

HEPBURN

OVER THE RISE

Business Retention & Expansion Survey Results

JULY 2025

Prairie Rising



P R E P A R E D B Y



www.prairierising.com

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General Business Information:

TRADES & CONSTRUCTION: 6



SERVICES: 7



ARTS & CULTURE: 1



RETAIL: 1



HOSPITALITY: 2



AGRICULTURE: 3



Years in Business

1 – 3 Years:

1

1 – 3 Years:

2

3 + Years:

14

Number of Employees

1: 10

39%

2-3: 7

39%

4-7: 2

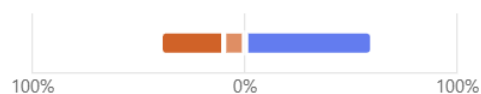
11%

7-10: 2

11%

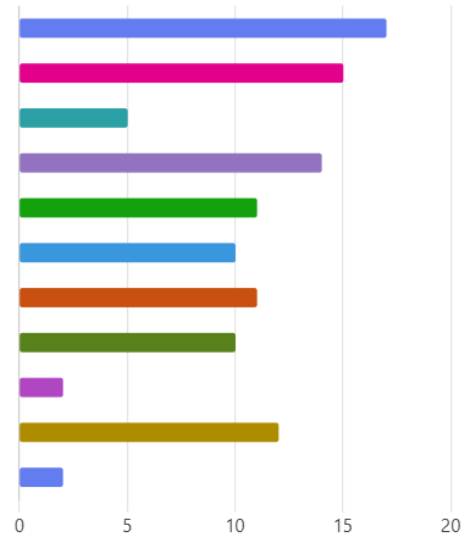
What percentage of your employees live in the local community?

● 0-25% ● 26-50% ● 51-75% ● 76-100%



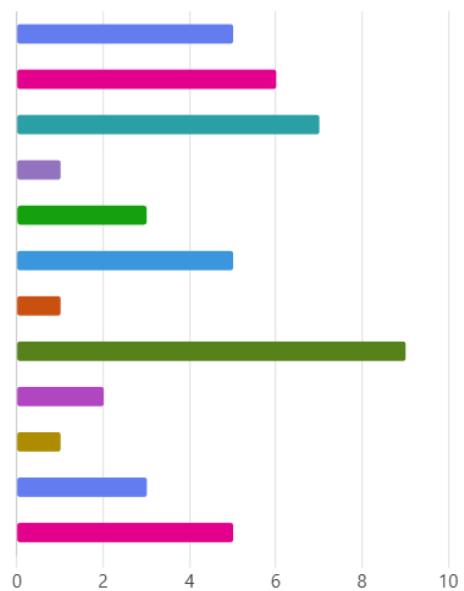
What are your greatest Strengths?

Strong customer service	17
Quality products or services	15
Strong brand recognition	5
Skilled workforce	14
Innovation and adaptability	11
Strong community involvement	10
Financial stability	11
Efficient operations	10
Strong online presence	2
Good location/Accessibility	12
Other	2



What are your greatest Weaknesses?

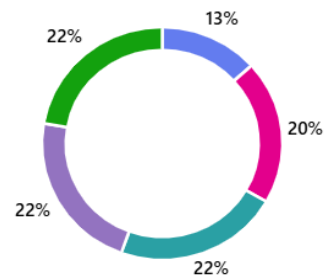
Limited access to capital or funding	5
Lack of skilled workforce	6
Limited marketing or brand awareness	7
High employee turnover	1
Insufficient technology or equipment	3
Poor location or limited visibility	5
Difficulty managing cash flow	1
Limited customer base	9
Supply chain or inventory issues	2
Ineffective management or leadership	1
Regulatory or compliance challenges	3
Other	5



Community Satisfaction:

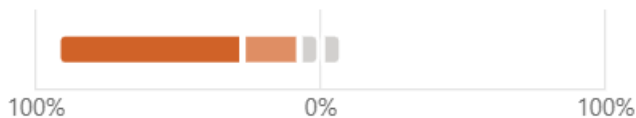
What attracted you to start or expand your business in Hepburn?

Affordable cost of living	6
Local market potential	9
Strong community vibe	10
Proximity to larger cities	10
Other	10



How satisfied are you with your current location?

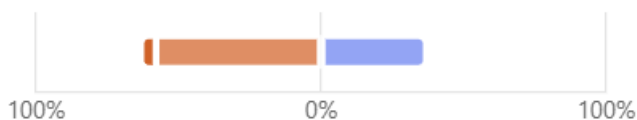
Very satisfied Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied Very dissatisfied



How would you rate the overall business climate?

Excellent Good Fair Poor

5.2% 57.8% 36.8% 0%



What are the key advantages of doing business here?



"Very friendly atmosphere open to creative endeavors."

"Community involvement and connection."

"Word of mouth happens, small community talks, reduces cost of advertising."

**"Opportunities to develop relationships with people.
Not just transactional."**

"Reprieve, getting away from the hecticness of the city. Safety."

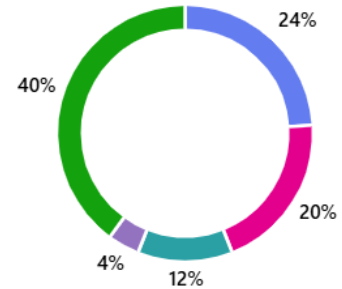
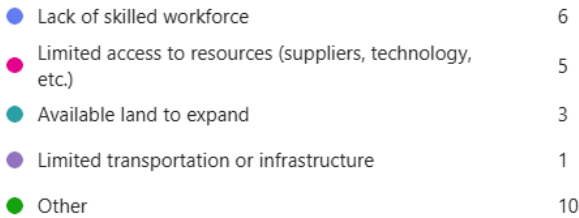
“People pay their bills.”

“People are friendly. Good to shop local, have local connections.”

**“We have a very community environment, it is safe.
My clients like coming here. The town brought the
Heritage Common, positive direction and lots of
opportunities.”**



What are the biggest challenges your business faces?



How would you rate the following aspects of infrastructure in your community? (Higher = Better)

Roads /Transportation:

3.42

Average Rating



Internet access:

3.53

Average Rating



Commercial space Available:

2.62

Average Rating



Utilities/Energy reliability:

4.39

Average Rating



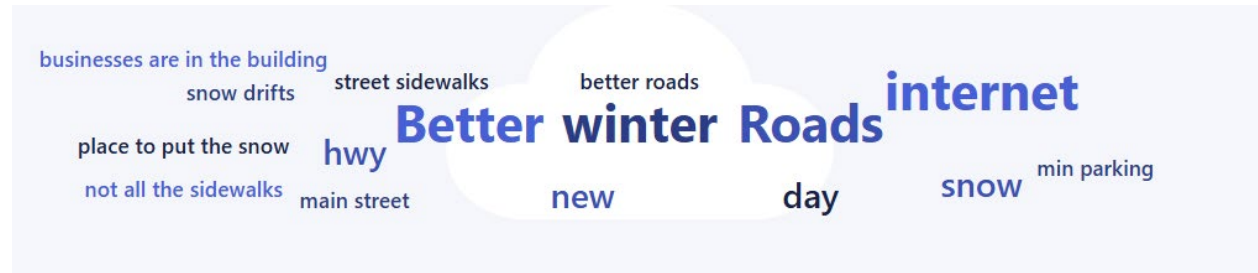
Access to shipping/logistics:

3.56

Average Rating



What improvements in infrastructure would benefit your business the most?



"The highway coming into town – resurfacing of 375"

"Lots of people can't expand or do new development because the lagoon is maxed out."

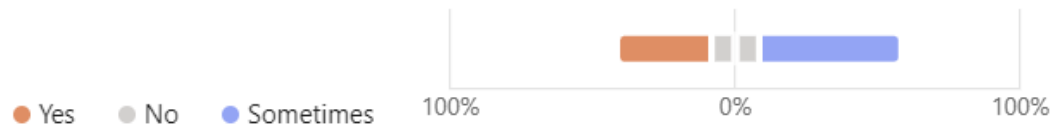
"Access road is treacherous, especially in winter, and no center line. Dangerous, it needs to be safer."

"Better signage."

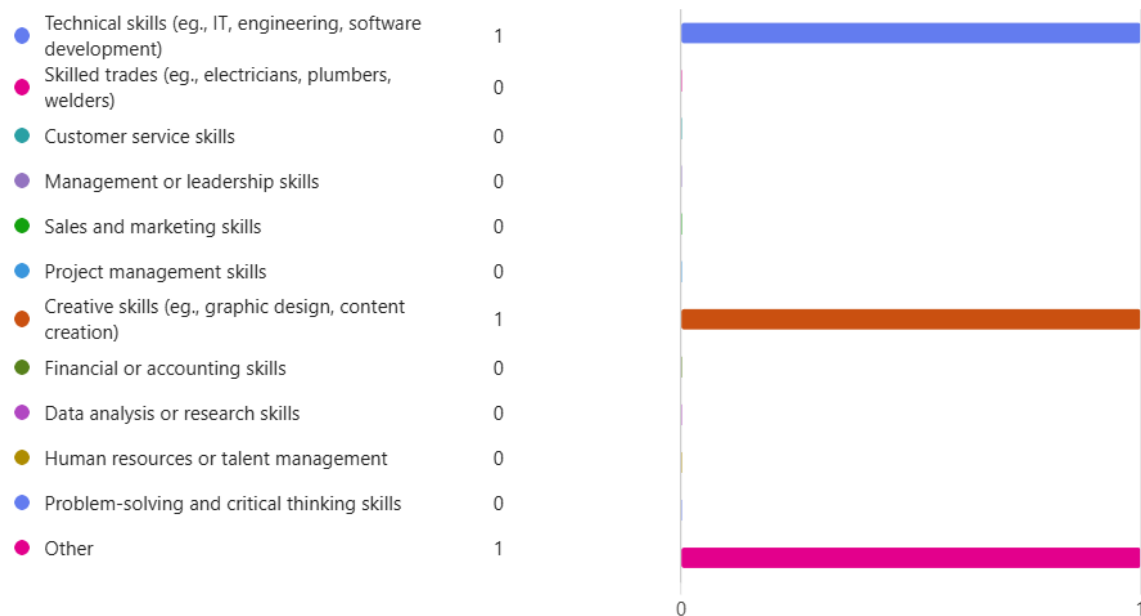


Workforce:

Are you able to find skilled workers locally?



If no, what skills are most difficult to find? (select all that apply)

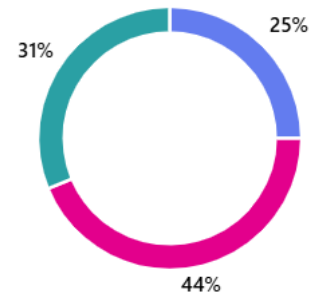


Would you be interested in workforce training or apprenticeship programs?



What types of training programs would benefit your business? (Select all that apply)

● Job training programs	4
● Internships or apprenticeship programs	7
● Other	5



What kind of recruitment strategies could the town partner with businesses on?

“Promotion and awareness for opportunities for employment.”

“In the past the town has offered youth as set up and take down support for local market – that was helpful.”

“Networking, ability to post jobs. Job availability. Platform to find people locally.”

“Host a career fair and get all local youth and anyone in workforce age. Get in front of the public eye – alot of people dont even know what we do.”

Business Support

How would you rate the level of support from the town, in the following aspects (Higher the Better)

Business regulation:

4.27

Average Rating



Permitting process:

4.25

Average Rating



Town Marketing

3.72

Average Rating



Bylaw enforcement:

3.45

Average Rating



How can the town enhance its services?

“Encourage more development.”

“I think we’re on track.”

“The roads – the access roads, they just repaved but there are already holes. Keep up on potholes.”

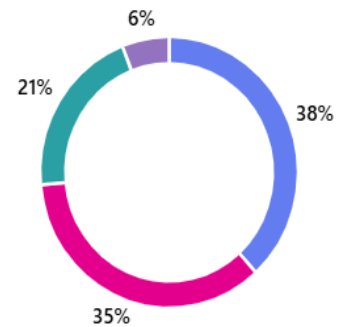
“Would love to see more pockets on a billboard for more business cards – inside heritage common and to see a waterproof covering for billboard downtown.”

“They’re pretty good at listening to issues but improve the roads.”



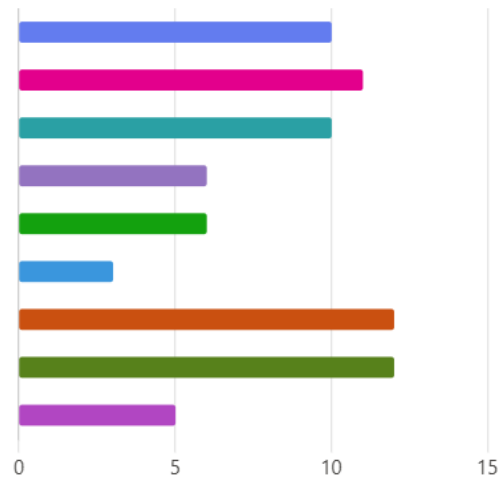
What types of local government support would be most helpful?

● Tax incentives	13
● Grants or subsidies	12
● Workforce development assistance	7
● Other	2



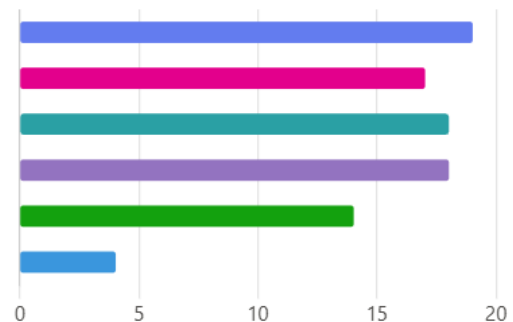
What amenities or services would make the town more attractive for businesses and residents?

● Better internet access	10
● Healthcare services	11
● Recreational facilities and entertainment	10
● Schools and education programs	6
● Child-friendly spaces like playgrounds and play spaces	6
● pet friendly amenities like dog parks	3
● Restaurants and shops	12
● Financial institutions and ATMs	12
● Other	5



What do you think are the top factors that would attract people to move to this town?

● Affordable housing	19
● Good schools	17
● Safe environment	18
● Proximity to larger cities	18
● Strong community involvement and volunteer base	14
● Other	4



What improvements would help the community grow and thrive?

“Encourage more development, we need more people to live here. Build some houses.”

“Being able to offer as many services and amenities as possible.”

“Greenspace, pedestrian trails.”

“Entertainment, more things to bring people into town.”

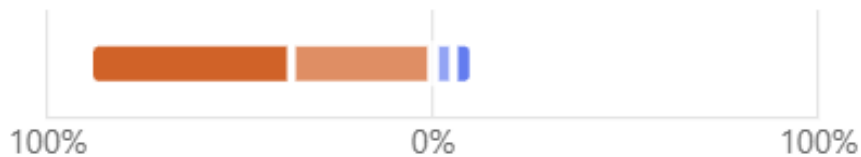
“More access to child friendly – like a carnival area, like a spray park. A car wash.”

“No place to retire to, if you must move out of house. I would have to go to a different town or city. A retirement home/ care home. Health care facilities, pharmacy, people need access to.”

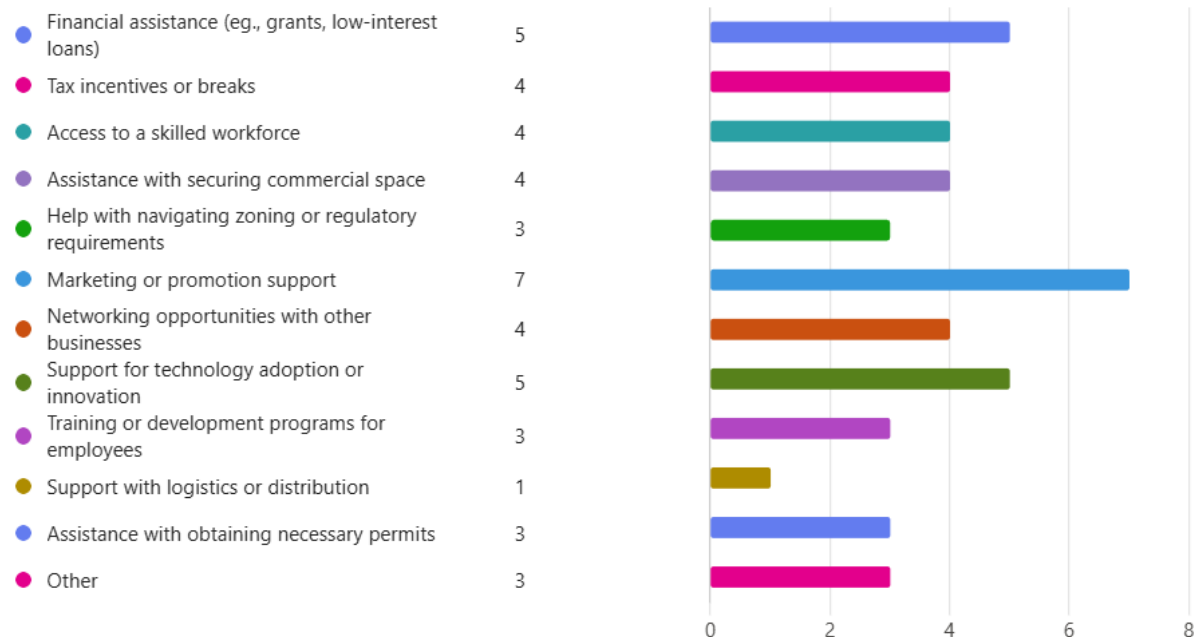
Future Business Plans & Needs:

What are your business plans for the next 5 years?

● Expand ● Maintain Current Size ● Relocate ● Reduce size



If planning to expand, what support do you need?



If considering reducing size, what are the reasons?

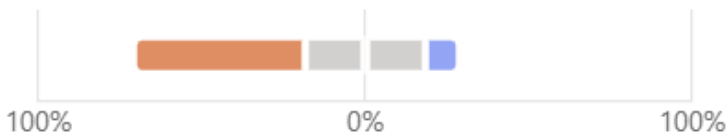
Lack of available skilled workers
Nearing Retirement

If considering relocation, what are the reasons?



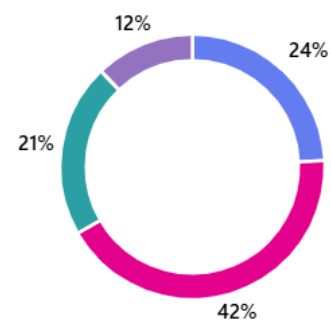
Are you considering any building improvement projects?

YES: 10 **NO: 7** **MAYBE: 2**



What kind of incentives would encourage you to expand your business here?

Property tax breaks	8
Grants or subsidies	14
Workforce development assistance	7
Other	4



What are your businesses greatest threats?

"Competition."

"Lack of scale, talent."

"Having buy in from the people in the town."

**"General economic slowdown, spike in interest rates,
decreasing population growth."**

"Running out of work."

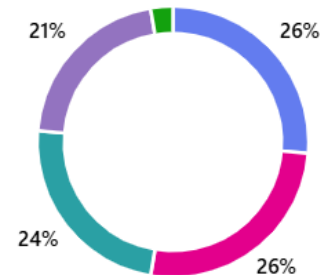
"Marketing, social media."

**"Apathy. Understanding our local market is
important."**

Growth Opportunities

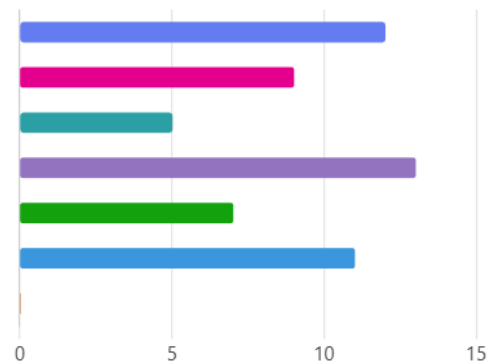
What economic development would you benefit from?

Better broadband internet	10
Tax incentives	10
Infrastructure improvements	9
Workforce development programs	8
Other	1



What types of industries do you think would thrive here?

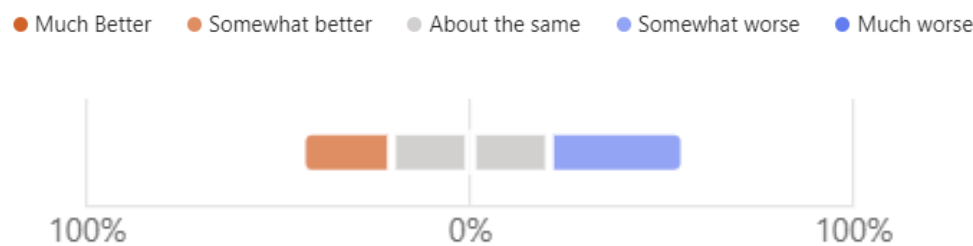
Consumption - Retail, home, personal	12
Manufacturing	9
Technology	5
Agriculture/ food processing	13
Financial	7
Service - tourism, media, transport, health	11
Other	0



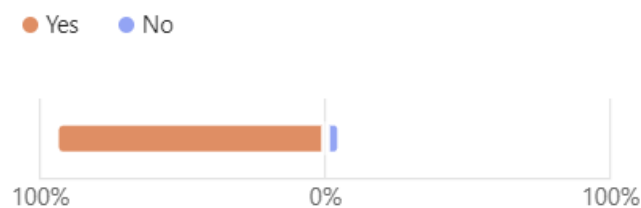
What specific businesses do you think would thrive here?



How do you feel about this town compares to other nearby towns or cities in terms of business opportunities?



Do you want to see more regional cooperation for businesses?

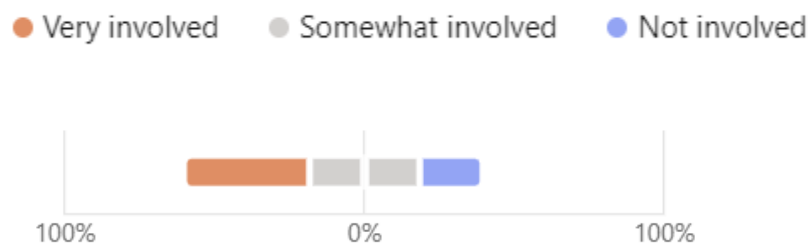


What type of financial support would help your business grow?



Networking & Collaboration

How involved are you in community activities or local governance?



What can the town do to encourage more community involvement and create a stronger local identity?

“Planning more community functions that will bring people from other communities there.”

“Incentivize. Pedestrian path, green space promotion, signage.”

“I think they have good community involvement but where they go wrong is such a heavy load for volunteers. Local identity comes from local events, but most are 95% volunteer run.”

Do you currently collaborate with other businesses or community organizations?



If yes, in what areas do you collaborate?



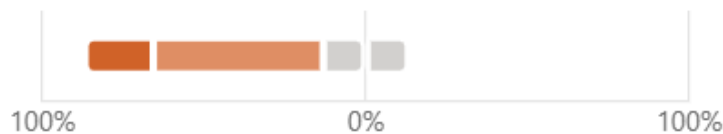
What would you prefer within the business community?



Attracting New Residents

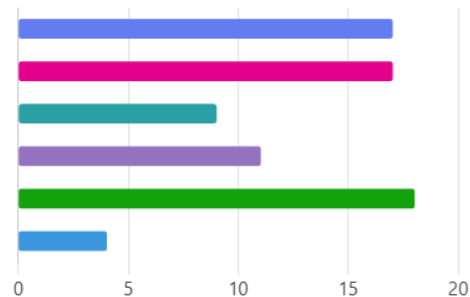
How would you describe the overall image of this town to someone who may be considering moving here?

● Very positive ● Positive ● Neutral ● Negative ● Very negative



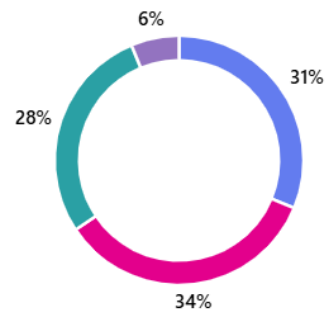
What would make this town more attractive for new residents?

- Better job opportunities 17
- Improved housing options 17
- Social and cultural events 9
- Access to quality education 11
- Healthcare and senior services 18
- Other 4

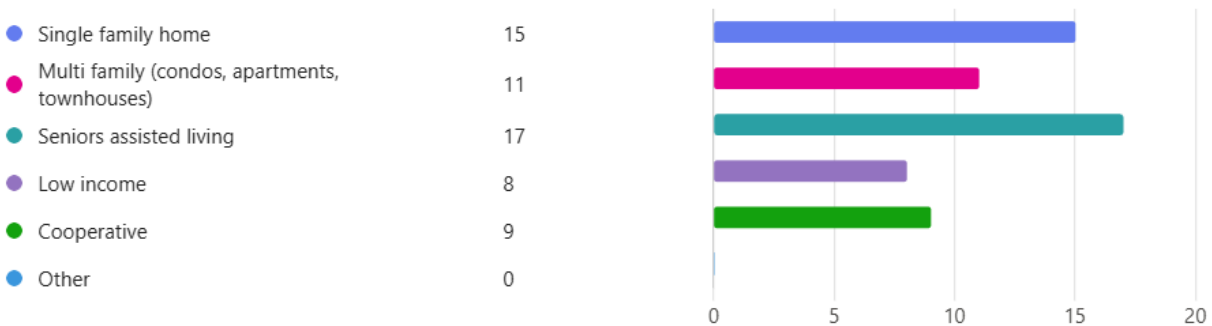


Are there any programs or policies that would encourage people to move here?

- Relocation incentives (e.g., moving grants, homebuyer assistance) 10
- Networking events for new residents 11
- Community mentorship or welcome programs 9
- Other 2

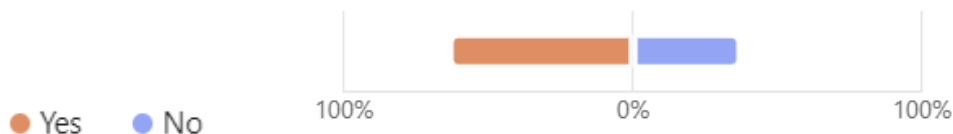


What type of housing would you like to see developed in the town?



Sustainability

Are sustainability and environmental practices important to your business?



What kind of support or resources would you need to implement more sustainable practices in your business?



Recommendations

Community Satisfaction:

63% of respondents indicated the overall business climate was Excellent to Good and most businesses surveyed are Very Satisfied with their current location! This is astounding and provides a solid foundation to build upon.

The top 5 weaknesses listed by Businesses in Hepburn were Limited Access to Capital/Funding, Poor Location/Visibility, Lack of Skilled Workforce, Limited Branding/Marketing, and a Limited Customer Base. In rural Saskatchewan there is no quick win here. However, these weaknesses are guiding long-term strategic planning across multiple fronts:

Limited Access to Capital/Funding:

- Setting up a Business Incubator program that may include a Trust or Annual Grant partially funded by the Town with the goal of matching funding from other partners.
- Host Workshops with Business Services such as Community Futures and Affinity Credit Union to educate local business owners aspiring entrepreneurs on funding options.

Poor Location/Visibility:

- A new and modern highway sign is in the works which will improve the visibility of the town. Research into the viability of adding business signage leading up to the turn off will be conducted as well.
- Long-term Marketing Plans will reframe Hepburn's location as a major strength.

Lack of Skilled Workforce:

- Touched on below.

Limited Branding/Marketing:

- This is often ranked far lower and presents an opportunity for another local business – Skipping Stones Designs to grow their business. Further research will be conducted into the viability of holding a workshop with businesses and Skipping Stones Designs and other marketing agencies.

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly changing the world we live in and businesses using AI are now able to streamline marketing tasks. Prairie Rising can host a workshop for businesses interested in leveraging this new technology.

Limited Customer Base

- With a new lagoon the Town of Hepburn will be set to expand rapidly. Strategic Planning is well underway to ensure Hepburn is well positioned to take advantage of the growing need for using in and around Saskatoon while maintaining the small town charm that Hepburn currently enjoys.
- Research will be conducted into the viability of a shop local app and campaign to help increase shopping local. Prairie Rising has experience designing these apps and campaigns.

Key Business Infrastructure was all rated above 3.5 except for Commercial Space Available. Long-term strategic and development plans will address this. Marketing efforts will also raise awareness of the Heritage Common's availability as a commercial space for rent.

Hepburn's access road was cited as being "Treacherous in the winter" and in need of improvement. Work has begun in researching the viability of improving that road and engaging with Saskatchewan Ministry of Highways.

Workforce

37% of respondents said they would be interested in Job Training Programs. Prairie Rising will investigate skills and workforce training programs that could be brought to the community.

Respondents indicated a local platform or career fair may be a beneficial way to build awareness of businesses and their job vacancies. Prairie Rising will research the viability of these initiatives specifically at a regional level.

Business Support

Road maintenance was mentioned a few times. Review these processes to ensure they are robust and build awareness of the ongoing good work done by staff.

Prairie Rising will research Billboard improvements downtown and additional billboard/business advertising at the Heritage Common.

Prairie Rising will research possible Grants, Subsidies and Tax Incentives for Businesses.

Prairie Rising will continue its work on attracting new developments that include:

- Health Services & Pharmacy
- Long-Term Care Home
- Restaurants & Other Hospitality
- Financial Services
- Retail

Improve communication specifically to businesses of the work that the Town is doing and the results achieved. Communicate the timeline of improvements to the Heritage Common such as the Gym and the upcoming Fitness Centre.

When asked “What improvements would help the community grow and thrive?”

Respondents added:

- Enhance and expand walking trails.
- Attract and promote more entertainment options.
- Research viability of a Spray Park.

Business Needs

1 business indicated plans to reduce size. Prairie Rising will set up a meeting with this business to discuss their challenges in more detail and report back.

10 businesses indicated plans to expand operations. Prairie Rising will follow up directly with each business to more specifically understand their goals and create specific strategies that can help their business succeed.

10 businesses indicated they are considering building improvement projects and 2 indicated maybe. Prairie Rising will follow up with each business and research specific programs that could help these businesses with their improvement goals.

Growth Opportunities

Agriculture/food processing, Retail and Service (tourism, media, transport, health) we're all chosen by more than 50% of respondents as industries that would thrive in Hepburn. Prairie Rising will continue work on attracting businesses within these industries to town.

Specific Businesses Mentioned by respondents:

- Improved Grocery Store
- Car/Truck Wash & Detailing
- Thrift Store
- Feed Mill and/or Ag Processing
- Bakery
- Chiropractor

Networking & Collaboration

95% of businesses want to see more regional cooperation. Begin researching regional cooperation initiatives designed to help local businesses and reach out to regional communities. This could include a regional Chamber of Commerce or Business Group.

Only 52% of respondents indicated they currently collaborate with other businesses and community organizations. Research initiatives and events to help improve collaboration and attract new businesses/community members.

58% of respondents said they would be interested in a local networking group. Work should begin to plan workshop luncheons specifically targeting business owners. These luncheons would host workshops relating to marketing, funding opportunities, new technology and more.

Now that these results are in, Prairie Rising will reach out to Rosthern & District Chamber of Commerce and SREDA to brainstorm ways we can work together to meet the Town's economic development goals.

Attracting New Residents

Begin or continue work in attracting the following:

- Assisted Seniors Living Development
- Smaller, affordable housing
- Cooperative Living
- Multi-Family Homes
- Traditional Single-Family Homes

Review viability of relocation incentives, networking events and welcome initiatives.

Sustainability

Most respondents said sustainability and environmental practices important to their business. Indeed, this is increasingly an opportunity to businesses to reduce costs in the long term while attracting skilled talent. This is also a way communities can differentiate themselves with prospective residents by implementing community wide sustainability initiatives. Research into the viability of attracting more large-scale sustainability development projects to Hepburn will be conducted as well.

Research will be done regarding solar energy rebate and equipment retrofit programs for businesses with results communicated to them.

