

South County Business Walk

POST-EVALUATION SUMMARY

March 11, 2011



In partnership with:



Supported by:

2011 Business Walk Insights and Observations

- Out of the businesses interviewed, most were very optimistic about their current business success and/or in near future.
- Feedback included:
 - 49% of the respondents stated that the “people” and/or the “community” are what they enjoy most about doing business here.
 - Lack of area marketing and excessive government involvement are the highest concerns of doing business.
 - Print advertising is the most common form of business promotion.

The Fair Play Marketing Group, the Wineries of Fair Play, the Bed & Breakfast Inns of El Dorado County, and the El Dorado County, Office of Economic Development, launched the first annual South County Business Walk on March 11, 2011.

A business walk allows business and civic leaders to gain important insight into a local community’s business climate. During a business walk, leaders learn first hand the major needs of the local businesses and are able to act quickly to provide information and/or support to businesses in the area. Community organizations, the County, and other civic leaders work on behalf of local businesses to identify overall needs and successes of the community. These leaders are then able to promote a prosperous business climate.

The businesses visited during the business walk were asked four basic questions of local businesses:

- How is business?
- What do you like about doing business in the area?
- What needs to be done to make business even better?
- What do you do to actively increase business?

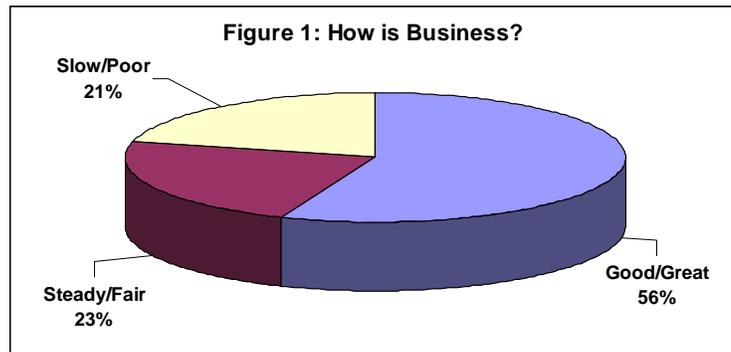
During South County’s first business walk, 11 business and civic leaders surveyed 39 businesses. Four other businesses were visited but the surveys could not be completed with them at that time. Of those surveyed, half were wineries, 10% were lodging-based businesses, 7% were food services, and the rest were comprised of several different industries. About 80% of the businesses had a very positive attitude and stated that business is improving or they are hopeful for a turn-around in the local economy.

The following report provides detail on the responses to each of the interview questions, as well as steps being taken to improve the local business climate.

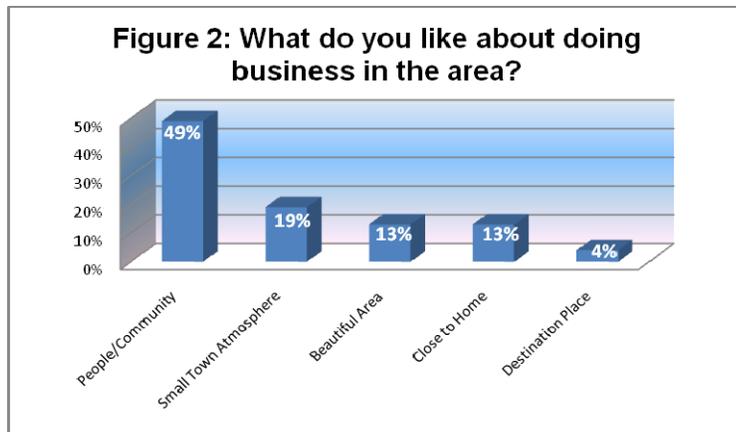
How is business?

The majority of the South County businesses surveyed reported strong commercial activity (Figure 1). Wineries especially stated they have seen an increase in business. Only 21% said business is slow or poor.

The negative responses were mostly attributed to the overall economy and the impact of restrained consumer spending.



What do you like about doing business in the area?



When asked what they like best about doing business in the South County, 49% of the respondents cited the people or the community (Figure 2). Many respondents commented on the support they receive from their customers and the community. They feel this is a tight-knit area with businesses working well together.

The small town atmosphere was the second most mentioned response (19%), many citing its peacefulness, slow pace, and welcoming ambiance.

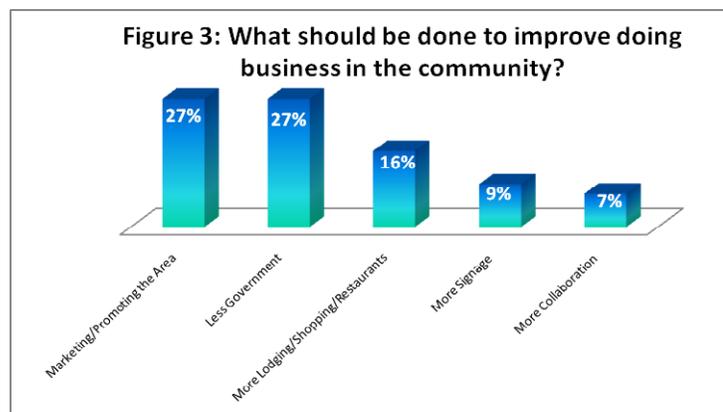
The area's natural beauty and the fact that they work close to home were third. Business owners/managers are appreciative that they are able to live and work in such a serene environment, eliminating the stress of commuting out of the area.

Other responses included:

- Being able to work in an area they consider to be a "wine destination"
- Community cleanliness
- Pleasant weather

What improvements should be done to improve doing business in the community?

The South County community is viewed, overall, as a pleasant place to both live and work; however there is room for improvement.



More marketing/promotion and less government involvement were the most common answers (Figure 3). They would like more community marketing/promotion to attract more customers to the area and build on the clientele they have already created from the Bay Area and Nevada. This includes better signage and more advertising in areas outside of the County.

Upcoming South County Activities

- **Fair Play Poker Run**
 Collect playing cards (and wine) to assemble a poker hand while visiting wineries. At the end of the day, participants gather to enjoy dinner and awards based on their poker hands.
 (May 14, June 25, Aug. 13, Oct. 8, Nov. 19, 2011)
- **Fair Play Wine Festival**
 Spend a day touring wineries and enjoying wine, food, and entertainment.
 (June 4 & 5, 2011)
- **Slug Fest**
 Wines made of grapes grown along Slug Gulch Road will be featured at this event. Appetizers will also be paired with these wines.
 (August 6 & 7, 2011)

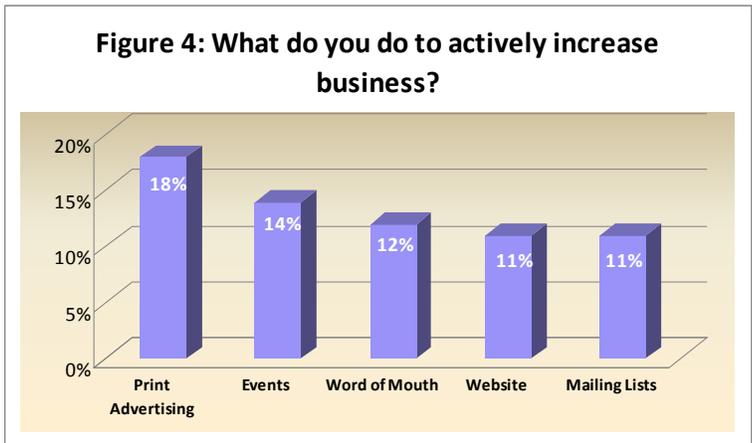
Comments about government involvement include the desire for fewer taxes/fees (water testing, permits, etc.), less expensive fees, and more consistent information received from the government, which was directed mostly to the County government. They also feel developing regulations are too restrictive and many expressed concerns regarding the upcoming proposed Bucks Bar Road Bridge closure, which may impact the number of customers to the area.

The second most mentioned response was the need for more local businesses, which would provide more variety for customers and draw more people to the area (16%). This includes restaurants (including casual dining), lodging, and unique shops. It is felt this will also help make the South County more of a multi-day destination rather than an area just for day trips. It may also encourage more people to come during the week.

Other responses to this question included:

- Lower rents
- Better access across Bucks Bar gorge
- More collaboration among local businesses
- An equestrian directory
- A wine competition

What do you do to actively increase business?



This question was asked to help determine best practices. The most common response as far as what businesses feel helps them the most is print advertising (18%). This includes advertising in the Mountain Democrat, The Windfall, The Gold Panner, and various magazines.

The second most mentioned response was participation in events (14%). Examples are the Home and Garden Show, the Slug Fest, crab feeds, and private events with the wineries' clubs. One winery mentioned organizing wine parties in customers' homes.

Another common response was word of mouth (12%). Their reputation goes a long way in a small community. Businesses feel they provide a quality product (or service) and their repeat customers do an excellent job of letting others know.

Other responses included:

- Utilizing mailing lists to disseminate information about upcoming events and specials
- Keeping their websites updated
- Networking and passing out business cards and brochures
- Hanging flyers in local businesses
- Increasing and diversifying inventory
- Selling local produce exclusively
- Donating to fundraisers
- Providing personal attention to customers and creating lasting relationships
- Offering free wine tasting and coupons

Participating Businesses

The Fair Play Marketing Group, the Wineries of Fair Play, the Bed & Breakfast Inns of El Dorado County and the El Dorado County, Office of Economic Development would like to thank the following businesses for providing feedback during the South County Business Walk:

Alpacas of El Dorado	Leif Wilson Excavation Contractor
Bob's Custom Cabinets	Lucinda's Country Inn
Bocconato Trattoria	Mann's Blueberry Farm
Busby Cellars	Mt. Aukum General Store
Cantiga Wineworks	MV Winery - Miller Vineyards
Colibri Ridge	Naylor Farms
Crossroads Cafe	Oakstone Winery
D'Agostini's Delights	Perry Creek Retreat
Dailey's Quality Tile	Perry Creek Winery
dkcellars	Rancho Margarita Alpacas
Dreamcatcher Ranch Equestrian Facility	Saluti Cellars
Fair Play Hardware	Seven Up Bar Ranch & Resort
Fitzpatrick Winery & Lodge	Shadow Ranch Vineyard & Winery
Fleur de Lys	Shear Serenity Salon
Gold Vine Grill	Single Leaf Vineyards
Golden Leaves Winery & Vineyard	Skinner Winery
Granite Springs Winery	Somerset Store
Gray's Mart	Toogood Estate Wine Caves
Iverson Vineyards	Vina Dorado Vacation Home Rental
Keller & D'Agostini	Windwalker Winery
Latcham Vineyards	Winery by the Creek

Special thanks go to Lucinda's Country Inn for allowing us to use their beautiful bed & breakfast as the meeting location and for the delicious food.