

Executive Overview

Introduction

To aid in planning for the False Creek Flats, an industry survey has been conducted among area businesses and enterprises located there. A total of 141 businesses responded to the mail-return survey completed in April and May 2005. The sample is representative of the geographic distribution of businesses within the Flats (see map on page 5) and a broad range of types of businesses/organizations.

A brief overview of findings is presented here with greater detail in the Highlight Summary section of this report.

Key Findings

Business Characteristics in Brief

- Wholesale trade is reported as the most dominant type of business activity (33%), followed by retail trade (12%) and manufacturing (11%). A wide range of other types of industry sectors are represented in the Flats.
- On average, businesses have been at this location for about 10 years.
- In terms of floor space in the Flats overall, 38% is used by businesses in this survey for warehouse/storage purposes, 29% for manufacturing/industrial repair, 14% for administrative offices and the remaining for assorted other purposes.

Economic Impact

- False Creek Flats businesses sell goods and services to customers throughout the City of Vancouver (21% Downtown, 25% other City), elsewhere in the Lower Mainland (26%) and outside the Lower Mainland (29%).
- These businesses purchase goods and services from all areas as well with 37% from other City businesses (10% Downtown, 27% rest of City), 27% rest of Lower Mainland and 36% outside of Lower Mainland.

Employee and Transportation Needs

- Hours of operation are largely weekday daytime (90%), followed by weekends (44%) and then weekday evenings (23%).
- Typical staffing needs on an average day are 18 full-time and 2 part-time staff.
- Employers say that most staff travel to work by single occupant vehicle (68%).
- For about half of companies (52%), a majority of their staff lives in the City (50% or more are City residents)

- The most commonly used vehicle size is the small van or pick-up truck (used by more than two-thirds of businesses, over half need access by light trucks (55%) and more than a quarter need access by heavy trucks (28%).

Location Decision Factors

- By far, the factors with highest priority (essential or important) for most False Creek Flats businesses are cost of land or rent (90%) and adequate parking (83%).
- Other characteristics and factors with high priority for businesses include loading bays (67%), face-to-face contact (67%) and being close to customers (67%). Somewhat smaller majorities also consider being close to Downtown (63%), ground floor occupancy (57%), large truck access (54%) and high ceilings (54%) as essential or important in choosing a business location.
- Although most location decision makers are satisfied with their location in the Flats for the site characteristics of greatest importance to them, there is somewhat less satisfaction with these aspects: room to expand, high visibility and outdoor storage space (where 40-50% of those who regard these factors as important appear to be not satisfied).
- About two-thirds of businesses surveyed (64%) moved to the Flats location after having established their business elsewhere. Proximity to Downtown Vancouver and their customers was the foremost reason.
- Most businesses have no plans for moving from this location (70%), while almost one-quarter (23%) would like to expand their current operation at this location. Furthermore, most businesses are unaware of any other location in the City or region that would meet their location needs.
- About one-third of businesses, when asked, said they had specific requirements in terms of access, parking or road/rail/transportation improvements in order to remain and grow in their present location. The most needed improvement is parking – more/better/cheaper or free parking is desired.

Social and Community Practices

- About half of False Creek Flats businesses participate in social or community or environmental programs and practices that aim to make a difference in the workplace or the community. The most common of these are environmental (reduce/reuse/recycle programs or waste reduction) and charitable donations.

Recommendations

- The cost of land and rent are the cornerstones of location planning; keeping these costs reasonable for these businesses is a primary concern.
- Parking related improvements appear to be the most pressing need and the area of improvement desired by the most businesses, in particular adequate parking.
- Policies allowing room to expand would also be welcomed by a sizable minority.