TOWNSHIP OF BONFIELD

Five-Year Economic Development Strategy

BUSINESS RETENTION + EXPANSION (BR+E) COMMUNITY SURVEY

Growing Bonfield Together - Community Business Survey 2025 - 2026

Prepared by

for the Township of Bonfield

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Survey fieldwork: October 2025 - January 2026 (24 participating businesses)

A line of evidence for the Bonfield Economic Development Strategy, 2026

Document Control

This report presents the results of the Township of Bonfield's Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Community Business Survey, conducted under the Growing Bonfield Together initiative, and explains how those results will be used within the Township's Five-Year Economic Development Strategy (EDS). It is based on the analysis of all 24 individual survey responses, provided to Qatalyst in redacted form, and is prepared for the Township of Bonfield project team as a working reference for the Strategy.

How to use this document. Sections 1-2 set out the background and the profile of participating businesses. Sections 3-7 report and interpret the findings by survey module (Business Climate, Future Plans, Business Development, Workforce, and Community Development). Section 8 distils the cross-cutting themes, and Section 9 describes how this evidence will be carried into the Economic Development Strategy alongside the other lines of evidence being collected through the project. Appendix A contains the detailed rating tables.

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1. Introduction and Purpose

The Township of Bonfield launched its Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) initiative - Growing Bonfield Together - in September 2025, following the Ontario BR+E model. A volunteer leadership team, supported by regional partners (Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth, Ministry of Rural Affairs, NECO Community Futures, The Business Centre Nipissing Parry Sound, and The Labour Market Group), interviewed local businesses using a structured Qualtrics survey covering business information, business climate, future plans, business development, workforce, and community development.

Interviews were conducted in mixed volunteer pairs beginning in late October 2025. Twenty-four businesses completed the survey. Responses were redacted to remove identifying information before analysis, and results are reported here in aggregate or as anonymized comments, consistent with the confidentiality commitment made to participants.

The timing of this work is fortunate. The BR+E was conceived as a stand-alone retention initiative, but it now also arrives at exactly the moment the Township is preparing its Five-Year Economic Development Strategy. That gives the survey a second life: beyond prompting direct retention actions, it becomes the first substantial line of primary evidence available to the EDS - a structured, business-by-business account of how Bonfield's employers experience the community, gathered before the Strategy's own engagement program begins. This report therefore serves two purposes:

- **Report back to the community.** It summarizes what Bonfield's businesses said - their plans, their constraints, and their priorities - so the Township and the BR+E Leadership Team can respond with concrete retention and expansion actions.
- **Inform the Economic Development Strategy.** It gives the Township project team an early, evidence-based picture of the business community that the EDS research and engagement program will test, deepen, and triangulate over the months ahead (Section 9).

Interpretation note. Twenty-four businesses took part. That is a strong response for a community of Bonfield's size, but it is not a statistical sample of the whole business community, so the findings should be read as a structured evidence base rather than as percentages that can be generalized. Not every business answered every question. Results are therefore reported as a count out of the number of businesses who answered that particular question - for example, "12 of 24" - and percentages are used sparingly. Throughout, the report distinguishes between what businesses said and what we take it to mean.

Confidentiality. Every interview was conducted in confidence. Because Bonfield is a small community, results that could identify an individual business have been aggregated or generalized: sectors, size bands and other characteristics represented by only one or two respondents are reported in combined form, and no business is named, quoted in a way that would identify it, or described by a combination of details that would allow it to be recognized. Comments are reproduced only where they carry no identifying detail. The underlying interview records remain confidential to the BR+E Leadership Team and are not released with this report.

2. Who Responded: Business Profile

The 24 participating businesses are a good cross-section of Bonfield's economy - weighted, as the community itself is, toward very small, locally owned, owner-operated enterprises.

Profile dimension	What the survey shows
Sector (NAICS)	Construction (4); agriculture and agri-food (3); accommodation and food services (3); real estate (2); retail (2); and single respondents across nine further sectors spanning manufacturing, finance, professional and technical services, health care, education, horticultural and creative services, and other services. Single-respondent sectors are reported in combined form to protect confidentiality.
Ownership	20 of 23 are locally owned and operated; the remaining 3 are branches of companies headquartered outside the Township.
Structure	Sole proprietorships 10; incorporated 8; partnerships 2; other structures 3 (n=23).
Owner residency	In 16 of 20 businesses answering, at least one owner lives in the community.
Years in operation	Over 35 years: 7; 26-35 years: 2; 11-25 years: 2; 4-10 years: 6; 1-3 years: 3; less than 1 year: 2 (n=22).
Employment size	1-4 employees: 17; 5-9: 4; 10 or more: 2 (n=23). Many use part-time or seasonal staff.
Operating pattern	Year-round full-time 12; year-round part-time 5; seasonal (summer) 2; other schedules 4 (n=23).
Business plan	10 have a business plan; 10 do not (n=20).
Equity-seeking ownership	6 of 24 owners self-identify with at least one equity-seeking group, most often French-language communities. Individual group counts are not reported, in order to protect respondent confidentiality.

Three features of this profile shape everything that follows. First, this is an economy of micro-enterprises: three-quarters of respondents employ four people or fewer, and many run their business alongside a job, a farm, or a household. Policies and supports designed for "small business" in the conventional sense will still be too big for much of Bonfield's base; the supports that land here are simple, low-cost, and personal. Second, the tenure mix is genuinely healthy - a third of respondents have operated for more than a quarter-century while another third started within the past decade - which tells us Bonfield both retains its anchors and still attracts new entrants. Third, ownership is overwhelmingly local and resident. These are not footloose firms weighing competing locations; they are households invested in the community's future. That rootedness is the Township's single biggest retention asset, and it raises the stakes on the irritants reported in the sections that follow, because frustrated local owners do not usually leave - they stop investing.

3. Business Climate

3.1 Overall impression and direction of travel

Asked for their general impression of Bonfield as a place to do business, 11 of 24 respondents said "Good" or "Excellent" (9 Good, 2 Excellent), 11 said "Fair", and 2 said "Poor". Sentiment is therefore lukewarm-to-positive: most businesses see a workable environment with clear room for improvement. In BR+E terms this is a constructive starting point - "Fair" answers are rarely fixed judgments; they are invitations.

Attitudes are in motion, in both directions. Of 20 businesses answering whether their attitude had changed over the past three years, 7 had become more positive, 6 more negative, and 7 reported no change. Those more positive pointed to new residents and development around the lake, a welcoming start-up experience (including help from municipal staff and the Bonfield Trade Show), strong local buying loyalty, and businesses successfully filling local niches. Those more negative cited communication gaps with the municipality, slow or complicated approvals - particularly for larger or commercial development - perceived red tape and staffing concerns at the Township office, informal ("under the table") competition, and a shrinking senior customer base.

The pattern behind the split is worth the project team's attention: the businesses trending positive are largely newer, smaller, and consumer-facing - they experience Bonfield as a welcoming market. The businesses trending negative are disproportionately those that have tried to build, develop, or expand something - they experience Bonfield as a process. The community is winning on warmth and losing on transactions. That diagnosis recurs in every module of the survey, and it is encouraging in one specific way: process problems are among the most fixable problems a municipality can have.

3.2 Rating the factors of doing business

Businesses rated the community's locational factors from Poor (1) to Excellent (4). Three patterns stand out (full table in Appendix A):

- **Strengths:** highway access (average 2.95) and proximity to rail and airports (2.93) anchor Bonfield's locational case, and the "soft" climate - support from the municipality (2.67), other businesses (2.62), and residents (2.57) - rates as moderately good.
- **Weaknesses:** availability of space for rent or lease is the lowest-rated factor (1.50), followed by housing availability (1.69), municipal fees (1.79), the development/building permit process (2.00), electricity capacity (2.00), and municipal property taxes (2.10).
- **Connectivity is middling:** cellular service (2.12) and internet (2.24) draw mixed reviews - adequate for some, a real constraint for others.

Read together, the ratings sketch a community whose fundamentals are better than its enabling conditions. Bonfield sits on a major corridor, near a regional centre, with goodwill from residents and from the municipality - and yet a business that wants to act on those fundamentals immediately hits the bottom of the table: nowhere to lease, nowhere serviced to build, an approvals process rated no better than "Fair", and costs that feel high for what is received. The low-rated factors are not independent problems; they are a single bottleneck - the path from intention to premises - described five different ways. That bottleneck is precisely the kind of structural issue a five-year strategy exists to address, which is why it features prominently in Section 9.

3.3 Satisfaction with services

Among local government services, protective and community services rate well - fire (2.95), health unit (2.92), police/OPP (2.81), parks and recreation (2.56). The lowest-rated municipal service is economic development itself (1.92, with no "Excellent" ratings)*, followed by building and enforcement (2.11) and public works (2.22). One respondent flagged the inspection and billing practices of a provincial safety regulator, illustrating the regulatory friction smaller operators feel even where the regulator is not the Township.

* The economic development rating deserves a careful reading rather than a defensive one. Bonfield has not historically had a resourced economic development function, so businesses are largely rating an absence - and the fact that they rate it at all, rather than marking "not applicable", signals that they expect the Township to play this role. Seen that way, the 1.92 is less a complaint than a mandate: it is the demand side of the case for the EDS itself, and it sets a natural baseline against which the Strategy's implementation can later be measured.

Contact with business support organizations is strikingly low. For most regional services - the Chamber of Commerce, Regional Innovation Centres, the Small Business Enterprise Centre, settlement services, even child care services - a majority of respondents reported no contact at all. Where contact exists (e.g., NECO/CFDC, YES Employment Services), experiences skew positive. The interpretation matters: the regional support ecosystem works for those who reach it, but almost nobody in Bonfield is reaching it. The gap is awareness and brokering, not regional institutional capacity - which makes it inexpensive to close.

3.4 A welcoming community?

Asked about Bonfield's welcome to equity-seeking individuals, groups, and businesses, most respondents were neutral-to-positive: "very open council", "better in the past few years with the new council and mayor", "felt welcomed" as a newcomer, and praise for community events (parade, fall fair, trade show, Canada Day). A minority were critical - no visible welcoming effort, cliquishness, slow responses to requests (e.g., a website listing) - and several simply had no experience to draw on. One suggested a welcoming committee or centre. The fairest summary is that Bonfield's welcome is real but informal: it depends on events and personalities rather than any deliberate practice, which means newcomers' experiences will be uneven until someone owns the function.

4. Future Plans

4.1 Headline: an expansion-minded business base

Plans for the next 18 months	Businesses
Expanding	12 of 24
Remaining the same	10 of 24
Relocating	1 of 24
Selling	1 of 24
Downsizing or closing	0 of 24

Half of the businesses surveyed plan to expand within 18 months, and none plan to downsize or close. For a BR+E survey this is an unusually strong result, and it reframes the Township's task. The classic BR+E worry - quiet decline, businesses drifting away - is not Bonfield's situation. The risk here is subtler: growth intentions that go unrealized because the space, approvals, and financing pieces described elsewhere in this report do not come together. The opportunity cost of inaction is therefore not businesses lost, but expansions foregone - invisible in any future survey, but real.

4.2 What expansion looks like

Expansion plans are concrete and mostly incremental: new product lines and services, additional floor space, ranging from very small additions to several thousand square feet, more workforce and training, on-farm infrastructure and farm-gate retail, added food-service capacity at an existing location, visitor accommodation, and consolidating multiple business lines under one roof. Reasons given include growing local demand, new residents, prime locations, and gaps in the local market. Notably, almost all of this growth is organic and self-financed in conception - businesses scaling what already works, in place - which means modest enablers (a permit that moves quickly, a small grant navigated successfully) can be decisive.

Of 12 businesses answering, 7 plan to access (or want to access) federal or provincial programs to support expansion - NECO Community Futures is the most-named partner - and several explicitly asked for information on grants and funding options. Few report current difficulties with their expansion plans (time and financing constraints were noted); where community help was requested, it was for funding information, advertising/trade show support, and a study of what the town needs. The pattern repeats the Section 3 finding: demand for support exists, the programs exist, and the missing piece is the connection between them.

4.3 Retention watch items

Two quieter signals in the future-plans data deserve the team's attention precisely because they will not announce themselves:

- Conditional commitment. Businesses "remaining the same" are not all content: at least one is waiting to see whether the Township improves infrastructure, invests in the downtown core, and attracts development before deciding whether to keep focusing sales locally. “Remaining the same” can be a holding pattern, not a settled plan - and the EDS’s visible early actions will influence which way such businesses break.

- Succession. With 9 businesses operating 26+ years and several owner-operators at or near retirement age, the near-absence of succession planning (and low uptake when assistance is offered) is a slow-burning retention risk. Experience elsewhere suggests owners decline “succession help” when offered abstractly but accept it when it arrives through a trusted, personal channel - a role the BR+E Leadership Team and NECO are well placed to play.

5. Business Development

5.1 Outlook and sales

Industry outlook is optimistic: 14 of 23 describe their industry as growing, 5 as stable, and 4 as declining (declining cases include real estate conditions and competition from larger centres). Projected sales for the next year follow suit: 11 of 22 expect increases, 5 expect no change, 2 expect decreases, and 4 are unsure. Reasons for expected growth include new community members, expanded offerings, moving from part-time to full-time operation, and market-driven housing demand. The recurring growth driver across answers is population: businesses are growing because Bonfield is growing - a useful reminder that residential attraction and business retention are the same agenda viewed from two sides.

The revenue base is modest: of 21 businesses answering, 9 report annual sales under $100,000, with small numbers spread across the higher bands and 5 preferring not to answer. This underlines how many Bonfield businesses are micro-enterprises and supplementary-income operations. The interpretive point for the EDS is about expectations: success for most of this base will look like a part-time business becoming full-time, or an $80,000 operation becoming a $200,000 one - increments that conventional economic indicators barely register but that transform household incomes and local service availability.

5.2 Technology and IT

Self-rated technology use clusters at “Moderate” (10 of 21) and “High” (7), with 3 “Very high” and 1 “Low”. Most report no current IT barriers; where barriers exist they concern internet access/speed and knowledge. Several training requests (Section 6.3) are digital: e-marketing, social media, software, and inventory/invoicing systems. The base is digitally functional but not digitally confident - comfortable operating online, less comfortable marketing online - which is exactly the gap the heavily requested e-marketing workshops (Section 7.4) would address.

5.3 Local supply gaps

Asked what they would like to purchase locally that is now bought outside the area, businesses listed: building supplies and lumber, hardware, fuel, groceries/produce/meats at wholesale, garden centre stock, fencing materials, food-service bulk orders, packaging inputs, and local farm products. These answers do double duty. They quantify leakage - money leaving the community weekly - and, read from the other direction, they are a market-tested prospect list: each gap is demand that an attraction effort or an existing local supplier could capture. The overlap with residents' presumed gaps (groceries, fuel) suggests a single anchor investment could serve both businesses and households.

5.4 Co-operation between businesses

Networking and information sharing is far and away the preferred form of co-operation among the roughly 20 businesses answering, followed by joint marketing and joint product purchasing. Several businesses volunteered the same idea independently: a recurring Bonfield business networking event or coffee gathering, with one respondent recalling a past regional economic development event fondly. Co-operative freight along the Highway 17 corridor was also proposed. When multiple respondents invent the same initiative unprompted, the demand is real; this is among the cheapest, fastest items in the entire survey to act on, and an early networking event would also give the EDS team a standing venue for engagement and feedback.

5.5 Premises

Fifteen of 17 own their premises; 2 lease (no renewal problems anticipated). Ownership reinforces rootedness - but combined with the near-total absence of rentable commercial space (Section 3.2), it also explains how the space bottleneck stays invisible: established businesses are insulated from it because they own, while the businesses it deters - would-be entrants and expanders - are by definition not yet in the room. The survey only hears the constraint from the growth-minded minority; the full cost is larger than the count suggests.

6. Workforce

6.1 Employment patterns and hiring

Most respondents employ one to four people including owners, and most report employment has remained stable over the past three years. Six businesses - generally the larger employers - completed the detailed workforce module, and they consistently report hiring difficulty: too few applicants, lack of appropriate skills or relevant experience, and - notably for a strategy audience - lack of available housing and transportation as recruitment barriers. Hard-to-fill occupations include skilled trades, sales associates and customer service, administrative staff, food-service staff, and specialized professional roles. Recruitment runs through personal networks, word of mouth, and social media; formal channels are little used.

Although only a quarter of respondents engaged with the workforce module in depth, the team should resist reading that as workforce being a minor issue. The module's reach was small because most respondents are owner-operators with no staff - but every employer large enough to hire reported difficulty hiring. In other words, workforce constraints arrive exactly at the moment a Bonfield business succeeds enough to grow. As the expansion plans in Section 4 mature, more businesses will cross that threshold, and the housing and transportation barriers named here will bind more widely.

6.2 Ratings of local workforce factors

The employers who rated community workforce factors gave middling-to-good scores for workforce stability, retention, and work ethic, but flagged availability of child care/youth services (rated not-applicable or poor by most) and training of the local workforce as weak points. Retention difficulties, where present, relate to wages, hours, seasonality, and competition from larger employers - including demand elsewhere for bilingual staff. The bilingual note is a two-sided finding: Bonfield's francophone workforce is an asset valuable enough that other communities recruit it away.

6.3 Training, programs, and HR practices

Only one business currently participates in co-op, internship, or apprenticeship programs, and four have in the past (with good experiences reported, including college and Indigenous trades placements that led to permanent hires). Eleven businesses want information about these programs. The arithmetic here is telling: participation is near zero, satisfaction among past participants is high, and stated interest is broad - three facts that only fit together if the barrier is information, not appetite. This is the clearest single brokering opportunity in the survey.

About half use some external training (industry certifications, WHMIS, Smart Serve, professional development); barriers, where reported, are cost, the lack of locally accessible options, and wariness of online offerings. The most-requested training topics: business development, customer service, computer literacy, technical training, financial literacy, and presentation skills - plus specific asks for start-up guidance, marketing, income tax, and inventory/invoicing systems.

Nearly all respondents say they embrace workforce diversity, but only 5 of 21 have a formal HR policy - typical of micro-businesses, and a candidate topic for template-based support. New hires are supported informally through orientation, training, and mentorship.

7. Community Development

7.1 Bonfield's advantages

Respondents' top three advantages converge on five themes:

- **Community spirit and loyalty** - a friendly, supportive, tight-knit community; people want to buy local; strong referral networks; "full community support".
- **Location** - proximity to North Bay and Mattawa, the Trans-Canada/major highways, and snowmobile trails.
- **Room to grow** - available land, lower land costs, an underdeveloped waterfront with potential, and a growing population of new builds and residents.
- **Market gaps and low competition** - unmet local needs create niches (several businesses are explicitly built on them).

- **Natural environment** - the landscape and lake setting as both quality-of-life and tourism assets.

7.2 Bonfield's disadvantages

The disadvantages are equally consistent, and they map directly onto the low-rated climate factors in Section 3:

- **No commercial space or shovel-ready land** - "lack of commercial property", "no shovel-ready properties for businesses to come", no water/sewer infrastructure.
- **Small market** - low population and sales volume; competition from larger centres nearby; delivery surcharges due to location.
- **Taxes and incentives** - property taxes felt to be out of proportion to services; no incentives for new or operating businesses while nearby centres offer them.
- **Municipal process and communication** - permitting and regulation friction, limited business communication, and perceptions of limited business support capacity; several pointed comments about the building/planning function and decision-making.
- **Downtown and services** - the Church Street/waterfront core needs investment and aesthetics; limited everyday services (gas, groceries, restaurants) reduce reasons to stop in Bonfield.

Strikingly, the advantages and disadvantages are mirror images: the same proximity to North Bay that businesses prize as market access also drains spending to larger centres; the same available land celebrated as "room to grow" is unusable for commercial purposes without servicing; the same small community that generates loyalty caps sales volumes. Bonfield's strategic question is not which list is true - both are - but which conditions would let the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The businesses themselves answer that question consistently in the next two subsections.

7.3 The one change businesses want most

Asked for the single most significant change to support business growth over the next five years, answers cluster tightly:

- **Commercial space and serviced land** - a commercial hub or zone, commercial space to lease (e.g., a strip mall with units), and shovel-ready, serviced land;
- **Downtown revitalization** - rezone and develop the Church/Mark Street waterfront core, and improve property aesthetics through by-laws;
- **Everyday anchors** - a grocery store and gas station (named independently by several businesses);
- **Streamlined approvals** - make repairs, renovations, and development faster and more predictable; align regulations with growth plans;
- **Visibility and support** - a continuously updated business directory, promotion of local business opportunities, community events that draw outsiders, attraction programs for new residents, tax incentives, and tourism/hospitality development;
- **Housing** - single dwellings and apartments, including options serving an aging population.

For an open-ended question with no prompts, the degree of convergence here is the finding. Two dozen businesses across a dozen sectors, interviewed separately, described substantially the same five-year agenda. When the EDS engagement program later asks residents and stakeholders similar questions, the extent to which their answers echo or diverge from this list will itself be informative.

7.4 What support businesses would use

From the structured list of potential supports (n=22), the most-selected were:

Support option (CD5)	Selections
Township BR+E Initiative - continued future actions	13
Township-maintained business directory	13
E-marketing, social media and online content workshops	13
Access to capital	12
Township branding and communications	11
Participation in trade shows / conferences	11
Enhanced marketing	9
Professional networking	8

Lower-demand items (succession planning, business plan updates, supply chain development, productivity workshops) still matter for specific businesses but are not broad priorities. Write-ins included a local-vendor preference in Township procurement, markets and craft fairs, and informing the community about approved developments. Two readings of this table are worth holding together: businesses are asking for visibility and connection more than money (directory, branding, trade shows, networking all outrank most financial items except access to capital), and the single most-endorsed “support” is the continuation of the BR+E initiative itself - an explicit vote of confidence in being asked, provided the asking leads somewhere.

7.5 Awareness of plans and partners

Familiarity with the current council’s strategic direction is low-to-moderate: 7 of 23 are not familiar at all, 7 slightly familiar, 7 moderately familiar, and only 2 very or extremely familiar. About 10 had reviewed the Strategic Plan 2025-2030. Comments ranged from supportive (“strategic plan is a good guiding document - hope the Township continues these things”, with praise for the agri-food and developers’ forums) to skeptical (doubts about implementation capacity, and a call to look beyond aggregates and agriculture to sectors such as arts and culture).

Familiarity with regional service providers is low across the board; the relatively best-known are YES Employment Services, the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, NECO Community Futures, and The Business Centre Nipissing Parry Sound. For sector-specific information, businesses most want material on agri-food systems and networks (10), housing innovation and development (8), retail and commercial opportunities (7), public-sector/non-profit services (6), and sustainable forest management (5) - with write-ins for arts and culture and rental-housing funding. Two businesses know of a business with potential interest in locating to Bonfield.

Finally, nearly every respondent asked to join the Township's newsletter distribution list to stay informed about the BR+E project. Taken together with the low familiarity scores, the message is consistent: businesses are not disengaged from the Township's plans - they are under-informed and asking to be informed. Communication is the cheapest item on the entire findings list, and the one with the shortest path to visible improvement.

8. Key Findings

- **1. Bonfield's businesses are loyal, rooted, and growth-minded.** Most are locally owned, own their premises, and have an owner living in the community; half plan to expand within 18 months and none plan to close. The retention base is solid - the binding constraints are physical and procedural, not motivational.
- **2. Space is the number-one hard constraint.** Commercial space for rent or lease is the lowest-rated factor in the survey, echoed in the disadvantages and "one change" questions. Without serviced, shovel-ready commercial land or leasable units, expansion-minded businesses and prospective entrants have nowhere to go.
- **3. Process and communication are the number one soft constraints.** Permitting friction, municipal fees, a low rating for the municipal economic development service, and thin business communication recur across modules - and they are also the most fixable items on the list.
- **4. Housing and workforce are linked constraints.** Housing rates near the bottom of the climate factors and surfaces directly as a hiring barrier alongside skills, transportation, and child care.
- **5. Demand exists for simple, brokered supports.** A business directory, networking events, e-marketing workshops, funding navigation (NECO and others), co-op/apprenticeship information, and a continuing BR+E program - inexpensive, high-trust actions the Township can lead or broker.
- **6. Local anchors are an attraction target.** A grocery store and gas station were repeatedly named; documented supply gaps (building materials, fuel, wholesale food, farm inputs) give a concrete business-attraction and supplier-development shortlist.
- **7. Sector energy is in agri-food, construction/trades, and hospitality/tourism.** These sectors dominate the respondent base, the expansion plans, and the information requests.

9. Using These Results in the Economic Development Strategy

9.1 One line of evidence among several

This survey is the first substantial line of primary evidence available to the Five-Year Economic Development Strategy - but it is one line of evidence, not the verdict. Over the course of the project, the EDS will assemble several complementary sources: the background research and baseline assessment (economic, demographic, labour-force, and land data); the community-wide survey of residents; focus groups; key-informant interviews with businesses, developers, farmers, tourism operators, and regional partners; the town hall; and the Township's agri-food and developers' forum results. Each source sees the community from a different angle, and none is complete on its own. The BR+E survey's particular contribution is depth on the business experience: 24 structured, confidential conversations about how it actually feels to operate, build, hire, and grow in Bonfield.

The findings in this report should therefore be treated by the project team as well-grounded hypotheses to carry into the rest of the work - strong signals to be tested, weighed, and refined as the other evidence arrives, rather than conclusions to be implemented as-is. Where the later evidence corroborates a BR+E theme (and the consistency of these results suggests much of it will), the Strategy can act on it with confidence. Where it diverges - for example, if residents weigh priorities differently than businesses do - the divergence itself becomes a finding the Strategy must reconcile.

9.2 Where the evidence flows in the project

Project stage	How the BR+E results will be used
Research and baseline assessment	BR+E findings give the secondary data a ground-truth check: the micro-enterprise structure, sector mix, commercial land and servicing constraints, connectivity gaps, and retail/service leakage reported here become specific questions for the baseline analysis and the SWOT to confirm, quantify, or qualify.
Engagement program	BR+E themes - commercial space, approvals, the downtown core, grocery/gas anchors, housing, networking - inform the design of the community survey, focus-group guides, and key-informant interviews, so the EDS engagement builds on what businesses have already said instead of re-asking it. BR+E participants, nearly all of whom joined the Township newsletter list, are a warm contact base for recruitment.
Synthesis and triangulation	BR+E results sit alongside the research findings and the engagement inputs in the What We Heard report and the emerging strategic framework. Convergence across sources strengthens a theme's claim to priority; divergence flags where trade-offs need Council and community discussion.
Strategy and Community Profile	Business-reported strengths (highway access, land, community support) and constraints (servicing, space, approvals) inform the strategic priorities, the target-sector discussion (agri-food, construction/trades, hospitality/tourism, local-serving retail), and the honest, investment-ready content of the Community Profile.
Implementation and measurement	The survey's ratings provide ready-made baselines (overall business climate impression, satisfaction with economic development services, space availability) against which the Strategy's progress can later be measured - and the BR+E Leadership Team offers a standing vehicle for early, visible actions.

9.3 What the team can take from this now

Without prejudging the Strategy, three uses of this evidence are available to the Township team immediately. First, orientation: Sections 3-8 give the team a shared, evidence-based picture of the business community to carry into the engagement events - including the specific irritants (approvals, communication) and aspirations (downtown, anchors, networking) likely to be raised there. Second, expectation-setting: the survey identifies where businesses are already asking for things the project will eventually address, so the team can speak to how input is being used rather than promising outcomes prematurely. Third, relationship maintenance: participants were promised a community report and follow-up. Circulating a short “What We Heard” summary, routing the specific assistance requests recorded in the survey (funding information, program referrals, directory listings) to the right partner, and showing BR+E participants where their input lands in the EDS will all reinforce the credibility on which the rest of the engagement program depends.

As the project proceeds, this report remains a reference point: when the community survey, focus groups, and forums produce their own findings, the team can return to these pages to ask the synthesis question that matters - do the other lines of evidence tell the same story businesses told here?

Appendix A - Detailed Rating Tables

Counts are numbers of businesses selecting each rating. NA = not applicable; NC = no contact. Averages are calculated on 1-4 ratings only (excluding NA/NC) and should be read with the small sample in mind.

A.1 BC3 - Factors of doing business in the community (up to 24 respondents)

Factor	NA	Poor	Fair	Good	Exc.	Avg.
Regional/provincial roads and highways	1	0	4	13	3	2.95
Proximity to rail and airports	9	2	1	8	4	2.93
Support from the municipality	2	3	4	11	3	2.67
Support from other businesses	3	3	4	5	4	2.62
Support from local residents	1	3	7	7	4	2.57
Availability of health and medical services	2	3	5	13	1	2.55
Workforce	7	4	5	5	3	2.41
Availability of serviced land	12	2	2	6	0	2.40
Land costs	7	1	10	3	2	2.38
Internet service	4	5	4	7	1	2.24
Local roads and streets	0	6	7	9	1	2.22
Cellular phone service	0	4	7	6	0	2.12
Municipal property taxes	2	4	10	6	0	2.10
Development/building permit process	6	6	6	6	0	2.00
Availability of adequate electricity	5	5	9	5	0	2.00
Municipal fees	9	4	9	1	0	1.79
Availability of adequate housing	5	9	4	2	1	1.69
Availability of space for rent or lease	12	8	2	2	0	1.50

Note: water/wastewater capacity and fees were rated NA by nearly all respondents (no municipal servicing).

A.2 BC4(b) - Satisfaction with local government services (up to 24 respondents)

Service	NA	Poor	Fair	Good	Exc.	Avg.
Fire services	2	1	3	11	4	2.95
Health department / health unit	10	0	4	5	3	2.92
Police services (OPP)	5	2	5	3	6	2.81
Emergency management	7	0	5	6	1	2.67
Parks and recreation facilities	2	1	6	11	0	2.56
Land use planning and development	9	3	6	5	1	2.27
Public works (roads, snow removal, garbage and recycling)	1	5	9	8	1	2.22

Service	NA	Poor	Fair	Good	Exc.	Avg.
Building and enforcement	5	5	8	5	1	2.11
Economic development	4	3	8	2	0	1.92

A.3 BC4(a) - Access to community services and support organizations (up to 24 respondents)

Service / organization	NC	Poor	Fair	Good	Exc.
Child care services	18	2	0	2	2
Schools (elementary and secondary)	13	1	1	3	3
Post-secondary education	17	0	1	2	1
Workforce planning / development board	13	1	3	2	2
Chamber of Commerce	17	2	1	3	1
Regional Innovation Centres	20	1	0	3	0
Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC)	13	2	1	3	2
Small Business Enterprise Centre	16	3	1	3	1
Settlement and newcomer services	21	0	0	3	0

Method note. Responses were extracted from the 24 redacted PDF survey exports using optical character recognition with automated detection of selected answers, followed by manual review. Minor transcription imprecision is possible on individual items; totals were cross-checked across questions. Where a respondent skipped a question or a value could not be read reliably, it is excluded from that question's n.