



Fillmore County

Business Survey Results – Summer 2017

Overview

The Fillmore County Development Corporation (FCDC) works to assist and support the businesses in Fillmore County and applauds business growth and stability. Local businesses are the backbone of Fillmore County and provide products, services, and employment to the citizens of the county. Their efforts have been a driving force in the economic progress of the county. In an effort to become a stronger partner with businesses, the FCDC conducted “Business Retention and Expansion” (BR & E) visits during June with manufacturers and companies who do much of their services and sales outside a 50-mile radius of the county.

Twenty-one businesses in Fillmore County participated in the Fillmore County Business Visitation Program this summer. The businesses answered a survey and discussed their recent achievements and future plans with local FCDC staff, Board members, and utility economic development partners. The businesses this year were located in Exeter, Fairmont, Geneva, Grafton and Shickley.

Conducting the visits were the FCDC Executive Director Patt Lentfer, FCDC staff, members of the FCDC Board, Rick Nelson, NPPD Senior Economic Development Consultant, Craig Vincent, NPPD Account Manager, and Deb Eggleston from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.



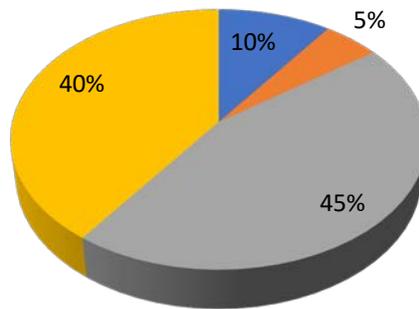
Survey Questions

The first question of the survey was “What is your company’s greatest achievement in the past two years?” Answers varied from “adding new equipment,” “expanding facilities,” and “working on community projects,” such as the Geneva Aquatic Center and the Fortigen anhydrous ammonium plant. Many businesses were simply happy with having a stable or growing business. Every business interviewed had some successes to share and were glad to be located in Fillmore County.

Nearly half of all the business had a product where sales were increasing or a service that’s use was growing.

Where is the company's primary product/service in its life cycle?

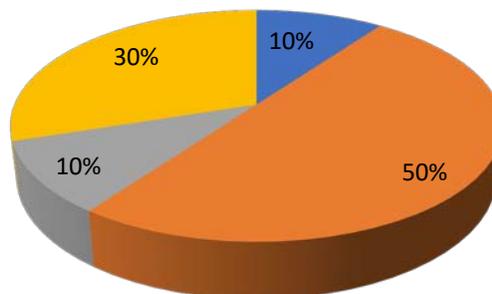
■ Declining ■ Emerging ■ Growing ■ Maturing



Businesses were asked if their primary market was local, regional, national, or international. Most of them replied the majority of their market was local or regional or a combination of those.

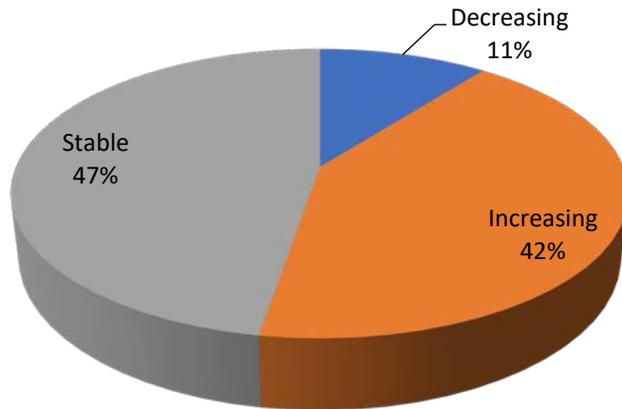
Where is the Company's Primary Market?

■ International ■ Local ■ National ■ Regional



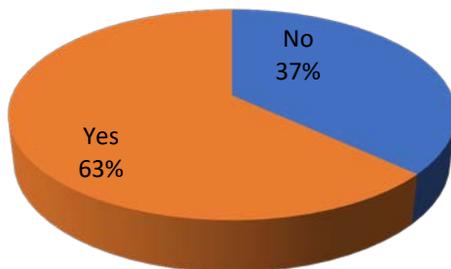
The businesses were asked if generally sales were up or down. Eight-nine percent reported that sales were steady or increasing.

Total Sales

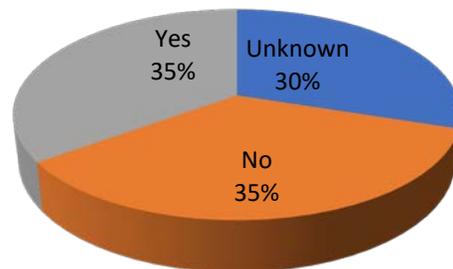


The interviewers asked the business owners/managers if the company had expanded in the past three years; this expansion could be employment, facility, new products and/or equipment. The follow-up question was do you plan to expand in the next three years at your current location or a different location.

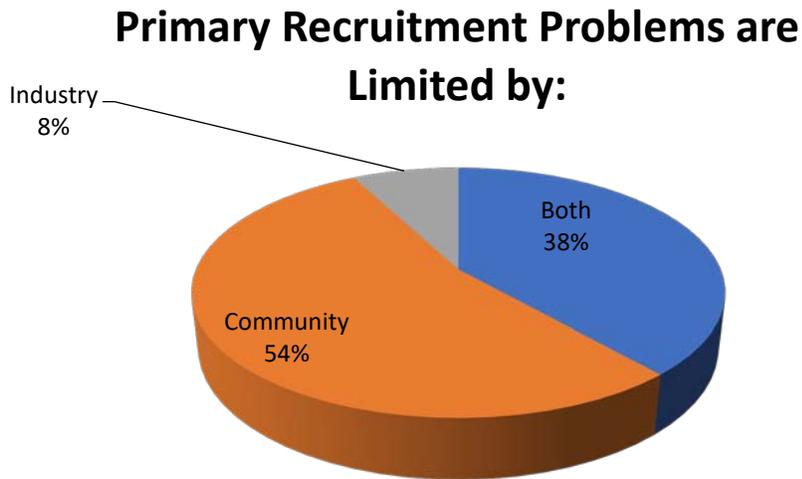
Has your company expanded in the last three years?



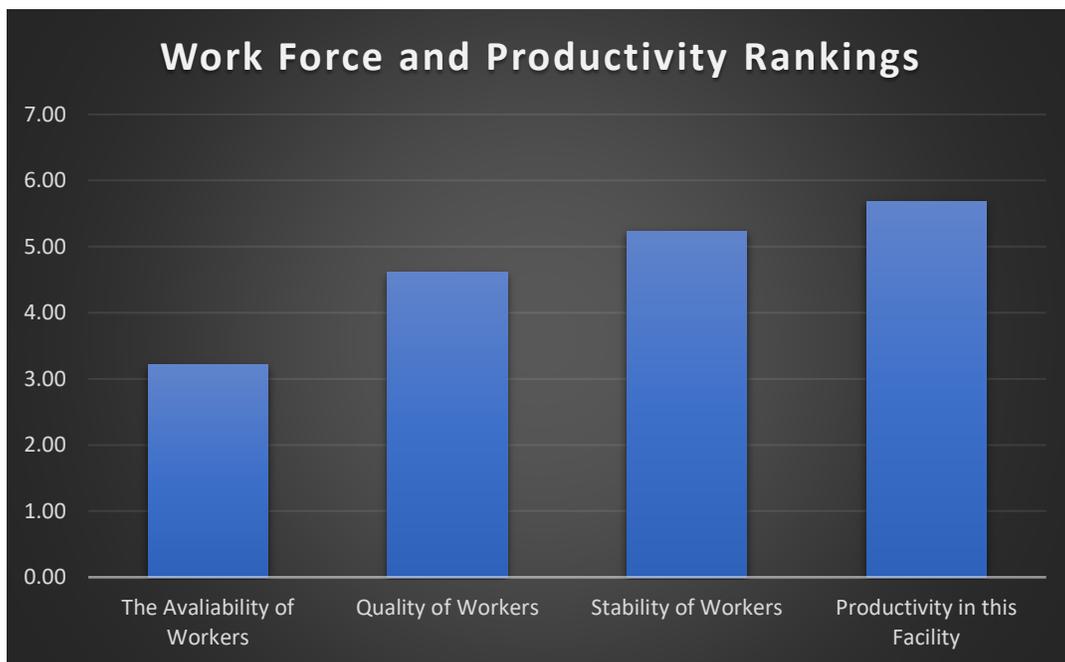
Does your company plan to expand in the next three years?



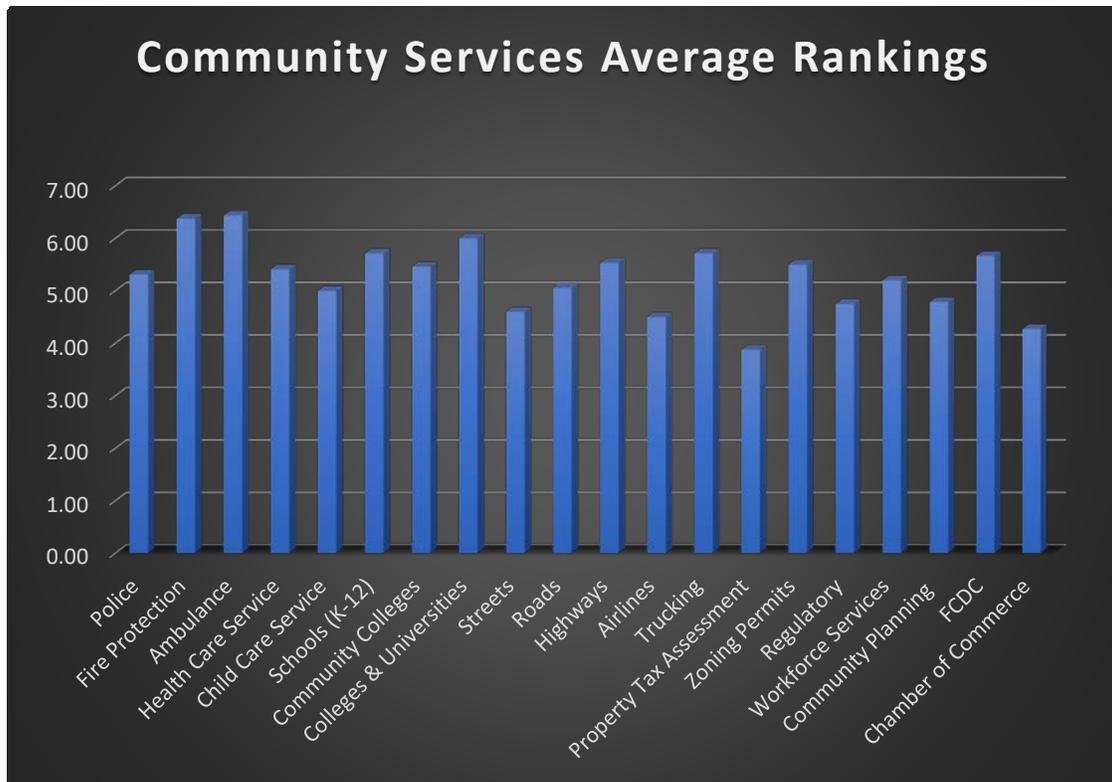
Thirty percent of business owners/managers replied that they have had some recruitment problems. They were then asked if their recruitment problems were limited to the community or if it was an industry problem. Those who did have problems recruiting employees said that the problem is related to the community more than industry.



The businesses were asked about their employment needs and all the businesses were either stable (80%) or increasing (20%). They also ranked the following traits relating to workers and productivity (on a scale of 1 to 7, with seven being high).



The businesses were asked to rank a variety of community services on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being high. These are the average results of those rankings:



Out of all the businesses surveyed, there was *no* ownership or management change expected in next 18 months.

When asked about the community's strength and weaknesses, a few trends emerged. As community strengths the businesses showed an appreciation of a rural community, local and loyal customers, their current employees, and an overall friendly environment.

When asked about community weaknesses, business owners/managers spoke of problems with low housing stock and difficulty of finding qualified employees. Some commented that it would be nice to have more restaurants and daycares.

Conclusion*

The results of the Business Retention and Expansion visits showed that Fillmore County businesses are planning to be around for a while and want grow. Every established business had a positive attitude about doing business in Fillmore County.

It was also positive that many businesses had steady sales or even seen sales growth despite the down turn in the farm economy. Over half of the businesses interviewed had done expansions in the past three years by adding employees, enlarging their facility and/or making capital investments. Thirty-five percent of the businesses are now planning expansions in the next three years many based on new products or services.

The immediate challenge facing Fillmore County businesses is finding skilled employees. With a decreasing population in rural Nebraska and a limited housing stock it is difficult to find quality workers. This challenge is not limited to Fillmore County, but also adjoining counties.

Fillmore County Development Corporation will assist individual employers with workforce issues on a need-by-need basis. We keep the available jobs list current on our website, so if your company has a job you would like posted, let me know. We collaborated with York and other counties to host a job fair the past four years. The FCDC board and membership wants to keep the businesses in Fillmore County growing and will offer any assistance that they can.

I want to thank you again for participating in the Business Retention & Expansion survey this summer. The information we receive from you helps us understand the business climate in Fillmore County and strategize what direction the FCDC should take to keep the county moving forward.

Patt Lentfer, Executive Director

*Based on responses of 21 businesses surveyed in June 2017



Currently there is a 54,200 Sq. Ft building in Geneva available for sale. If you or a colleague is interested in purchasing the building contact the FCDC office.