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TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

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SUBJECT: 2021 Biennial Bellevue Business Survey Results

The 4th biennial Business Survey was conducted from May 10 - June 30. Findings reflect an overall strong economic position with COVID recovery and growth challenges.

- 92 percent of businesses feel Bellevue's economy is better than that of other Puget Sound cities
- 80 percent of businesses state their business is "somewhat" or "very" strong
- 79 percent of businesses agree Bellevue is a better place than other cities and towns to do business
- Access to qualified employees and transportation continue to be challenges to businesses within Bellevue
- Businesses report affordable housing and childcare are the top challenges for employees

The survey is designed to support Bellevue's Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) work, help staff better understand the needs of local businesses, and enable the City to deliver high-quality services to the business community. This year, additional questions were added related to COVID-19, work-from-home, small business and business ownership demographics such as race and gender.

Past survey results were used in development of the Economic Development Plan and this year's results will be used to assess progress and continued program development in implementation of the Plan. Additionally, these results are used to guide policy discussions around economic development, infrastructure, and services to support long-term economic growth.

Methodology

The report provides analysis and comparisons of the results for the following groups:

- **Business Sector:** Business Services, Information Technology, Retail, Tourism, Creative Industries (new in 2019), and Other Businesses
- **Major Employment Center (MEC):** SR 520/Bel-Red, Crossroads, Downtown, Eastgate/Factoria, 116th/Bellefield, and Outside the MEC

- **Age of Business:** Founded prior to 1980, founded in the 1980's, founded in the 1990's, founded in the 2000's, founded in 2010 or later
- **Size of Business:** One person, two to five employees, six to 49 employees, 50 to 99 employees and 100 or more employees

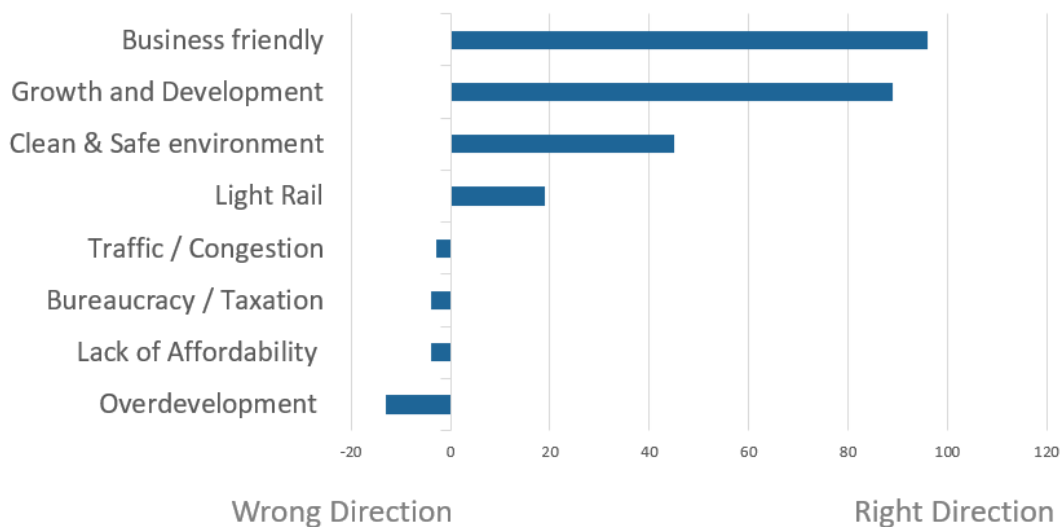
Also, businesses were reached with the survey by email, postal mail, telephone and through social media. Outreach was also conducted through community organization partners, business service providers, and City inspection databases to ensure broad community representation. This resulted in 747 responses that constitute 9.5 percent of active Bellevue businesses.

2021 Key Findings

Bellevue received high ratings for all its key metrics, as outlined below. These key metrics provide an overall picture of the health of the City from the perspective of businesses located in Bellevue. These high ratings have been consistent from the first survey in 2015 but did see modest increases in 2021.

Question	Results			
	2015	2017	2019	2021
Bellevue as a Place to Operate a Business -better than other cities and towns	74%	74%	77%	79% (+2)
Quality of Services Provided to Businesses - exceeds expectations	66%	68%	72%	69% (-3)
Value of Services for Tax Dollar Paid – good value/excellent value for city tax dollar	N/A	59%	61%	66% (+4)
Likelihood of Recommending Doing Business in Bellevue – likely	57%	60%	58%	67% (+9)
Perceptions of Bellevue's Economy – better than other Puget Sound cities	92%	90%	91%	92% (+1)
Direction City is Headed - right direction	69%	69%	69%	73% (+4)

Direction Bellevue is headed – response reasons



Conclusion

This survey's findings reflect an overall strong economic position and an optimistic business community in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this optimism is not without barriers. Growth related issues include transportation and affordability and lingering COVID impacts challenge business's ability to start, grow, and succeed within Bellevue.

These survey findings are shared across City departments to inform Foundational Strategies such as Transportation and Affordable Housing. CED Staff continues to adapt direct business assistance programing to address the barriers illustrated through this survey and other business feedback received.

The full survey report includes detailed findings on business and cultural arts within Bellevue by sector, size and geographic location. The full 2021 Business Survey report will be available on the City's website along with an interactive data dashboard located here: bellevuewa.gov/city-government/departments/community-development/economic-development/economic-data.