

**2021 HURON COUNTY BUSINESS RETENTION &
EXPANSION PROJECT**

**RETAIL & DOWNTOWN RETAIL SURVEY
DATA SUMMARY REPORT**



Data Summary

The following report is based on the responses from 94 retail and downtown retail businesses in Huron County.

Retail

57% of retail respondents are located in an identifiable commercial district.

Of those located in an identifiable commercial district, are you located in:

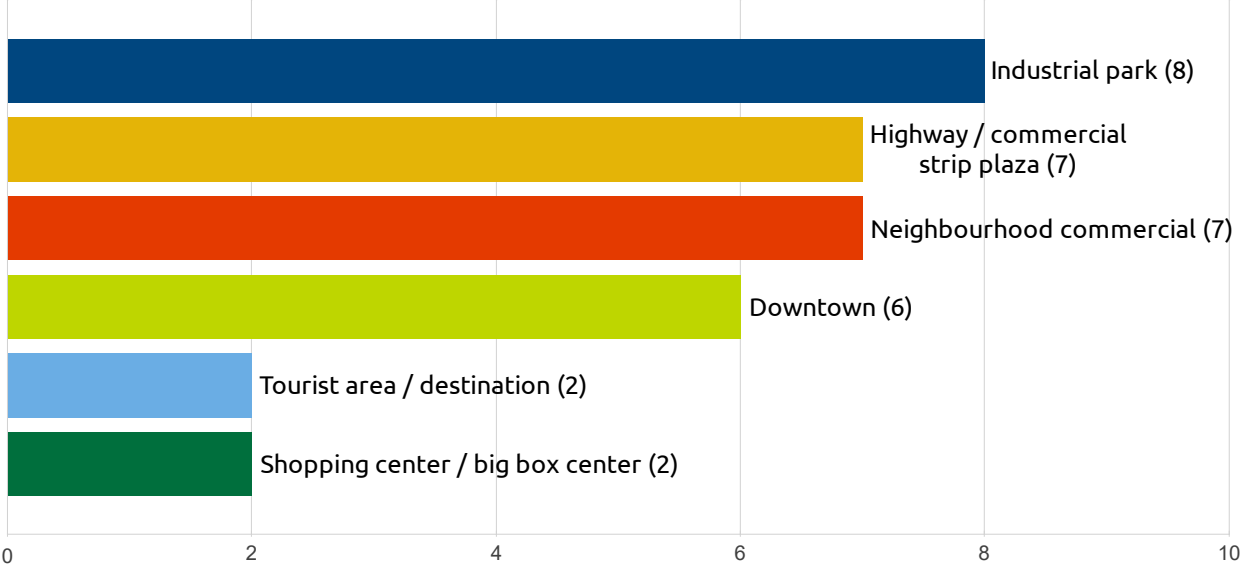


Figure 1

Half of respondents claim there is no strategy or plan in place to promote and manage their commercial district, while the other half do not know if there is a plan in place.

The majority of respondents are represented by a Business Improvement Area association or Chamber of Commerce.

In terms of conditions of their commercial district, respondents were happy with the availability of parking, lack of vandalism and graffiti, and flow of traffic. However, it was found that sidewalk and pedestrian environments could use improvement. The existence of vagrancy and homelessness were also seen as poor factors, along with the lack of special events (see appendix 1 for full data table).

Retail businesses identify the most beneficial programs and services to be the implementation of business directories, brochures and maps, along with building and signage improvement loan and grant programs (see appendix 2 for full data table).

What are your top 3 suggestions for improving the retail business environment?

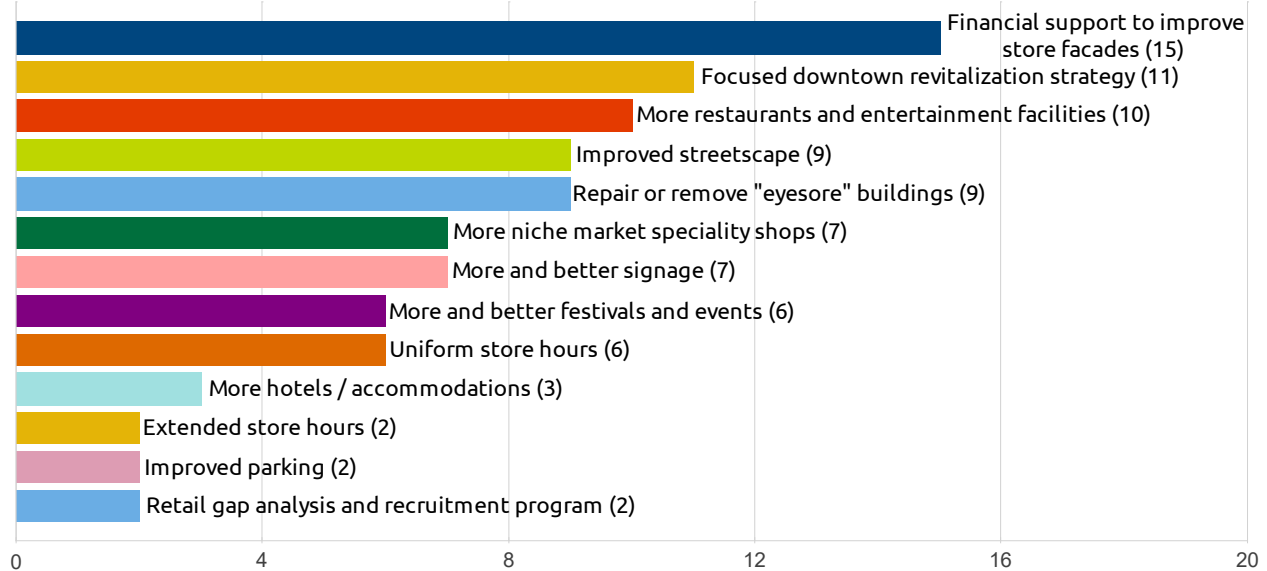


Figure 2

There is a large variety of skills that respondents would like to improve, including and related to marketing, evaluating market opportunities, retaining/attracting customers and product pricing. However, when asked if about attending a workshop on improving these skills, it was not seen as beneficial; on average, only half of respondents would attend a workshop to improve these skills (see appendix 3 for full data table).

While labour (cost and availability of part/full-time employees) was seen as a serious concern to the success of their business, cost factors such as taxes, insurance, and rent and lease of buildings were not seen as issues.

Community assets you would most like to see developed:

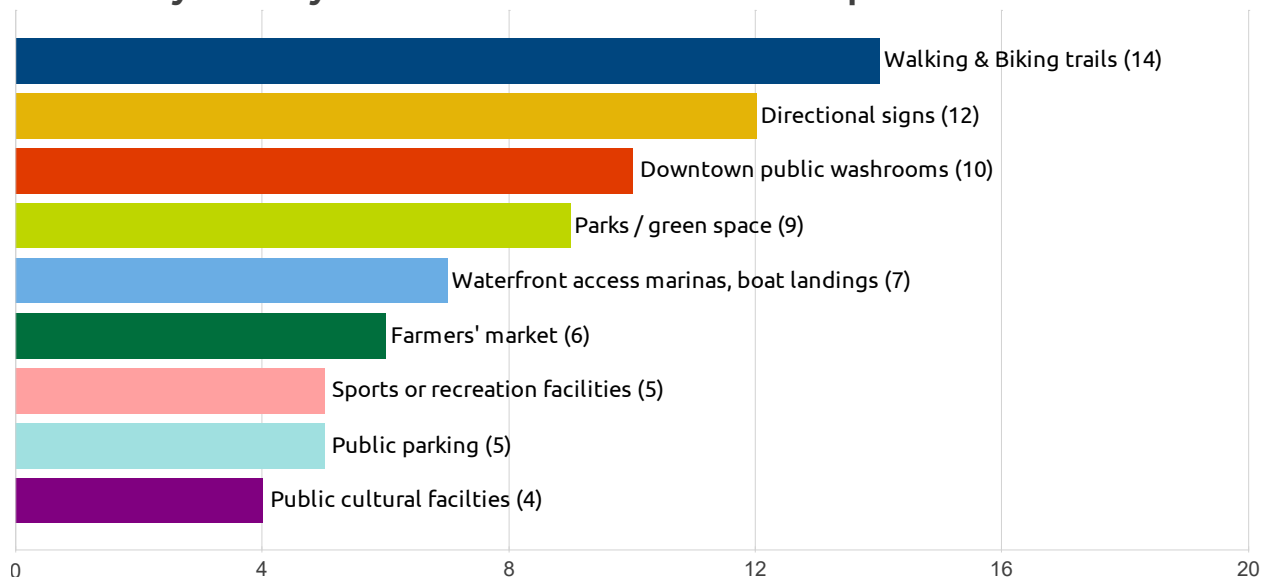


Figure 3

Downtown Retail

A majority of downtown retail businesses range in size from 1,000 to 5,000 square feet, with the majority of space being used either for sales or storage.

In terms of conditions of their downtowns, respondents were happy with the use of street furniture (lights, benches, waste containers), plantings/trees and flower boxes, and sidewalks and pedestrian environments. It is worth noting the stark difference in the ratings of these conditions compared to those retail businesses outside of their downtown corridors (see appendix 4 for full data table).

Respondents identified the busiest days of the week to be (in order) Friday, Saturday and Thursday.

What are the three busiest months of the year for your business?

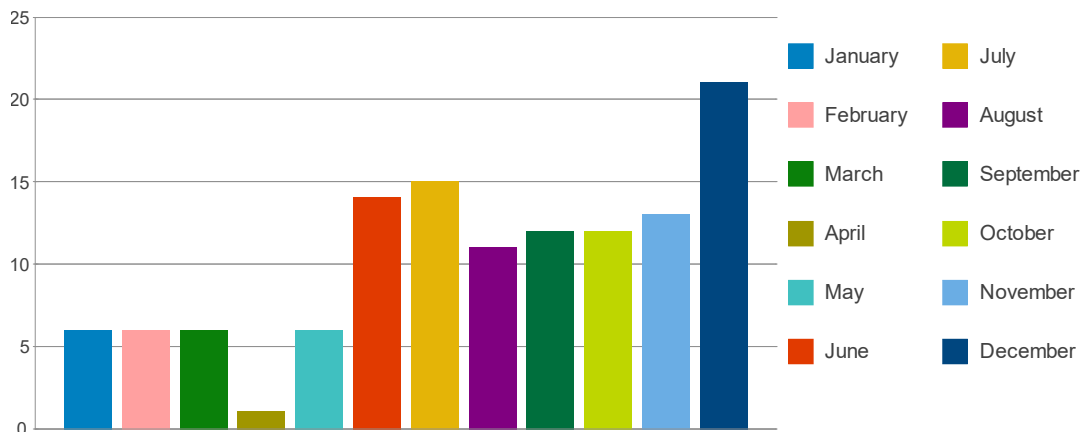


Figure 4

What are your thoughts on store hours?

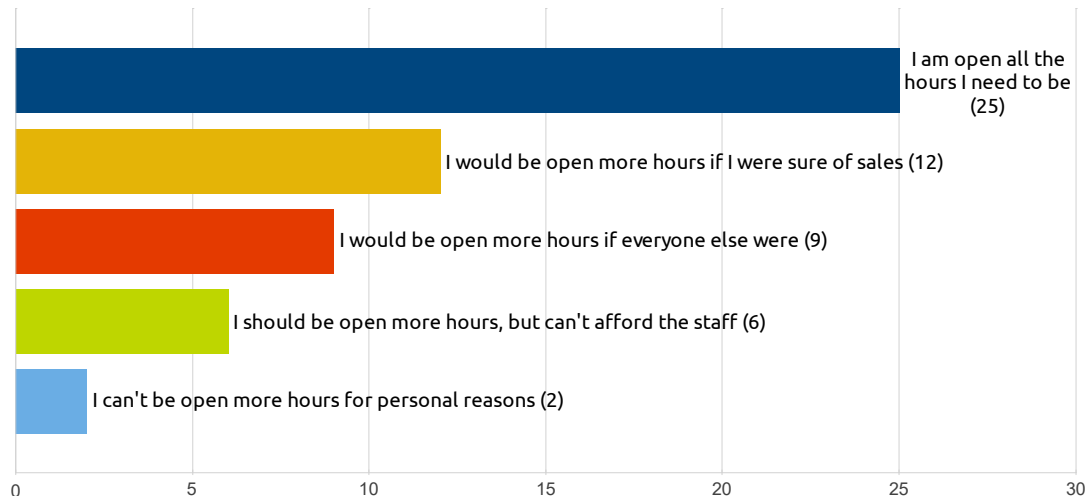


Figure 5

48% of downtown retail respondents claim community events and festivals increase sales for their business. Specifically, this covers a cross section of events from weekly farmers markets, themed events like Christmas in Bayfield and cultural attractions like the Blyth Festival.

Customers & Clients

Respondents identified the activity of customers to be most commonly from foot traffic, followed by internet-based research.

On average, downtown businesses target:

- Female shoppers
- Aged 25 years or above
- Household incomes of \$50,000 or more

Among downtown businesses that track where their customers come from, most retailers draw customers from within Huron County.

Advertising

88% of downtown retail respondents advertise their business.

Methods you use to promote your business:

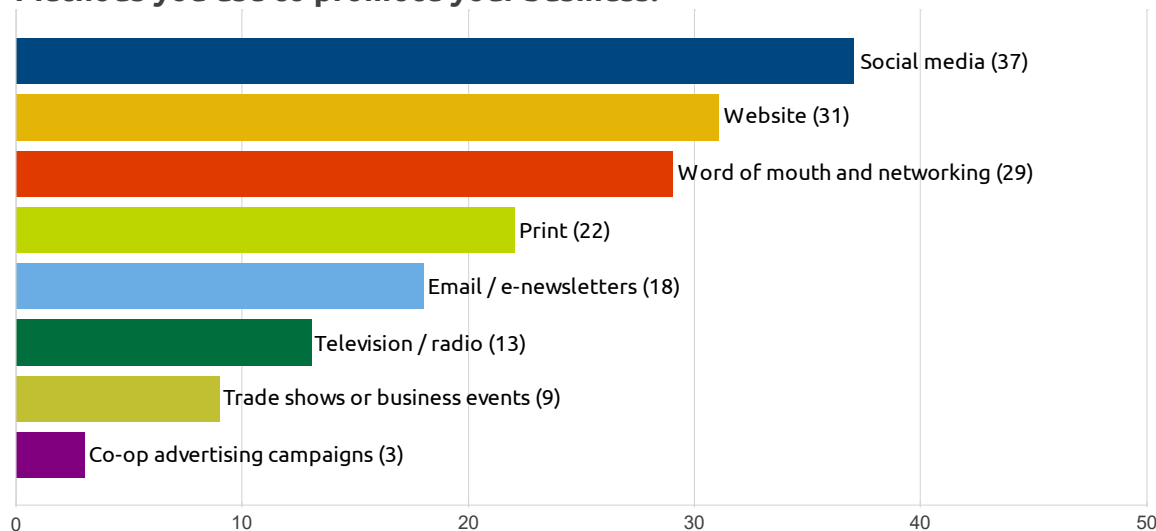


Figure 6

When provided with an array of statements, downtown retailers most commonly strongly agreed with the following statements:

- Employees of this business show great customer services
- I always direct customers to other downtown businesses
- I always try to buy products and services locally

However, respondents most commonly agreed that there are not enough qualified workers available in Huron County.

See appendix 5 for a full breakdown of statement results.

Downtown retailers identified the most common reasons people visit their downtowns to be shopping (convenience stores, pharmacies, etc.) and dining at local restaurants.

Furthermore, respondents identified the community assets/infrastructure they would most like to see developed in their downtown to be more farmers markets and expanded parking.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Ratings of conditions of your commercial district:

	No Response	Needs improving	Fair	Good	Excellent
Street furniture (e.g. lights, benches)	33%	18%	18%	23%	8%
Customer service programs	57%	9%	17%	17%	-
Advertising campaigns	53%	14%	17%	14%	3%
Sidewalks, pedestrian environment	31%	26%	10%	33%	-
Number of parking spots / facilities	21%	5%	21%	29%	24%
Highway / tourism signage	17%	14%	25%	39%	6%
Exterior appearance of facades	16%	13%	26%	42%	3%
Vagrancy / homelessness / panhandling	38%	21%	23%	10%	8%
Appropriate mix of businesses	27%	14%	27%	30%	3%
Adequacy of public transit	58%	26%	11%	5%	-
Accessibility for people with disabilities	19%	14%	14%	35%	19%
Organizations of special events	32%	24%	14%	30%	-
Plantings, trees, flower boxes	32%	16%	18%	26%	8%
Parking signage	46%	5%	8%	38%	3%
Graffiti and litter	31%	11%	17%	22%	19%
Roadside advertising	28%	17%	25%	25%	6%
Visual identity of the area (e.g. banners)	38%	11%	27%	22%	3%
Public amenities (parks, washrooms)	32%	16%	26%	21%	5%
Window displays	46%	5%	24%	24%	-
Signage	24%	5%	27%	32%	11%
Traffic flow on streets in the area	19%	11%	11%	46%	14%
Vandalism	32%	16%	14%	22%	16%
Public safety (e.g. lighting, security, etc)	30%	14%	19%	32%	5%
Conditions of the housing stock	46%	24%	8%	19%	3%
Appropriate range of quality / price	44%	14%	8%	28%	6%
Number of vacancies / turnover	47%	14%	14%	19%	6%
Uniform hours of operation	31%	11%	11%	31%	17%

Appendix 2: Would your business benefit from any of the following programs or services?

	Yes	No
Store design and layout assistance	26%	74%
Networking events	43%	57%
Cooperative advertising / joint marketing	42%	58%
Building improvement loan / grant programs	50%	50%
Sign improvement loan / grant programs	50%	50%
Physical improvements in public areas (benches, lighting, etc.)	29%	71%
Business directories, brochures, maps	70%	30%
Mentorship programs / business to business counseling	17%	83%
Analysis and reporting on the downtown market / economy	14%	86%
Retail and special event coordination	40%	60%
Customer service training	22%	78%
Marketing on the web	46%	54%
Training in financial management and product pricing	22%	78%
Succession planning	21%	79%
Improved telecommunications infrastructure (e.g. internet access)	38%	62%

Appendix 3: In order for your business to be competitive, A) What skills would you like to improve and B) Would you participate in workshops to address the following issues?

	Would like to improve this skill	Would participate in a workshop
Retaining existing or attracting new customers	95%	47%
Assessing new technologies	83%	67%
Staff training and development	83%	58%
Visual merchandising	80%	60%
Product pricing	91%	45%
Financial management	88%	50%
Marketing	100%	57%
Evaluating market opportunities	100%	38%
Dealing with the competition	83%	33%
Customer service training	75%	63%

Appendix 4: Ratings of conditions of your downtown:

	No Response	Needs Improving	Fair	Good	Excellent
Street Furniture (lights, benches)	-	9%	9%	53%	29%
Public amenities (parks, washrooms)	-	16%	32%	36%	16%
Plantings, trees, flower boxes	-	4%	18%	49%	29%
Sidewalks, pedestrian environment	-	4%	13%	53%	29%
Number of parking spots / facilities	-	9%	31%	56%	4%
Parking	-	14%	21%	58%	7%
Highway signage	-	11%	9%	64%	16%
Way finding / directional signage	2%	9%	23%	52%	14%
Street banners	2%	11%	16%	52%	18%
Accessibility for people with disabilities	4%	13%	36%	44%	2%
Exterior appearance of facades	-	14%	30%	57%	-
Graffiti and litter	7%	9%	27%	53%	4%
Window displays	-	2%	36%	53%	9%

Appendix 5: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I always try to buy products and services locally	-	4%	42%	53%
I always direct customers to other downtown businesses	2%	-	24%	73%
The existing downtown business mix helps this business	-	18%	48%	34%
There is plenty of convenient parking downtown	9%	18%	53%	20%
Downtown is an excellent place to have a business	-	14%	45%	41%
There are plenty of good workers available here	15%	48%	35%	3%
I would support a new retail promotions event	-	-	59%	41%
The look and feel of downtown helps this business	9%	14%	50%	27%
My building facade draws customers into this business	2%	21%	58%	19%
My window and store displays help this business	2%	12%	29%	57%
Downtown advertising campaigns benefit my business	5%	20%	37%	39%
Employees of this business show great customer service	-	-	19%	81%
I feel safe downtown, even at night	9%	16%	31%	44%