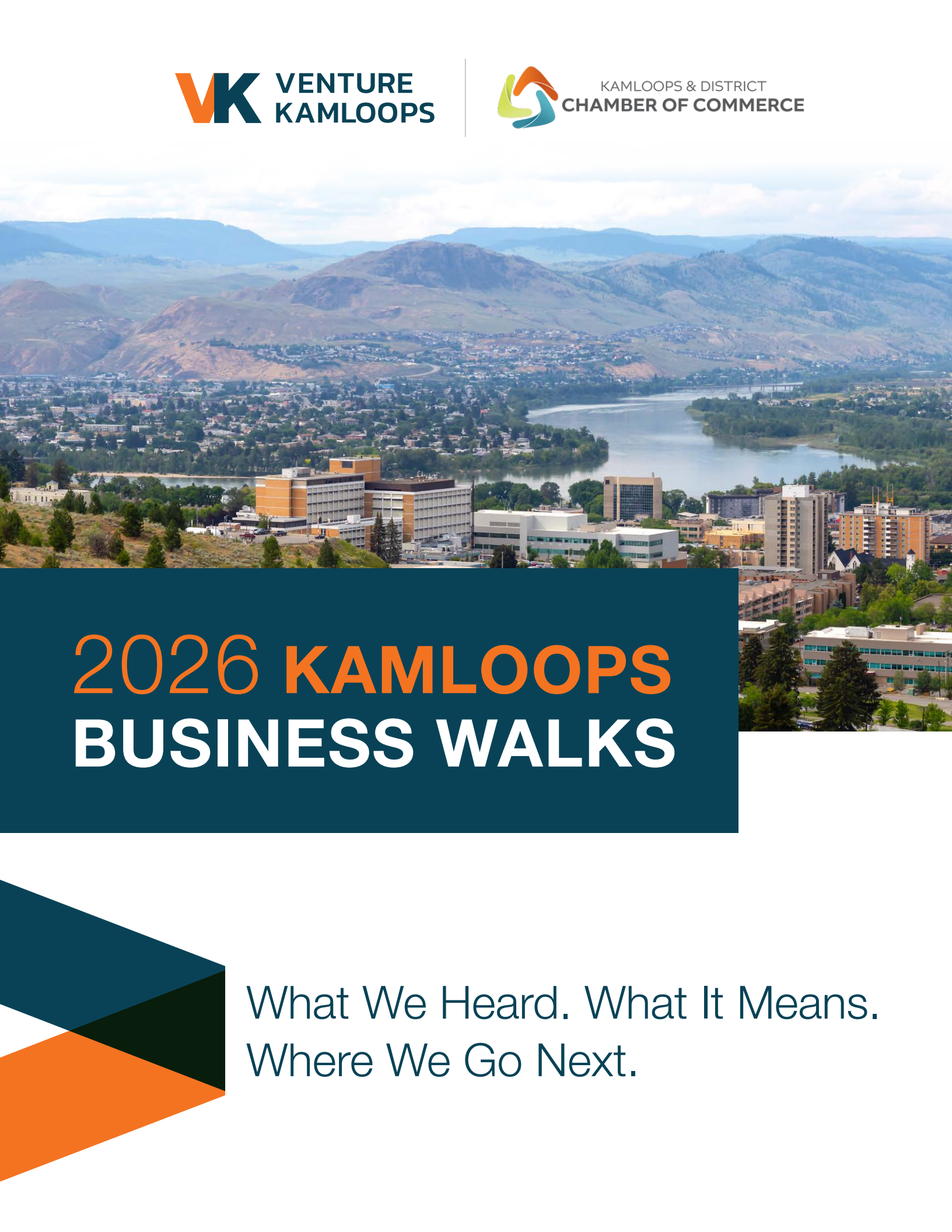


An aerial photograph of Kamloops, British Columbia, showing the city's urban landscape, the Shuswap River, and the surrounding mountains under a cloudy sky.

2026 KAMLOOPS BUSINESS WALKS

Two overlapping geometric shapes, a dark teal triangle and an orange triangle, pointing towards the right.

What We Heard. What It Means.
Where We Go Next.

Acknowledgements

Kamloops and District Chamber of Commerce and Venture Kamloops Business Development Society acknowledge that we live and work on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory, situated within the unceded ancestral lands of the Secwépemc Nation. We are grateful for the opportunity to carry out our economic development work on this land and recognize our responsibility to build honest and respectful relationships with the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc people.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the 93 businesses that participated in the 2026 Kamloops Business Walks either by welcoming the walking team to their business place or completing the follow-up survey. Their willingness to share their experiences, challenges, opportunities and ideas provided the foundation for this report and will help inform future business retention and expansion efforts in Kamloops.

The Business Walks were made possible through the collaboration of the Kamloops & District Chamber of Commerce team and board members; City of Kamloops staff and councilors; the North Shore Business Improvement Association; the Downtown Kamloops Business Improvement Association; the East Kamloops Business Improvement Association; Community Futures, Sc.wénwen Economic Development Corporation; and Venture Kamloops. We also thank the interviewers and volunteers from these organizations who contributed their time to this year's Business Walks.

I. Executive Summary

On the 24th of June 2026, the Kamloops & District Chamber of Commerce and Venture Kamloops, worked alongside volunteers and community partners, to visit and survey 93 local businesses across five Kamloops neighbourhoods, as part of the 2026 Business Walks program. This is the first year that findings have been compiled into a formal report and compared with results from a previous walk conducted in October 2024, which included 67 businesses across four neighbourhoods. Together, these findings provide Council, City departments and both partner organizations with a shared, evidence-based starting point for understanding and supporting Kamloops' business community.

The picture that emerges is one of a business community that is fundamentally stable and improving. Fifty-two percent rate their current state as good and increasing, up from 40% in 2024, while those reporting slow or poor conditions fell from 16% to 9%. This positive trend also holds when comparing only the four neighbourhoods surveyed in both years. Downtown recorded the largest improvement, with businesses reporting good and increasing conditions rising from 25% to 46%.

Businesses nonetheless face specific pressures rather than a single dominant crisis, and what those pressures are, has shifted. Workforce availability, the leading concern in 2024 at 31%, fell to 18%. Broader economic uncertainty and tariff-related pressure more than doubled over the same period, from 9% to 19%, and now sits just behind homelessness and street disorder (22%) as the top challenge citywide. Homelessness and street disorder is the one major theme that did not move between the two walks, cited at 21% in 2024 and 22% in 2026.

On the growth side, businesses are asking most often to be seen. Marketing and visibility support was the single most-cited need in both years, at 28% in 2024 and 29% in 2026, ahead of every individual challenge theme. These patterns are not uniform across the city or across sectors: Sahali and Downtown show the highest concentrations of businesses reporting difficulty, and different sectors contend with different pressures, from workforce availability in the professional services to economic uncertainty in construction.

A notable finding for future planning: of the businesses considering retiring or selling within the next five years, just over half have no succession plan in place, a quiet risk to Kamloops' tax base and commercial vacancy rate if left unaddressed.

Fifty-seven percent of participating businesses asked for a partner agency to follow up directly. The Chamber and Venture Kamloops are now actioning those requests individually, and this report closes with a set of recommended actions spanning immediate follow-up, a community

marketing campaign, a proposed workforce-training partnership with Thompson Rivers University, and advocacy on economic pressures that cannot be resolved locally.

II. Background and Purpose

Business Walks are a core Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) tool that creates direct, structured conversations between businesses, economic development organizations, local government and community partners. These conversations help identify emerging challenges and opportunities, connect businesses with relevant support, and provide decision-makers with a clearer understanding of local operating conditions.

The Kamloops and District Chamber of Commerce and Venture Kamloops, alongside partner organizations, conducted the 2026 Business Walks to better understand current business conditions, identify common barriers to growth and determine where businesses may benefit from follow-up assistance. This initiative supports Venture Kamloops' business retention and expansion mandate by strengthening relationships with existing businesses, identifying businesses at risk or preparing for transition, and informing the development of relevant programs, referrals and partnerships. The information collected through this initiative helps inform the advocacy priorities of the Kamloops and District Chamber of Commerce.

Kamloops has conducted Business Walks previously, most recently in October 2024, when 67 businesses were visited across four neighbourhoods. Those findings were not compiled into a formal report at the time. Revisiting the 2024 data alongside the 2026 results makes it possible to identify which conditions have shifted and which have persisted over the two-year period, and this report incorporates that comparison where the data supports it. Because the two walks differed in timing, neighbourhood coverage and number of participants, the comparisons presented here are directional rather than precise, and the relevant limitations are set out in Section 3.

The findings may also help inform City of Kamloops priorities related to economic health, safety and security, mobility and commercial access, service coordination and advocacy. The report does not assign responsibility for every issue raised; some matters fall within Venture Kamloops and the Kamloops & District Chamber of Commerce's mandate, some require municipal assessment or partner coordination, and others are primarily matters for provincial or federal advocacy.

III. Methodology and Limitations

The Business Walks utilized volunteer walking teams of two to three people, who visited businesses in person over the course of the walk, using a short, standardized survey to collect

the data. The businesses missed on the walk day were contacted individually over the days that followed with a similar survey and only a few businesses completed the survey.

Detail	2024	2026
Walk date	October 2024	June 2026
Live walk day	67 businesses visited	88 businesses visited
Follow-up outreach	-	5 additional businesses surveyed
Total participation	67 businesses	93 businesses
Volunteer walking teams	6 teams	9 teams
Neighbourhoods covered	Downtown, Sahali, Valleyview, North Shore	Downtown, Sahali, Valleyview, Aberdeen, North Shore

Every business was assured that individual responses would remain confidential and be reported only in aggregate. This report follows that commitment throughout; no comments or figures are attributed to business names.

This report should be read with the following in mind:

- Sample, not census: Participating businesses were those open and willing during the day of the Business Walks or reachable for follow-up. Businesses that were closed, seasonal, declined to participate or could not be reached due to time constraints are not represented.
- Two collection modes: 88 responses came from in-person interviews on the walk day; 5 came from a self-administered follow-up survey. Response style and depth differ somewhat between the two.
- Missing data: 10 businesses did not answer the retirement question and 14 did not answer the succession question; these are excluded from those specific calculations rather than counted as “no.”
- Differences between the 2024 and 2026 walks: The two walks were not identical exercises. Aberdeen was not surveyed in 2024, and the 2026 walk reached 93 businesses compared with 67 in 2024. Where citywide comparisons are made in this report, they have been mainly based on the four neighbourhoods common to both years.
- Seasonal timing: The 2024 walk took place in early October and the 2026 walk in late June. Business sentiment in Kamloops may vary seasonally, and some 2024 respondents

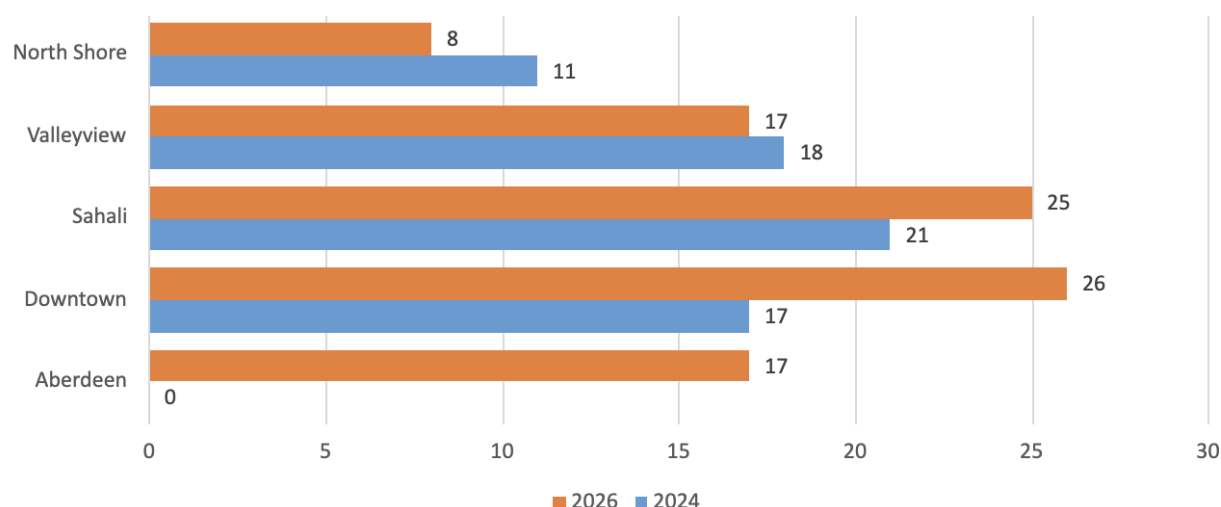
referred explicitly to entering their slower season. Some portion of the difference between the two years may reflect this timing rather than a genuine change in conditions.

- Open-text coding: Responses to the challenge and growth questions were free text, not selected from a list. Both years were reviewed and grouped into themes by staff using the same categories. Coding involves some level of judgment, and another reviewer might group up some responses differently. Comparisons between years should be read as indicative of direction, not precise magnitude.
- How percentages are calculated: Percentages for the challenge and growth questions are calculated as a share of all participating businesses, not only those who answered the specific question. A small number of businesses did not respond to each open-ended question, and these are treated as having raised no theme rather than being excluded from the base.

IV. Profile of Participating Businesses

1. Neighbourhoods

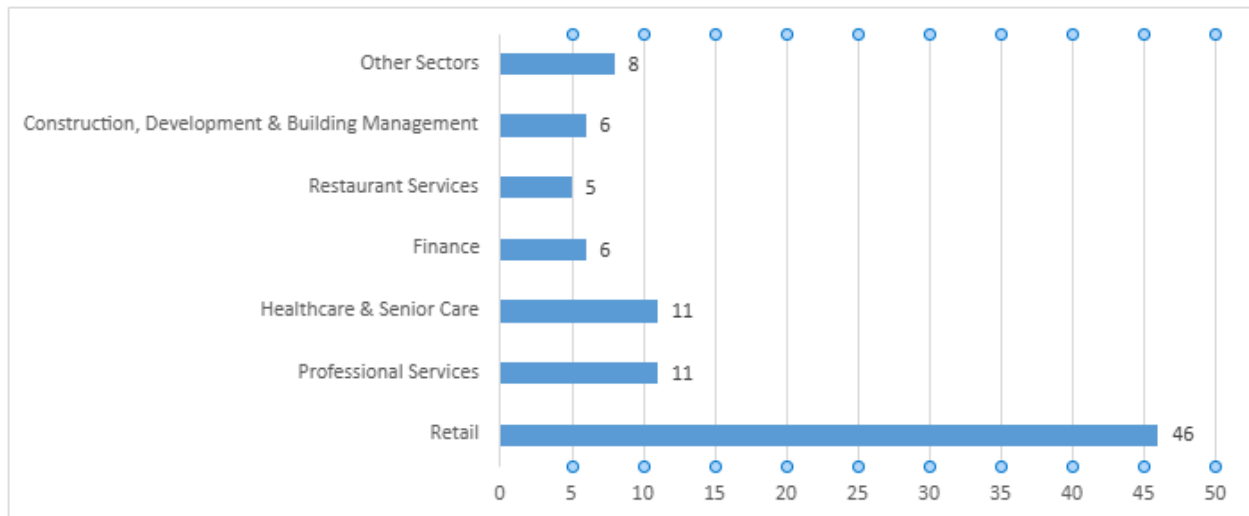
In 2026, five Kamloops neighbourhoods were reached through the Business Walks with Downtown and Sahali together accounting for more than half of all participation. In 2024, the same neighbourhoods were surveyed with the exception of Aberdeen that was not included.



Businesses reached by neighbourhood ($n_{2024}=67$; $n_{2026}=93$)

2. Sector

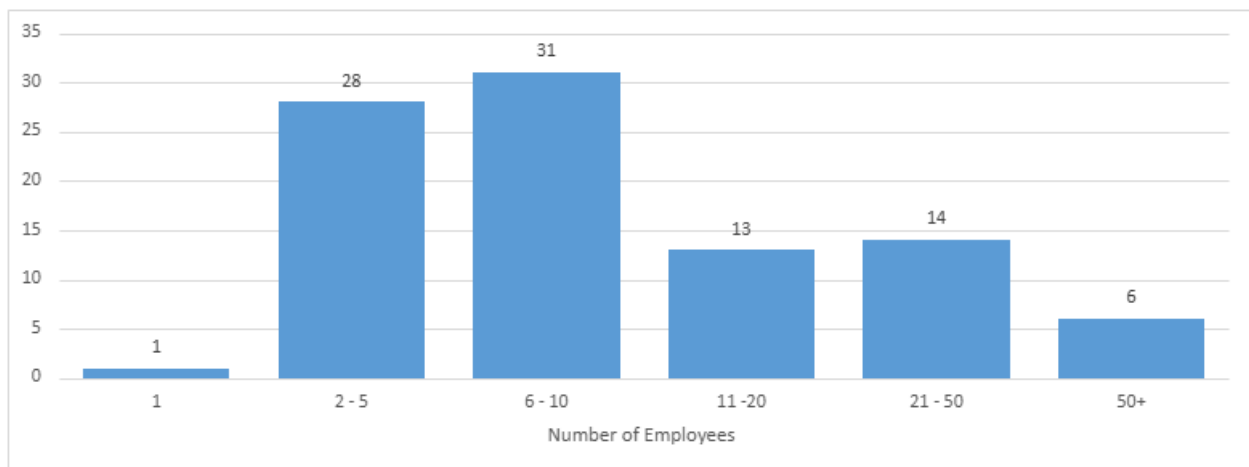
Retail was by far the most represented sector, followed by Healthcare & Senior Care and Professional Services. A long tail of single-business sectors (technology, non-profit, real estate, arts and manufacturing, among others) is grouped as “Other sectors” below.



Businesses reached by sector(n=93)

3. Business Size

Participating businesses ranged from sole operators to large industrial employers. Combined, they represent an estimated 1,636 jobs in Kamloops, with a typical (median) business size of 8 employees. Because a small number of larger employers pull the average upward, the median is the more representative figure for a typical Kamloops business. Size also varies meaningfully by sector: Retail, the most represented sector, tends to be smaller-scale, with a typical business reporting around 7 to 8 employees, while Construction, Development & Building Management firms, though fewer in number, tend to be considerably larger, with a typical business closer to 25 employees.



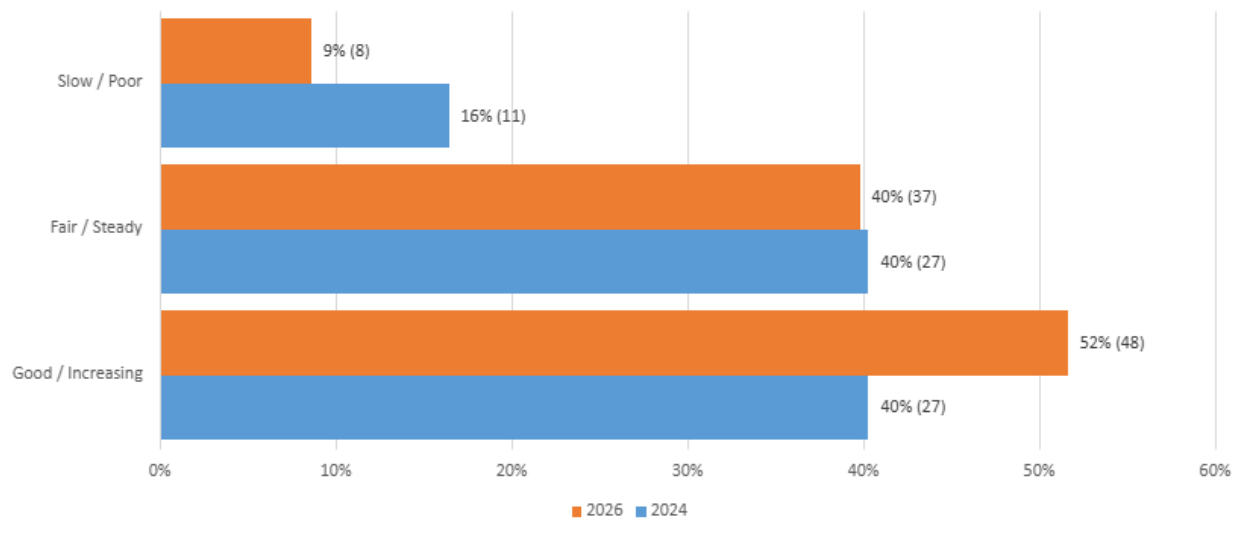
Businesses reached by number employees (n=93)

Sample composition was broadly similar to the 2024 walk, with retail businesses representing 47% of participants in 2026 compared to 46% in 2024. Differences in participation totals and neighbourhood coverage between the two years are set out in Section 3.

V. Current State of Business

Interviewers asked businesses to rate their current state of business. The results point to a business community that is largely stable or growing, with a smaller share reporting difficulty. Just over half of participating businesses rated their current state as good and increasing, with most of the remainder describing steady, fair conditions and fewer than one in ten reporting slow or poor conditions.

Reviewing the 2024 Business Walks data alongside these results shows measurable improvement over the two-year period.



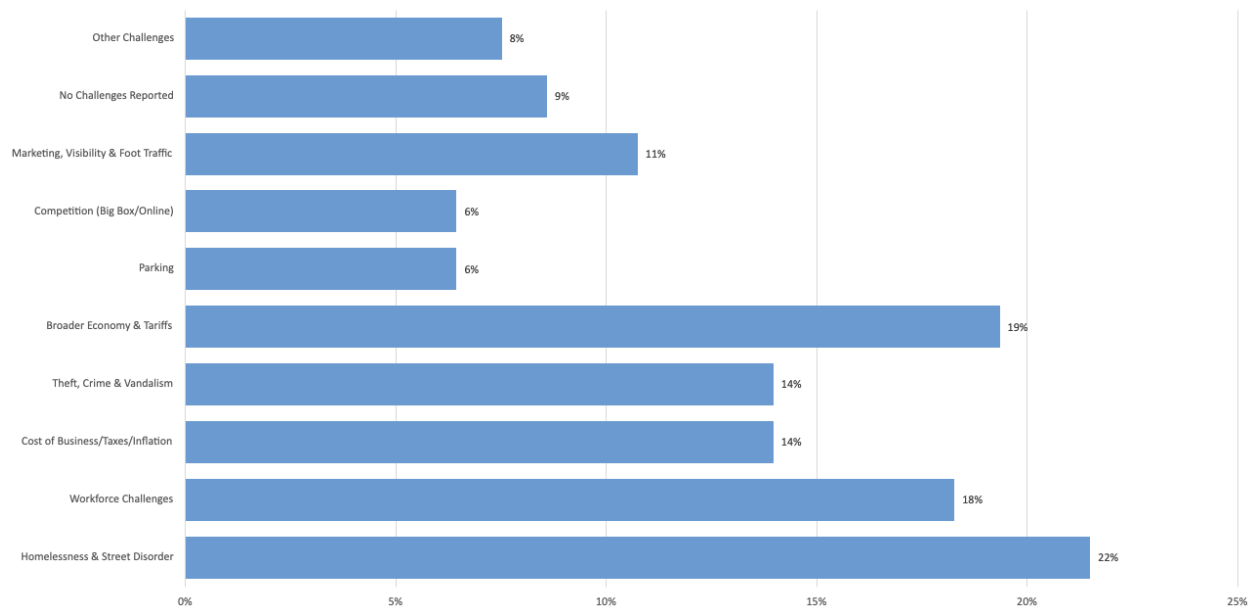
Self-rated current business state, 2024 and 2026 (n₂₀₂₄=67; n₂₀₂₆=93)

The share of businesses reporting good and increasing conditions rose from 40% to 52% between the two walks, while the share reporting slow or poor conditions fell from 16% to 9%. Fair and steady responses held broadly constant, indicating the improvement came from businesses moving out of difficulty rather than from a general softening across all categories.

Because Aberdeen was not surveyed in 2024 and reported above-average conditions in 2026, this comparison was re-tested using only the four neighbourhoods common to both years. The improvement holds: excluding Aberdeen, the good and increasing share rises from 40% to 50%, and slow or poor falls from 16% to 9%.

VI. Greatest Challenges Facing Businesses

Businesses were asked, in an open-ended question, what the greatest challenge facing their business is today. Each of the 93 responses received was reviewed individually and coded against the themes below; because many businesses raised more than one issue, percentages add to more than 100%.



Share of businesses citing each challenge (n=93 responses, multiple possible)

- 22% (20) cited homelessness, street disorder, or personal and property safety as their greatest challenge. This is the single most common response citywide.
- 19% (18) cited broader economic uncertainty or tariff-related pressure, close behind homelessness as businesses' top concern.
- 18% (17) pointed to workforce challenges, covering both the availability and the quality of staff, particularly skilled trades and service roles.
- 14% (13) named rising costs, taxes, inflation, and overhead as the central pressure on their business.
- 14% (13) reported theft, shoplifting, or vandalism directly affecting operations.
- 11% (10) said limited marketing, visibility, or foot traffic was their greatest challenge; customers simply do not know the business exists or where to find it.
- 6% (6) named parking availability as their greatest challenge.
- 6% (6) cited direct competition from big-box retailers or online shopping.

Comparing these results with the 2024 Business Walks shows a marked shift in what businesses identify as their greatest challenge. Workforce availability, the single most-cited challenge in 2024 at 31%, fell to 18% in 2026. Over the same period, broader economic uncertainty and tariff-related pressure more than doubled, rising from 9% to 19%. Reported theft and vandalism also declined, from 22% to 14%. In practical terms, the pressures businesses named in 2024 were largely operational, centered on finding and keeping staff, while the pressures named in 2026 are more external and less directly within local control.

Homelessness and street disorder was the one major theme that did not change, cited by 21% of businesses in 2024 and 22% in 2026. While most of the challenges businesses identified have eased or shifted over the two-year period, concerns related to street-level conditions have remained constant. Affordable commercial space, raised by several businesses in 2024 in the form of rising rents and limited available space, did not appear as a distinct theme in 2026.

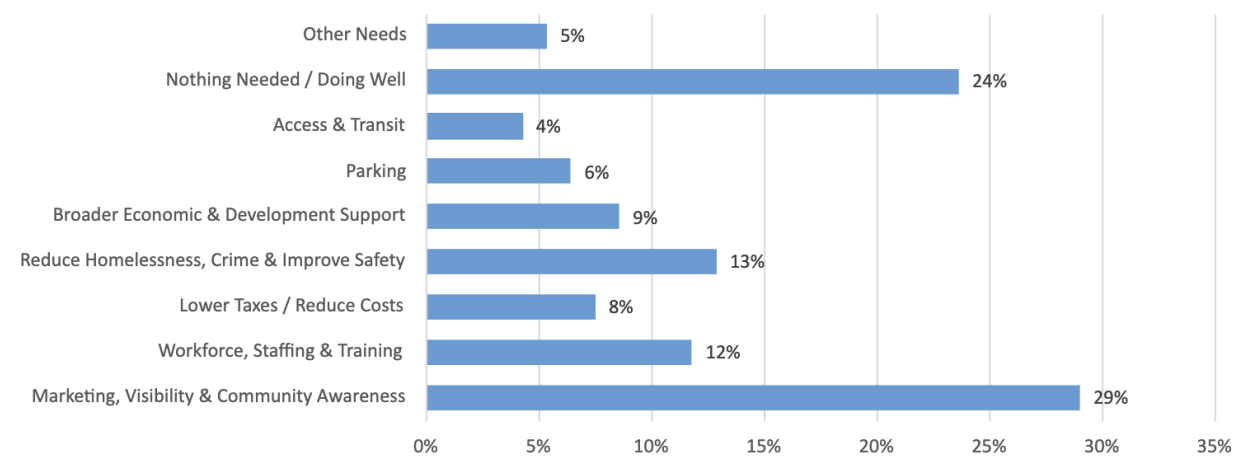
A further 8 businesses (9%) reported no significant challenge at all, and another 7 (8%) raised concerns too specific or varied to group into a common theme, among them access to funding, inventory and strategic planning, and customer education about a particular product or service. These are included in the total reviewed and categorized as “Other Challenges”.

Challenges also vary meaningfully by the business sector. Sectors with only one or two respondents (Real Estate, Technology, Transportation, Arts & Entertainment, Non-profit) are excluded below, since a single response cannot support a sector-wide conclusion.

- Retail (43 respondents) shows broad exposure across nearly every theme. Homelessness and street disorder (26%), theft (19%), marketing and visibility (16%), and broader economic conditions (16%) are all elevated.
- Finance (6) raised homelessness and street disorder at the highest rate of any sector (50%), likely reflecting the concentration of bank and financial branches in the Downtown core.
- Healthcare & Senior Care (10) cited theft more often than any other sector (30%). This is notable, since theft is often assumed to be a retail-specific problem.
- Professional Services (6) and Automotive & Trade Services (5) are both dominated by workforce availability (67% and 60% respectively), compared with just 12% of Retail respondents.
- Construction, Development & Building Management (6) stands apart on broader economic uncertainty and tariffs (50%), followed by workforce challenges (33%).

VII. What Businesses Say Would Help Them Grow

Businesses were asked, in an open-ended question, what could be done to help their business grow. Each of the 93 responses received was reviewed individually and coded against the themes below; because many businesses raised more than one need, percentages add to more than 100%.



Share of businesses citing each growth need (n=93 responses, multiple possible)

- 29% (27) said more marketing, advertising, or community visibility would help their business grow, the single most common response citywide, and notably higher than any single challenge theme in Section 6.
- 13% (12) said reducing homelessness and crime, or improving public safety, would support their growth, echoing the top challenge theme from the previous section.
- 12% (11) pointed to workforce, staffing, or training support.
- 9% (8) pointed to broader economic or development support, such as easier permitting and more construction activity.
- 8% (7) said lower taxes or reduced business costs would free up room to grow.
- 6% (6) asked for more or better-enforced parking.
- 4% (4) pointed to access and transit improvements.

A further 22 businesses (24%) said nothing further was needed or that the business is already growing well, and another 5 (5%) raised needs too specific or varied to group into a common theme.

Comparing these results with the 2024 Business Walks shows notable consistency in what businesses say they need. Marketing, visibility and community awareness was the most-cited growth need in both years, at 28% in 2024 and 29% in 2026. Reducing homelessness and crime ranked second in both years, at 15% and 13% respectively. Unlike the challenges data, where the

leading concerns shifted substantially between the two walks, what businesses say would help them grow has remained largely unchanged.

One theme did recede. In 2024, a number of businesses identified affordable or larger commercial space as the key constraint on growth, citing rising rents and limited available inventory. This did not appear as a distinct theme in 2026. Workforce support rose modestly over the same period, from 7% to 12%, and requests for lower taxes or reduced costs roughly doubled, from 4% to 8%.

Growth needs in 2026 also vary meaningfully by business sector, not just by neighbourhood. Sectors with only one or two respondents (Real Estate, Transportation, Arts & Entertainment, Manufacturing, Non-profit) are excluded below, since a single response cannot support a sector-wide conclusion.

- Retail (42 respondents) points overwhelmingly to marketing and visibility support (40%), well above the citywide average and the single strongest sector-level signal in either dataset. Homelessness and crime reduction is a distant second (19%), echoing Retail's challenge-side profile.
- Healthcare & Senior Care (11) is the most satisfied sector on this question, with 36% saying nothing further is needed; among those who did name something, workforce support and lower costs tie as the leading asks (18% each).
- Finance (6) splits evenly: half report nothing needed (50%), while the other half is spread across marketing, lower taxes, homelessness/crime, and parking (17% each).
- Professional Services (6) names workforce support as its clear top need (33%), matching its challenge-side profile almost exactly, where two-thirds cited workforce as their greatest challenge.
- Construction, Development & Building Management (5) is dominated by broader economic and real-estate development support (60%), consistent with its challenge-side pattern (50% cited Broader Economy & Tariffs).
- Automotive & Trade Services (5) leans toward "nothing needed" (40%), but workforce and homelessness/crime tie as the top named needs (20% each), a smaller echo of this sector's 60% workforce challenge rate.

VIII. Business Succession and Continuity

Businesses were asked whether they are considering retiring or selling within the next five years, and separately, whether they have a formal succession plan in place. Twenty-one of 93 businesses (23%) said they are considering an exit within that window, compared with 11 of 67 businesses (16%) in 2024.

	Has succession plan	No succession plan	Did not answer
Considering exit within 5 years (2026)	9	11	1
Considering exit within 5 years (2024)	5	3	3

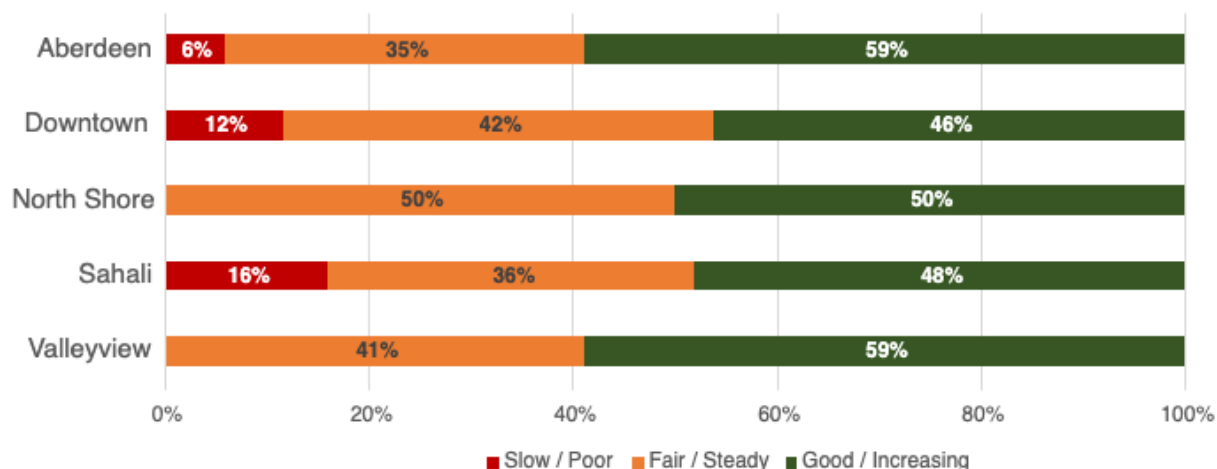
Of the 21 businesses planning a transition within five years in 2026, 11, just over half, have no succession plan in place. This is a meaningful gap. Without a plan, these businesses are at greater risk of an unplanned closure rather than a successful handoff, with knock-on effects for jobs, tenancy, and the surrounding business district.

The comparable 2024 figure was 3 of 11 businesses. Taken at face value, this suggests the succession gap has widened considerably, but the 2024 sample is small enough that three additional responses either way would change the picture entirely, and three of the eleven businesses did not answer the succession question at all. The 2026 finding should therefore be read on its own terms rather than as evidence of a two-year trend.

These findings should also be read with an important caveat about how the questions are received. Succession questions are sensitive, and the response pattern reflects that. In 2026, ten businesses declined to answer the retirement question and fourteen declined the succession question, the highest non-response rates of any questions in the survey. In 2024 the pattern was more pronounced still, with eleven businesses declining the retirement question and nineteen declining the succession question, roughly a quarter of all participants. Some owners are reluctant to discuss an exit in the presence of their employees. Other respondents represent local branches of larger corporations, where the on-site manager has no role in succession planning and answers accordingly. The caveat cuts both ways: a response of "no succession plan" may overstate risk where the decision sits with a head office, while reluctance to discuss an exit in front of staff may mean the 23% figure understates how many businesses are genuinely approaching a transition.

IX. Neighbourhood Findings

Aggregating across all five neighbourhoods can mask real differences in what businesses in each part of Kamloops are experiencing. The breakdown below should be read alongside the sample-size caution in Section 3: smaller neighbourhoods can show large swings from just one or two responses.



Self-rated business state by neighbourhood (% of respondents)

Sahali reports the highest share of businesses rating their state as Slow/Poor (16%, 4 of 25). The only other neighbourhood in double digits alongside Downtown (12%, 3 of 26). Valleyview and North Shore report no businesses in the Slow/Poor category at all, and Valleyview and Aberdeen share the strongest Good/Increasing rate at 59% each. Read the North Shore figures cautiously given its small sample (n=8), where a single response shifts the percentage by roughly 13 points.

Comparison with 2024

Neighbourhood	Good / Increasing (2024 → 2026)	Slow / Poor (2024 → 2026)
Downtown	25% → 46%	19% → 12%
Sahali	38% → 48%	24% → 16%
Valleyview	47% → 59%	12% → 0%
North Shore	64% → 50%	9% → 0%
Aberdeen	not surveyed → 59%	not surveyed → 6%

Every neighbourhood surveyed in both years reported a lower share of businesses in the Slow/Poor category in 2026 than in 2024. Downtown shows the largest improvement of any neighbourhood: in 2024 it recorded the lowest Good/Increasing rate in the city at 25%, and by 2026 that figure had risen to 46%. This does not mean Downtown's difficulties have been resolved, as later findings show street-level conditions remain its most frequently cited challenge, but businesses operating Downtown view their own trajectory considerably more positively than they did two years ago.

Two patterns persist across both walks. Sahali recorded the highest share of Slow/Poor responses in each year, and North Shore is the only neighbourhood where the Good/Increasing share declined, though its small sample in both years (11 in 2024, 8 in 2026) means this should be treated as directional.

Challenges and Growth Needs by Neighbourhood

Neighbourhood	Top challenge (2024 → 2026)	Top growth need (2024 → 2026)
Downtown	Workforce (29%) → Homelessness & street disorder (27%)	Address homelessness/safety & broader economic support (tied at 24% each) → Marketing, visibility & awareness, and parking (tied at 19% each).
Sahali	Homelessness & Workforce (33% each) → Cost of business, taxes & inflation (32%)	Marketing and visibility (43%) → Three-way tie between Marketing, Workforce, and Broader Economic Support (tied at 20% each)
Valleyview	Workforce (33%) → Staffing & workforce shortage (35%)	Address homelessness/safety (22%) → Marketing and visibility (24%)
Aberdeen (2026 only)	Theft, crime & vandalism and Broader economic uncertainty & tariffs (tied at 24% each)	Marketing, visibility & awareness (59%)
North Shore	Cost of business (36%) → Homelessness & street disorder (75%).	Marketing and visibility (36%) → Address homelessness/safety (63%)

Downtown and North Shore show the clearest concentration of homelessness- and safety-related concerns. Sahali and Valleyview, by contrast, point more toward cost pressures and workforce availability, concerns tied more to operating conditions than to the street environment. Aberdeen stands out for a tie between theft and vandalism and broader economic pressure as its leading challenges. The North Shore figure of six of eight businesses is the most concentrated in the dataset and should be treated as directional given the small sample.

The leading challenge changed in three of the four neighbourhoods surveyed in both years. Downtown moved from workforce availability in 2024 to homelessness and street disorder in

2026; Sahali from a tie between homelessness and workforce to cost of business; and North Shore from cost of business to homelessness and street disorder. Valleyview is the exception, with workforce availability its leading challenge in both years, the only neighbourhood where the top concern has not shifted.

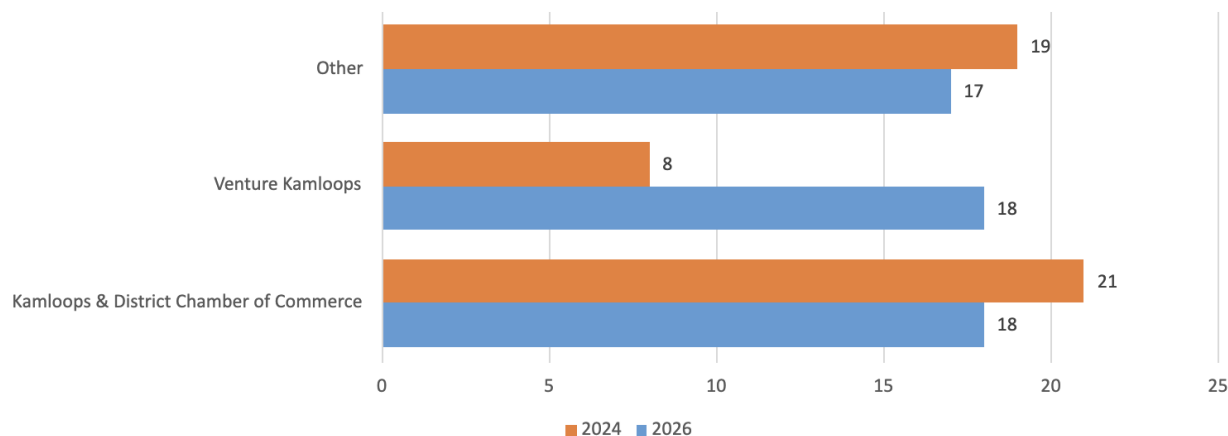
The growth-needs data presents a more consistent pattern than the challenge data. Marketing, visibility and awareness is the leading or tied-leading growth need in four of the five neighbourhoods: Aberdeen (59%); Downtown, tied with parking (19% each); Sahali, tied with workforce development and broader economic support (20% each); and Valleyview (24%).

North Shore is the clear exception, and notably, it has moved in the opposite direction from the rest of the city. In 2024, marketing was North Shore's leading growth need, in line with most other neighbourhoods. By 2026, homelessness and safety had become the top response in both categories, identified as the leading growth need by five of eight businesses as well as the neighbourhood's primary challenge.

Taken together, the results suggest that businesses in most Kamloops neighbourhoods are primarily seeking greater visibility, customer awareness, and market reach. North Shore businesses, however, are more focused on addressing immediate street-level conditions that directly affect their operating environment.

X. Follow-Up and Immediate Response

Fifty-three of 93 businesses (57%) asked for a partner agency to reach out directly, compared with 48 of 67 businesses (72%) in 2024. While the share of businesses requesting follow-up declined, the absolute number rose, meaning the volume of direct follow-up arising from the walk has grown rather than eased.



Businesses requesting follow-up by partner, 2024 and 2026 ($n_{2024}=48$; $n_{2026}=53$)

The distribution of those requests changed markedly between the two walks. In 2024, the Kamloops & District Chamber of Commerce was the most requested partner, accounting for 44% of all requests, while Venture Kamloops accounted for 17%. In 2026, requests were divided almost evenly across the three options, with Venture Kamloops and the Chamber each receiving 18 and other partners 17. Requests directed to Venture Kamloops more than doubled in absolute terms, from 8 to 18.

This may reflect growing awareness of Venture Kamloops' programs among local businesses, though it cannot be confirmed from this data alone. The decline in the overall request rate is discussed in Section 11.

Venture Kamloops and the Kamloops & District Chamber of Commerce are contacting each business that requested follow-up individually. In keeping with the confidentiality commitment made during the walk, this report does not identify which businesses requested support or what support they requested.

In addition to those who asked, a smaller number of businesses were identified through their survey responses as likely to benefit from proactive outreach, including businesses signalling a possible closure, a retention risk, or an unmet need they did not flag for follow-up. These businesses are also being contacted directly.

XI. Key Findings and Implications

- Business health is solid and improving, with pockets of concern. Kamloops' business community is fundamentally stable, but not uniformly so. A 52% "Good/Increasing" rating is a healthy baseline, up from 40% in 2024, while the share reporting "Slow/Poor" fell

from 16% to 9% over the same period. This improvement holds when tested against only the four neighbourhoods surveyed in both years. Concerns nevertheless remain concentrated: businesses reporting “Slow/Poor” conditions cluster more heavily in Sahali and Downtown, suggesting district-level, not just sector-level, factors are at play.

- Street disorder and the broader economy are essentially co-leading concerns, not a single dominant theme. Homelessness and street disorder (22%) and broader economic uncertainty and tariff-related pressure (19%) are now nearly tied as the top challenges citywide. Homelessness and street disorder is the only major theme that did not move between the two walks, cited by 21% of businesses in 2024 and 22% in 2026, while economic and tariff-related pressure more than doubled over the same period, from 9% to 19%. These call for different responses: street-level conditions sit largely outside Venture Kamloops and the Kamloops & District Chamber of Commerce’s direct mandate but affect the operating environment both organizations are responsible for supporting, making them a strong candidate for a coordinated response with the City and BIAs. Broader economic pressure, by contrast, is not something any single local organization can fix. As such, it is better addressed through advocacy and forecasting than direct intervention.
- The survey identifies two widespread needs that are also among the most actionable: marketing and visibility, and workforce availability. Marketing and visibility is the most frequently cited growth need in the report, identified by 29% of businesses and exceeding every individual challenge category. It was also the most cited growth need in 2024, at 28%, making it the one need Kamloops businesses have named first in both walks, unprompted and across two different samples. Workforce availability follows a different pattern. It was the single most cited challenge in 2024 at 31% and fell to 18% in 2026, suggesting a pressure that is easing rather than one that is entrenched.

Unlike broader structural issues such as homelessness, safety, parking and infrastructure, these needs can be addressed more directly through Venture Kamloops’ existing programming, including VK Takeover, workforce-development initiatives and referrals to partner organizations. They therefore represent the clearest opportunities for near-term action and measurable results.

- The sector-level findings show that Kamloops businesses are not facing one common set of issues. Their challenges and growth needs vary depending on sector. In two sectors, the same priority emerged in both survey questions, strengthening the signal. Construction, Development and Building Management businesses identified development and permitting support as both a leading challenge and a growth need. Professional Services businesses similarly identified workforce availability in both categories. Retail, the largest sector represented in the survey, showed a different pattern.

While its challenges were more varied, 40% of retail businesses identified marketing and visibility as a growth need. This suggests that targeted visibility support could have a particularly strong impact in the sector most frequently reached through Venture Kamloops' programming.

- The succession gap is a quiet risk to the tax base and commercial vacancy rate. Just over half of businesses nearing a transition have no succession plan in place. Left unaddressed, this creates a real risk of unplanned closures in the next five years, with further effects on tenancy, employment, and neighbourhood vacancy rates. As set out in Section 8, the 2024 succession responses are too few and carry too high a non-response rate to support a year-over-year comparison.
- High engagement suggests that the format itself works. The follow-up request rate (57%) is high enough to suggest the walk format itself builds trust and surfaces real need, an argument for running it more consistently, not just more often. The rate has fallen from 72% in 2024, however. This may reflect improved business conditions and therefore less need for assistance, but it may equally reflect declining engagement, and it is worth monitoring in future walks.
- Two years of data separate the persistent from the shifting. Marketing and visibility, and street-level conditions, appear at nearly identical levels in both walks and warrant sustained programming and partnership. Workforce availability and economic pressure moved sharply in opposite directions over the same period and are better met with monitoring and responsive advocacy than with permanent structures. This distinction matters for how Council and both organizations allocate effort going forward.

XII. Recommended Actions

1. Complete individual follow-up with all 53 businesses that requested it, routing each to the appropriate partner agency. In addition, contact the 13 businesses that did not request follow-up but whose responses indicate a need, including two that reported they are considering closing within the next year.
2. Share the Downtown and North Shore concentrated findings on parking, safety, and street disorder with the relevant City of Kamloops departments and the Business Improvement Associations.
3. Proactively reach out to businesses considering an ownership transition without a succession plan, connecting them to VK Accelerate before a transition becomes urgent.
4. Address marketing and visibility, the most-cited growth need in both 2024 and 2026, through a two-part approach:
 - a. Launch a Shop Kamloops community campaign to rally local support behind Kamloops businesses, responding to a need identified by 29% of businesses citywide and 40% of Retail respondents specifically.

- b. Establish a recurring Small Business Friday social media initiative, in which local businesses post and tag Venture Kamloops and Venture Kamloops reshares that content to extend reach. Partner organizations on the business council would be encouraged to do the same, with a shared hashtag linking posts across accounts. This can be delivered through the existing VK Takeover program at minimal cost and can begin immediately, ahead of any broader campaign.
5. Establish this report as the baseline for future Business Walks, with a recommended cadence of at least once annually, ideally timed with BC Small Business Month (October) to get a snapshot of the year. Consider expanding to a multi-day format to increase sample depth in underrepresented neighbourhoods such as North Shore, where this year's small sample (8 businesses) limits how confidently findings can be generalized.
6. Advance advocacy on tariffs and broader economic pressure. Concerns in this area more than doubled between 2024 and 2026, from 9% to 19%, and are now nearly tied with street-level conditions as the leading challenge citywide. These pressures originate largely in federal and international policy and cannot be resolved at the local level. Through local, provincial and national Chamber of Commerce networks, we will carry the concerns Kamloops businesses raised through these Business Walks into advocacy channels beyond the community, and we will connect affected businesses to available trade, export, and market diversification supports.
7. Partner with Thompson Rivers University to design targeted micro-credentials that support workforce development, particularly in skilled trades. This directly addresses workforce availability and quality, the one of the most common challenge citywide (18%) and the dominant concern in Professional Services (67%) and Automotive & Trade Services (60%) specifically, by building a faster, more accessible training pipeline than a full credential program.

Supporting Programs & Referral Partners

The themes raised through the walk map directly onto existing VK programs and regional partners, and should guide where referral effort is concentrated:

Need identified	VK program / referral partner
Succession & ownership transition	VK Accelerate
Business planning & growth	VK Accelerate, VK Venture Advisors
Marketing & social visibility	VK Takeover (in partnership with the Business Improvement Associations, the Kamloops & District

	Chamber of Commerce and other organizations); Shop Kamloops campaign; Small Business Friday
Access to capital / financing	BDC, Futurpreneur, WeBC, Community Futures Thompson Country
Workforce development	Venture Kamloops, TRU, Kamloops & District Chamber of Commerce
Downtown safety, parking & street disorder	City of Kamloops (Bylaw, RCMP liaison), BIAs

XIII. Conclusion

The 2026 Business Walks confirm what the Chamber and Venture Kamloops have long observed anecdotally: Kamloops businesses are broadly stable and optimistic, but face real, specific, and in most cases addressable pressures. Formalizing this data into a joint report for the first time replaces a collection of individual impressions with a shared, evidence-based picture, one that both organizations, the City, and community partners can now work from together.

The work ahead shifts from listening to acting. That means following up with every business that asked for it, routing street-level concerns to the partners best equipped to address them, closing the succession-planning gap before it becomes a wave of unplanned closures, and meeting the single clearest need in this data, marketing and visibility, with a coordinated response rather than leaving individual businesses to solve it alone. The Chamber and Venture Kamloops intend to repeat this exercise on a regular cadence, so that this report becomes the first data point in an ongoing conversation with the Kamloops business community, not a one-time snapshot. We are grateful to every business that took the time to participate, and to the partner organizations and volunteers who made this year's walk possible.