



Fernie Chamber of Commerce

Annual Report 2021

www.fernienchamber.com

FERNIE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VISION

A vibrant organization recognized for its valuable contribution to the community.

MISSION

Strengthening commerce in the Fernie area.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Integrity
Best practice
Non-partisan
Member-driven

THREE LEVELS OF CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP



BC Chamber of Commerce



Canadian
Chamber of
Commerce

Chambre de
Commerce
du Canada

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – NORM FRASER

It is my pleasure to deliver this review of the 2021 operating year for the Fernie Chamber of Commerce. I would like to thank the board of directors for their dedication, hard work and their commitment to the mission and goals of the Fernie Chamber in helping our members grow their businesses in the Fernie area.

The COVID-19 pandemic still pervaded all aspects of doing business in 2021 as we continued to endure restrictions on certain sectors, mask mandates, and vaccine passports as Canada's vaccination program rolled out. Local Fernie businesses continued to face unprecedented challenges from the pandemic, and the ripple effects of compounding worker shortages, supply chain issues, increasing costs of doing business, and the winding down of many government supports.

I want to sincerely thank our dedicated staff for their unwavering commitment to helping impacted businesses weather this storm over the past 12 months – especially Brad Parsell (Executive Director), Jesse Ross (Visitor Services Manager), Kalina Whitelaw (Membership Manager), and Sandra Robertson (Administrative Assistant). Our team have been there every step of the way with timely information and resources, and have worked tirelessly to support the community under incredibly difficult circumstances.

Like every organization on the planet, we had to adapt to all these challenges (many internal) while still delivering on our strategic priorities and value proposition for our members.

Our advocacy efforts continued apace in 2021 as we regularly connected with elected officials and staff at all levels of government to relay how businesses were doing – especially as targeted government support began to drop away, and

businesses were left to deal with ongoing impacts. To all those local businesses that reached out to the Fernie Chamber with their challenges and stories – thank you. Your experience and feedback were so valuable in our lobbying efforts last year.

I encourage you to read through this whole annual report, as there was so much work done by our organization that it is hard to capture with the room I have here.

But some highlights included the Fernie Chamber's work as administrator of the Elk Valley Economic Initiative in securing funding for a 12-month economic development contract position. That work will start to roll out in 2022 – including the largest survey ever undertaken of businesses in the Elk Valley. After a lot of work and effort, the Fernie Chamber finally was so proud to open the doors of '2nd Edition Coworking' in January 2021. To say that opening a shared coworking space in the middle of a pandemic was challenging is an understatement. But the coworking space continues to build momentum and will be an asset to this community well into the future. We also continue to build out our workforce attraction efforts, immigration and housing advocacy to address worker shortages.

Finally, it has been my great honour to serve as President for the Fernie Chamber of Commerce these past two years. I am very proud to volunteer for this organization as we celebrate 120 years of incorporation.

Wishing you all the best in 2022 and beyond,



Norm Fraser, Board President
Fernie Chamber of Commerce

2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

LABOUR SHORTAGES

Continued to build out and promote the www.workinfernie.com workforce attraction website and job board which had its first full year of operation in 2021, after launching in 2020. Data from the project is being used in our advocacy efforts for more streamlined immigration programs to communities like Fernie.

COWORKING SPACE

2nd Edition Coworking (www.coworkingfernie.com) officially opened its doors to the public in January 2021 in the Free Press building on 2nd Avenue, after major renovations and improvements to the space. The facility features 6 private offices, two open coworking areas, and a meeting room.

VISITOR SERVICES

At the end of 2020, the Fernie Chamber and the City of Fernie renewed their partnership agreement for another 5 years (2021 through 2025) for the Chamber to manage the Fernie Visitor Information Centre and related services. In 2021, the Visitor Information Centre saw 24,721 unique visitors.

FERNIE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

WORKFORCE HOUSING

The Fernie Chamber added workforce housing as a strategic priority in 2021, recognizing the importance of this issue to workforce attraction and retention efforts for our members. The Chamber continues to work this file by engaging governments at all levels, as well as other stakeholders locally and provincially.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Fernie Chamber continued to be an engaged partner and administrator of the Elk Valley Economic Initiative (EVEI) in 2021 – the Elk Valley's economic development function. We led the EVEI's efforts to successfully apply for funding from ETSI-BC for an economic development contract position for 12-months.



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2021 YEAR IN REVIEW – STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

LABOUR SHORTAGES

The Fernie Chamber continued to build out and promote the www.workinfernie.com workforce attraction website and job board which had its first full year of operation in 2021, after launching in 2020. We worked with Tourism Fernie on digital marketing of the website and received a grant from Community Futures East Kootenay to support those efforts. 414 unique jobs were advertised on the site in 2021 and 192 businesses had an active account. The industry that posted the most job vacancies in 2021 was Food & Beverage. The website had 67,654 views in 2021. Data from the project is being used in our advocacy efforts for more streamlined immigration programs to resort communities like Fernie, in order to boost our workforce.



COWORKING SPACE

2nd Edition Coworking (www.coworkingfernie.com) officially opened its doors to the public in January 2021 in the Free Press building on 2nd Avenue, after major renovations and improvements to the space. The facility features 6 private offices, two open coworking areas, and a meeting room. The Fernie Free Press stayed on as anchor tenants, and flexible coworking memberships are available on a month-to-month basis with no long-term commitment. Despite the challenges of opening a coworking space during a pandemic, we have had great uptake from the community on this project and look forward to growing it and adding events/workshops in 2022.

COWORKING SPACE (continued)

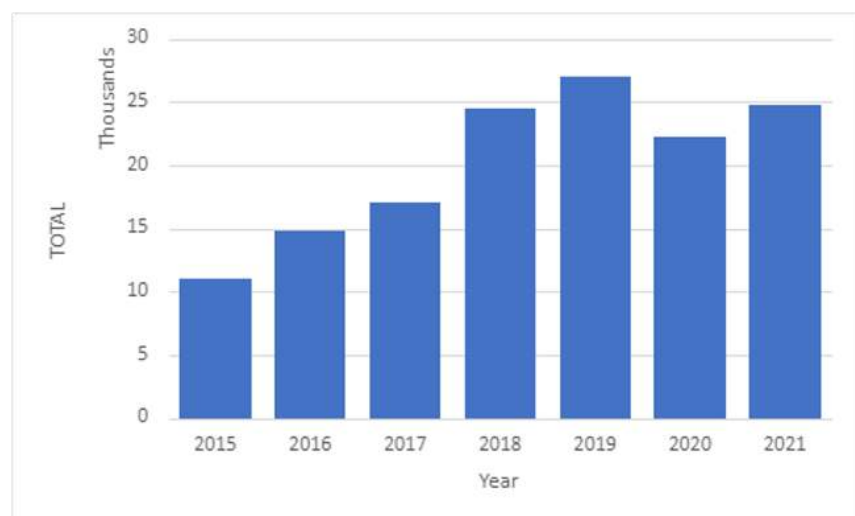


Without the ability to host a grand opening celebration due to pandemic restrictions on gatherings, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held in June 2021 to officially recognize the opening of 2nd Edition Coworking. The ribbon cutting was attended by (left to right) Brad Parsell (Executive Director), Norm Fraser (President), Anita Palmer (Past President), and Ange Qualizza (Mayor of Fernie).

VISITOR SERVICES

At the end of 2020, the Fernie Chamber and the City of Fernie renewed their partnership agreement for another 5 years (2021 through 2025) for the Chamber to manage the Fernie Visitor Information Centre and related services. In 2021, the Visitor Information Centre saw 24,721 unique visitors enter the building – up from 22,298 in 2020, but still shy of the 27,004 visitors seen in 2019 pre-pandemic. 58% of visitors surveyed in 2021 were from Alberta, and 25% were from BC. The Visitor Centre extended its 7-days per week summer season hours from May Long through to Thanksgiving. A new downtown Fernie display was installed in 2021 to encourage visitors off the highway and into our downtown core.

The adjacent graph shows the total number of visitors recorded entering the Fernie Visitor Information Centre over the past 7 years.



WORKFORCE HOUSING

The Fernie Chamber added workforce housing as a strategic priority in 2021, recognizing the importance of this issue to workforce attraction and retention efforts for our members. We took the time to develop a better understanding of Fernie's ongoing housing issues by reviewing the City of Fernie's Housing Needs Report and inviting the City of Fernie to update the membership on the report, as well as ongoing activities to address the issue at a virtual housing panel hosted in June 2021. At that same panel, other speakers were invited to provide a snapshot of housing in other areas of the province. The Chamber continues to work this file by engaging governments at all levels, as well as other stakeholders locally and provincially.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Fernie Chamber continued to be an engaged partner and administrator of the Elk Valley Economic Initiative or EVEI (www.theelkvalley.ca) in 2021 – the Elk Valley's economic development function. Recognizing the need for more foundational economic development work and data collection in our region, the Fernie Chamber led the EVEI's efforts to successfully apply for funding from ETSI-BC (Economic Trust of the Southern Interior) for an economic development position for 12-months. In June 2021, Taylor Jenkins was hired into the role of the Elk Valley Economic Recovery Advisor and has been advancing work on the Elk Valley's largest ever Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) survey and reports, as well as new investment profiles for the corridor.



FERNIE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2021 IN REVIEW

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

This year we advocated strongly on behalf of our business community with all three levels of government. We made sure that they understood the situation on the ground for Fernie businesses.

GRIZ DAYS

Hosted a successful modified Griz Days 2021 that allowed our community to continue the 44 year old tradition safely despite the ongoing pandemic.

BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

We took a step towards our pre pandemic format for the 2021 Fernie Business Excellence Awards in October. We were able to hold two groups of 50 people in person for snacks and drinks to celebrate our amazing business community!

HOLIDAY KICKOFF

Thanks to support from the BC Chamber of Commerce and Columbia Basin Trust, we were able to host our largest and most successful Holiday Kick to date with the addition of a Spend It In Fernie campaign to promote and incentivize shopping at local businesses over the Holiday Season.

2021 IN REVIEW – OPERATIONS & EVENTS

GRIZ DAYS 2021



The 44th Fernie Griz Days took place March 5-7, 2021. This year was different than previous years due to the restrictions in place from COVID-19. Restrictions during this time prevented any kind of gatherings and people were only allowed to socialize with their immediate household. As we followed all health guidelines, we were able to run some “modified” events safely. This included the streaming of The History of Griz Days Documentary, a drive-thru float display, fireworks, streaming of the pre-recorded Extreme Griz Competition and skiing with the Griz. All “events” except for the drive-thru float display and skiing, were able to be viewed safely from home.



BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2021

We took a step towards our pre-pandemic format for the 2021 Fernie Business Excellence Awards in October. We were able to hold two groups of 50 people in-person for snacks and drinks to celebrate our amazing business community! We also live streamed this event on our Facebook page for those who couldn't attend in person.



SHOP LOCAL HOLIDAY KICKOFF

Thanks to support from the BC Chamber of Commerce and Columbia Basin Trust, we were able to host our largest and most successful Holiday Kickoff event to date with the addition of a #SpendItInFernie campaign to promote and incentivize shopping at local businesses over the Holiday Season. The re-imagining of this event will be carried forward into future years where we want to build on 2021's success.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

The Fernie Chamber hosted multiple professional development workshops and information sessions across 2021 for our members. This included a partnership with the BC Chamber of Commerce and the University of Victoria to deliver a series of pandemic recovery sessions (with academic credit) under the title "Building Resilience To Thrive". We also hosted a labour shortage panel discussion, a workforce housing panel discussion, and industry roundtables with the local retail sector and the local food & beverage sector. We also continued to deliver the Fernie Ambassador Program with our partners at College of the Rockies and Tourism Fernie – with funding from the province of BC's Resort Municipality Initiative. The Fernie Ambassador Program received a complete refresh in 2021 with additional video content added to reflect the priorities of the Fernie Tourism Master Plan. The courses returned to in-person in the fall of 2021 at the Fernie College of the Rockies campus.

2021-2022 FERNIE CHAMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Norman Fraser	President	Teck
Anita Palmer	Past President	College of the Rockies
Dennis Djonlich	Vice President	The Vogue Theatre
Jaime Hanson	Treasurer	Return to Earth Concepts/Foresight Accounting
Juliana Bower	Director at large	Elk Valley Painting/Bower Builders
Andy Cohen	Director-at-large	Fernie Alpine Resort
Phil Gadd	Director-at-large	The Loaf/EXP Realty
Simon Howse	Director-at-large	Parastone Developments
Laura Oleksow	Director-at-large	Spa 901
Sydney Salvador	Director-at-large	The Chopstick Truck
Ashley Williams	Director-at-large	Sheepdog Construction

PARTNERSHIPS

Canadian Chamber of Commerce
British Columbia Chamber of Commerce
British Columbia Chamber Executives
City of Fernie
Tourism Fernie
Fernie Tourism Master Plan Champions Group
Kootenay Rockies Tourism
Destination BC
Columbia Basin Trust
Elk Valley Economic Initiative
Columbia Basin Economic Development Practitioners Network
Regional District of East Kootenay
Community Futures East Kootenay
Fernie Heritage Library
Fernie Pride Society
Fernie Museum
Fernie Seniors Centre
Fernie Arts Station
Canadian Adaptive Network

STAFF LISTING

Brad Parsell	Executive Director
Kalina Whitelaw	Membership Manager
Jesse Ross	Visitor Services Manager
Sandra Robertson	Administrative Assistant
Taylor Jenkins	Elk Valley Economic Recovery Advisor (contract position)
Kate Brennan	Visitor Information Counsellor (contract position)
Sienna Longo	Visitor Information Counsellor (contract position)
Aislinn Dressler	Visitor Information Counsellor (contract position)

THANK YOU TO OUR 2022 AGM SPONSORS

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College of the Rockies

Fernie Fox Hotel

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