

2015 SHELBURNE
BUSINESS STUDY

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Executive Summary

- Data collected from 182 Shelburne business community respondents in 2015.
- Results are representative to the entire Shelburne business community of 579 enterprises, plus or minus a margin of error of 6%.
- Most Shelburne businesses stick around. 54% report operating in Shelburne for 11 years or longer.
- Most Shelburne businesses are here because it's home. Over half (51%), cite proximity to home as their reason for locating in Shelburne.
- More than a third (38%) of Shelburne businesses are home-based.
- Most Shelburne businesses are not dependent on tourism. 83% report being not "heavily dependent" on tourism.
- Shelburne businesses are mostly reliant on local customers. The plurality (roughly 46%) report their customers are primarily from Chittenden County.
- Shelburne businesses think their town is a good place to start a business. Over half (54%) rated Shelburne as a "good" place to start a business.
- Shelburne businesses both benefit from, and are challenged by traffic and parking issues related to location along the route 7 corridor. 18.4% name the proximity to route 7 and its attractions and traffic as the reason for their business location, while 50.7% deemed "peak traffic management" infrastructure inadequate and named traffic and parking infrastructure as challenges to further business growth.

Introduction

This project was initiated when Shelburne Planning Commissioner Ann Hogan reviewed the 2014 Town Plan and thought the Economic Development section needed to be strengthened and expanded in the next revision. With the support of Town Manager Joe Colangelo, they decided to go directly to the businesses in town and ask them whether Shelburne was a good place to start or grow a business, and what the town could do to support them.

The first step was to find out who they were. In Phase 1 a number of knowledgeable town residents spent many hours reviewing lists of possible businesses (both for-profit and non-profit) and narrowing the lists down from approximately 1000 to less than 600. The inventory includes "below the radar" home-based businesses and consultants. To stimulate public interest in the local economy, the Shelburne News helped publish BizQuiz, a game for readers to guess the number of businesses in town. Importantly, Pam Brangan, CCRPC Planner, volunteered to map the nearly 600 locations and post the map and the listing on the Town website.

In Phase 2 an ad hoc committee was formed to create a written survey tool. Because email addresses were not available, an anonymous 23-question printed survey was used. The committee's input was enhanced by input from the SPBA, Planning Commission, Selectboard, Planning and Zoning Director, and the two state Representatives.

The results presented in this report are seen as the starting point for a conversation in the town about the needs of businesses, the backbone of our local economy.

Methodology

The survey instrument was designed by: Ann Hogan, Joe Colangelo, John DuBrul, Rosalyn Graham, Toby Knox, Meagan Downey, Judy Christensen and Dean Pierce. The initial meeting took place in March 2015.

The anonymous survey, with a cover letter and stamped, self-addressed envelope, was mailed on October 20, to 579 addressees thought to be operating businesses housed in Shelburne. The responses were collected by mail at the Town Offices, numbered, and the data recorded by a volunteer. Responses were collected over a six-week period ending December 5, 2015.

The results of this study are posed with the assumption of a population of 579 operating businesses in Shelburne. With 182 valid responses, this study achieved a Confidence Level of 95% plus or minus a 6% margin of error. This means that if replicated 100 times, 95 of those times, the survey responses would fall within +/-6% of the responses in this report.

Note on analysis: The survey contains several open-response questions. All open-response options were categorized. Open-responses with more than one response were separated and counted in their respective categories.

Results

1 Which type of business is your enterprise?	Number	Percent
For Profit	169	92.9%
Non Profit	11	6.0%
Both	2	1.1%
	182	100.0%

Nearly 93% of respondents are for-profit businesses.

2 Which of the categories below describes your business best?	Number	Percent
Retail, Sales, Wholesale	22	12.1%
Medical, Psychology	18	9.9%
Educational	14	7.7%
Consulting	14	7.7%
Food, Restaurant, Bar	12	6.6%
Computers, Electronics, Web	10	5.5%
Automotive, aviation, Marine	8	4.4%
Arts, Crafts, Etc.	7	3.8%
Financial Services, Insurance	7	3.8%
Building Trades	6	3.3%
Marketing, PR	6	3.3%
Accounting	5	2.7%
Architecture	5	2.7%
Farming, Ag.	5	2.7%
Fitness, Nutrition	5	2.7%
Landscape, Plow, Maintenance	5	2.7%
Services- Other	5	2.7%

Caregivers	4	2.2%
Veterinary, Pet	4	2.2%
Legal	4	2.2%
Lodging, Tourism	4	2.2%
Real Estate, Development	4	2.2%
Design	3	1.6%
Hair, Nail, Skin, Beauty	2	1.1%
Media, Writing	2	1.1%
Arts, Entertainment	1	0.5%
	182	100.0%

Just over 12% of Shelburne businesses surveyed categorized themselves as retail, sales, or wholesale, making that category the largest. Following were respondents from medical or psychology fields at nearly 10%, and both education as well as consulting at around 8% each.

3 How long has your business operated in Shelburne?	Number	Percent
Under 1 Year	7	3.8%
1-5 Years	45	24.7%
6-10 Years	32	17.6%
11-20 Years	40	22.0%
Over 20 Years	58	31.9%
	182	100.0%

Almost 32% of businesses have operated in Shelburne for over 20 years, and another 22% have operated between 11-20 years. In contrast, only around 4% of businesses are new, having operated for under a year.

4 Why is your business located in Shelburne?	Number	Percent
Home (Close to)	80	50.6%
Proximity to; Location, Rt. 7, attractions	29	18.4%
Clients (Close to)	19	12.0%
Long history here	13	8.2%
Community Qualities, village	12	7.6%
Available/Good Space	5	3.2%
	158	100.0%

A majority of businesses, around 51%, cite proximity to home as their reason for location in Shelburne. Nearly 20% cite proximity to Route 7 and its attraction, and another 12% answered proximity to their clientele.

5 Did you start your business?	Number	Percent
Yes	142	78.9%
No	38	21.1%
	180	100.0%

About 78% of businesses owners surveyed started their own businesses.

6 Do you think the town supports entrepreneurship?	Number	Percent
Yes	53	52.5%
No	39	38.6%
Neutral, Yes and No	9	8.9%
	101	100.0%

Over half of respondents to the survey believe that Shelburne does support entrepreneurship.

7 How many people does your business employ, including the proprietor(s) and including both part-time and full-time workers?	Number	Percent
1 Employee	60	33.1%
2-4 Employees	56	30.9%
5-10 Employees	27	14.9%
11-20 Employees	18	9.9%
Over 20 Employees	20	11.0%
	181	100.0%

The majority of Shelburne businesses employ relatively few personnel, with around 33% percent having only one employee, and an additional 31% percent with between 2-4 employees. Only around 21% employ more than 11 people.

8 From where do you operate your business?	Number	Percent
Home	67	38.1%
Rented (Commercial) Space	60	34.1%
Owned (Commercial) Space	39	22.2%
Home plus other location	8	4.5%
Other Space	2	1.1%
	176	100.0%

Just over 38% of respondents operate from their home, while 56% operate from commercial space (about 34% from rented commercial space, and 22% from owned commercial space, respectively).

9 Where are the majority of the customers for your goods and services located?	Number	Percent
Chittenden Co. Only	83	45.9%
Chittenden Co., VT	41	22.7%
U.S. Only	38	21.0%
Global	10	5.5%
Chittenden Co., VT, U.S.	9	5.0%
	181	100.0%

Roughly 46% of businesses surveyed report that their customers are located solely in Chittenden County. About 23% report having customers from Chittenden County and other areas of Vermont. More than a quarter (26%) describe their customer base as being from across the U.S. and including VT and Chittenden County.

10 Is your enterprise heavily dependent on tourism?	Number	Percent
No	149	83.2%
Yes	23	12.8%
Not Sure	7	3.9%
	179	100.0%

The vast majority of businesses (around 83%) say they are not heavily dependent on tourism, and only around 13% report that they are.

11 What kind of job does the town of Shelburne do to promote tourism?	Number	Percent
Poor	15	9.5%
Fair	57	36.1%
Good	62	39.2%
Don't Know	24	15.2%
	158	100.0%

Over 39% report the town does a good job promoting tourism and 36% report the town does a fair job. 9.5% feel the town does a poor job promoting tourism.

12 Are you aware of the Shelburne Business and Professional Association (SBPA)?	Number	Percent
No	39	21.8%
Yes	140	78.2%
	179	100.0%

The majority of businesses surveyed, over 78%, reported that they are aware of the SBPA.

13 What kind or kinds of space does your business require? Check all that apply	Number	Percent
Home Office	46	26.9%
Commercial Office	45	26.3%
Retail Space	22	12.9%
Home Office plus mixed use, manufacturing/warehouse, etc.	14	8.2%
Incubator Space W/Services	11	6.4%
Commercial Office + incubator, manufacturing/warehouse, retail	11	6.4%
Retail plus manufacturing/warehouse/industrial	9	5.3%
Other Space	3	1.8%
Manufacturing/Industrial	3	1.8%
Mixed Use	3	1.8%
Warehouse	2	1.2%
Mixed Use, Manufacturing/warehouse	2	1.2%
	171	100.0%

The two most popular business spaces reported were home offices, at nearly 27% percent, and commercial space closely following at about 26%. Other less popular spaces included manufacturing/industrial, with only around 2% reporting using that kind of space, or warehouse, with only around 1%.

14 What would be the ideal location if you could move your business within Shelburne limits?	Number	Percent
No Change	57	52.3%
Other	18	16.5%
Route 7, Shelburne rd.	15	13.8%
Village/Town Ctr.	12	11.0%
Route 7, North of Village	3	2.8%
Shelburne Bay Plaza	2	1.8%
Industrial Park	2	1.8%
	109	100.0%

More than half (over 52%) of business owners, when asked if they could move their business elsewhere within Shelburne, said that they would not change their location. Popular locations for those that did choose a different location included Route 7, with almost 14% choosing that area, and 11% choosing the Shelburne's town center (also mostly on Route 7).

15 How adequate is Broadband/Internet access for your business?	Number	Percent
Fair	55	31.3%
Good	105	59.7%
Poor	16	9.1%
	176	100.0%

The majority of Shelburne business owners expressed satisfaction with their current Broadband/internet access, with almost 60% rating their access as "good." Only about 9% rated their access as "poor".

16 Is infrastructure listed below, adequate for the business?	Yes	No	Total	Percent Yes
Transportation to/from business	140	22	162	86.4%
Maintenance of streets & roads	149	12	161	92.5%
Sidewalks	123	32	155	79.4%
Parking	138	19	157	87.9%
Sewer	143	14	157	91.1%
Water	145	13	158	91.8%
Street Lighting	124	32	156	79.5%
Directional signage to Shelburne or business	104	42	146	71.2%
Peak traffic management	76	74	150	50.7%
North & South Entrances to town	111	38	149	74.5%

Nearly all infrastructure items were considered “adequate” by the vast majority of businesses. “Peak traffic management” was deemed inadequate by half of respondents (51%).

17 How do you advertise or promote your business? Check any that apply.	Number	Percent
Word of Mouth	148	31.0%
Proprietary Website	99	20.8%
Social Media	91	19.1%
Front Porch Forum	40	8.4%
Broadcast Media	29	6.1%
Direct Mail	26	5.5%
Trade Shows	26	5.5%
Print Media	17	3.6%
Other (Site Signage)	1	0.2%
	477	100.0%

31% of responses for advertising methods included word of mouth. Other popular methods include the use of websites (21%) and social media (19%).

18a Are you planning to hire any employees in the next year?	Number	Percent
Yes	66	37.3%
No	108	61.0%
Maybe	3	1.7%
	177	100.0%

Over 60% of businesses report that they do not plan on hiring any new employees in the next year while over a third (37%) say they do plan to hire in the next year.

18b If yes, what qualifications are you looking for in your employees?	Number	Percent
Related degree, education, skills, license, Experience	29	32.6%
Dependable, Work Ethic, Reliable, Hard Working	18	20.2%
Good Personality, Enthusiasm, Honesty, Mature,	9	10.1%
IT, Telecom, Computer, Social Media	7	7.9%
Customer Service	6	6.7%
Attention to Detail, Organized	5	5.6%
Sales	4	4.5%
Math, Tech Skills	4	4.5%
Flexible Schedule, Part Time, Seasonal	4	4.5%
Communication Skills	3	3.4%
	89	100.0%

The most sought-after employee qualifications included having related degree/education/skills/license/experience (33%). Personality traits were the next most common qualification, with around 20% of businesses reporting that they want “dependable/reliable/hard-working” employees, and another 10% that want “good personality/enthusiasm/honesty”. Less commonly sought were specific skill sets such as math/tech, with only 4.5% of businesses seeking that qualification, and just over 3% looking for communication skills.

18c If yes, are you having any particular difficulty finding qualified candidates in Vermont or attracting them to move to Vermont?	Number	Percent
Yes	34	58.6%
No	21	36.2%
Other	3	5.2%
	58	100.0%

The majority (nearly 59%) of Shelburne businesses reported difficult in finding qualified candidates for employees within Vermont.

19 What do you consider major obstacles to developing and growing your business, if any?	Number	Percent
Taxes, Affordability, Cost of Doing Business	29	17.4%
Built inf. (Space, broadband, sidewalks, bus service, parking	24	14.4%
Regulations (State, Local)	23	13.8%
None	17	10.2%
Employees, Workforce	13	7.8%
Traffic, Rt. 7	12	7.2%
Personal factors (Time	12	7.2%
Economy, business climate	9	5.4%
Cash flow, Capital	8	4.8%
Need Business Supports (Financial, Marketing,)	8	4.8%

Location	6	3.6%
Competition (untaxed, online)	4	2.4%
low Population	2	1.2%
	167	100.0%

The most reported obstacle to developing/growing business in Shelburne was taxes/affordability/cost of doing business, at over 17%. Other popularly reported obstacles were built infrastructure such as space/sidewalks/parking at over 14%, and state or local regulations at just under 14%. However, another large percentage, about 10%, reported that there were no major obstacles to be reported.

20 What features does the Shelburne community offer that you consider as favorable for the development of your business?	Number	Percent
Location (Proximity, Traffic, Rt. 7, VT)	34	24.6%
Demographics (Income, Education, Good, Supportive Community)	32	23.2%
Natural and built environment	20	14.5%
Local Community, Businesses are supportive, SBPA	19	13.8%
Attractions, Events, Tourism	14	10.1%
Municipal Supports, Services, Schools	11	8.0%
Brand, Reputation	8	5.8%
	138	100.0%

The most popularly reported features were Shelburne's location (proximity to Route 7 and its traffic) at almost 25%, as well as Shelburne's community attributes & demographics at just over 23%.

21 How would you rate Shelburne overall as a place to start a business?	Number	Percent
Good	88	54.0%
Fair	66	40.5%
Poor	9	5.5%
	163	100.0%

Nearly 95% of business owners rate Shelburne as fair to good as a place to start a business, and only under 6% rate it as poor.

22 What is the single most important thing the town boards, commissions, and staff could do to support your business?	Number	Percent
Ease/Simplify/Flexible/ Regulations, Faster Process	18	19.4%
Fix Traffic/Parking Issues	16	17.2%
Affordability, Lower Taxes	13	14.0%
Promote and Support local businesses (Mixers, Services)	13	14.0%
Fast, affordable Internet, Broadband, Cellular	6	6.5%
Increase Village Development, Walkability	4	4.3%
Other things	23	24.7%
	93	100.0%

Over 19% of businesses surveyed said that simplifying or making the regulations process faster is the most important thing the town boards, commissions and staff could do support their business. 17% reported that fixing traffic or parking issues was the single most important thing.

23 Would you like assistance with any of the following?	Number	Percent
Developing a marketing plan to find new customers	17	19.8%
Finding financing to grow the business	15	17.4%
Help navigating the zoning/permitting process	14	16.3%
Identifying the next step for the business	10	11.6%
Developing a business plan	7	8.1%
Using the internet to do business	7	8.1%
Mentoring	7	8.1%
Help writing a press release for your business	4	4.7%
Improving customer service	3	3.5%
Other (Help develop & expand, finding classroom space)	2	2.3%
	86	100.0%

When asked if their business needed assistance in anything, almost 20% said they would like assistance developing a marketing plan, 17% would welcome financing assistance, and over 16% said assistance navigating zoning/permitting processes would be useful.

Researcher Bio

Michael Moser has provided professional research assistance to municipalities, non-profit organizations and the business sector for over 15 years. His Master of Science degree in Community Development and Economics from the University of Vermont provides him with the background to collaborate with clients in developing appropriate research methodologies to fit their needs within their means. Contact Michael at 802.233.8187.

Addendum

Prepared by

ANN L. HOGAN, PLANNING COMMISSIONER

Selected responses to the question:

#6 Does Town support entrepreneurship?

I feel supported. However, some of the Town's decisions make me question whether they support entrepreneurship.

I have had no Town contact.

No; restrictions and inconsistent zoning regulations; high taxes.

Yes – thoughtful Town leadership

I think the Town makes it difficult with the DRB. What should be a quick & easy process on approvals turns into something much more lengthy due to the DRB being vague on what is needed for approval.

Nope. This is the first correspondence I've ever received from the Town regarding business. Support & encouragement are actions.

Only in "the Village"

Yes. The SBPA & Farmers Market are a great resource.

Not in the past. The situation is improving

Yes, I feel residents like to support local companies.

Yes. SBPA is very important in this regard. Also the Town has not, as have so many others, increased the already high local sales tax.

No idea. What do you do to support & encourage entrepreneurship?

Yes, it seems like the Town seeks the opinions of local businesses, when looking into potential changes.

Not really. I can't think of anything it does to support entrepreneurship. How about setting up a program to work with the high school to help kids launch mini-businesses in town? Invite the community to invest via "micro-loans". How cool.

Not entirely. When I identified my home office, my property taxes increased for the "Business" portion.

The Town could do more.

Yes – Town seems to encourage entrepreneurship in development areas, i.e. Shelburne Green

There's not an abundance of small, inexpensive office space in the Village. Denser zoning in the Village Center may help. Also parking is scarce.

Don't believe the Town should support "entrepreneurism" which is a small part of the economy, but rather should support "business in general" which it generally does already.

There should be a welcome package that would help navigate all the permits!

Yes. No trouble from any dept. Had a write-up in the local paper, majority of residents seem to promote & patronize local business

QUESTION #22: What single thing could the Town boards do to help support your business?

Encourage residents to shop locally – we local businesses support many non-profit & civic groups.

I feel businesses in the Village get special treatment when it comes to additional signage. We'd like the same treatment.

Increase density to allow more development and build a truly walkable community – Right now we pay lip service to being a real village – the car still rules!

Faster and less expensive broadband

Let us build on our land.

Winter farmers market. More festivals for businesses to promote their products.

Treat ALL local businesses as if they're important, not jut the town favorites.

Provide incentives. Advertise the improved business climate.

Fair balance of business and residential needs.

Promote the town as a retail destination. Promote joint marketing efforts.

Please allow Shelburne business owners to have a permit for Shelburne Beach!

Allow us to advertise on our home&business building.

Change the sign restrictions on Rt. 7 to reflect 40-50 mph traffic. Letter size on signs needs to be 14 in. or bigger for passing traffic to read the sign.

Connect with businesses in general. Outreach.

Make sure there are no impediments to home-based businesses in residentially-zoned areas.

Start a small business lending assistance program.

Have a Business Social. Promote & connect local businesses

Be our customer

Temporary display/signage is critical to business. Allow more than 14 days in a calendar year for temp. display.

Make it less complicated to acquire permits. Be supportive. Without businesses we won't be able to afford to live here and enjoy the quality of life.

Create public notice board for business [only] use

Handicapped accessible office space is needed.

Keep up the support & positive approach in general.

Adjust Village Center density in Zoning Regs. Density distinguishes the character of the Village as different from suburban sprawl.

Give "Shelburne" an identity that stands out like "Stowe, Vermont". Great place to stay, eat. Fun housing for young people. Bus route.

Consider a bond for a pool

Stop development in Rural District

Town boards and staff continue being very helpful.

Make sure "Right to Farm laws" go out to new people moving close to agriculture. Also Route 116 business is usually forgotten in this corner of Shelburne.

Support the activities that make Shelburne an attractive place to live: our school, the library, our natural resources; and provide services to those in the town that are in the greatest need of food and housing.

Keeping Shelburne a beautiful & wonderful place to live & do business!

Selected responses to other questions

MISCELLANEOUS

Wish we had more tourists.

Employment candidates can't afford to re-locate from elsewhere. [VT cost of living]

Rents are too high.

Re Question 23 "Would you like assistance with.. ?" These are services I don't expect the town to provide. BUT if available, they could help businesses develop & expand.

It is hard to get youth to stay and to get seasonal/temps to commute from towns outside Shelburne.

There is a need for mentorship with business development.

I am moving out of VT because of too high TAXES.

I am in the right space, but rents are expensive b/c they are limited.

Traffic light needed for Chaplain Drive.

Cell phone coverage! Communicating over the phone to my clients across the U.S. is crucial to my business.

Internet access is terrible! We were quoted over \$50,000 to have broadband cable brought up our road a few years ago.

The qualifications I am looking for are strong work ethic, career oriented, looking to help build and grow the company. I have a very hard time finding them. Cost of living is very high, and some State assistance program can pay as well as we can.