



FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BROCK TOURISM | BUSINESS RETENTION
AND EXPANSION (BR+E)





Historic Stone Church, Beaverton

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1. Introduction & Executive Summary of Recommendations

Research shows that most business expansions and new jobs in a community come from existing and established local businesses.

1.1 Introduction

The Brock Tourism Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) project follows the Ontario BR+E program provided through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). It is a community based economic development program to strengthen the local economy by supporting existing businesses. The Ontario BR+E program has been used in numerous communities across Ontario and includes resources such as sector specific business surveys and training materials.

It is a visitation program whereby volunteer visitors conduct confidential in-person visits with local business owners, managers and organization leaders. By gathering information directly, key challenges and opportunities for growth are identified and used to build a local action plan. Through the action plan, the Township of Brock with support from the Regional Municipality of Durham and local organizations can work together to enhance and support the tourism industry in Brock Township.

Over 40 Brock businesses and organizations participated in the BR+E surveys throughout 2017 leading to a very successful project. Seven different sports organizations also provided input for this project via an online survey. Thank you to the businesses and organizations for taking time to provide feedback for this project, it is appreciated. The Brock Tourism BR+E was led by the Brock Economic Development Advisory Committee (BEDAC) in partnership with the Township of Brock and the Region of Durham Economic Development and Tourism Division. Other project partners included the OMAFRA, the Brock Board of Trade and the Durham Workforce Authority. A Leadership Team was formed, comprised of representatives from the partner organizations and members of BEDAC, to help guide the project. A total of 16 volunteer visitors conducted confidential interviews. The aggregated results have been compiled in this document with a particular focus on tourism specific data gathered.



Cyclists touring through Cannington



Ice Fishing off Beaverton Harbour

1.2 Executive Summary of Recommendations

The surveys highlighted numerous new opportunities for tourism in Brock Township and areas for further improvement. Over the last several years, the formation of the BEDAC, the Beaverton 180 Downtown Revitalization Action Plan, three First Impression Community Exchanges and the Shop Brock Downtown Revitalization Program have had a major positive impact on economic development and tourism. Moving forward, participants expressed the need for dedicated staff resources for economic development and tourism as well as a coordinated approach to tourism in Brock Township.

Following an analysis of the aggregate data and consultations with the Leadership Team, four priority recommendations have been identified:

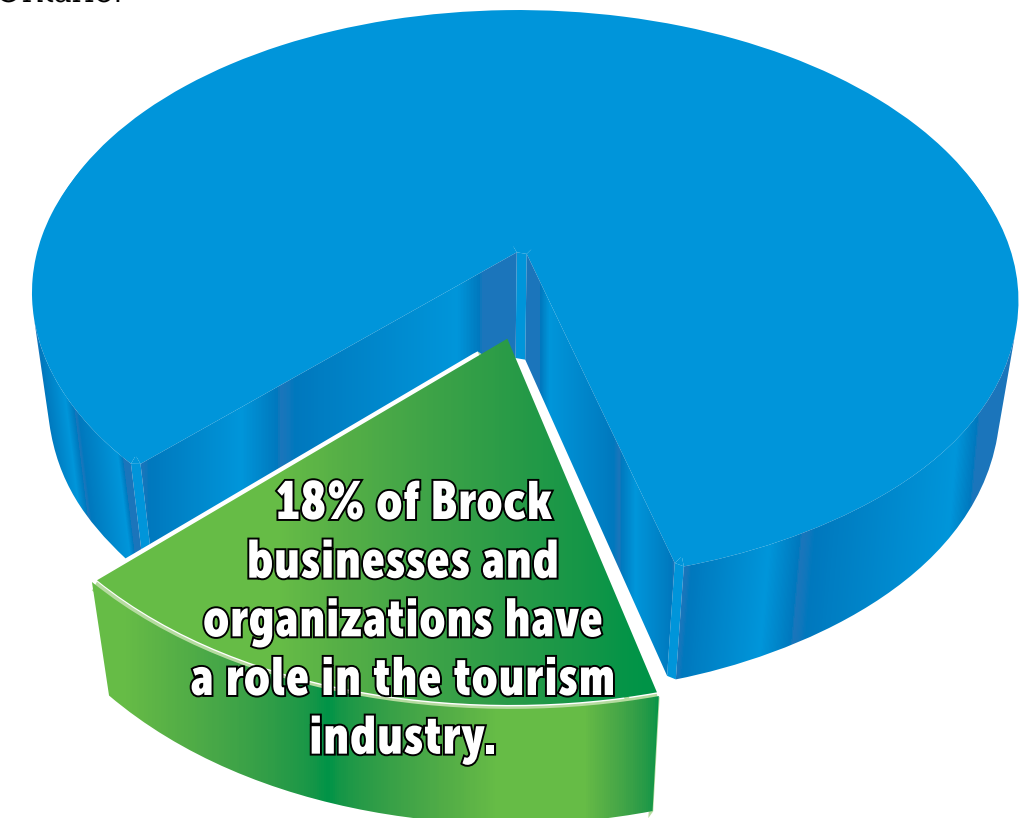
Further recommendations are identified in the Action Plan as additional opportunities and ideas. The Leadership Team has highlighted priority recommendations because they are thought to be the most significant to develop the tourism industry in Brock. However, the additional opportunities and ideas are important to build upon the priority recommendations.

- 1 Allocate dedicated Township resources (staff and financial) to support tourism and economic development;
- 2 Establish a working relationship with Durham Tourism and Central Counties Tourism (CCT) resulting in funding, resources and a Community Tourism Plan to develop the tourism industry in Brock Township
 - a. Leverage partnership funding from CCT whenever possible;
- 3 Enhance existing assets in the Township for public parking and washrooms to ensure a positive tourist experience;
 - a. Public washrooms in local arenas and Town Halls should be made accessible to the public on evenings and weekends;
 - b. Public parking signage should be installed to direct visitors to available parking options that may be located close to the main streets;
- 4 Market the Township of Brock more effectively through targeted campaigns (social media and print) and signage to promote Brock a destination for visitors.

2. Why Tourism? Economic impacts of Tourism in Brock Township

The Tourism industry is a dynamic and far-reaching sector whose economic impact helps to employ Canadians across the country and support small businesses. Tourism is an important economic driver for small communities. It can reduce dependency on more traditional primary industries and help to grow and diversify the economy. Small communities in rural Ontario also provide unique experiences for visitors that cannot be replicated anywhere else.

In Ontario, there are an estimated 186,000 tourism businesses providing 389,000 jobs which contribute to 1 in every 20 jobs, according to data from the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario.



In Brock Township alone, over 18 per cent of businesses and organizations have a role in the tourism industry. Of the businesses and organizations interviewed as part of this project, they employ over **400 persons**.



Horse drawn carriage, Sunderland Maple Syrup Festival

3. Brock Tourism BR+E Project

3.1 Background

In late 2016, the Brock Economic Development Advisory Committee (BEDAC) participated in an exercise to identify Brock's best assets. They were identified as Lake Simcoe, parks and trails. To determine how to capitalize and promote these assets more effectively, the BEDAC proposed undertaking a tourism focused BR+E project. This was included in their 2017 workplan, which was subsequently approved and endorsed by Council in early 2017.

3.2 Methodology

The project was designed with four goals in mind:

- 1 Determine how to capitalize on Brock's best assets;
- 2 Continue to support existing tourism-related businesses and determine other ways that these existing business can be supported more effectively;
- 3 Grow the tourism industry in Brock Township by attracting new businesses and visitors;
- 4 Create a sustainable tourism sector in Brock Township.

The leadership team chose to survey a cross section of tourism related businesses and organizations from across the Township. Contact lists were derived from the 2017 Durham Region Business Count Data, Township of Brock contact lists and the Durham Tourism Business Directory. Approximately 90 letters were sent from the Township Office on behalf of the Deputy Mayor, requesting participation in the survey.

Each business interview was coordinated by Durham Region and/or Township staff and conducted by volunteer interviewers during the spring and summer of 2017. Volunteer interviewers were recruited through all of the BR+E project partners. All volunteer interviewers completed a BR+E training session provided by OMAFRA. Prior to conducting business interviews, volunteer interviewers signed a confidentiality agreement and were provided with a package of surveys that included a copy of questions for each business owner or organization. These questions were derived from the OMAFRA retention, downtown revitalization and tourism surveys. Additional Brock specific questions were developed by the leadership team and added to the pre-existing BR+E survey. Sport organizations were also interviewed with a separate survey to gather information on Sport Tourism potential in Brock Township. Businesses were kept informed of the progress of the Tourism BR+E through two presentations at the Mayor's Business Networking Breakfasts held in the spring and fall of 2017.

Completed surveys were entered into the Ontario BR+E database. Businesses with immediate concerns or issues, such as lease expirations or closures, were identified as

Red Flags. Two businesses were identified with Red Flags; these concerns were followed up by Region and/or Township staff. Additional requests for information were made by more than half of the businesses surveyed. The information requested ranged from information about accessibility and Ontario By Bike Certification to information about funding opportunities.

Some of the information for these businesses was gathered and disseminated as the project progressed. Additional information is being gathered and will be provided as a follow-up to this study.

Following the data input, aggregate data was provided to the Leadership Team for analysis and action planning. Meetings took place in February and March of 2018 to identify major challenges and opportunities to develop a draft action plan. Community members were invited to a Task Force Retreat on February 1st, 2018 to provide further direction on opportunities and provide feedback. The information gathered was shared with the leadership team who incorporated this information as part of their overall analysis.



Beaver River Trail System, Cannington

4. Recommendations and Actions

The following list of recommendations and action-item possibilities have been identified as the most important action items for the community to pursue.

4.1 Priority Recommendations and Actions



Brock's Big Bite Festival, Beaverton

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS
Allocate dedicated Township resources (staff and financial) to support tourism and economic development.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Apply for the September intake of the Rural Economic Development Program to hire a Tourism Development Coordinator and implement the actions/recommendations of the Tourism BR+E project on behalf of the Township.2 Under the next term of Council formally establish a tourism specific advisory committee or working group comprised of members of the public, business owners and representatives from organizations and government to help guide tourism initiatives.
Establish a working relationship with Durham Tourism and Central Counties Tourism resulting in funding, resources and a Community Tourism Plan to develop the tourism industry in Brock Township.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Allocate funds in the next budget year to access the Central Counties Partnership Funding (50% cost share) ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000 for projects related to: industry equipping, product/experience development and communications/marketing.2 Work with the new Tourism Advisory Committee, the Brock Board of Trade, Durham Tourism and Central Counties Tourism to develop a Community Tourism Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS
Ensure a positive tourism experience by enhancing existing public washroom and public parking assets making them available and accessible on evenings and weekends.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Make public washrooms in local arenas/Town Halls available and accessible to the public on days, evenings and throughout weekend.2 Create a marketing campaign around public parking to promote available parking options within walking distance to the main streets. This includes new and more visible signage to public parking options.3 Ensure that parking and washrooms are included as part of the Township of Brock Wayfinding Signage Strategy.
Market the Township of Brock as a destination for visitors through targeted campaigns and signage, leverage existing assets (e.g. Lake Simcoe) in marketing and promotional strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Accelerate implementation of the Township of Brock Wayfinding Signage Strategy developed in partnership with Central Counties in 2016.2 Work with Central Counties Tourism to access Partnership Funding to create a 'cheap and cheery' social media campaign targeting social media audiences (Instagram and Facebook). This helps to build a following for a Brock Township tourism audience.3 Engage CCT and Durham Tourism to work with the new Tourism Advisory Committee to create a marketing/communications plan for the Township that demonstrates a coordinated and strategic approach to place building and attracting visitors.

4.2 Supporting Recommendations and Actions

The remaining action-item possibilities listed below are recommended for the Township and the community to pursue as supporting the priority recommendations. They may be quick wins that work toward accomplishing the priority recommendations or standalone items.

1

Identify partner organization(s) that can pursue funds for a barrier free, fully accessible outdoor washroom trailer and work with these organizations to assist with funding grants.

- For an example from the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville see Appendix 1 or go to <http://www.townofws.ca/en/recreation/resources/Documents/Accessible-Trailer-Brochure.pdf>
- The washroom would be mobile and available at events taking place in the Township
- South Lake Community Futures and/or Ontario Trillium Funding should be considered as potential (or partial) funding sources for the project

2

Host a “Tourism Now” workshop with Central Counties Tourism (CCT), Durham Tourism and the Business Advisory Centre Durham (BACD).

- This will help to foster the growth of tourism businesses and assist them in becoming “tourism ready” therefore gaining more notoriety and access to promotions from CCT.
- One of the topics should address the need to train staff on customer service and needs for tourism patrons.

3

Produce a ‘Backroads of Brock’ self-guided tour package to showcase the hidden gems of Brock Township.

- Gain ‘buy-in’ from local artists/studios so they can be included in the tour as the main focus and attraction.
- The intent is to showcase the depth of talent of the arts in Brock and how it can contribute to the creation of a vibrant tourist economy.
- Develop a brochure and/or online tool that provides an interactive map, images and/or a description of each stop on the tour.
- Include places to stop for a picnic or cafes/restaurants to make it a full day itinerary for visitors.
- Market the tour as a unique/ ‘can’t find this anywhere else’ experience to potential tourists outside of Brock Township.

4

Compile an inventory of existing tourism assets in the Township.

- An assets inventory should be conducted by the Township of Brock or Brock Board of Trade Summer student(s).
- The inventory should include:
 - The places to stay in Brock Township and the surrounding area together with images of each hotel, motel, bed and breakfast, etc.
 - A comprehensive list of all the events that take place in Brock Township throughout the year.
- Ask visitors to the Information Booth at the Beaverton Harbour what brings them to Brock Township.
 - This exercise will lead to better awareness of what we have in our backyard; the information should be shared with residents and business owners and be used to promote the Township.

5

Develop and implement a Tourism Ambassador Program throughout Brock Township.

- Identify businesses in the Township who can act as community champions (“tourism ambassadors”) to promote the Township and provide information to visitors on what to do and see in the area.
- This enhances the visitor experience by making visitors feel welcomed and informed, it increases the likelihood of return visits.
- The program should be modelled on the Uxbridge Tourism Ambassador Program wherein select businesses will display a “Tourism Ambassador” sign in their window to distinguish them as a stop for visitors.



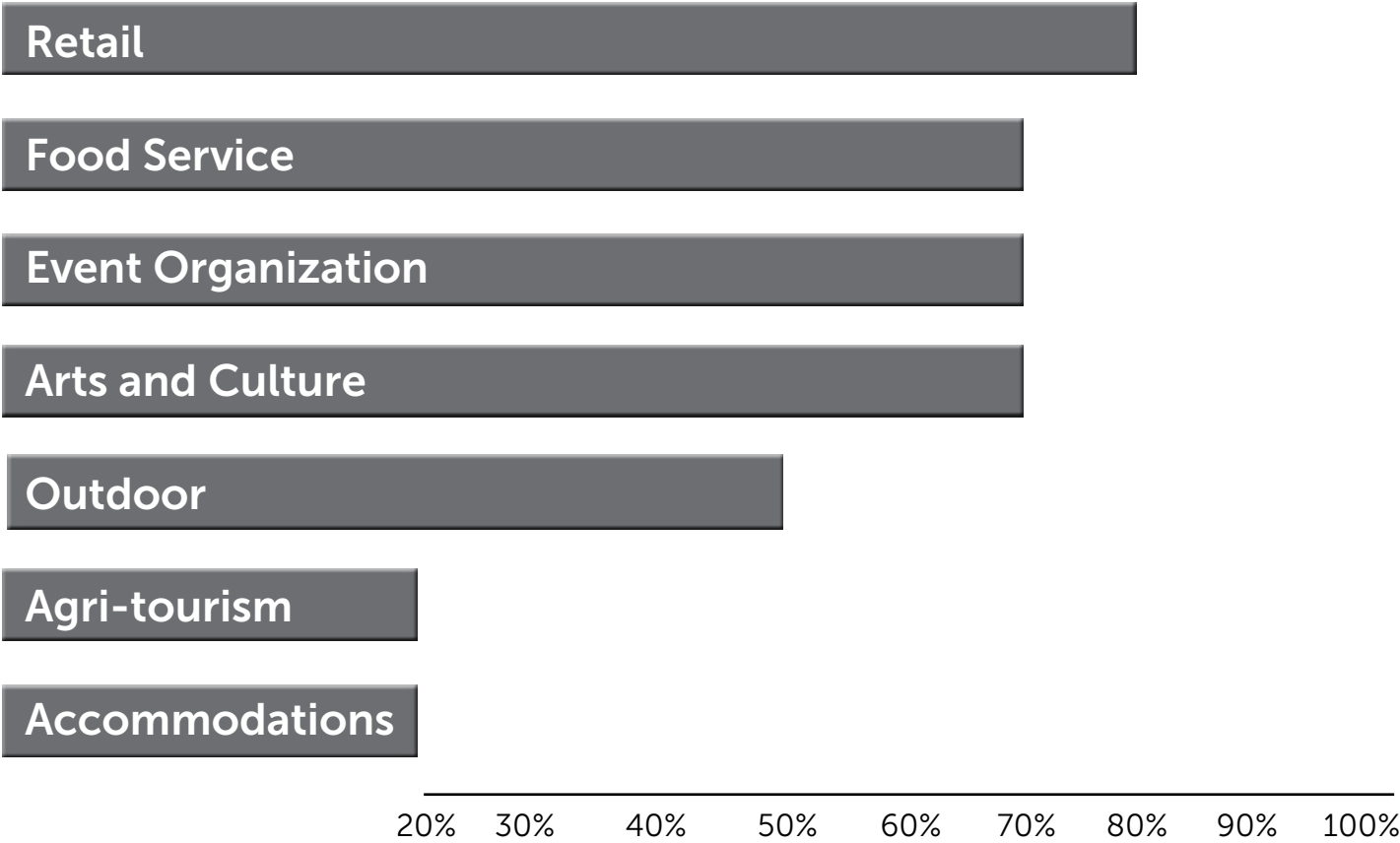
Golfing on one of the many golf courses in Brock

5. Participating Businesses and Organizations

A total of 42 businesses and/or organizations participated in the BR+E project. This included interviews where individuals represented more than one organization or business. Each business or organization was assigned to a sub-sector (Figure 1 below).

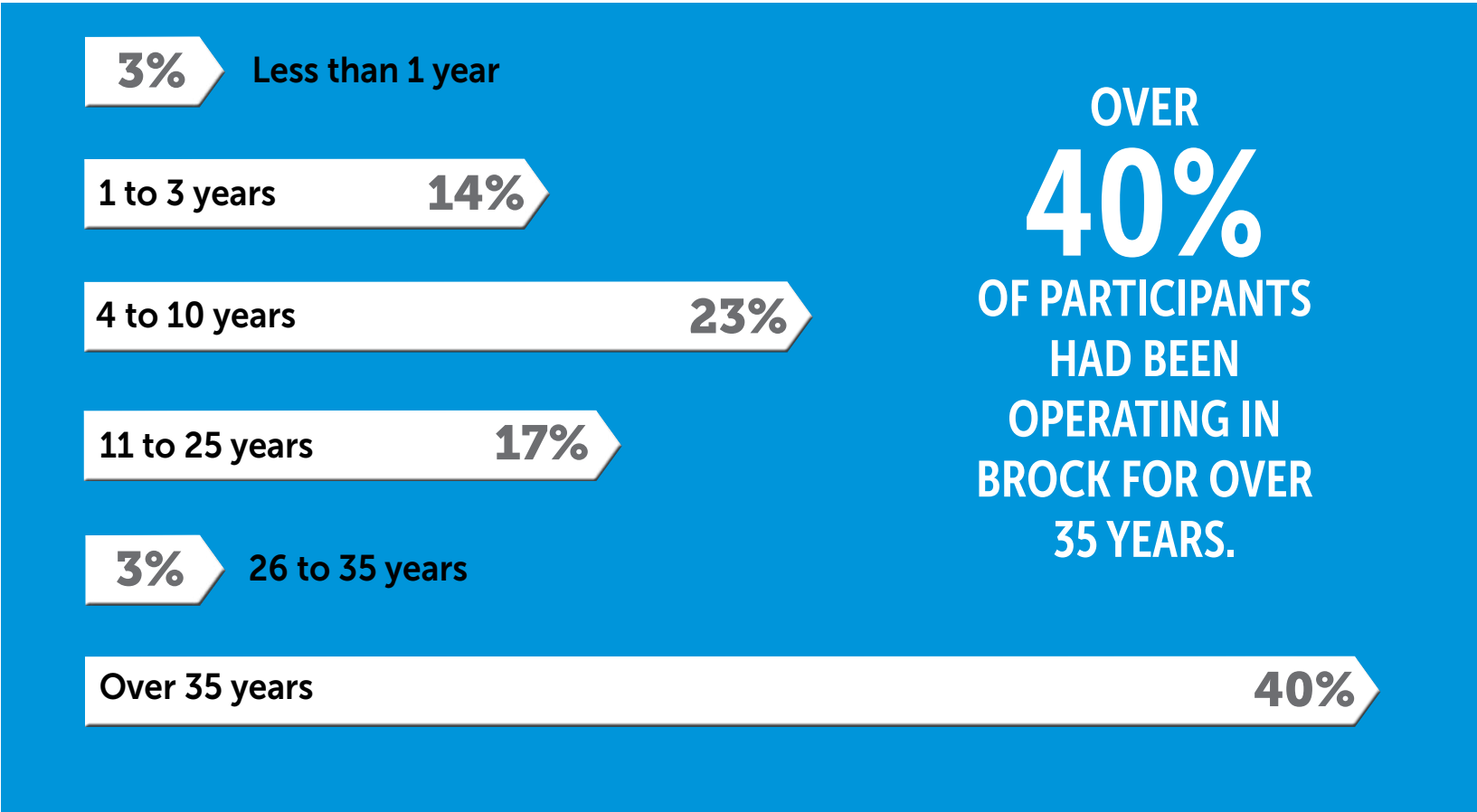
Number and types of businesses / organizations interviewed

Figure 1



All businesses or organizations completed a base retention survey together with Brock specific questions. In addition, the Ontario BR+E program includes a series of sector specific surveys. For the purposes of this project, questions from the downtown survey and tourism survey were included.

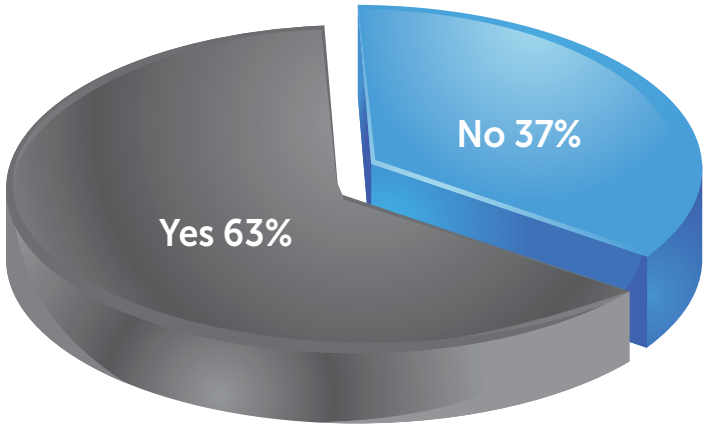
Years in Business
Figure 2



A majority of participants were well established in the community (Figure 2 above) and had a business plan (Figure 3 below).

Does your business have a business plan?

Figure 3



6. Summary of Results (Tourism, Downtown and Community Questions)

This section of the Report is a summary of the BR+E Tourism and Brock community questions as well as the downtown survey. The questions were answered by businesses and organizations participating in the survey. In addition, an online survey was sent to 12 organizations in Brock who are involved in Sport Tourism. The results of the Sport Tourism online survey are also included.

6.1 Tourism and Downtown Specific Surveys

Tourism specific questions were combined with downtown revitalization survey questions to ensure tourism businesses and organizations from across the Township were well represented in the survey questions. These questions help to provide further insight into tourist attraction and growth in the industry.

There are many opportunities to enhance the tourist experience in Brock Township. Ensuring a positive experience increases the likelihood that tourists will tell their friends and families about Brock Township.

The majority of businesses and organizations were not satisfied with the tourism facilities in the area. (Figure 4 opposite page).

The majority of respondents indicated that community events and festivals increased sales in their business with 77 per cent indicating yes and 23 per cent indicating no. The reasoning varied depending on the event or type of businesses being interviewed. Overall there was a general impression that it is becoming more difficult to host events with increased competition, duplication of events and volunteer burnout.

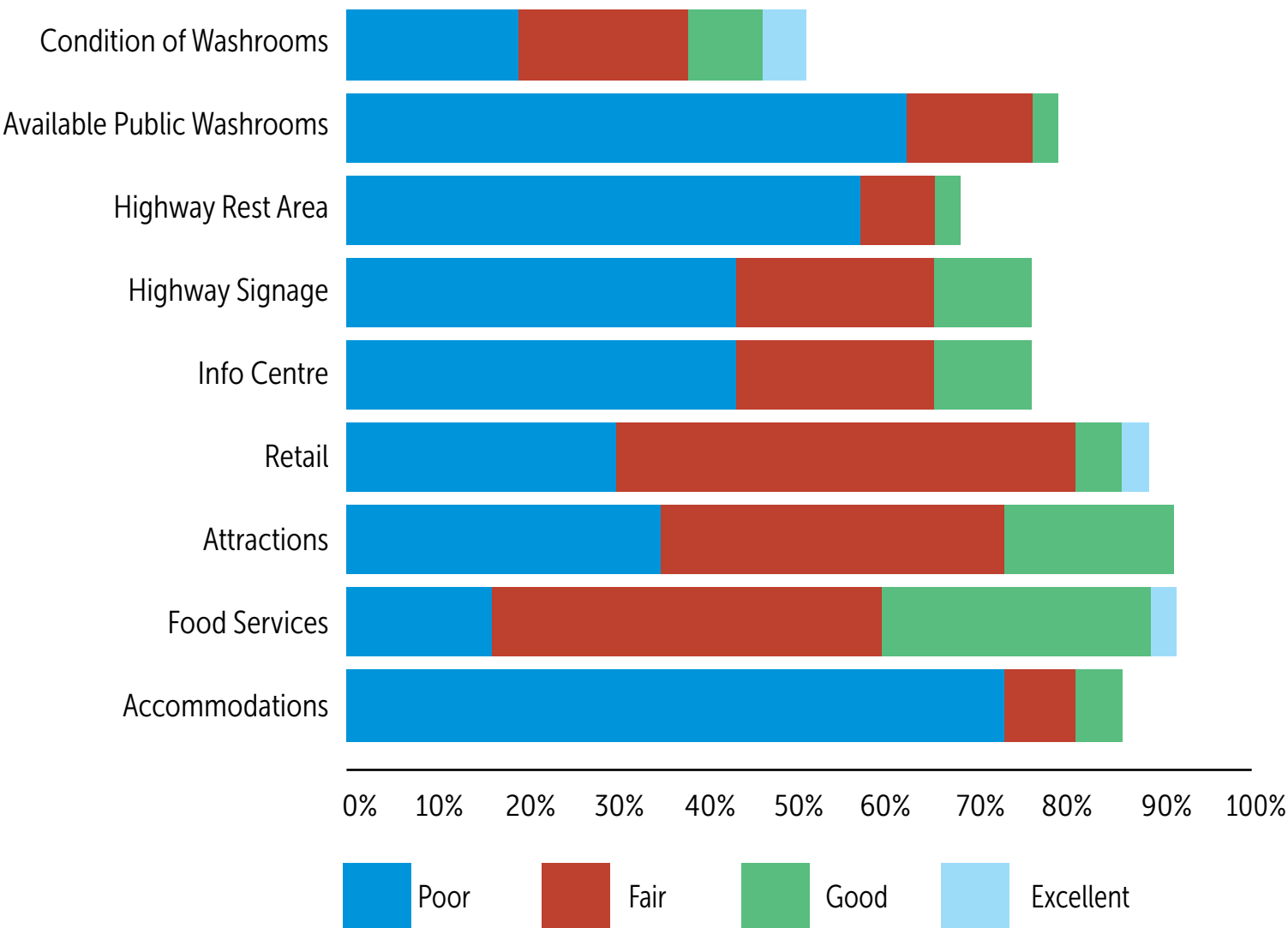
6.2 Support for the Tourism Industry

There are organizations and resources available that support businesses and organizations operating within the tourism spectrum. In Durham Region the Destination Marketing Organization is Durham Tourism and the Regional Tourism Organization is Central Counties Tourism. Most respondents had no involvement with either organization (Figure 5 opposite) or with a slightly higher percentage having involvement with Durham Tourism than Central Counties. Engaging these organizations in a meaningful way could provide real benefits, both financial and in-kind, to businesses and organizations in Brock.



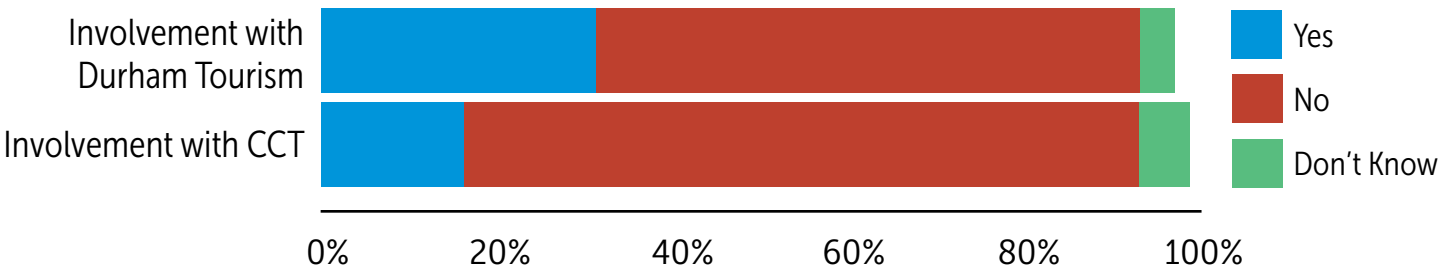
Satisfaction with tourism facilities

Figure 4



Involvement with the Central Counties Tourism and/or Durham Tourism

Figure 5





Having fun at Beaverton Harbour

6.3 Attraction of Visitors

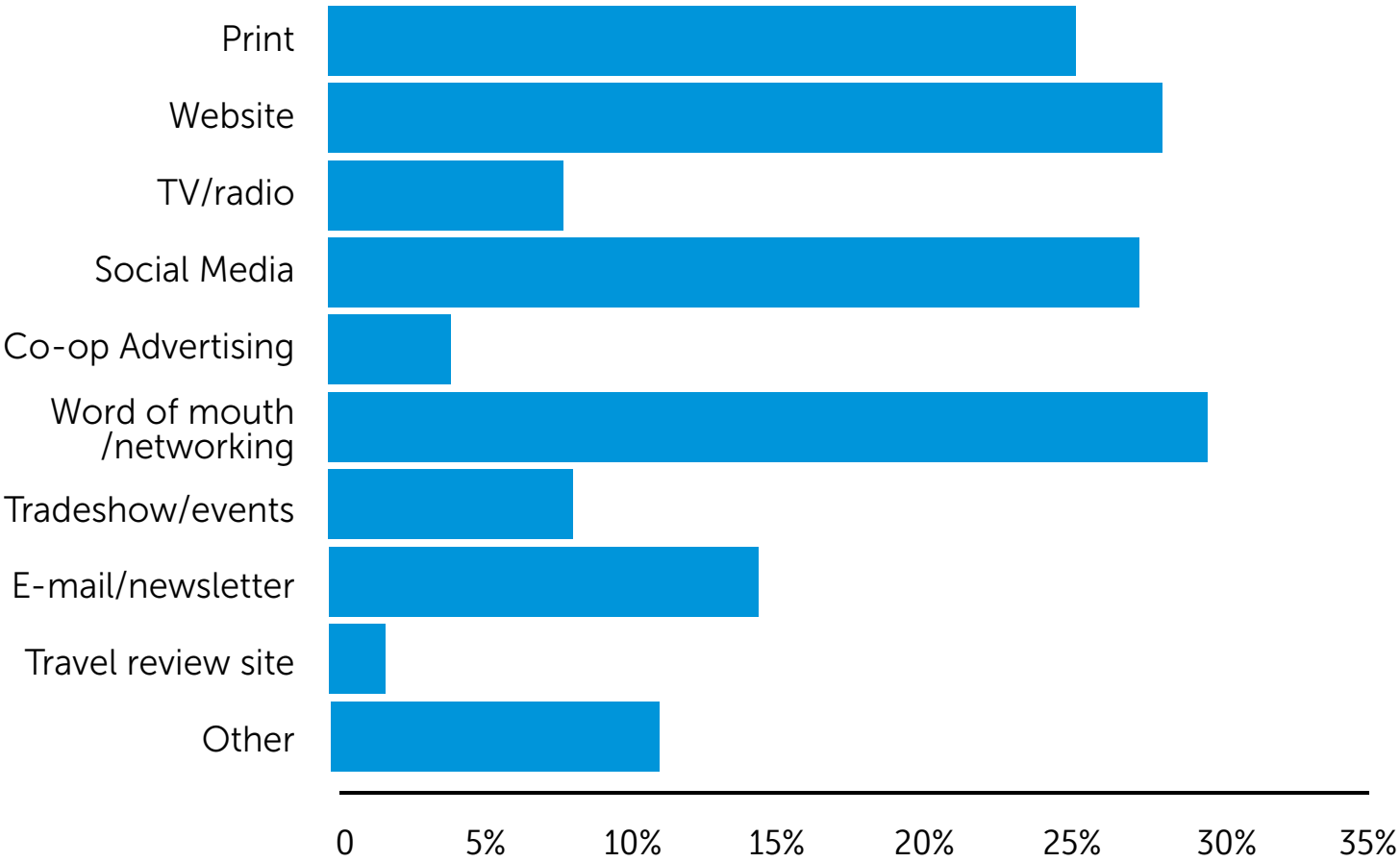
Residents and members of the community can be the most effective spokesperson when it comes to attracting visitors and ensuring a positive visitor experience. On the flip side, residents and community members may have a completely different perspective on what attracts visitors. When asked what participants feel are the products or activities that attract visitors to Brock, they most commonly answered:

Water Activities,
Outdoor Activities,
Agri-tourism, Golf,
Motorized Activities,
Snowmobile, ATV, Fishing

Marketing and promotions can be used to let visitors and non-residents know about what you and the community have to offer. Most respondents use word of mouth, closely followed by website and social media (Figure 6 opposite).

Methods used to promote

Figure 6



6.4 Tourism Community Questions

Tourism can take many different forms, all of which have an impact on the local community. In order for tourism to be successful there must be overall community support and acceptance.

The community questions identify elements of the local context that influence tourism in Brock.

The most identified advantages and disadvantages of operating a tourism business in Brock:

TOP 5 ADVANTAGES

- 1. Proximity to the GTA
- 2. Small town feel
- 3. Beautiful countryside escapes
- 4. Lake access for all seasons
- 5. Provincial roads and highways for easy access

The advantages are a value proposition for the promoting Brock as a place to visit, while the disadvantages identified are a great foundation for areas to improve upon.

There are many opportunities to grow and develop tourism in Brock Township.

Participants suggested that some of the assets that they would like to see developed to support tourism include:

- Farmers market
- Public washrooms
- Expanded public parking
- Arts and culture centre
- Development of the lake front (beach)
- Physical downtown improvements
- Promotion of culture and heritage
- Public art displays

TOP 5 DISADVANTAGES

- 1. Signage and marketing the Township
- 2. Downtown parking and washrooms
- 3. Seasonal dependency
- 4. Small town and location (off the beaten path)
- 5. Destination, assets and activities

Brock has many opportunities to encourage tourism development in the short term. In the next five years, participants suggested that continued residential growth and attraction of more businesses, particularly high end retail and restaurants, could lead to more vibrant and attractive downtowns. A comprehensive plan for tourism was identified by a number of participants who would like to see this include destination and attraction development that also empowers the community to embrace tourism.

In addition, encouraging more collaboration between the three villages could help to avoid duplication and encourage partnerships.

7. Summary of Results - Retention Survey

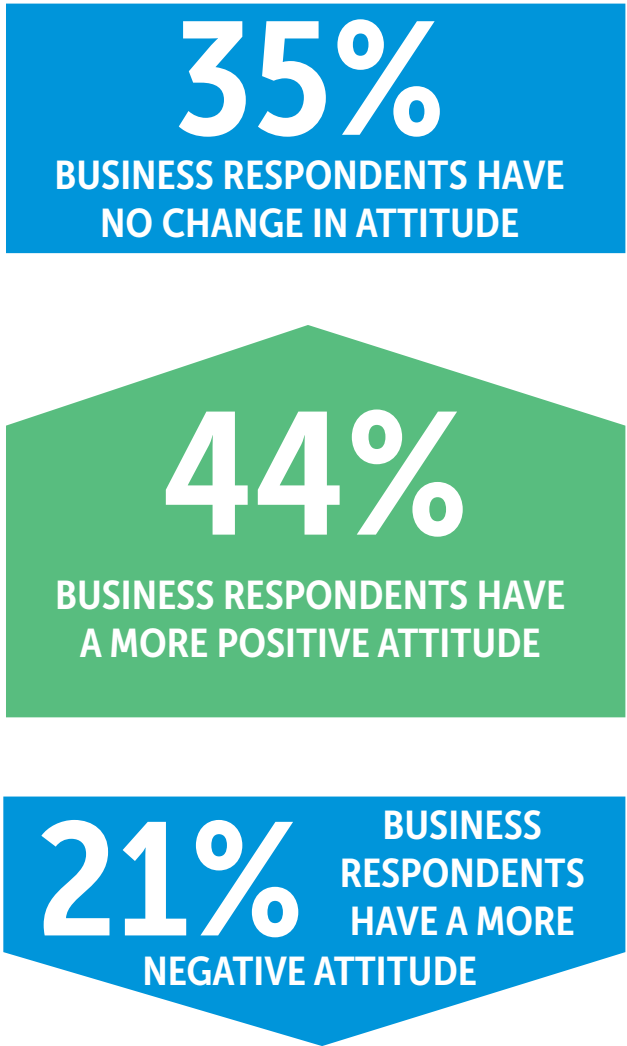


This section of the Report is a summary of the BR+E Retention survey. The questions were answered by all of the businesses and organizations participating in the survey.

7.1 Retention survey – Business Climate

Business climate refers to the conditions in a community that have an effect on local business operations. Overall, the business climate in Brock is positive with 65 per cent of participants indicating that Brock is a good or excellent place to do business. In the past three years, the attitude of half of the participants had changed (Figure 7) both positively and negatively. The reasons for changes in attitude varied for both positive changes and negative changes.

Figure 7



In the past 3 years, has your attitude about doing business in this community changed?

Reasons for a more positive change in attitude about doing business

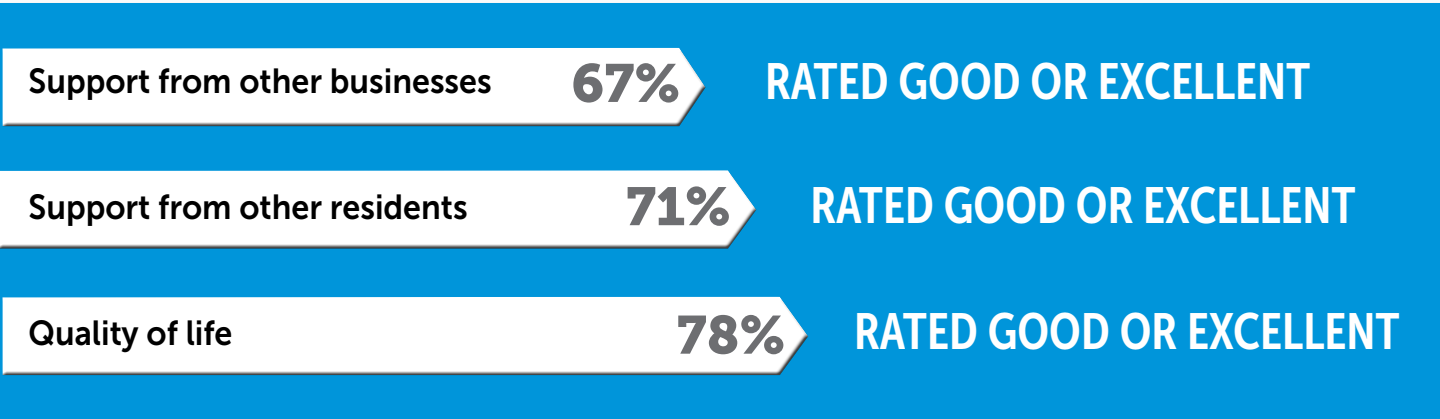
- Changing demographics and new growth within Brock
- New businesses coming to the community
- Local community champions

Reasons for a more negative change in attitude about doing business

- Time consuming and onerous development process
- High business turnover
- Not the right kind of growth within Brock

7.2 Retention Survey – Factors in doing business

Participants have identified a number of factors that impact their ability to conduct business in Brock. Highlights include:



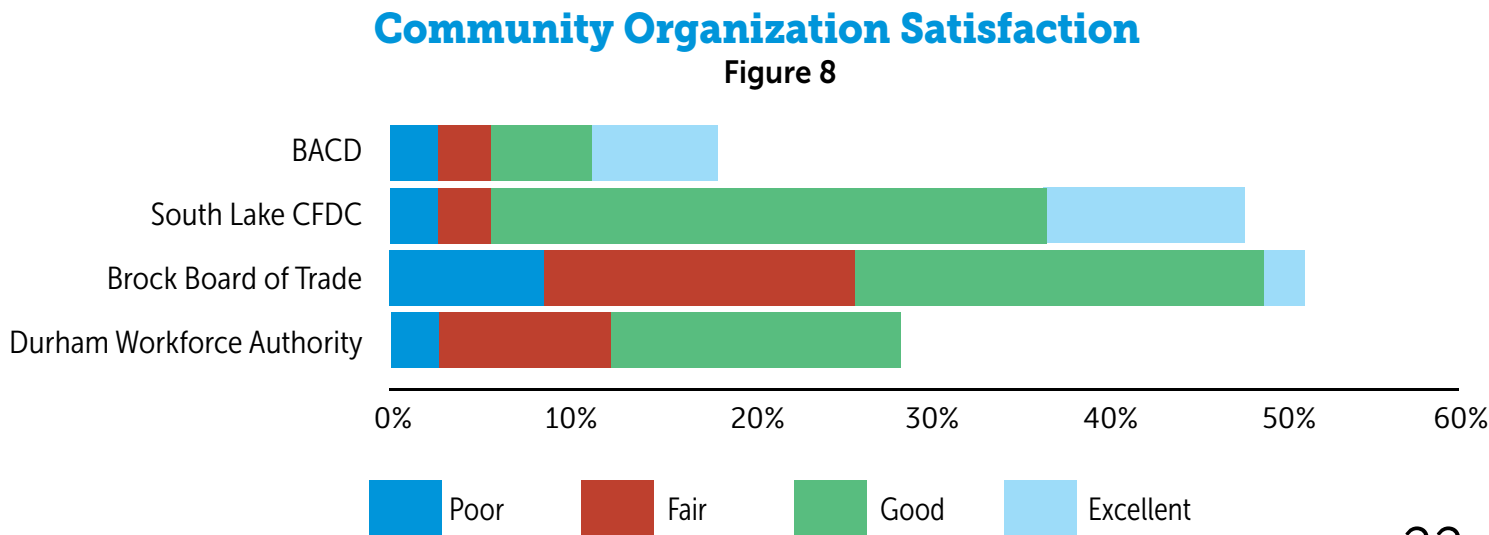
When asked about support from the municipality as a factor in doing business, responses varied significantly with 26 per cent rating support as poor, 23 per cent as fair, 17 per cent as good and 23 per cent as excellent. Approximately 4 participants did not answer the question.

- 1 High municipal property taxes.
- 2 Local roads and streets rated as fair or good.
- 3 Cost of electricity was rated poor by 63 per cent of participants.

Other themes captured included:

7.3 Retention Survey – Community Services

Figure 8 (below) is a list of community organizations and services that participants are most satisfied with. There was a high level of no responses when asked about satisfaction with community services.



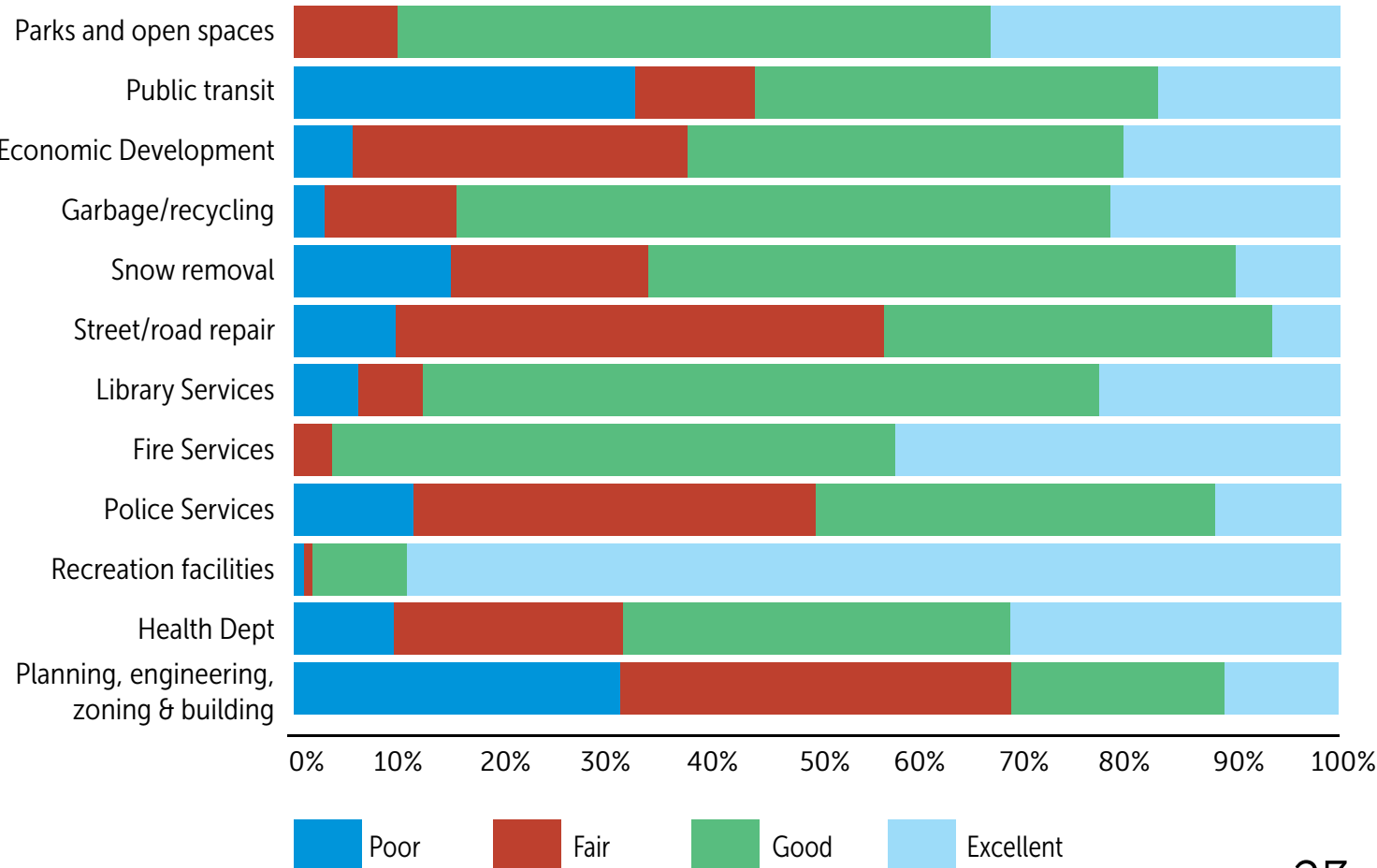
7.4 Retention Survey – Government services

The services and amenities offered by local and regional governments can help to facilitate attraction of businesses and visitors to the community. Most respondents felt the Township had good or excellent parks and open spaces, recreation facilities, library services and fire services. Transit, a Regional service, was seen as a barrier to conducting business in Brock, this could impact the ability to attract visitors who may travel to the area from south Durham using public transit.



Satisfaction with Government Services

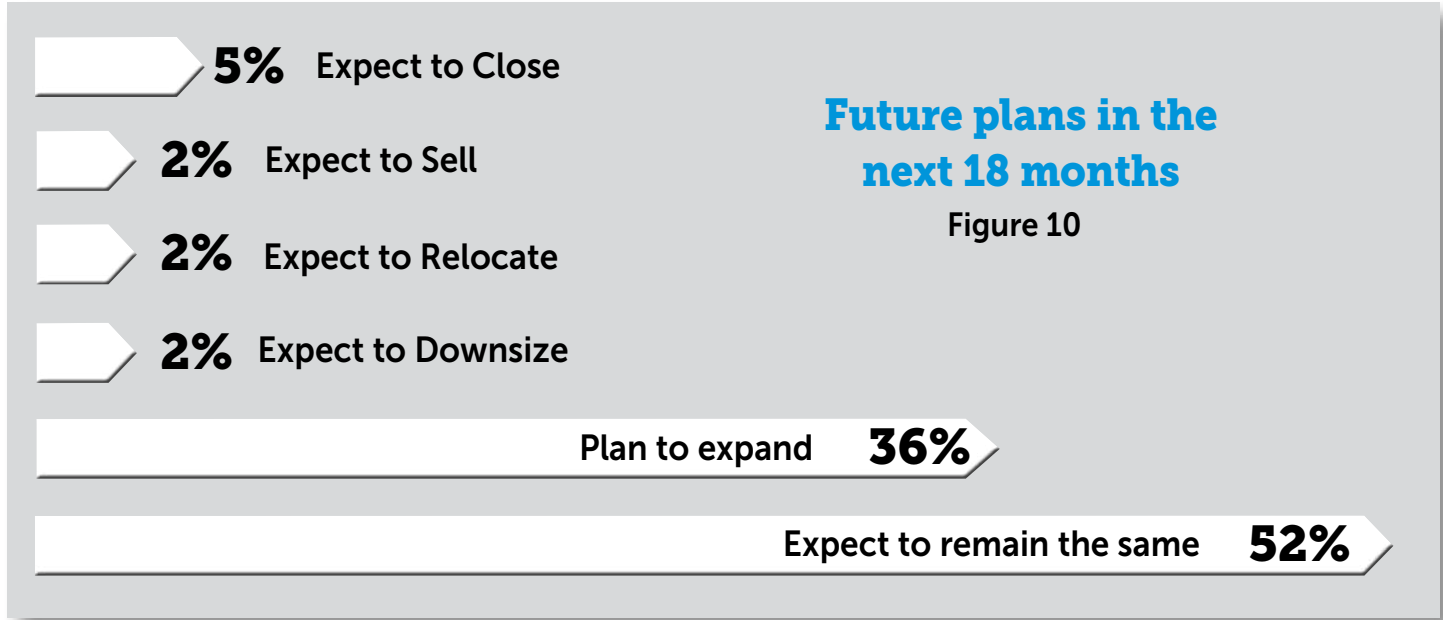
Figure 9



7.5 Retention Survey – Future Plans

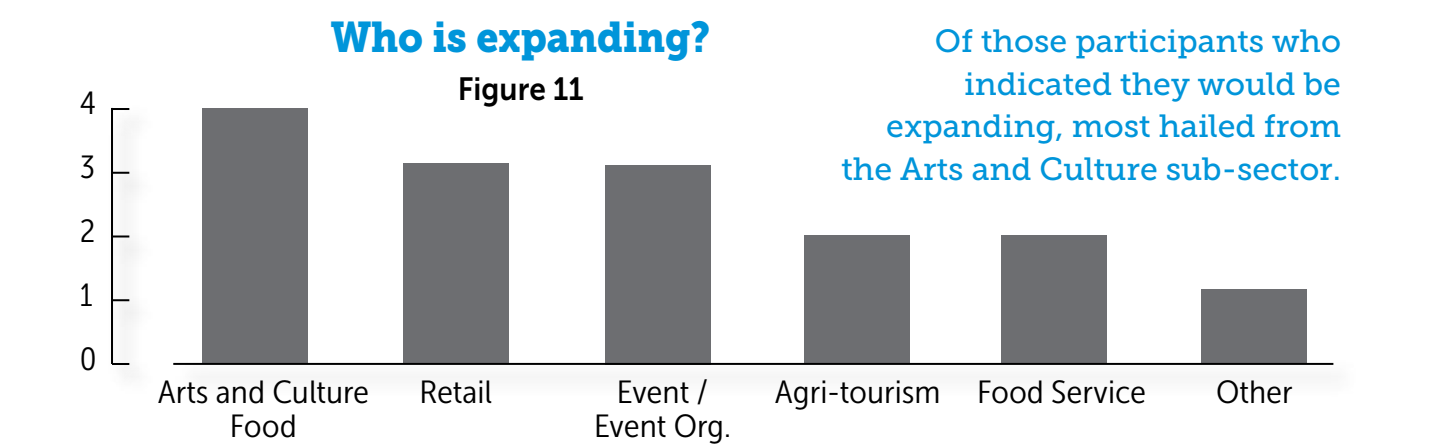
Questions related to future plans provide an insight into the short term future plans of local businesses and organizations and the implications on future retention of tourism businesses. Overall, the future looks bright for businesses and organization in Brock.

Over 50 per cent of participants expect to remain the same within the next 18 months (Figure 10). While almost 40 per cent of participants expect to expand. The number of participants looking to relocate outside of Brock, downsize or close is minimal.



The main reasons for businesses remaining the same included;	The main reasons for businesses expanding included;
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Not enough space to expand 2 Business profits 3 Retirement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 New residential population 2 Increased profit 3 Meeting increased demands and new interests

Participants expanding their businesses in the next 18 months will be making investments in Brock. This will lead to development and expanded tourism opportunities.



7.6 Retention Survey – Business Development

Understanding what happens within a business or organization helps identify opportunities to enhance business success. When asked about the outlook for the tourism industry, more than half of respondents felt that it was growing (Figure 12), pointing to a bright future for development of the industry in Brock.





Maple Syrup Season, Sunderland

Respondents are interested in working cooperatively with other businesses/ organizations in the community in various ways:

- 1 Joint product purchasing
- 2 Joint marketing
- 3 Joint training
- 4 Networking / information sharing

These responses indicate that a coordinated group approach to tourism would be beneficial for many businesses and organizations.

7.7 Retention Survey – Workforce

A workforce able to meet the needs of businesses and organizations is necessary for a strong local economy. Over 35 per cent of businesses and organizations indicated that their workforce has increased in the past 3 years. However, over 50 per cent of respondents rated their ability to attract new employees as either poor or fair and almost 56 per cent felt that they had difficulties hiring overall.

The main reasons for these challenges were:

- 1 Too few applicants
- 2 Lack of appropriate skills/ training
- 3 Lack of relevant experience

The majority of businesses and organizations felt that the challenges are specifically related to the community (77.8%), not the industry (22.2%).

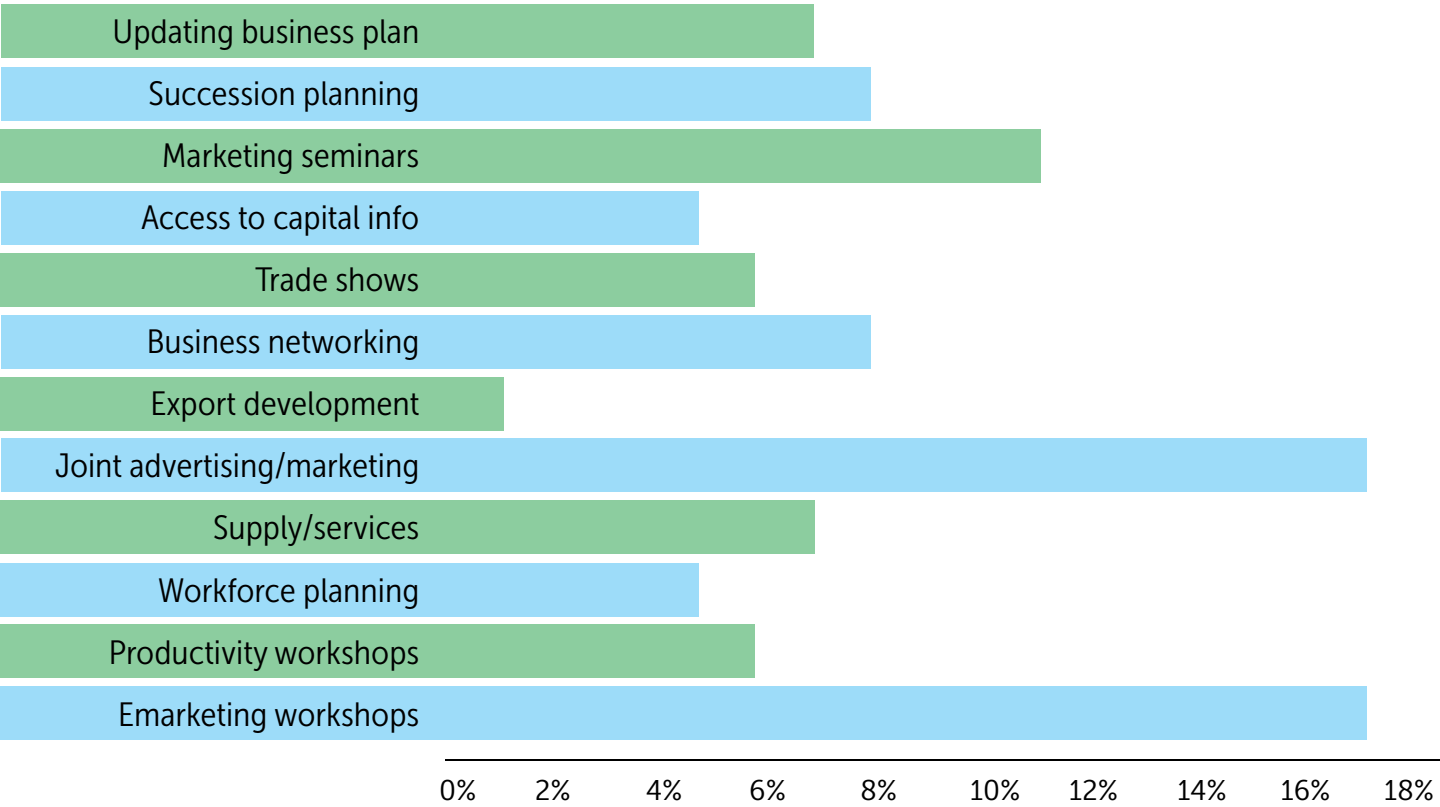
7.8 Retention Survey – Community Development

The engagement of the community can help to drive successful economic development initiatives, particularly in small communities. This can be accomplished through cooperation with local business support organizations and municipal/

regional governments. The assistance or opportunities that would be most helpful to support businesses/organizations included: E-marketing workshops, joint advertising/ marketing and succession planning. (Figure 13 opposite).

Assistance of Opportunities that would be beneficial

Figure 13



APPENDIX 1

Town of Whitchurch Stouffville Mobile Accessible Washroom
<http://www.townofws.ca/en/recreation/resources/Documents/Accessible-Trailer-Brochure.pdf>



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