesses surveyed are not in industries that would typically conduct business internationally (i.e. professional services like insurance companies, CPAs and attorneys), this data may reveal opportunities for businesses in manufacturing and similar industries who do not currently export to explore it as an option.

City staff works closely with both the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Port of San Diego to identify opportunities to increase international exporting in the North County region. Specifically in the craft beer industry, international exporting to Asia has grown tremendously in the past couple of years thanks to the efforts of local municipalities and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

During the Business Walk, businesses were also asked open-ended questions like “What is one ‘thing’ that would help your business grow?” and “What one regulatory item is most impacting your business at this time?” Businesses responded with an array of answers. Regarding business growth, many cited that ramped-up marketing efforts would help them grow. Regarding regulatory items, several cited signage requirements while several cited state and federal regulations.

Conclusion

Business retention efforts are some of the most important aspects of economic development. They help existing businesses grow and create jobs within our City. Overwhelmingly, volunteers and businesses reported that Escondido’s first Business Walk was a valuable exercise, and economic development staff plan to establish it as an annual event.

Businesses Visited

The list of businesses to be visited during the Business Walk was developed using a strategic approach. Criteria for selection included: businesses with whom the City did not already have frequent contact, industries that typically have higher paying jobs with lower employee turnover like manufacturing and professional services and businesses in target economic development areas like Escondido's historic downtown and the East Valley Parkway corridor.

Following is a list of the businesses that were visited:

Acucare Home Medical	Hugins Companies, CPAs
Airgas	Hydroscape
AJ Cunningham Tax & Business	Integrity 1st Mortgage
Allstate Insurance	J & M's Family Restaurant
Animal Urgent Care	Joseph Holtz, DDS
Aurora Biochem	John R. Betts, CPA
B&B Lock & Safe, Inc.	Johnstone Supply
BGS Jewelers	Joyce E. Rethmeier, CPA
Brauwer Insurance	Kennedy's Karne
Buckles Associates	Kenneth Miller, CPA
Cabinets by Charron	Kettle Coffee
Clairemont Equipment Rental	Little Mo Storage
Companion Animal Clinic	Lisi Medical
COR Security	Manzke Machine
Cricket Wireless	Marie Callender's
Deborah's Next to New	Pearls of Dentistry
Diversified Business Resources, Inc.	Precision Rifles
EscoGelato	Rancho Computer Networks
Fitness Unlimited	Red Deer Systems
General Athletics	Security Public Storage
Glaser Bailey Awards, Inc.	State Farm Insurance
Glennie's Office Products	TurnKey Strategic Relations
Green Mechanical Contractors	Tri-Ad
Grocery Outlet	Valley Camper Sales
Hilltop Classics	Valley Radiology
Holiday Wine Cellar	Vander Spek & Corsello, CPAs
	Western Rim Contractors