

Berlin Business Survey
Prepared for the
Town of Berlin, Connecticut

Prepared by
The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Berlin,
with the Assistance of the Center for Research and Public Policy

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METHODOLOGY: Questionnaires were mailed to about 800 Berlin businesses in late March and early April 2001. As of the writing of this report, 116 responses were received. The sample was not randomly determined, but there was a significant response level.

A. Profile of Businesses that Responded

1. Size by employment
 - 1/3 3 or less employees
 - 1/3 4-10 employees
 - 1/3 larger than 10 employees
(12 firms with 50 or more employees)
2. Type of firms
 - Diverse businesses
3. Square Footage
 - 1/3 1000 square feet or less
 - 1/3 1000-5000 square feet
 - 1/3 >5000 square feet
(10 firms with 25,000 square feet or more)
4. Own or Rent
 - 43% Own
 - 47% Rent
 - 10% Undetermined
5. Resident of Berlin
 - 59% Yes
 - 41% No

B. General Community Ratings

1. 95% of the respondents rated the quality of life in Berlin as good or very good.
2. 78% of the respondents rated Berlin as a good or very good place to do business.

C. Future Business Plans

1. 24% of the firms expect to expand their business.
2. 7% anticipate business contraction.
3. 69% expect no change in their business size or don't know.
4. Of the firms anticipating an expansion, 89% expect to grow in Berlin.
5. Employment Plans:
 - 40% of the firms expect to add employment
 - 4% expect to reduce their employment level
 - 56% expected static employment or didn't know

D. Assistance Programs

1. 75% of the businesses had not used any government assistance programs.
2. U. S. Small Business Administration financing was the government assistance program most used, it was cited by 5% of the sample.
3. Tax relief (with a 10% response) was most often cited as a potential source of business assistance.
4. 80% of the businesses had no issue or concern related to local government.
5. Types of assistance programs that businesses would like more information about are:
 - 50% expansion incentives
 - 43% financing programs
 - 39% employee recruitment
 - 30% employee training
 - 26% technical assistance
 - 15% export assistance

E. Economic Development Issues

1. 83% of the businesses surveyed favor investment in roads and infrastructure to support commercial and industrial development that will achieve a net tax benefit to the Town.
2. 79% support a new Town Center as a community focal point.
3. 75% favor a review process that encompasses architectural review of non-residential construction or renovation projects.

F. Investments in New Services and Facilities

A majority of respondents were willing to pay \$50.00 per year in extra taxes for:

- Economic development investments (61%)
 - A new Town Community Center (54%)
 - Bike and walking paths (52%)
- (Farmland preservation (49%) also drew support)

G. Business Location Evaluation

1. Berlin's central location and highway access were perceived as the leading advantages of being located in Berlin.
2. Higher taxes (at 7% response) were the most cited business disadvantage.
3. Informing residents about the importance of business growth was (at 8%) the most cited issue relating to explaining economic development to Town citizens.

H. Rating of Town Services

The percentage of businesses rating Town Services good or very good was:

- 94% for Police
- 92% for Fire
- 84% for Water & Sewer Service
- 80% for Road Maintenance
- 69% for Parks and Recreation
- 50% for Economic Development

When excluding businesses that did not know about these services, Economic Development's favorable rating rose to 76% and Parks and Recreation to 93%.