

City of Sammamish Economic Development Strategy

Community Viewpoints

May 15, 2017

Presented by Community Attributes to the City of Sammamish





*Community Attributes tells data rich stories about communities
that are important to decision-makers.*

Principal: Chris Mefford

Project Manager: Mark Goodman

Lead Analyst: Kristina Gallant

Analysts: Alexandra Streamer
Sudarshan Sampath

Community Attributes Inc.
1411 Fourth Ave, Suite 1401
Seattle, Washington 98101
www.communityattributes.com

A INTERVIEW METHODS & PROCESS

B DOING BUSINESS IN SAMMAMISH

C CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

D LOOKING FORWARD

E COMMUNITY RESPONSE SUMMARY

F BUSINESS & COMMUNITY RESPONSE SUMMARY

A

Interview Methods and Process

Business Interviews

Community Attributes worked with the City of Sammamish to identify a variety of economic stakeholders to interview in order to gain their perspective of the economic landscape in the City. Interviewees were asked to describe why they do business in Sammamish; evaluate the assets of the local economy; share their challenges; outline business opportunities; predict the evolution of the Sammamish economy; and describe what kinds of commercial development were suitable for the City.

Many interviewees live in Sammamish in addition to doing business in the City, and thus provided a business and resident perspective on the economic climate.

These interviews began in March 2017 and concluded in April 2017. A list of business and stakeholder participants is presented to the right.

Virtual Town Hall

Community Attributes worked with the City of Sammamish to develop a virtual town hall where Sammamish residents could provide feedback about their experiences in Sammamish. The virtual town hall was implemented in April of 2017 and garnered a total of 262 responses from community members.

Questions examined the perceived strengths and challenges of living in Sammamish as well as inquiries about how often community members leave the City in search of products and services. Virtual town hall also asked residents forward-thinking questions about Sammamish's future identity.

Interviewed Stakeholders

- Sammamish Chamber of Commerce
- TRF Development Partners
- Ichijo USA
- Pacific Bike and Ski
- Precision Chiropractic
- Fivash Cellars
- Big Block Brewery
- Katie's on the Lake
- Pine Lake Ale House
- Jersey Mike's
- Sammamish Cafe

Interview Questions

Below are the questions used for the business interviews portion of community outreach:

1. What attracted you to Sammamish/Why did you choose to do business in Sammamish?
2. Provide three words that describe Sammamish's local economy:
3. What are Sammamish's economic assets/strengths?
4. What are the greatest challenges you see for Sammamish's local economy/business community?
 - a. Follow up – Do you have any ideas on how to address these challenges?
5. What are the greatest opportunities you see for Sammamish's local economy/business community?
6. What tools should the City consider using to bring new businesses and institutions to town? (Examples: Active recruitment, Real estate development incentives, Land Assembly)
7. How do you see Sammamish changing over the next 5-10 years?
8. What type of commercial development do you think is suitable for Sammamish?

B

Doing Business in Sammamish

1. What attracted you to Sammamish/Why did you choose to do business in Sammamish?

"If you support the Sammamish community, it will support you."

COMMON THEME: The majority of business owners reported an attraction to Sammamish because of its community identity.

Interviewed businesses highlighted:

- > **A desire to work where they live**
 - Interviewees articulated a strong preference to work in the same community in which they live. Many respondents opted to remain in Sammamish even though their cost of doing business would be lower in neighboring cities, like Redmond or Issaquah.
- > **The small-town feel and strong sense of community**
 - The cohesiveness of the Sammamish community is integral to the commercial success of many businesses. Many small businesses rely on "regulars" and repeat customer relationships to thrive.
- > **The ability to fill a gap in the market**
 - The lack of on-plateau services provides an opportunity for businesses to enter the market. Sammamish residents are a captive audience; they strongly prefer not to travel outside of the City, so if businesses can consistently meet or exceed customer expectations, they'll be successful.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: Many business owners choose Sammamish because they are members of the community themselves and/or like the City, and think beyond the economic factors.

2. Provide three words that describe Sammamish's local economy.

COMMON THEME: Sammamish business owners expect the local economy to continue to grow.

Distinctiveness

- > Local
- > Close-knit
- > Trendy
- > Identity
- > Desirable
- > Community-minded

Wealthy

- > Rich
- > Affluent
- > Profitable
- > Privileged
- > Ideal

Successful

- > Healthy
- > Vibrant
- > Consistent
- > Strong
- > Diverse
- > Potential

Dynamic

- > Transitioning
- > Growing
- > Bustling
- > Hungry
- > Untapped



STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: The majority of responses were positive when describing the local economy after becoming established, but business owners also expressed difficulties in launching businesses and addressing labor shortages.

3. What are Sammamish's economic assets/strengths?

"The community is the strongest asset—there are great people, schools, parks and more."

COMMON THEME: Sammamish has a variety of strong economic assets.

Interviewed businesses highlighted:

> The residents

- Sammamish residents earn higher-than-average incomes, are not cost-sensitive and seek high-quality services. The affluence also allows residents free time to be actively engaged in the development of the community.

> Strong community investment

- The wealth residents bring to the local economy subsequently leads to strong community investment in the form of great parks, schools and other amenities. These investments pay dividends in attracting developers and other businesses interested in augmenting the commercial economy.

> The location

- The location of the City is a considerable asset. It has notable natural beauty and is close to many recreation opportunities. Sammamish is proximate to several regional employment centers, while maintaining a bedroom community identity that is removed from city life. Because of its ideal location and numerous assets, the population in Sammamish is growing significantly.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: Nearly all businesses expressed the value of high income-earning residents and their relationship to community investment.

C

Challenges & Opportunities

4. What are the greatest challenges you see for Sammamish's local economy/business community?

COMMON THEME: The affluence of Sammamish residents and high demand for the area are viewed both as assets and impeding factors to business operations.

Interviewed businesses highlighted:

> **Traffic**

- There are limited routes to get off and on the Sammamish plateau, and all have become increasingly congested as the population has grown. One interviewee highlighted 228th as a particularly cumbersome street to navigate during peak travel times.

> **Shortage of labor**

- Employees who work in retail and service jobs in Sammamish are not typically able to afford to live there. As a result, employees have to commute far distances from surrounding areas, such as Renton, Totem Lake and Edmonds. Business owners reported significant difficulty in filling open positions and retaining existing employees. Several respondents acknowledged that the new Central Washington University campus will likely increase the retail and service labor supply.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: Infrastructure concerns, the high cost of doing business, and confusion surrounding development and business operations present challenges for the commercial market and limit business diversity.

4. What are the greatest challenges you see for Sammamish's local economy/business community?

COMMON THEME: The affluence of Sammamish residents and high demand for the area are viewed both as assets and impeding factors to business operations.

Interviewed businesses highlighted:

- > **Absence of diversity in commercial space ownership**
 - One group owns the existing shopping centers and the lack of competition in conjunction with low supply of commercial space leads to expensive leases. This is not conducive to fostering "mom and pop"-style small businesses as they are frequently unable to out-compete corporate chains for leasable space.
- > **Lack of flexibility and confusion surrounding development requirements**
 - The majority of businesses owners reported that the City is highly prescriptive about the types of development suited for its commercial areas. Businesses and developers also expressed difficulty in navigating zoning regulations. These factors in tandem contribute to the lack of business diversity in Sammamish.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: Infrastructure concerns, the high cost of doing business, and confusion surrounding development and business operations present challenges for the commercial market and limit business diversity.

5. Do you have any ideas how to address these challenges?

COMMON THEME: Businesses' suggestions for ameliorating challenges centered around infrastructure needs and careful growth planning.

Interviewed businesses suggested:

> **Control traffic flow**

- The amount of traffic in Sammamish makes it difficult to be timely and restricts the flow of customers. Many interviewees mentioned the corridor with three high schools is particularly congested and suggested staggering start times to prevent blockages. Adding left turn lanes at busy intersections and widening heavily-traveled roads could also alleviate congestion.

> **Improve transit accessibility and walkability**

- Enhancing transit options and service could reduce traffic and provide commuting employees with a quicker, more cost-effective way to get to work. Linking commercial centers with walkways would increase foot traffic as well as ease parking challenges.

> **Increase affordable housing options**

- The labor shortage in the City is driven primarily by a lack of affordable housing. Planning for more multi-family and affordable units would likely increase the labor supply, and subsequently growth of the commercial activities, by reducing commuting times.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: Addressing the relationship between population growth and residents' desire for diverse amenities will be crucial to the future success of Sammamish.

5. Do you have any ideas how to address these challenges?

COMMON THEME: Businesses' suggestions for ameliorating challenges centered around infrastructure needs and careful growth planning.

Interviewed businesses suggested:

- > **Ensure adequate planning for commercial center growth and expansion**
 - Designating more areas for commercial development and careful planning for existing commercial center growth will provide relief for the constricted supply of leasable space.
- > **Emphasize business diversity**
 - There are several duplicated services in Sammamish; the City has an abundance of grocery stores, pizza places, dry cleaners and pet stores. Prioritizing business diversity in the planning process will be key to ensuring a wide range of services offered in the City.
- > **Increase flexibility surrounding commercial development**
 - One way to prioritize business diversity is to reduce the development restrictions on commercial centers. The City should consider allowing for some interpretation of the growth plan so it's not so restrictive and exacting.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: Addressing the relationship between population growth and residents' desire for diverse amenities will be crucial to Sammamish's economic identity.

6. What are the greatest opportunities you see for Sammamish's local economy/business community?

COMMON THEME: Sammamish has the chance to plan for economic growth in a way that coincides with the City's identity.

"Anyone can be successful in Sammamish as long as they're filling a hole in the market."

Interviewed businesses highlighted:

- > **Demand for more amenities and services is strong**
 - Residents are optimistic and enthusiastic about the prospect of more businesses and services. There is strong demand for more diverse options within the City; the market can bear increased commercial growth. The growing population indicates the demand will continue to increase.
- > **The market is virtually untapped**
 - There are numerous business and service vacancies in the local market. As a result, the market can support considerable commercial development in a variety of subsectors. See results from Question 9 for examples of desired commercial development.
- > **The ability to recruit many different types of businesses**
 - The City has the opportunity to plan critically for desirable types of commercial growth. Additionally, it can leverage residents' strong demand for more commercial options and absence of cost-sensitivity to attract high-quality services.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: The City can leverage residents' unmet demand for high-quality, on-plateau services to attract top tier services.

D

Looking Forward

7. What tools should the City consider using to bring new businesses and institutions to town?

COMMON THEME: The City could employ several strategies to be more business-friendly.

Interviewed businesses suggested:

- > **Market the City's economic assets**
 - The City should leverage the numerous economic assets and strengths in the region, including the consumer landscape, lack of B&O tax, and growing populations. Partnering with the Chamber of Commerce would increase the avenues through which the City could attract new businesses.
- > **Provide more development flexibility**
 - The City has stringent business and design requirements for commercial sites. Adding some flexibility to the zoning code would make Sammamish a more attractive place to do business.
- > **Offer incentives**
 - Offering assistance with zoning, tax concessions, expedited permitting and other incentives would assist new businesses in accessing the Sammamish market. Nearby cities, like Monroe and Issaquah, offer these motivations to prospective businesses.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: Sammamish is an attractive place to do business, but likely doesn't have enough visibility compared to surrounding communities. Providing some flexibility to the zoning code and incentive structure would further elevate the City's attractiveness.

8. How do you see Sammamish changing over the next 5-10 years?

COMMON THEME: Business owners are optimistic about Sammamish's future.

Interviewed businesses predicted:

- > **A younger, more diverse pool of residents**
 - Sammamish is particularly attractive to those employed in the technology sector, which has a diverse workforce. Business owners are also noticing an influx in young families and an outflow of retired individuals who are being priced out of the housing market.
- > **Continued population growth**
 - Business owners don't expect the population growth to slow in the near future.
- > **Increase in the number of businesses**
 - Interviewees expressed confidence in the number of Sammamish businesses increasing to serve the growing population.
- > **A more transit-oriented landscape**
 - The majority of business owners predicted improving transit and walkability would be the only ways to mitigate congestion in the City, especially as the population continues to increase.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: Business stakeholders predict a more urbanized future for Sammamish.

9. What type of commercial development do you think is suitable for Sammamish?

COMMON THEME: Stakeholders placed an emphasis on the need for more diversified commercial options.

Interviewed businesses suggested:

- > **Small-scale development**
 - There is consensus around the idea that big-box stores and large-scale development do not fit the identity of Sammamish. Examples included an independent coffee shop, a hardware store or a bakery.
- > **Local businesses**
 - Interviewees expressed a preference for more local businesses as opposed to the national chains that dominate the City now.
- > **More sit-down, non-chain restaurants**
 - Throughout the City, there are numerous fast food and quick-serve options, but there are only a couple sit-down restaurants that don't cater to a family audience.
- > **Entertainment options**
 - Sammamish is in need of more entertainment options, such as a movie theatre, a bowling alley or a performance venue.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: Sammamish is in need of more spaces where people can gather, whether it's a restaurant or a bowling alley. The preference is that these be smaller scale and local, when possible.

E

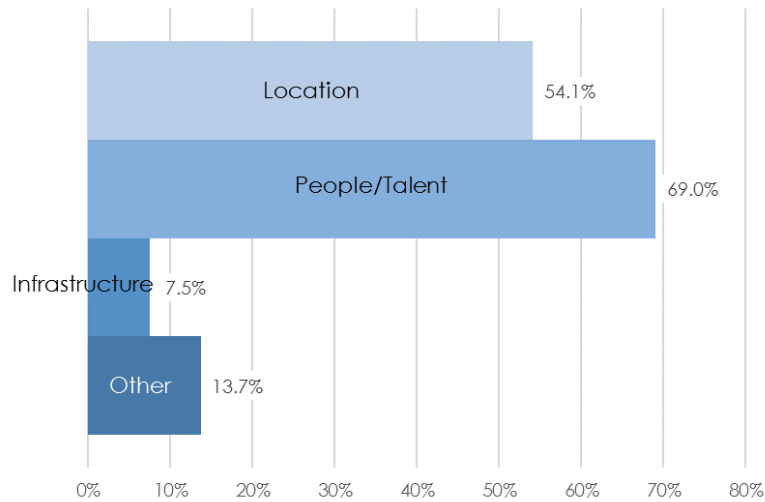
Community Response Summary

E Virtual Town Hall

Below are the questions used for the virtual town hall portion of community outreach.

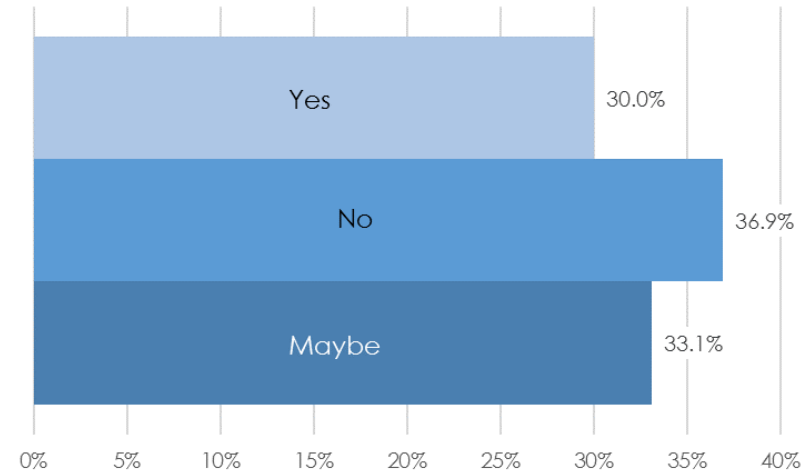
1. What are Sammamish's economic strengths?
2. Would you like to see Sammamish grow as an employment center?
3. Do you think the city should encourage new business to locate in Sammamish?
4. What type of employment opportunities would you like to see in Sammamish?
5. How much of your retail shopping is done locally in Sammamish?
- 6-11. Where do you do your shopping?
(Entertainment, Restaurants, Groceries, Non-grocery retail, Personal finance services and Medical services)
12. What is the item or service you most leave Sammamish to buy?
13. How often do you leave Sammamish to buy this item?
14. What type of retail would you most like to come to Sammamish?
15. What are the greatest challenges you see for Sammamish's local economy?
16. What are the greatest opportunities you see for Sammamish's local economy?

1. What are Sammamish's economic strengths?



N= 262

2. Would you like to see Sammamish grow as an employment center?



N= 262

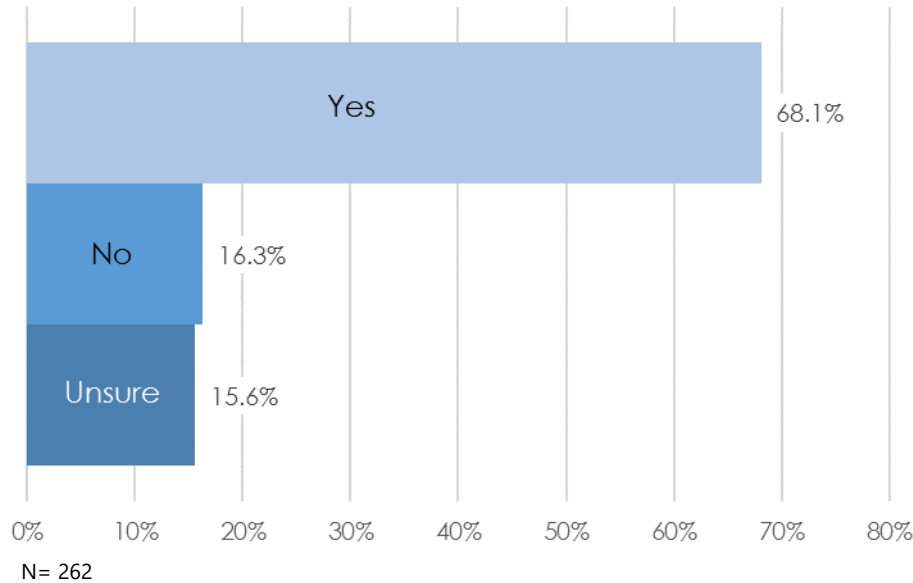
Strategic Implications

- > Many people mentioned the community as a strength which has a significant number of high income-earning residents. Sammamish's location was also considered to be an important attribute.

Strategic Implications

- > Respondents are conflicted about whether Sammamish should continue to grow

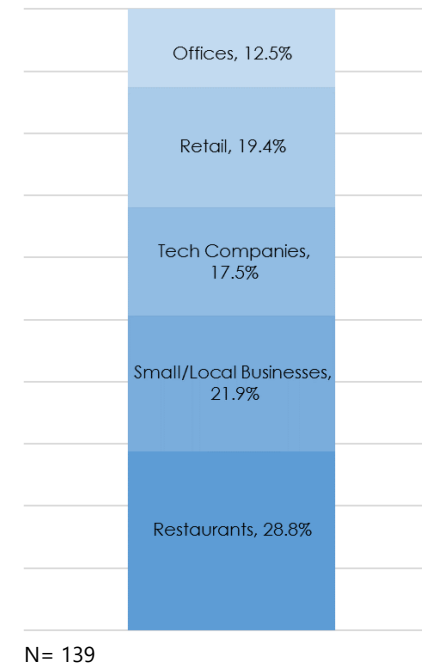
3. Do you think the city should encourage new business to locate in Sammamish?



Strategic Implications

- > 68.1% of respondents want to see new business
- > 31.9% of respondents were either against or unsure about seeing more businesses in Sammamish

4. What type of employment opportunities would you like to see in Sammamish?

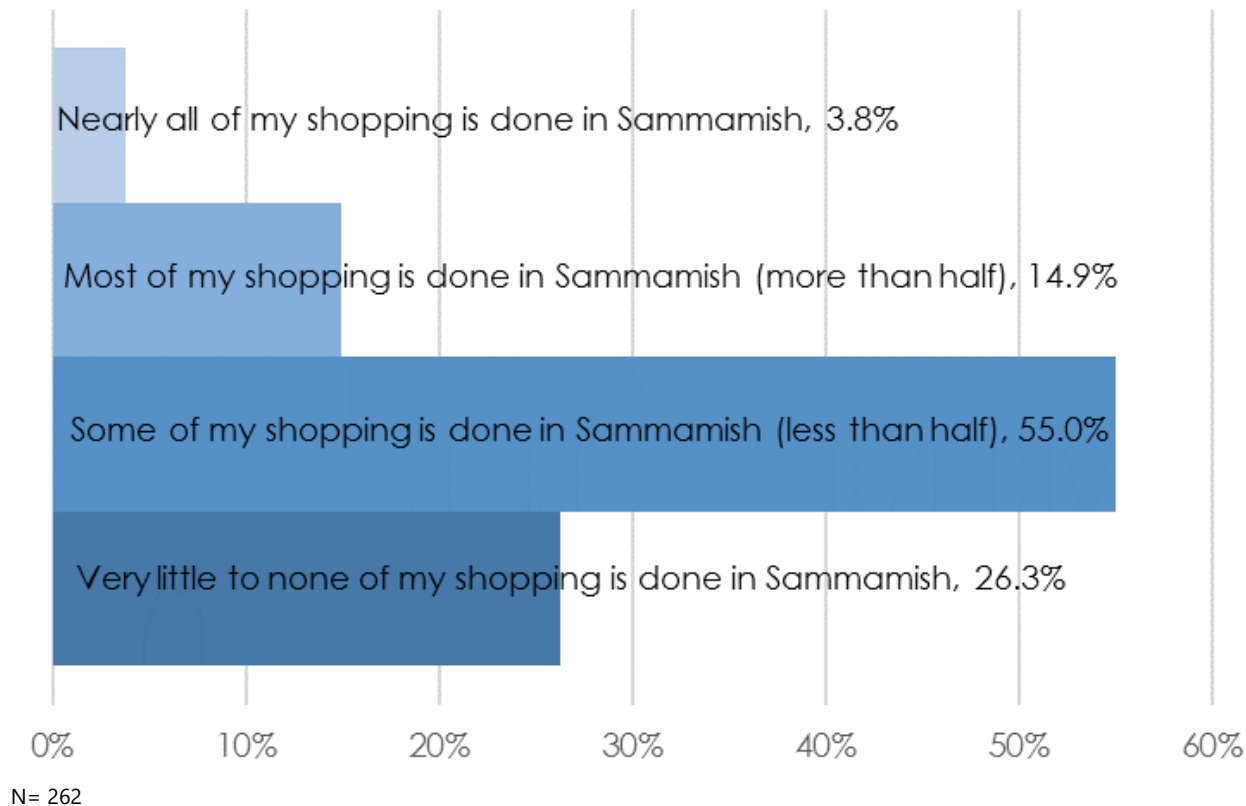


Strategic Implications

- > There is a strong desire to see local business and a wider variety in eateries

“Actually, what I would love to see is small, locally owned neighborhood shopping centers.”

5. How much of your retail shopping is done locally in Sammamish?

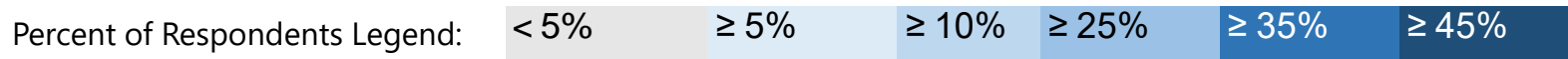


Strategic Implications

- > Residents do some shopping in Sammamish, but require other retail centers for all their shopping needs
- > 18.7% of residents do nearly all or most of their shopping in Sammamish

Questions 6-11. Where do you do your shopping?

	Sammamish	Issaquah	Redmond	Bellevue	Seattle
Entertainment	0.0%	40.9%	26.2%	20.4%	12.5%
Restaurants	5.9%	33.5%	28.5%	23.2%	8.9%
Groceries	48.0%	28.6%	19.7%	3.2%	0.6%
Non-grocery retail	1.0%	23.0%	29.8%	40.2%	6.0%
Personal finance services	32.4%	13.3%	18.6%	26.1%	9.6%
Medical services	15.3%	43.0%	16.7%	18.7%	6.3%

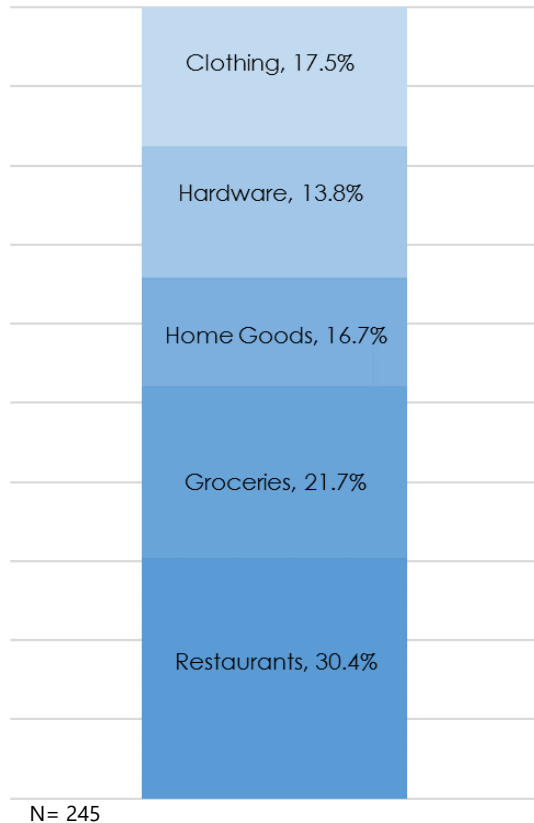


Entertainment, N= 249; Restaurants, N=256; Groceries, N=256; Non-grocery retail, N=254; Personal finance services, N=213; Medical Services, N=250

Strategic Implications

- > Issaquah Highlands and Redmond act as important destinations for entertainment
- > There is a lack of restaurant variety in Sammamish, causing residents to travel to other cities
- > Sammamish and Issaquah are the two most popular destinations for groceries
- > Residents in Sammamish have to travel to Bellevue, Redmond and Issaquah for non-grocery retail
- > Very few residents travel to Seattle for their shopping

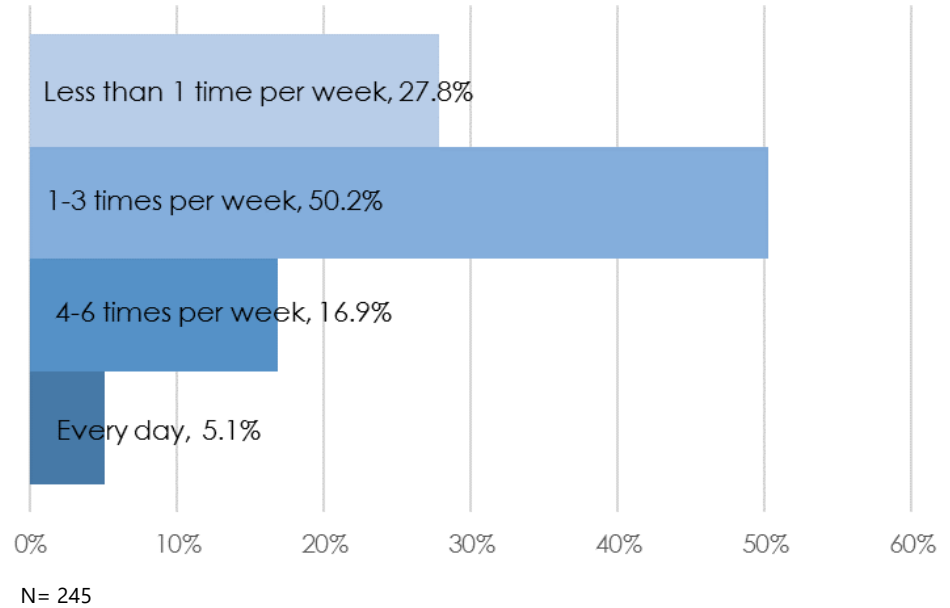
12. What is the item or service you most leave Sammamish to buy?



Strategic Implications

- > There is a lack of restaurant variety in Sammamish, causing residents to travel to other cities.

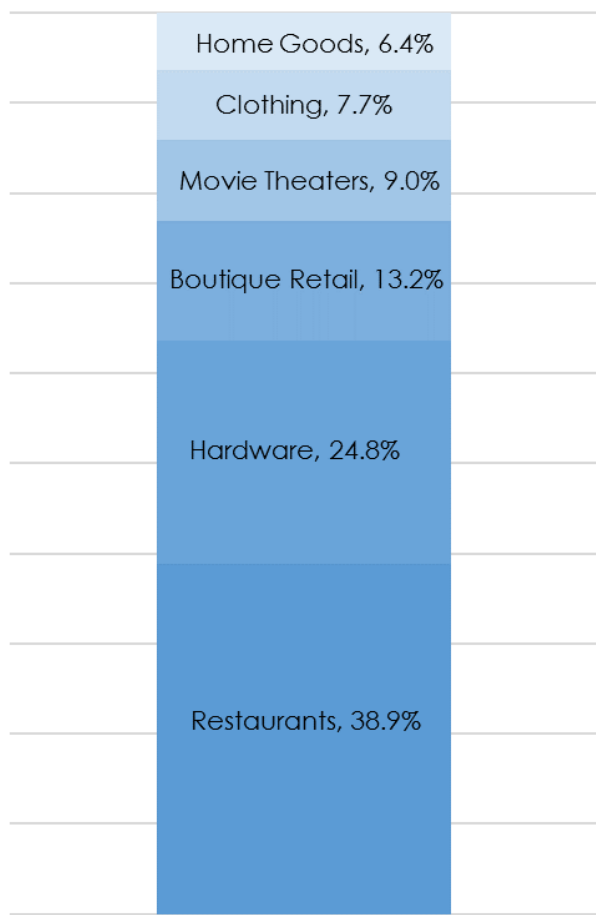
13. How often do you leave Sammamish to buy this item?



Strategic Implications

- > The majority of Sammamish residents have to travel outside of the City each week to get the items or services they need.

14. What type of retail would you most like to come to Sammamish?



N= 225

"Entertainment options- live music, sports bar or movies. Somewhere (anywhere) to go on date night that does not close at 10pm..."

"More retail. Glassybaby would be nice. More boutique stores. Maybe a brewery or a winery."

"A really good hardware store like McLendon, Ace or True Value would be terrific!"

"Restaurants, breweries, coffee shops, other hang-out, meet-friends, date-night types of venues. Must have interesting decor & facades, and must be high quality."

Strategic Implications

- > The majority of Sammamish residents have to travel outside of the City each week to get the items or services they need.

15. What are the greatest challenges you see for Sammamish's local economy?



"Retail space rent is very expensive! My husband recently pursued starting a craft brewery in Sammamish and gave up because space was too expensive."

"Our infrastructure is woefully inadequate to support Sammamish and should be improved before any new businesses or homes are built."

"Traffic! We just don't have the roads to accommodate that many more people."

Strategic Implications

- > Traffic and infrastructure are the two largest challenges Sammamish residents see for the local economy. These two concerns are highly intertwined, with a need for better road development to alleviate heavy traffic in Sammamish.

16. What are the greatest opportunities you see for Sammamish's local economy?



N= 211

Strategic Implications

- > This word cloud represents a broad list of common words used when residents thought of opportunities
- > There was less consensus on what opportunities exist for Sammamish businesses compared to challenges and strengths
- > Many respondents mentioned the high income of the population
- > Some respondents used this field to re-voice their concerns about the traffic and infrastructure within Sammamish

F

Business & Community Response Summary

The following represents an overall assessment of common themes amongst both businesses owners and residents.

COMMON THEME: The perspectives of the public and business owners overlap significantly, largely because many business owners are also Sammamish residents.

Greatest Assets

- > The community
- > High income-earning residents
- > Location

Greatest Challenges

- > Traffic
- > Cost of housing

Desired Commercial Development

- > Small-scale development
- > Local businesses
- > More sit-down, non-chain restaurants
- > Entertainment options
- > Business diversity