



Q1 2022 Business Retention and Expansion Report

Prepared by Ted Thelin and Becky Newton

PROGRESS UPDATE:

A total of 21 business outreach interviews were conducted. Primary issues continued to be complications due to pandemic and state restrictions.

There were five retention cases. All cases were due rent increases, three manufacturers, and two auto related businesses (repair/detailing). Lakewood worked with the Economic Development Board of Tacoma/Pierce County on two cases. All businesses were either able to renegotiate leases (four), or find another suitable location (one).

The City provided resources and connections for workforce development, financing, permit assistance, legal, and accounting services through our partnerships.

We partnered with Washington State Procurement and Technical Assistance Center, and Pierce County to host the 2022 Pierce County Purchasing Forum, powered by Alliance Northwest. Approximately 175 Pierce County businesses attended. Government contracting has been an avenue for businesses to diversify income streams.

CONTENT UPDATE:

Homelessness has been the most popular topic by far, with workforce and supply chain issues being hot topics. Lakewood businesses interviewed are mainly concerned with:

Homelessness

- Every business with a physical storefront reports concern with homelessness and how it affects business

Difficulty with hiring, training, and retaining new employees

- Every business with 5 or more employees reports workforce challenges
 - Legal assistants
 - Attorneys
 - General professionals (office/sales/marketing)
 - Social workers
 - Daycare/early childhood education

- Construction workers/contractors
- Skilled laborers
- Baristas
- Entry level warehouse

City Business

- Most businesses report the city does not affect business in a positive or negative way
- Businesses are reporting that the experience of applying for permits with the City is improving
- Lakewood needs to rezone areas, especially areas that have not been revised in a long time
 - Commercial on bottom, residential on top.
 - Walkable areas where people can live, work, and play
- Lakewood needs more spaces for small business (commercial/light industrial)
- Business owners appreciate open communication with the City

Online meetings

- The most commonly reported change due to the pandemic is the prevalence of online meetings
 - More cases make it to trial (less no-show issues)
 - Easier to schedule and keep more meetings
 - What are we going to do with all the office space?

Transportation

- Reported as acceptable outside of I-5 and SR-512 backups or circumstance such as accidents
- Health Care and Social Assistance businesses that are close to bus lines report public transit greatly improves their ability to connect with low income and disabled clients

Importing/Supply Chain Issues

- Importing lead times are reported as sporadic and awful
- Estimating jobs is extremely difficult due to changes in pricing and availability of goods and materials