

SPARWOOD
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BUSINESS WALK SUMMARY

OCTOBER 2024



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ABOUT US



At the **Sparwood Chamber of Commerce**, our mission is to sustain existing business, enhance business opportunities and improve the economic, social, ecological and cultural well being of the community. We work closely with local entrepreneurs, organizations, and government to foster economic growth and create meaningful opportunities.

This past fall, we launched the **2024 Business Walk**—an initiative designed to deepen our understanding of the business landscape in Sparwood and help shape a strong, unified path forward.

BUSINESS WALK OVERVIEW

The Fall 2024 Business Walk was conducted in October and brought together Chamber board members, representatives from EVEI, and Sparwood's council.

101

Pre-identified businesses to engage with in the community

58

Face-to-face visits with businesses during the Business Walk

43

Email surveys circulated to those unavailable for the face-to-face meetings

1

GOAL

Capture the state of business in Sparwood, identify challenges, and learn what supports are needed for growth

POSITIVE FINDINGS

Sparwood businesses showed remarkable positivity.

When asked what they loved most about doing business in Sparwood, the top responses included **strong community support, loyal customers, a desirable location,** and a **friendly, small-town clientele.**

It was encouraging to see the high level of interest from businesses participating in the Business Walk. Many were prepared for our visit and welcomed the opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences.

This paints a promising picture of a stable, connected business environment.

80%

**REPORTED THEIR
BUSINESS AS BEING IN
A STRONG, STEADY, OR
GOOD STATE IN
SPARWOOD, BC**

CHALLENGES

While there is much to celebrate, businesses also highlighted some persistent challenges.

The top concerns raised included:

01

Employee Shortage

02

Growth Limitations

03

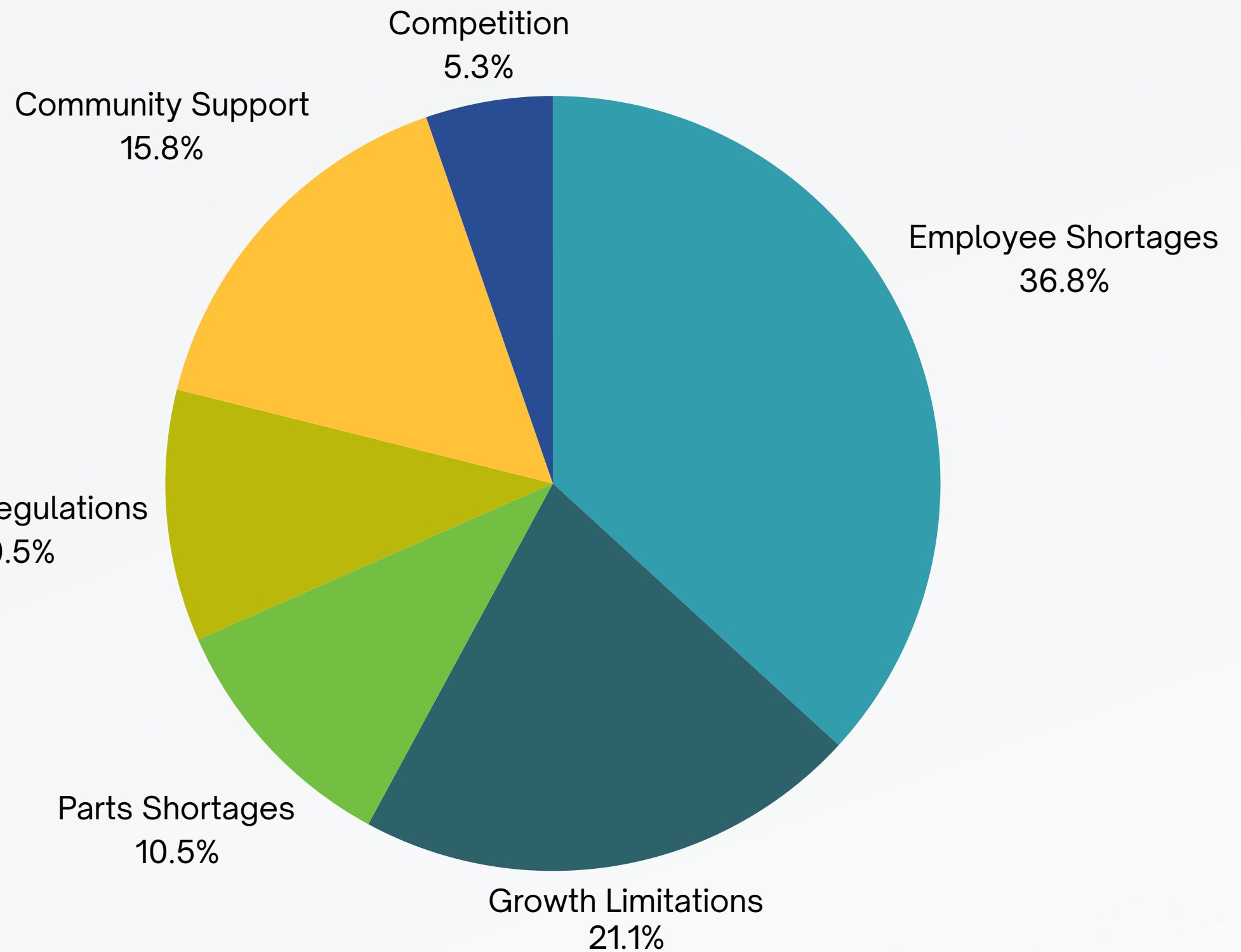
Community Support

04

Bylaw Regulations

05

Parts Shortages





Job Opportunity

EMPLOYMENT

A CLOSER LOOK: EMPLOYEE SHORTAGE

Employee shortage challenges were the most common issue raised so we've done a deeper dive.

The issue unfortunately goes beyond simple hiring difficulties and includes the following:

- Businesses in particular noted a shortage of **available** and **affordable housing**, making it difficult to recruit and retain employees.
- Lack of **childcare** options was a widespread concern, with approximately 50% of businesses identifying daycare as a key barrier.
- Some surveyed locations expressed some concern over employee retention based on **competitive wage restrictions** for their businesses.

A CLOSER LOOK: REGULATION & GROWTH LIMITATIONS

Many business owners expressed frustration with unclear or burdensome regulations, especially around bylaws and permit processes.

Lack of available space to expand operations was another major concern—especially for businesses looking to scale.

Additional concerns included high operational costs, increasing tax burdens, and limited parking options in key commercial areas.



These limitations collectively impact the potential for business expansion and long-term investment.



BUSINESS-DRIVEN IDEAS FOR A STRONGER FUTURE

Sparwood's business community offered practical, forward-thinking ideas to support growth and prosperity:

INCREASE space for
expansion

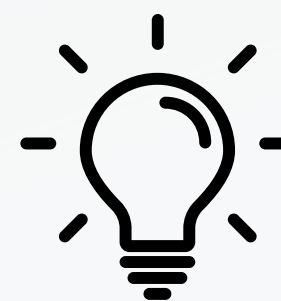
#1

REDUCE regulatory
barriers

#2

IMPROVE affordable
living options

#3



Other ideas included better parking infrastructure, tax relief for small businesses, and stronger two-way communication with local government.

TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

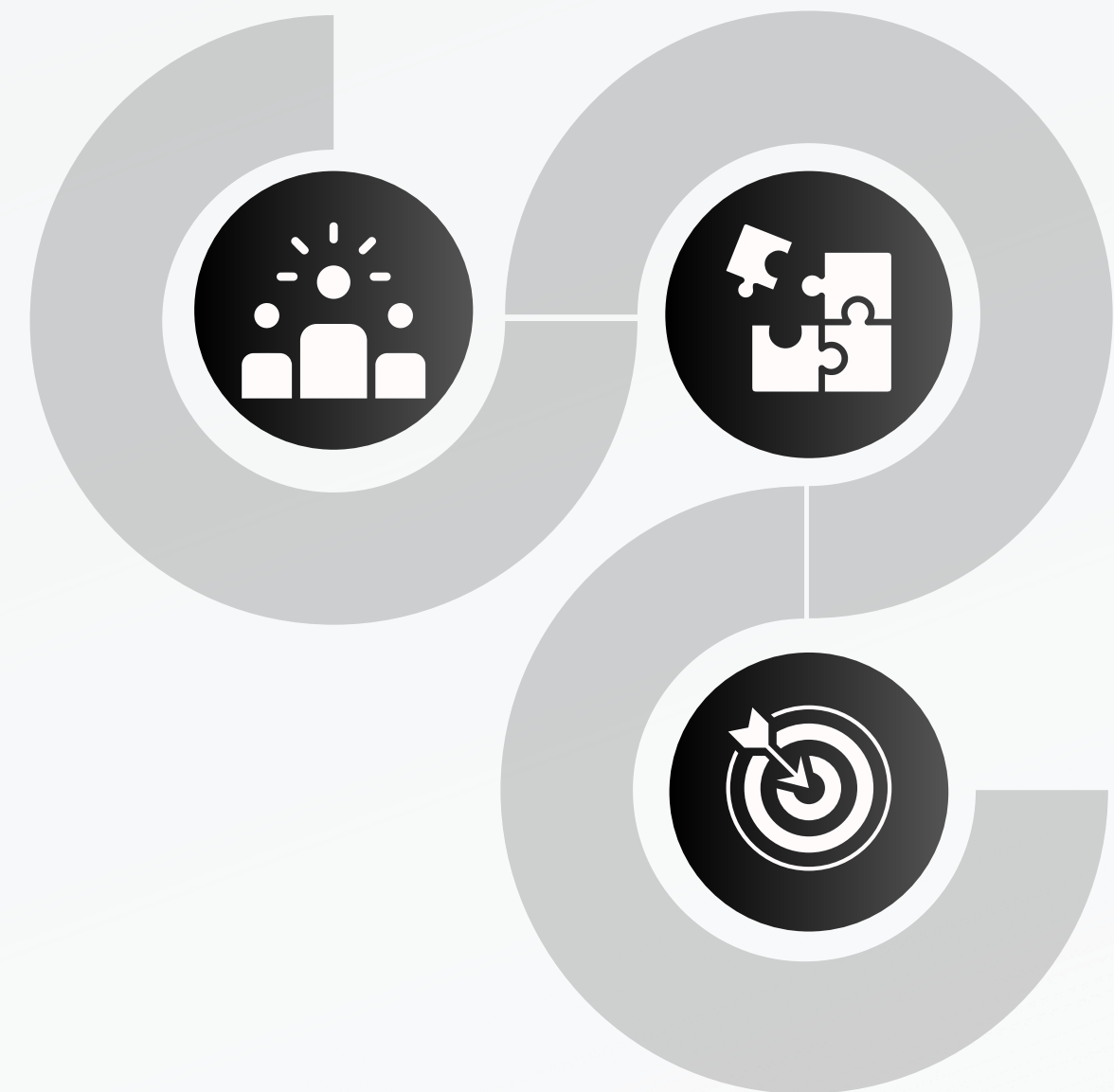
In response to these findings, the Chamber has created a dedicated **Advocacy Committee** tasked with **breaking down key issues and developing targeted action plans.**

The Advocacy Committee alongside the board has proactively begun addressing the key issues identified through the Business Walk survey, with particular emphasis on childcare and housing. In the area of childcare, committee members have reached out to all local providers to discuss availability, capacity, and future plans, gaining a deeper understanding of these challenges. On the housing front, the committee is actively participating in meetings and engaging with various housing projects to better understand community needs and explore potential solutions. **STAY TUNED!**

Next Steps

- Conduct a deeper dive into key challenges identified during the Business Walk
- Initiate discussions with the District of Sparwood — specifically the Planning & Development Department

We need your continued input — without your engagement, we cannot take meaningful action on your behalf.





SPARWOOD

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

A COMMUNITY WORTH BUILDING IN

The 2024 Sparwood Business Walk was a clear reminder of the strength, resilience, and innovation of our local business community.

With **over 100 businesses engaged**, we've gained valuable insight into what's working, what's challenging, and—most importantly—how we can grow together.

To every business owner who opened their doors and shared their time:
thank you.

Your voice is helping shape the future of business in Sparwood.

We'll be reaching out again soon with more questions—your continued feedback helps shape our advocacy efforts. Watch your inbox!

