

# CITY OF PEMBROKE

## BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION PROJECT FINAL REPORT



*Fall 2024 -  
Winter 2025*

# About the Business Retention and Expansion Project

From October 2024–February 2025, the City of Pembroke, with support from a team made up mostly of members of the Pembroke Economic Development Advisory Committee (PEDAC), conducted a Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) survey.

BR+E programs are created by the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs to help municipalities better understand the challenges and opportunities the businesses in their communities experience.

Developing a business retention and expansion plan is part of the City of Pembroke's 2023–2027 economic development and growth strategic plan. Completing a BR+E survey is the basis for developing such a plan. The BR+E survey is in-depth and takes about one to two hours to complete.

This BR+E project focused on manufacturers and small businesses. For the purposes of this project, a small business was defined as a business with 10 or fewer staff (including the owner). In total 32 Pembroke businesses participated in the survey. The last BR+E took place in 2017, focusing on manufacturers and large employers.



# Acknowledgments

The City of Pembroke would like to thank all of the businesses that took their time to speak with City representatives and be a part of the Business Retention and Expansion project. We understand how valuable a business' time is and we appreciate business owners and managers taking time to speak with us. This project was made possible with the support of funding and staff from the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs, members of the project team, and the Pembroke Economic Development Advisory Committee (PEDAC).

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## Industries Covered by This Project



**Accommodation  
and Food Services**



**Arts,  
Entertainment,  
and Recreation**



**Finance and  
Insurance**



**Health Care and  
Social Assistance**



**Manufacturing**



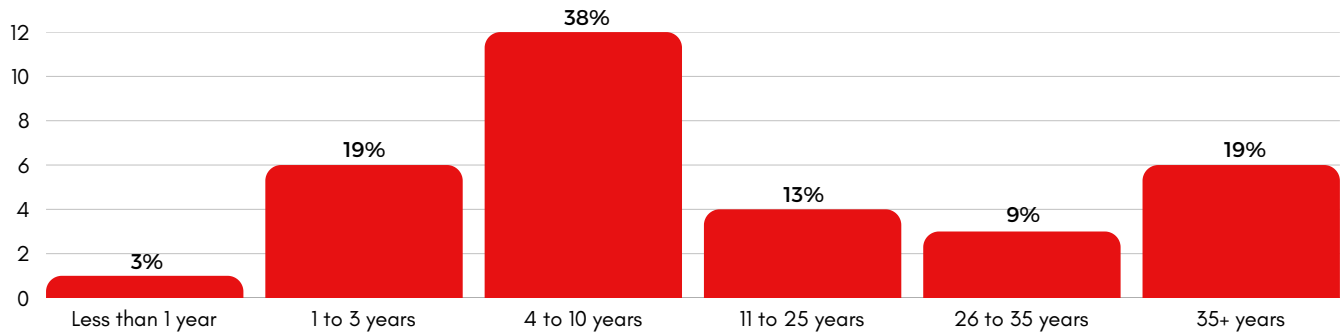
**Professional,  
Scientific, and  
Technical Services**



**Retail Trade**

# Business Information

## Years in operation in Pembroke



For a majority of respondents, their primary business market is local/regional.



62.5% of respondents  
are women



69% of businesses interviewed  
are locally-owned and operated  
with one location



97% of businesses interviewed  
have owners who are  
residents of the  
Pembroke region



# Business Climate

## Positive factors of doing business in the community (majority rated good or excellent)

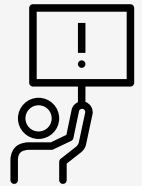
- Quality of life
- Support from the municipality
- Support from local residents
- Support from other businesses
- Regional roads/highways
- Internet service
- Water/wastewater capacity
- Availability of adequate electricity
- Cost of electricity
- Availability of natural gas
- Cost of natural gas



**87.5%** of businesses interviewed rate Pembroke as a good or excellent place to do business

## Barriers to doing business (majority rated poor or fair)

- Cell service
- Local roads and streets
- Availability of adequate housing
- Proximity to rail and airports
- Support for diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), anti-racism
- Support for mental health
- Municipal property taxes



Respondents noted high recognition and satisfaction with community services and supports such as the **Business Improvement Area, Community Futures Development Corporation, Algonquin College, Pembroke Public Library,** and the City's **open spaces** and **economic development services**.

They noted low satisfaction with **public transit** and **street/road repair**.

# Future Plans



**87.5%** of businesses interviewed are planning to expand or remain the same in their operations in the next 18 months

Expansion is due to an increase in demand as well as the perception of growing opportunities.

These expansions will benefit:



**Growing  
workforce**



**More  
products**



**Greater  
service**

Respondents noted space and training are needed to support expansion.

# Business Development

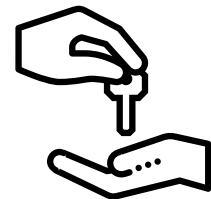
**72%** of businesses interviewed reported industry growth and/or stability



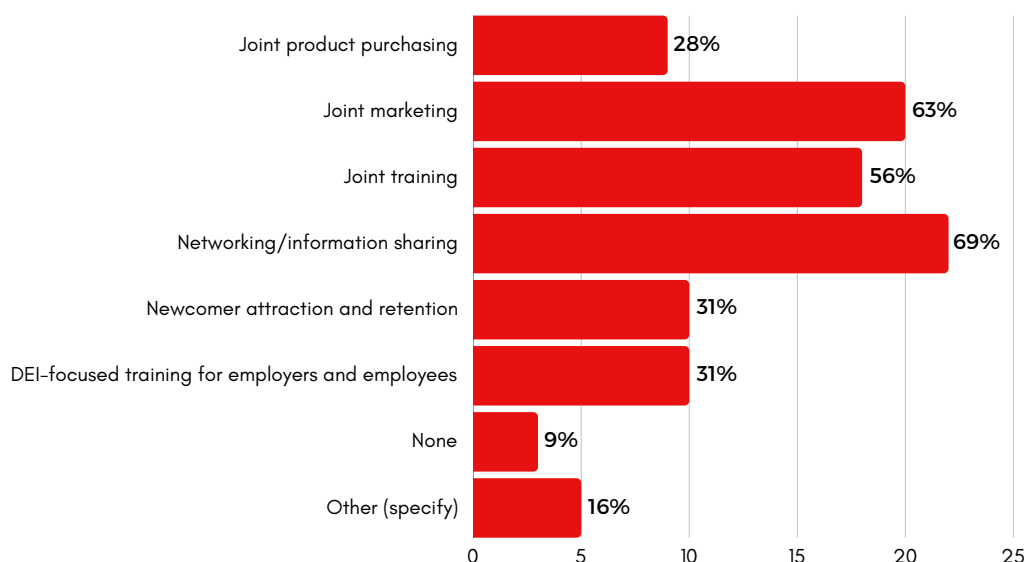
**75%** of businesses interviewed are projecting sales to increase or remain the same in the next year



**59%** of businesses interviewed lease their premises



## Ways in which businesses would like to work co-operatively with other businesses in the community



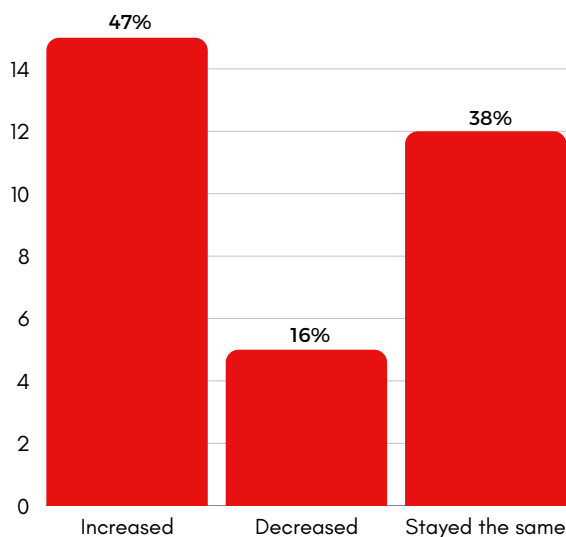
Other:

- Project collaboration
- Entrepreneur hub
- Sales experience information sharing
- Student support for college placements
- Not allowed due to barriers with corporate mandates

# Workforce



**During the past three years,  
the number of people you  
employ has:**



**59%** of businesses interviewed reported not having difficulties hiring. When there are challenges, they are tied evenly to too few applicants, lack of appropriate skills or training, and lack of relevant experience.

Hiring happens organically for the most part, through personal networks and referrals from friends or current employees.

**94%**

of businesses interviewed employ women

**41%**

of businesses interviewed employ youth

**78%**

of businesses interviewed reported not having difficulties retaining employees

**72%**

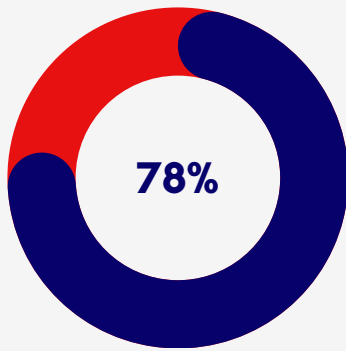
of businesses interviewed reported no barriers to training



# Pembroke Business Support

There is a high level of satisfaction with the following Pembroke business support services/tools (*majority rated good or excellent*):

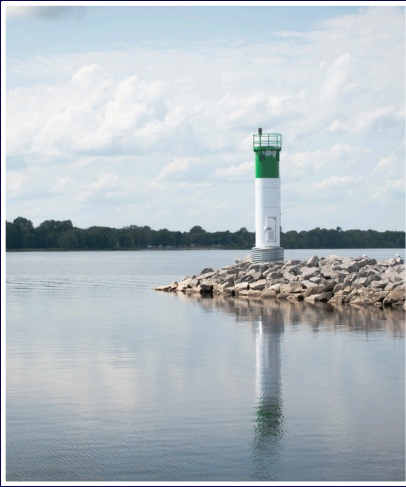
- City of Pembroke economic development office
- City of Pembroke website
- City of Pembroke Facebook and Instagram accounts
- Pembroke Business Bulletin monthly e-newsletter



Percentage of businesses interviewed who have not applied to or received a Community Improvement Plan grant in the past

There is desire for networking events, one-on-one visits with the economic development officer, and business visits from the economic development officer for business engagement opportunities.

# Community Development



## Top advantages of doing business in Pembroke

- Location
- Community support/customer loyalty
- Affordability (affordable utilities)
- Connectivity (close-knit, small-town feel)
- Natural beauty



## Top disadvantages of doing business in Pembroke

- Limited workforce
- Infrastructure (downtown parking, construction, communications infrastructure)
- Social issues (homelessness, addictions, mental health)
- Consumer base limitations
- Transportation (access to and around Pembroke)
- Taxes
- Lack of diversity of activities

Note: an array of things mentioned – not one obvious challenge or issue



# Community Development



## Most significant change desired in the next five years

- Strong marketing plan for the City – one that answers, “Why come here?”
- Support in building community for business owners
- Growth support for businesses
  - Financial incentives
  - Easing of perceived and actual barriers to starting and growing a business
- Increased community engagement (awareness of and support of) with the business community



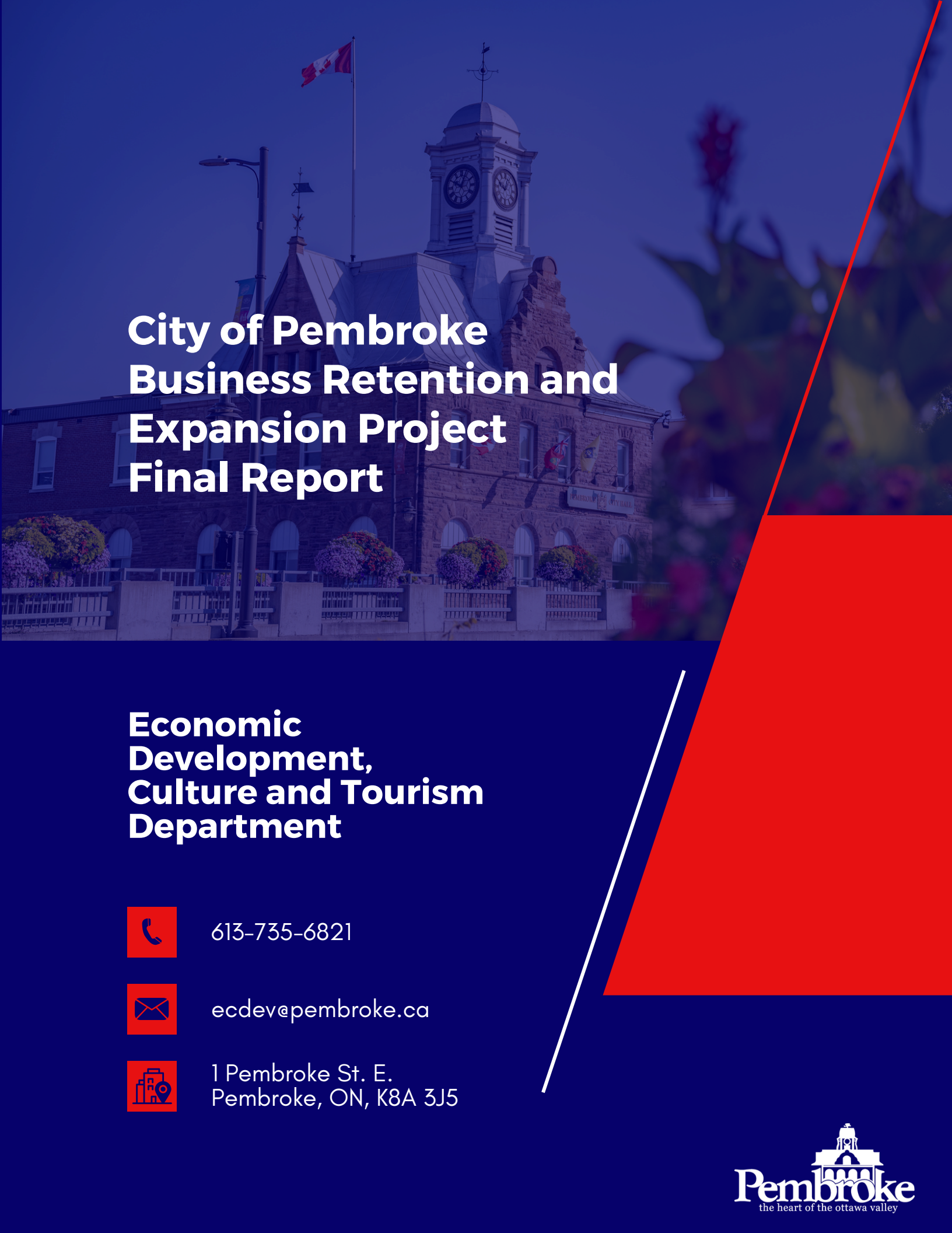
# Action Plan

Theme	Action	Measure
<b>Marketing</b>	Complete asset map of what Pembroke has in the community	Asset map completed
	Develop marketing plans for visitor, resident, and business attraction that complement each other	Plans completed and put into action
<b>Business Growth Support</b>	Update Community Improvement Plan program to better reflect current business climate needs	Updated plan completed
	Conduct training needs assessment survey with business community	Survey completed
	Work with regional partners to deliver training opportunities based on results of needs assessment	Two City-driven educational opportunities offered per year
	Create resource database for businesses looking to expand	Resource live on website
	Connect businesses with funding opportunities	Database or paid tool employed
	Develop marketing plan to best promote City's economic development services and programs	Plan completed and being implemented

# Action Plan

Theme	Action	Measure
<b>Business Growth Support</b>	Re-establish "Win This Space" program and include "Expand Your Space" arm for existing businesses	Program runs once every two years
	Develop succession planning strategy to both educate and support businesses on/with the process	Strategy completed and being implemented
<b>Community Building</b>	Develop new business welcome package	Content developed and being disseminated
	Increased business visits by economic development officer; target 45 businesses per year and increase year over year	Visits completed
	Offer quarterly business networking events	Events completed
	Form a mentorship team of retired or active businesspeople to support confidentially new or junior businesses	Team active with more than three mentors
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Celebrate successes; build storytelling about existing business community	Minimum one story posted per quarter
	Develop marketing plan to promote Pembroke business community to Pembroke and area residents	Plan completed and being implemented





# City of Pembroke Business Retention and Expansion Project Final Report

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