

*What is Durham's commercial profile?*

*What are business owners' experiences operating in Durham?*

*What are their suggestions for Durham's future success?*

Key Findings of the

## **Business Visitation & Survey Project**

Durham Economic Development Committee

April 2011

## Executive Summary

*“One strong faction in Durham wants to see progress and has gained some upward momentum. Another large group wants to preserve same-ness and is afraid of commercial development. These two come together to create non-movement. However, the climate feels more ready to change than in the past 10 years. There’s an openness and collaboration; people are taking baby steps.”*

From June 2010 through February 2011, volunteers organized by Durham’s Economic Development Committee (EDC) reached out to the business community to learn about their business and their experience doing business in Durham, guided by a “discussionaire” template. The EDC also distributed a one-page anonymous survey to gauge business owners’ familiarity with, and support for, various projects and issues related to economic development. Thirdly, the EDC analyzed 2011 commercial tax records to round out our understanding of Durham’s business segments.

Primary findings from the visitations are:

- 1. Durham must change its regional reputation of being unfriendly to business.**
- 2. Restrictive zoning and stringent code enforcement add time and expense to projects.**
- 3. Commercial space is hard to find, expensive, and poor quality.**
- 4. More (and more useful) parking is needed.**
- 5. More visible signage is needed.**
- 6. Improve downtown ambiance and safety.**
- 7. Expand community and family-friendly amenities - restaurants and retail.**
- 8. UNH is an asset; we should strengthen Durham-UNH relations.**
- 9. Better education and support is needed for current and prospective business owners.**
- 10. Durham’s commercial success is inextricably linked with the Town’s continued attractiveness to residents and solid real estate market.**
- 11. Mix of cynicism and hope for future.**

Other items of significance:

- Durham has a diverse mix of businesses that extend well beyond student-focused hospitality, retail, and services. For its commercial tax base, Durham still relies heavily on rental housing, Goss International, and Spruce Woods.
- 42% of interviewees said that they were already Durham residents when they started their business, or had moved to Durham for “family first, business second.”
- One of the most striking findings of the survey was how uninformed business owners say they are about potential economic development projects. (Nevertheless, many of these respondents hold strong opinions on these projects.)

Readers should kindly bear in mind that all of data in this report are best-effort approximations, and that the project’s purpose is to identify important *trends* in order to catalyze action.

\* Cover graphic: Created using Wordle.net, a toy for generating “word clouds” from provided text (in this case, the 27,172 words in the interview reports). The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text.

## Project Overview<sup>1</sup>

From June 2010 through February 2011, volunteers organized by Durham’s Economic Development Committee (EDC) reached out to the business community to learn about their business and their experience doing business in Durham, guided by a “discussionnaire” template. Interviewers documented their discussions, which interviewees edited and eventually approved. The EDC also distributed a one-page anonymous survey to gauge business owners’ familiarity with, and support for, various projects and issues related to economic development. Finally, the EDC analyzed 2011 commercial tax records to round out our understanding of Durham’s business sectors. See **Appendix A (Project Objectives)**, **Appendix B (Discussionnaire Questions)**, **Appendix C (Survey)**, and **Appendix D (Snapshot of Durham Businesses)**.

- Master list of 141 Durham businesses<sup>2</sup>
- Of these, 70 businesses were interviewed<sup>3</sup> (50%)
- 17 business owners were unresponsive or declined to be interviewed (12%)
- 56 single-page anonymous issue surveys received (40%)

Our initial intent was to approach every Durham business owner for an in-person conversation. With a window of opportunity to inform the Town’s 10-year Master Plan but with limited volunteer capacity, we decided to analyze and share these results before all businesses were approached.

Before discussing the findings, it is worth noting a few process-related outcomes:

- **Updated information on Durham businesses.** Surprisingly, the Town does not maintain a record or resource list of Durham businesses. The Durham Business Association (DBA) list served as an invaluable start for our project, and we added 34 businesses and removed 14. We believe there are additional businesses operating in Durham that are yet to be identified by the Town, DBA, or EDC.
- **Increased familiarity with business issues.** Our 18 volunteers, including 4 Town Councilors and 2 Town staff, emerged with a greater understanding of business needs and opportunities for Town support.
- **Positive feedback from business owners.** A key objective of the visitation project was to build relationships and trust between Town, business community, and engaged citizenry. Many business owners went out of their way to express appreciation for our outreach.

In this report, while every effort was made (within limited volunteer capacity) to ensure accuracy of information, readers should kindly bear in mind that all of data in this report are best-effort approximations. The project’s primary purpose is to identify important *trends* in order to build understanding and catalyze action.

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<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Durham business owners who shared their time and perspectives; to our team of 18 volunteer interviewers (Diana Carroll, Jim Campbell, Doug Clark, Tom Elliott, Richard England, Susan Fuller, Adam Gilsdorf, Jay Gooze, Jim Lawson, Jason Lenk, John Lilly, Ute Luxem, Bob Pavlik, Todd Selig, Mike Sievert, Rob Sullivan, Yusi Turell, Andrea Yager); to the Durham Business Association and Town staff; to Jason Lenk for serving as first project chair; and to Jim Lawson for Durham tax database analysis. Project managed and report written by Yusi Turell.

<sup>2</sup> This is an approximation due to business turnover since last June and to the fact that home-based businesses are underrepresented. After the visitations and surveys were complete, 17 additional businesses were identified from the Town tax database, bringing the number to 141.

<sup>3</sup> The number of actual interviews is slightly lower, since some Durham business owners own multiple businesses.

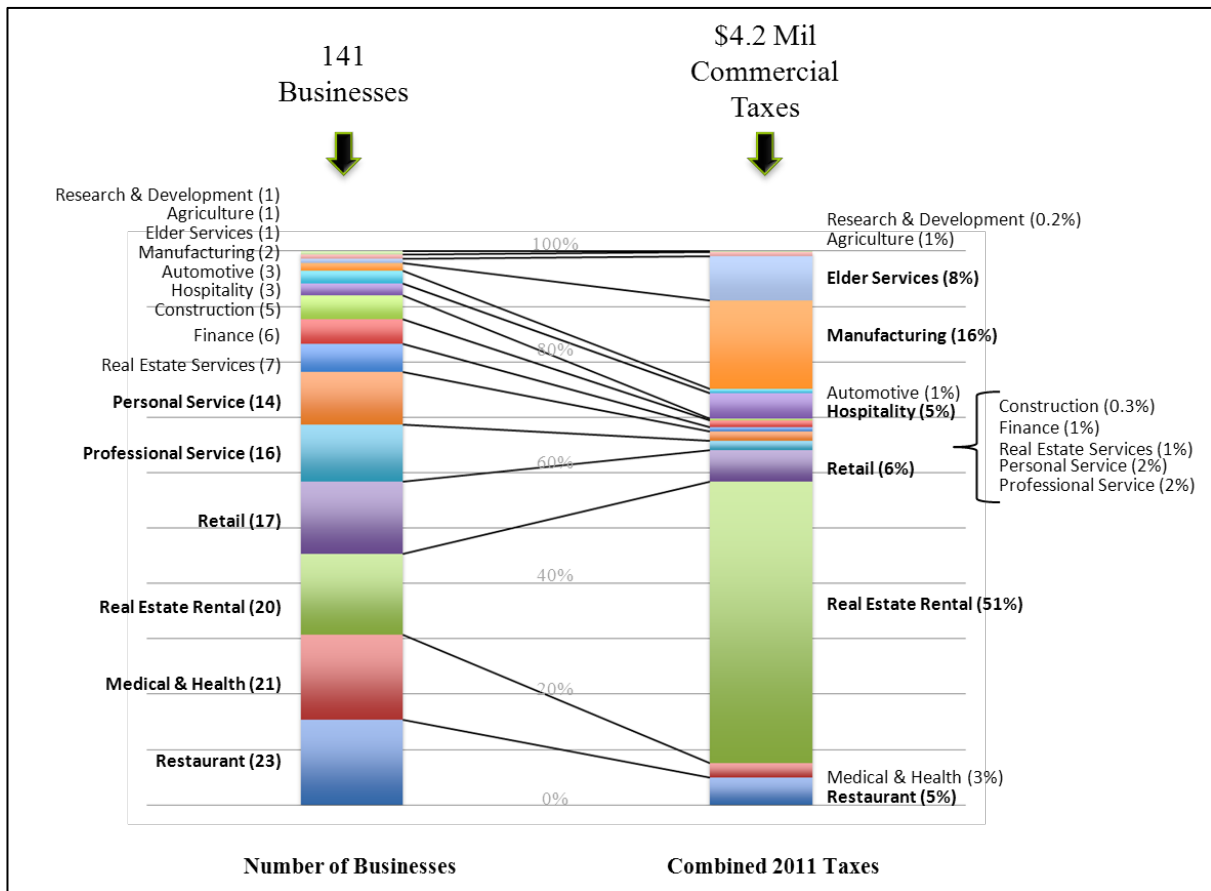
Profile of Durham Businesses

Contrary to public perception, Durham has a diverse mix of businesses that extend well beyond student-focused hospitality, retail, and services.

In addition to visible restaurants, bars, retail, and personal care offerings in the Central Business District, there is an exciting range of less visible businesses in Durham – including professional services, medical and health, manufacturing, and research and development. Our outreach also revealed more “creative economy” home-based businesses.

However, for its commercial tax base, Durham still relies heavily on rental housing (approximately 51% of property taxes paid), Goss International (16%), and Spruce Woods (8%). **Figure 1** profiles Durham’s business sectors by the number of businesses in each sector and each sector’s combined 2011 tax contribution.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1 - Durham Businesses by Sector**



<sup>4</sup> The tax assessment database was used to determine the assessed value of each business and the resulting property tax based on the 2011 rate. In situations where more than one business was located at a single property, the tax database and observations were used to estimate how much space was occupied by each business. The tax contribution was then allocated accordingly. Although this estimate has some degree of variability due to limited information, the aggregate numbers are considered to be reasonable estimates. (One complexity encountered was when the property had a business on the first floor and apartments on upper floors, as often occurs on Main Street. In this situation, estimates of the floor space were made for both the businesses and apartments, and the taxes were allocated accordingly with the apartments placed in the Real Estate Rental category.)

Many businesses lease space from commercial landlords. Two property owners – Galaro Properties (13 Jenkins Court) and Colonial Durham Associates (Mill Plaza) – lease to more than 10 business owners, and nine other property owners own property on which three or more businesses operate (in some cases, their own).

Other items of note:

- Primary customers include community (61% of survey respondents), students (50%), and outside Durham (59%). Less than one-third agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Businesses like mine must cater primarily to students in order to succeed in Durham.”
- Businesses serving students noted the difficulty of operating in a seven-month calendar (considering winter and other holiday vacations).
- Responses varied widely to the question, “How’s business?” – depending on sector.
- Many businesses were capitalized through individual/family savings and loans.
- The majority of survey respondents employee between 1-5 people and have been in Durham for 11+ years.
- 37% of businesses (and 45% of those interviewed) are members of the Durham Business Association.

### Profiles of Durham Business Owners

Interviewees noted Durham’s proximity to UNH and UNH students and its community demographics (affluent, stable) as the primary business-related drivers of starting or locating their businesses here. However, responses to the question, “Why Durham?” were as much about personal as professional motivations.

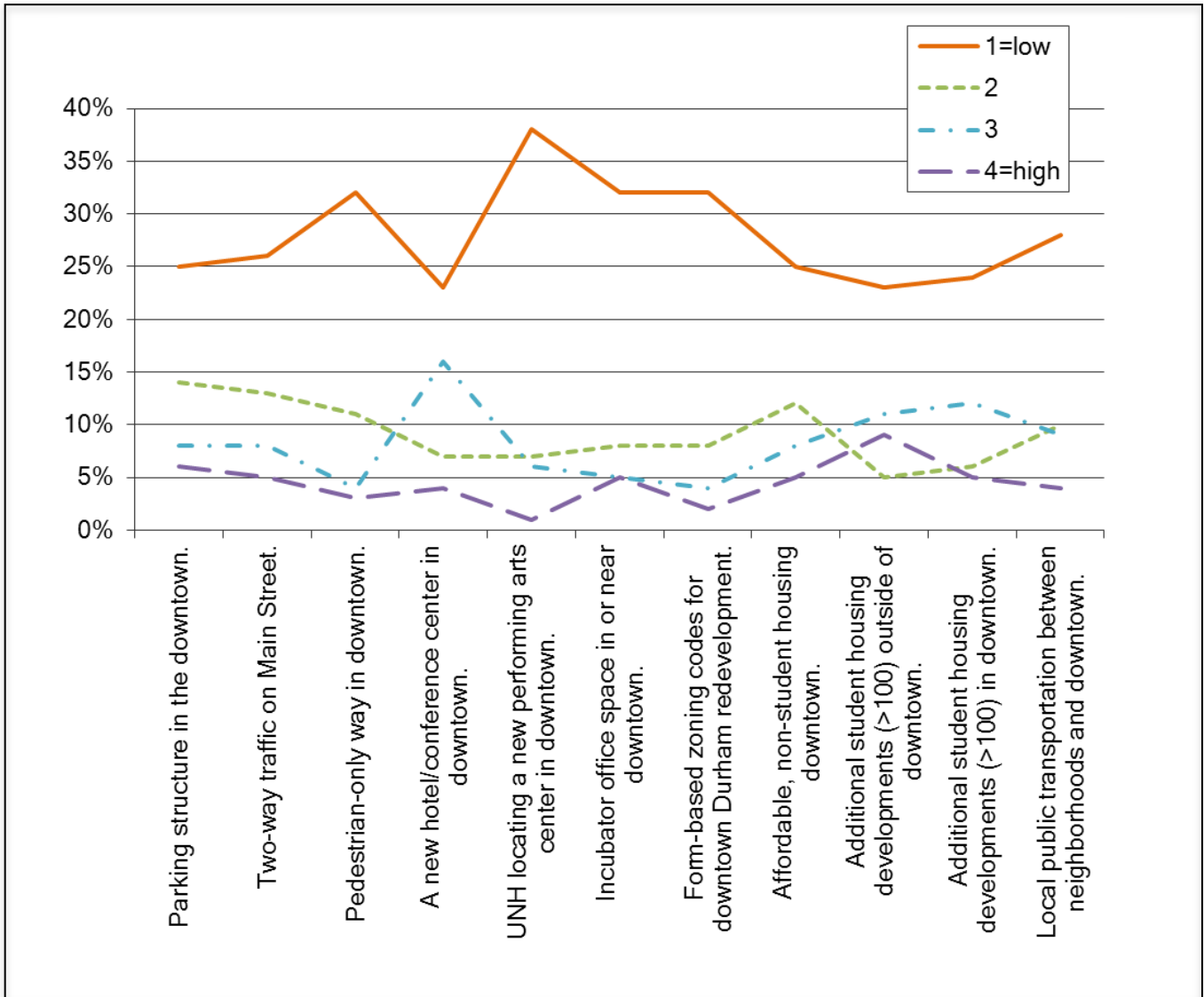
- 42% of interviewees said that they were already Durham residents when they started their business, or had moved to Durham for “family first, business second” (citing strong K-12 schools, natural beauty, history, etc.)
- 20% of interviewees noted they are UNH alumni – and 3% are current faculty

Durham business owners hold a range of opinions about economic development projects and issues – see **Attachment (“Durham Business Survey Results”)**. Highlights include:

- Downtown businesses largely do not support two-way traffic on Main Street or a pedestrian-only area downtown.
- There is strong support for a UNH performing arts center downtown.
- Most support the creation of additional affordable, non-student housing downtown.
- Most strongly support enhanced transit opportunities between downtown and neighborhoods.
- Based on a small sample size, there was not a significant difference between the opinions of business owners in downtown zones and those in other areas.

One of the most striking findings of the survey was how **uninformed** business owners say they are about potential economic development projects such as a new parking structure, student housing, two-way traffic, and UNH performing arts center. **Figure 2** shows that the overwhelming plurality of respondents rate themselves as being uninformed (i.e., 1 on a scale of 1-4) about every topic asked.

**Figure 2 – Survey Responses to Question #1 (“Rate how INFORMED you are about the following potential projects or activities (1=LOW, 4=HIGH)”)**



This lack of information did not dissuade many respondents from holding **strong opinions**. For every issue, at least 45% (and in one case 100%) of people who rated themselves Least Informed nevertheless had a very strong opinion about that issue, either Strongly Supporting or Strongly Opposing it. Put another way, many of those with strong opinions one way or the other are self-admittedly uninformed; for example, 70% of the people who Strongly Support major student housing outside of downtown actually rate themselves as Least Informed; as do 43% of those who are Strongly Opposed. This context should be kept in mind as we analyze opinions from the surveys and interviews. It is possible that, given more context and the opportunity for discussion, opinions would change.

## Primary Visitation Findings

While respondents may not be up to date with Durham's latest economic development topics, Durham's business owners have valuable feedback on what their businesses need to thrive and important suggestions for the Town of Durham's role.

- 1. Durham must change its regional reputation of being unfriendly to business.** Whether fact or perception, Durham has a reputation of being difficult and costly in relation to neighboring communities, both in new development and in the redevelopment of existing buildings.

*"Frustrated with the 'interpretation' of the code and ordinances which have forced him to invest substantially more in leasehold improvements than he planned, or thinks is reasonable. Estimates it costs about 33% more to build in Durham due to our interpretation of codes compared to neighboring communities."*

*"The 'most restrictive' interpretation of an ordinance was in place. Any code inspection typically added 10 percent to the cost of a product without any discernable difference in the final product. I remember standing at the Ricci Supply contractor desk (Portsmouth, NH) with other people talking about the high cost of doing business in Durham."*

*"Of the 4 towns we work with, Durham is the most difficult to work with. Members of zoning board, town council, and zoning board are much harder to deal with than town employees. The elected officials are very unfriendly to business."*

*"The business is managed out of Durham but extends into other [Seacoast] communities. Generally speaking, regulations tied to the real estate business in Durham are tougher and translate into the need to spend more \$\$ compared to other communities (e.g., parking regulations, permits, etc.)."*

*"My clients report that Durham is a 'tough place to do business.' Top two issues: parking and signage."*

*"Came in with a negative attitude due to stories being told but found not to be true and quickly overcame the negative attitude. Everyone has been great to deal with."*

*"We didn't discuss specific examples, however, Durham's reputation is that it is 'not a business friendly environment.'"*

- 2. Restrictive zoning and stringent code enforcement add time and expense to projects.** Of the survey respondents who expressed an opinion, 79% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "Zoning and regulatory procedures in Durham are favorable for new investments." Several interviewees asked for the Town to change its approach to zoning and to building code enforcement.

*"Tough rules and regulations which result in additional cost for owners; not supportive/encouraging for new businesses – opportunity for town officials to demonstrate more discretion relative to enforcing rules and regulations."*

*"From the perspectives of a resident and professional, [owner] thinks that the town's building code is unduly intrusive. Code enforcement is also excessively strict."*

*"I don't think the town is picking on us, or on businesses in general. I know people who do work on their houses have to pull permits, too. It just feels like it should be much easier to do things like put in a new door."*

*“I think Durham is more bureaucratic, maybe taking longer to gain approvals. Other towns seem to be able to move faster, but I’ve never thought that I’ve been treated unreasonably or unfairly.”*

*“Town Building Inspector is inordinately strict on some issues, but responsive and professional.”*

*“Tom is strict but a good guy. He gives advice that is safer in the long term and saves business owners money, e.g., requiring more roof insulation, but he is stricter than inspectors at any other location where I’ve worked.”*

*“Building Inspector should use more discretion. The codes are good guidance, but say explicitly that final authority rests with the local building inspector. If he chooses to not apply discretion, even if the project is safe and functional, it puts the project on hold and costs a lot of money – and deters future developers from coming in. Developers are reluctant to work in Durham downtown because of how costly the rules and regulations may be, relative to surrounding areas. Perhaps a local groundswell should ask the Town Council to direct Town staff to apply more discretion in inspection.”*

*“Review current ordinances for change opportunities to encourage more diverse types of businesses incl. restaurants; make downtown Durham a destination.”*

*“Create creative/better zoning packages takes too long to develop in town- costs the owners and the developers too much money so they stay away. It has stifled development find a way to speed up process.”*

*“Review Zoning Ordinance and adjust as necessary. Allow the Courthouse District to be more of a business district like downtown.”*

*“Change to 3-1 zoning, allowing three floors in a four-story building to be student housing.”*

*“One important recent improvement has been to remove the Town Council from consideration of conditional use permitting; the Planning Board is less political.”*

*“Owner supports attempts to change the calculation of developable land to omit ‘very poorly drained soil’” but not merely ‘poorly drained soil’ – since Durham’s geography all but disallows development. This lingering barrier is one of the relics of Durham’s anti-growth days.”*

*“Invest in infrastructure and put zoning in place to attract a Goss-like taxpayer.”*

- 3. Commercial space is hard to find, expensive, and poor quality.** The demand for student apartments pushes up the prices of commercial space, while developers and banks have little incentive to build new stock without a committed tenant. Over 75% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “More commercial office space downtown will be positive for the business climate in Durham,” and the plurality also agreed with the statement, “More commercial office space outside of downtown will be positive for the business climate in Durham.” Several interviewees noted that it had taken them many weeks to find appropriate space; obviously, we were not able to interview those who required quicker turnaround and went elsewhere!

*“Durham’s commercial spaces are tired and in need of renewal/reinvestment.”*

*“High property taxes are making commercial rents too expensive.”*

*“It was difficult to find office space in Durham. We looked for a few months.”*

*“There were a lot of student apartments out there, but it was hard to find good office space. We had trouble finding space here. We’re competing with students who are paying rents that are about twice what commercial tenants are paying. I had a hard time finding a realtor to even return my phone calls. They*



*were just not interested in showing commercial space. In many of the spaces we were shown, I could see right away there were life-safety issues and deteriorated infrastructure that made them unsuitable for us.”*

*“It’s hard to build on spec with property taxes so high and you are competing with existing built commercial inventory that can be leased locally for as low as \$5 per SF. New construction must lease at over \$20 per SF to work economically.”*

*“Finding space was a challenge. We looked at several different locations which did not fit our needs. We are in our current space, but would like to expand into a space that is larger and more conducive.”*

**4. More (and more useful) parking is needed.** Overwhelmingly, business owners pointed to a mismatch between Durham’s current parking spaces/policies and their business needs.

*“Parking is a huge challenge in Durham. Main Street one-hour parking is difficult. Parking downtown for lunch generally means getting parking tickets!”*

*“Many of the services offered by the business cannot be provided in one hour.”*

*“Parking is an issue. We’re here in the plaza and a lot of times students park here because they can’t find parking on the street. That makes it difficult sometimes for our customers to find parking. If there was parking on the street, the students wouldn’t park here in the plaza.”*

*“[Our employees] are constantly shuffling cars around in the driveway by our building.”*

*“Downtown businesses would benefit if shoppers were able to obtain validated parking.”*

*“The minimum parking requirement (for new developments) can be a killer.”*

**5. More visible signage is needed.** Route 4, Mill Plaza, and Jenkins Court were cited as particular opportunities for more effective signage to inform and attract visitors.

*“Town businesses need more/better visibility on Route 4, and recognition of our historic district.”*

*“Often, new customers mention that they had no idea [we are] in the Plaza, and they found out by accident. The new sign put up to promote businesses in the Plaza is often overlooked as drivers have to focus on traffic rather than signs in the area it is put up.”*

*“Larger sign [for Mill Plaza] on Main Street.”*

*“Overly restrictive sign size in the ordinance.”*

*“The town should be more flexible with some of their restrictions. They let me put up our sign board outside our door, but it would be much better if we could put it out on the corner of Main Street, where people can see it. They finally put up a sign for Jenkins Court, but why can’t they put up a sign that says what’s down here? If they said it would cost \$100 to get our business on that sign, I’d do it.”*

**6. Improve downtown ambiance and safety.** Interviewees explained that the lease arrangement of most downtown businesses did not incentivize property owners to improve their properties. They pointed to garbage, delinquency, and other customer-unfriendly activities in certain areas of town.

*“Building owners in downtown need to improve the appearance of their buildings and perform better ongoing maintenance.”*

*“Downtown looks crappy because most of the business spaces are leased, and I wished it looked better. I think it would if more property owners were the business owners. Right now, many property/building owners have owned the real estate for many years and have no incentive to do other than what they are currently doing, which is just collecting the rent. An example is Young’s Restaurant, which always has a fresh coat of paint and looks nice. Young’s is an owned property.”*

*“Although the actions available to the town may be limited, the managers noted many specific examples of Main Street buildings that have deteriorated due to lack of maintenance and improvement. The result is an unattractive downtown that doesn’t attract residents (especially when school is in session). Young’s restaurant was noted as a positive example of improving Main Street by updating a building’s façade coupled with ongoing maintenance.”*

*“There is a great deal of illegal activity in the Downtown Durham area as a result of the UNH student population. Drug deals and transfer of alcohol to minors is in full view from the store window. Other than the owner of Durham House of Pizza installing a video recording device, the alley and parking lot remains the scene of fights, illegal activity and persistent littering of trash and broken beer bottles.”*

*“Get the garbage truck to go down Madbury court because we are tired of having everybody on the street put their garbage in front of our property. If this trash flies around, we have to clean it up.”*

*“Community trash service for downtown businesses= less dumpsters and possible revenue for town-shared recycling service for downtown restaurants and businesses.”*

- 7. Expand community and family-friendly amenities - restaurants and retail.** Nearly 75% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Overall, more businesses in Durham are needed that focus on residents.”

*“Hardware store or other store that would create more of a downtown destination.”*

*“Break the perception of Durham as being a student playground and unfriendly to business and adults. The town of Durham needs its own cultural institutions beyond that offered by the university, i.e. a music or theater venue.”*

*“Owner prefers to cater to residents. Only 20% of business is students – finds them immature and entitled.”*

*“Create a zone where family centered services / businesses can exist and have synergy for multi-tasking busy moms. Protect this core family overlay district from the ingress of student housing. I have been approached by several professionals looking to locate in Durham, but they just don’t want to deal with the co-location of college students with their professional services.”*

- 8. UNH is an asset; we should strengthen Durham-UNH relations.** Despite growing retail competition from UNH, over two-thirds of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that *“The presence of UNH has helped my business over the last 10 years.”* One-fifth of interviewees are UNH alumni. New initiatives within UNH and within Durham may help strengthen relations through internships, entrepreneurship and commercialization activities, and other commercial ties.

*“Most businesses come to Durham because of UNH. A better relationship with UNH would be helpful.”*

*“[Located business in Durham because of] Proximity to UNH and access to UNH library – this was before computers and the Internet.”*

*“I graduated from UNH in 2007. I loved Durham when I was a student and thought it would be a great place to do business.”*

*“Went to UNH; lived in Durham already and started first business.”*

*“I enjoy being within walking distance of my UNH office. I could drive to Pease, but the students who intern here could not. It’s a quality of life issue, more than an economic viability issue.”*

*“The University was really the biggest attraction for us to come to Durham. We were really hoping to interact with the Civil Engineering Department, maybe take on a few interns and eventually hire a few new graduates, but I’ve been really disappointed in their lack of outreach. The best they did was tell me to type up an ad that they would post in the department, and I did that but I haven’t gotten any response... One of the reasons we chose Durham was to develop that synergy.”*

*“Collaborate with university to minimize additional [retail] competition”*

*“I believe that for most businesses here, we know that the students are our bread and butter. When the students leave for the summer, I see sales go down about 20 percent, which is ok, because I can take a break. When they come back, we’re always up 20 to 25 percent.”*

- 9. Better education and support is needed for current and prospective business owners.** Business owners pointed to a lack of information, advocacy, and guidance – both in locating to Durham and growing their businesses here. Many of the businesses in Durham are quite small, sole proprietorships where the owner is also the primary worker in the establishment. This affords owners with very limited time to become involved in local affairs, participate actively as part of the Durham Business Association, or remain engaged locally. Along with the lack of a mass media publication that focuses appropriately on Durham, these factors may explain in part our survey findings that most business owners rate themselves as Least Informed on economic development matters.

*“Town officials to operate as assets for businesses; help potential business owners save time and \$\$ by providing all information early and by facilitating variety of interactions with different town officials; potentially via liaison (EDC member or other?) who knows players and processes and helps navigate through.”*

*“There was recently a 4-page spread on Rochester businesses published by Foster's newspaper. The Rochester spread was coordinated by the Rochester Chamber of Commerce. Durham does not have a Chamber of Commerce. Who is the Durham Economic Development Committee and what is their role? What role does the Planning and Community Development play in Durham businesses? Why is it so costly to be part of the Durham Business Association yet we see so little involvement? Business owners could certainly use help navigating the town governments' role.”*

*“Local business associations need to more broadly represent the businesses in Durham, and not just the interests of a few members.”*

*“I’d like to get better at marketing to and informing our customers... I’d love for the DBA to host an event, How can one get a message to greater Durham TODAY? I’ve retained a social networking consultant to help me think through this, while we continue to place newspaper and radio ads.”*

*“Share economic development news/growth news. Share business information.”*

*“It would be beneficial if the town were trying to bring more businesses in the downtown. Our two commercial spaces are vacant. Our main business is student housing, but anything the town can do to draw in small business to fill those vacancies would help us.”*

*“Provide a welcome package to new business that will tell you the University calendar and the University agenda and when the football games are and things like that. I didn’t know anything when I first started out here.”*

*“Provide a welcome packet with names of CPA and lawyers.”*

**10. Durham’s commercial success is inextricably linked with the Town’s continued attractiveness to residents and solid real estate market.** One of the EDC’s guiding objectives is to diversify Durham’s tax base and, by extension, to enable the community to maintain or improve its priority investments (such as school quality and overall quality of life) without further increasing residential taxes. In other words, economic development is a critical input to Durham livability.

The visitations reveal that the converse is also true: maintaining the quality of ORCSD schools and of Durham living are critical inputs to economic development.

Those involved in improving Durham’s business and development climate would do well to pay attention to other issues that attract well-educated, affluent entrepreneurs and consumers – while those engaged in debate around other public priorities should understand how smart economic development will benefit their interests as well.

*“Durham offers a stable customer base due to the permanence of the University as a major employer and our per capita income of \$83,000/year, but one of the bigger draws to Durham for him was the public school system.”*

*“[Located in Durham because] Durham’s profile is affluent and good credit scores etc.”*

*“There are not too many ways in which the Town of Durham could directly support our business. We rely on solid, long term residents to populate and stabilize our patient base. As long as the Town of Durham maintains Durham as a place in which these types of people want to live, we should continue to maintain a solid practice in Durham.”*

*“Owner moved here so son could attend the Oyster River school system. The business decision came second.”*

*“Family came first. They wanted to live and work in the same town, and chose Durham as a place to live first, and as a business opportunity second.”*

*“Good schools for my kids, wanted to work and live in same tow.”*

*“Having a store within walking distance to the high school allowed her flexibility in raising her children.”*

*“Two of our original doctors are from Durham and they wanted to practice in Durham.”*

*“Moved to town for personal reasons (schools, rural setting) then opened the home based business, would have done that wherever they lived.”*

*“He and his wife looked at coastal communities from Boston to Portland before deciding to locate in Durham. The Oyster River Schools and the beauty of the landscape (especially the house lot they bought) attracted him and his wife to Durham.”*

**11. Mix of cynicism and hope for future.** Many business owners who shared their perspectives with us have been involved in Durham's economic development debates for years, sometimes for decades. Some expressed frustration at the Town's long-standing and persistent barriers to commercial growth and development. Nevertheless, most felt there has been a marked shift in the community's and Council's openness to economic development as a means to diminishing the residential tax burden and improving the vibrancy of our downtown.

*"One strong faction in Durham wants to see progress and has gained some upward momentum. Another large group wants to preserve same-ness and is afraid of commercial development. These two come together to create non-movement. However, the climate feels more ready to change than in the past 10 years. There's an openness and collaboration; people are taking baby steps."*

*"In some cases, the perception of Durham's openness to business lags reality. Previously, the Town Council was led by so-called 'tenured radicals' who didn't understand business and were intensely anti-growth. Now there's been a backlash to that approach and these are in the minority."*

*"It is easier to leave it the way it is than work with the town or make improvements. Got burned by on Master plan volunteering. The committee would not listen to his concerns and the committee was not business friendly."*

*"In last 10 years or so, Town has become more pro-development and Town Planner has been very helpful."*

*"[Owner] is excited/encouraged by all the current activity in town (new buildings, student apartments which should provide potential customers; he sees a lot of potential through the new business school and conference center, as well."*

## Appendix A – Business Visitation Project Objectives

1. Shape the Town’s business and economic development policies through a deeper understanding of current business segments and their unique needs.
2. Build relationships and trust between Town, business community, and engaged citizenry.
3. Ensure business community’s opinions and concerns are reflected in Town activities.
4. Provide useful resources to business owners.

## Appendix B – Discussionaire Questions

Original survey was mailed in March 2010. *Italicized* text represents additional questions we decided to include in face-to-face conversations, based on the EDC’s assessment of current topics and opportunities.

Company:  
Name & Title:  
Interviewer(s):  
Date:

### PART I: QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

1. Describe your business in 100 words. (Include business profile: # of personnel, years in business, own or lease arrangement?) *What is your role?*
2. What market or audience did you identify in your business plan? *What do you consider your primary market segment and why? (If either student or community, have you tried to branch out beyond this segment? If so, what were your experiences?)*
3. When starting your business, what information or research did you use to guide your business planning? What resources, people, or data did you seek out? *Have you ever owned or managed, or do you currently own or manage, a business elsewhere? If so, where and when?*
4. Did you receive support or resources from a public entity to start or maintain your business? Please describe. (i.e. local/state/federal grants, SBDC consultant, SCORE, etc.)
5. How did you capitalize your business? (i.e. private savings? Loans? Investors? etc.)
6. How are things going this year compared to last (up, even, down), and what are your 3-5 year projections for the future of your business? (To the extent you are comfortable, please elaborate on the trends are you experiencing with revenue, employees, margins, competition, and customer base). *What are major challenges you have to deal with? What’s working and what isn’t? Are your primary competitors inside or outside of Durham?*

### PART II: ABOUT DURHAM

7. What made you decide to locate your business in Durham? Be as specific as possible.
8. Please describe your experience interacting with town government while opening and/or operating your business. We’re interested in hearing about your experiences with our zoning ordinance, planning and permitting, and other service departments.
9. How did you find your business location/space? Please tell us about your experience navigating Durham’s retail/office/commercial real estate market.
10. How could the Town of Durham better support your business success? ... *Beyond your own business, what ideas do you have for how we here in Durham can keep customer dollars in Durham? What business or service currently missing in Durham do you believe is most: needed? wanted? What would it take for it to survive?*

# ISSUES SURVEY

*This short survey is designed to gauge business owners' awareness of, and support for, various topical issues related to economic development. Survey results will be interpreted carefully as a snapshot of current opinion, and included in a Business Visitation report to help inform Town activities. Please give the completed survey to your interviewer, who will return it to the EDC without identification, or mail it in the attached postage-paid addressed envelope.*

**RATE HOW INFORMED YOU ARE ABOUT, AND HOW MUCH YOU WOULD SUPPORT, THE FOLLOWING POTENTIAL PROJECTS OR ACTIVITIES (1=LOW, 4=HIGH):**

Potential Project or Activity	Informed				Support			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1. Parking structure in the downtown.								
2. Two-way traffic on Main Street.								
3. Pedestrian-only way in downtown.								
4. A new hotel/conference center in downtown.								
5. UNH locating a new performing arts center in downtown.								
6. Incubator office space in or near downtown.								
7. Form-based zoning codes for downtown Durham redevelopment.								
8. Affordable, non-student housing downtown.								
9. Additional student housing developments (>100) outside of downtown.								
10. Additional student housing developments (>100) in downtown.								
11. Local public transportation between neighborhoods and downtown.								

**HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
12. Businesses like mine must cater primarily to students in order to succeed in Durham.					
13. More student housing <u>downtown</u> will be positive for the business climate in Durham.					
14. More student housing <u>outside of downtown</u> will be positive for the business climate in Durham.					
15. More commercial office space <u>downtown</u> will be positive for the business climate in Durham.					
16. More commercial office space <u>outside of downtown</u> will be positive for the business climate in Durham.					
17. The presence of UNH has helped my business over the last 10 years.					
18. Commercial office development in Durham is most likely to succeed if it is concentrated in downtown.					
19. Zoning and regulatory procedures in Durham are favorable for new investments.					
20. Overall, more businesses in Durham are needed that focus on residents.					
21. Overall, Durham should focus on attracting more large-scale business and industry.					

22. The single most significant way that the Town could help my business thrive in the long term is:

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**ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS [to consider responses by business segment]**

Type (all that apply): Retail Restaurant Service Technology Rental housing Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary customers (all that apply): Students Community Outside Durham

# of employees: 1-5 6-20 21+

# of years in Durham: 0-2 3-10 11+

Headquartered in Durham? Y/N

**COMMENTS [please continue on back or separate sheet]:**

## Appendix D – Snapshot of Durham Businesses

### Agriculture

Krist Farm LLC

### Automotive

Durham Village Garage  
Foreign Motors of Durham  
Smitty's Towing & Recovery

### Construction

Acadia Engineers & Constructors  
Adams Point Contracting, Inc.  
Chinburg Builders  
Walter Rous Builder  
Yates Electrical Services, Inc.

### Elder Services

The Inn at Spruce Wood

### Finance

Federal Savings Bank  
NH Federal Credit Union  
People's United Bank  
People's United Bank  
Portsmouth Atlantic Insurance Agency  
Securities America, Incorporated

### Hospitality

Holiday Inn Express  
The Pines Guest House  
Three Chimney's Inn

### Manufacturing

Durham Boat Company  
Goss International

### Medical & Health

Avery Psychological Services  
Dental Office of Drs. Bragdon & Dugas  
Durham Chiropractic  
Durham Health Center  
Durham Hypnosis, LLC  
Durham Physical Therapy  
Ernie R. Downs, PhD., Licensed  
Psychologist  
Exeter Counseling Center  
Health Spirit Center  
Jeanne Allen, MSW  
LaFreniere Eyecare PA  
Lea Hutchins, LCMHC Counseling &  
Psychotherapy  
Lenk Orthodontics  
Maria Larkin, RD, LD, M.Ed, Nutrition  
Counselor  
Merritt Chiropractic Center  
Mill Pond Family Practice  
Phoenix Body Therapy - Licensed  
Massage Therapist  
Rehab & Sports Therapy Center  
Select Physical Therapy  
Susan Neal LICSW  
Woodbury Family Practice

### Personal Service

A Nu Du  
Cleary Cleaners  
Durham Laundercenter  
Eternal Nails  
Great Bay Kennel  
Hair Dimensions  
Hair Excitement  
Hazel'z Inkwell  
Horizon Travel Inc. (University Travel)  
Oyster River Press  
Pacific Beach Tanning  
Perfect Tan  
Upper Cut Hair Salon  
Wildcat Fitness

### Professional Service

Austin Studios Photography  
Bamford, Dedopoulos & Regan, PLLC  
Carolyn Anderson Interior Design  
Condor Aerial Photography  
CS Noon Marketing & Communications  
E-Forecasting  
Great Bay Animal Hospital  
High Performance Leadership  
Hydrocomp, Inc.  
Idea Greenhouse  
Leverage Consulting  
Lexian Management Associates  
Nary, Norris and Schlapak, PA  
Robert Sullivan  
Schoonmaker Architects  
Schwartz & Roman, PLLC

### Real Estate Rental

Andersen Williams Group LLC  
Borner, Alan  
Bryant Property LLC  
CWC Properties LLC  
Fall Line Properties  
Kostis Enterprises  
Kyreages, Inc.  
Loughman Enterprise, Inc.  
Pendexter Property Management  
Peridot Properties, LLC  
R.A.W. Revocable Trust  
Rivers Edge Apartments  
Rose Lawn Properties LLC  
Rosemary Lane Apartments  
SEJ Properties  
Strogen, Charles  
University Apartments  
Van Rich Properties LLC  
Varsity Place  
Walter W. Fischer Trust

### Real Estate Services

Allen Family Real Estate  
Bay Tree Realty  
Better Homes & Gardens - Masiello Group  
Keffalonia, Inc.  
Mariner Realty  
REMAX/All Points Realty  
Sheehan Real Estate LLC

### Research & Development

Xemed

### Restaurant/Bar

Bagelry  
Ballard's Restaurant  
Breaking New Grounds  
Domino's  
Dunkin Donuts  
Durham House of Pizza  
Franz's Fun Food  
JP's Eatery  
La Paz Taqueria  
Libby's Bar & Grill  
Mei Wei Asian Restaurant  
Minos Roast Beef & Seafood  
Moe's Italian Sandwich Shop  
Pauley's Pockets  
Scorpio's Provisions  
Scorpion's Bar & Grill  
Stat's Place  
The Knot Irish Pub  
Village Pizza  
What a Crock  
Wildcat Pizza  
Wings Your Way / Juice Hut  
Young's Restaurant & Coffee Shop

### Retail

Amy's Frame Shop  
Bindy's Boutique  
Campus Convenience  
Circle K (Irving)  
Cumberland Farms, Inc.  
Durham Bike Shop  
Durham Book Exchange  
Durham Marketplace  
Gibbs Oil Company  
Hayden Sports / The Outback  
Johnson Creek Fine Printing  
Main Street Mailing  
Red Carpet Flower & Gift Shop  
Rite Aid  
Tedeschi Food Shop  
Town & Campus  
Wiswall House Antiques