

PLANNING FOR PROSPERITY
Results from the Business Focus Group
June 7th, 2012

Overview

A Business Focus Group was held over two hours on June 7th, 2012 and was attended by commercial, industrial, and home based businesses. The purpose of the meeting was to inform Airdrie companies about:

- the annexation and how the City plans to grow in the future;
- Airdrie's approach to long term sustainability as identified by AirdrieOne Sustainability Plan; and
- upcoming improvements to City policies and regulations, including the City Plan update and the Land Use Bylaw rewrite.

As well, staff wanted to capture outstanding issues or concerns over the proposed direction of the Land Use Bylaw and City Plan rewrite.

An invitation was sent to 600 local businesses, resulting in 62 attendees.

Using iClicker, administration asked participants a series of targeted questions following the PowerPoint presentation slides. iClicker is a response system that allows participants to anonymously provide feedback to the presenter. As survey results were displayed on the screen to the group, it became clear what issues were contentious or needed further clarification. This allowed the facilitator to target the discussion towards topics of concern following the presentation. Participants were also given Work Books, to anonymously record written, long-form answers, in response to the iClicker questions.

Themes from the Facilitated Discussion & Work Book

Businesses expressed some concern over Airdrie's rapid population growth. Specifically, space (small, affordable office space is rare), safety (encroachment of residential development on agricultural lands) and funding (resources to support social service delivery) were of concern.

While attendees agree the work administration is doing will help the City become more economically competitive, many expressed the need for staff to explore other strategies, such as improving public transportation, revitalizing the downtown, and implementing water and energy conservation policies for businesses.

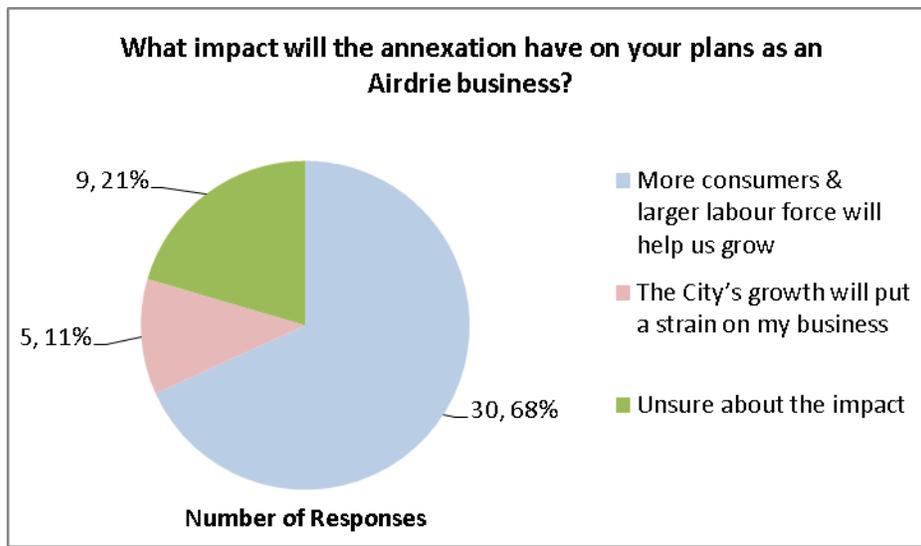
Through the Work Book and facilitated discussion, many attendees articulated their support for integrated residential-commercial, walkable neighbourhoods, in hopes that this will encourage 'walk-in business.' Increasing the number of career opportunities for residents in Airdrie was also seen as a way to support local businesses and encourage a sense of community.

There was strong support from participants for a more user friendly/accessible Land Use Bylaw. Parking standards and the integration of retail and industrial were flagged as regulations that need to be improved in the new Land Use Bylaw.

Attendees expressed some confusion regarding the direction of development/growth that the City wants to see, and uncertainty over the level of consultation being offered to businesses. Staff will need to continue to have transparent dialogue with businesses during the Land Use Bylaw rewrite process.

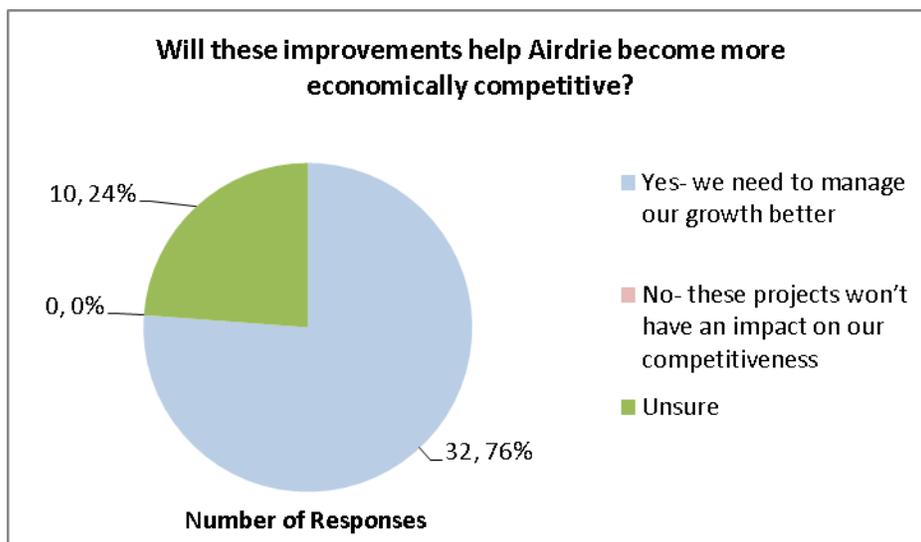
iClicker Survey Results

1. What impact will the annexation have on your plans as an Airdrie business?



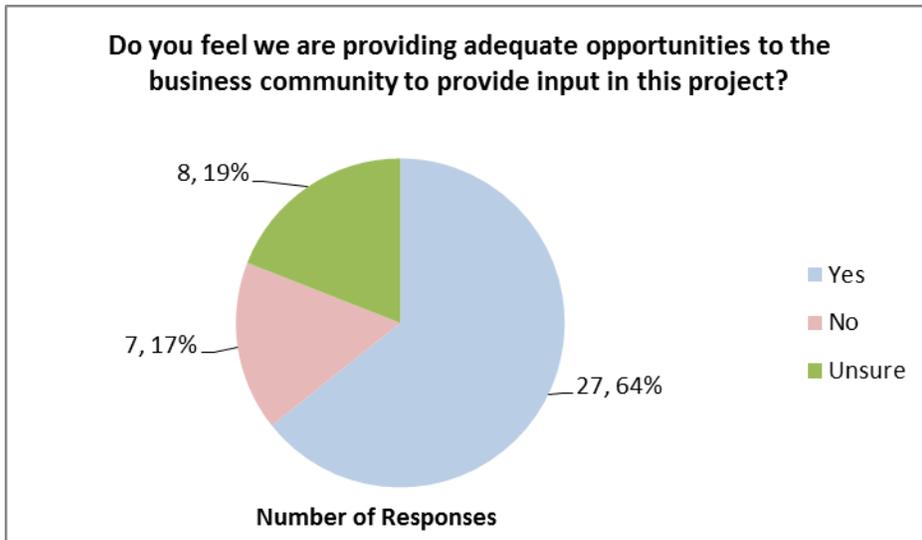
Total number of respondents: 44

2. Will these improvements help Airdrie become more economically competitive?



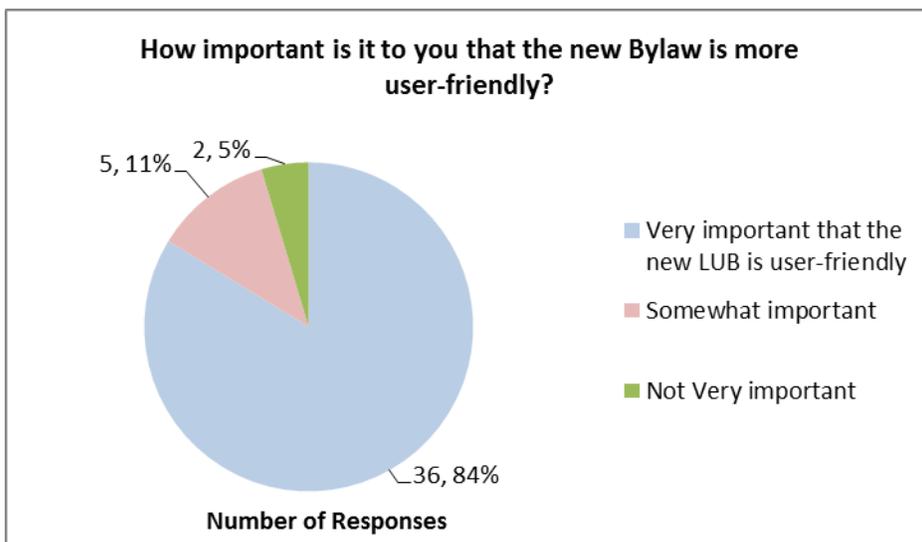
Total number of respondents: 42

3. Do you feel we are providing adequate opportunities to the business community to provide input in this project?



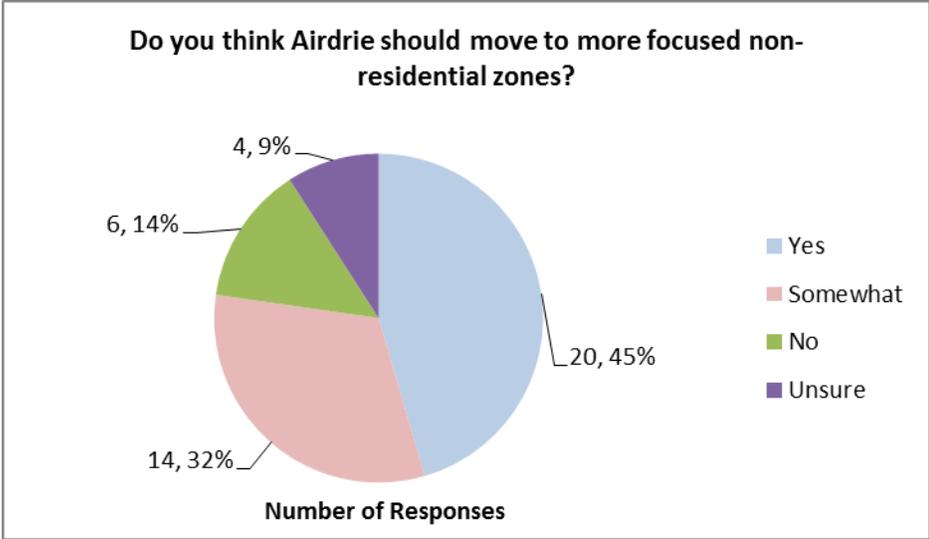
Total number of respondents: 42

4. How important is it to you that the new Bylaw is more user-friendly? (e.g. simple language and format, more tables and illustrations, better access on the web)



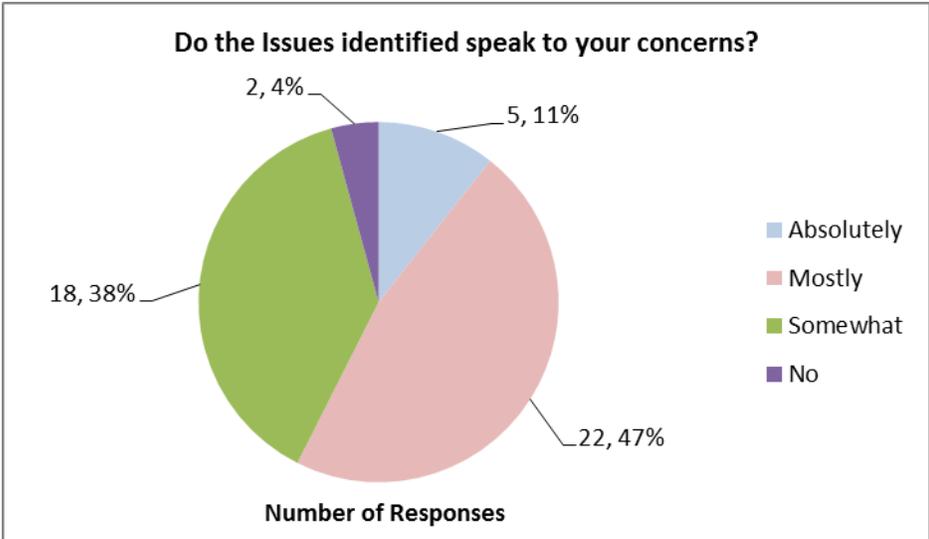
Total number of respondents: 43

5. Do you think Airdrie should move to more focused non-residential zones? (e.g. business park, manufacturing/warehousing, neighbourhood retail)



Total number of respondents: 44

6. Do the Issues identified speak to your concerns?



Total number of respondents: 47