

YUBA-SUTTER BUSINESS CONSORTIUM



LINKING BUSINESS WITH RESOURCES

BUSINESS WALK SUMMARY – MAY 9, 2025

Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corporation (YSEDC) and Yuba-Sutter Business Consortium (YSBC) conducted their biannual Business Walk to support business retention and expansion by identifying challenges and resource needs. Volunteers visited 32 businesses in Sutter County, primarily in Live Oak, the town of Sutter, and industrial area of west Yuba City.

BUSINESS SENTIMENT

35% of businesses reported steady performance
31% saw improvement
27% reported business was down
Average business tenure was 27 years (range: months to 102 years)
Stronger performance noted in **Manufacturing** and **Food Service** sectors

TOP CHALLENGES

Economic Conditions – Rising costs, weak, customer spending and inflation
Marketing – Difficulty attracting customers and increasing visibility
Regulatory/Tax Complexity – Confusing or burdensome compliance issues

REQUESTED BUSINESS RESOURCES

Marketing Assistance – Webinars, signage and training
Tax & Labor Law Education
Workforce

DESIRED SEMINAR TOPICS

Digital marketing on a budget
Navigating California tax and labor regulations
Accessing capital and financial tools
Hiring and employee retention
Local zoning and permit compliance

INDUSTRIES REPRESENTED

Accommodations & Food Service, Retail, Wholesale, Other services (auto & beauty)
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation and Manufacturing

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS



May 9, 2025 – Business Walk Summary
Live Oak, Sutter (Town), and Yuba City (Industrial, Geo. Washington & Colusa Hwy Area)

OVERVIEW

The Business Walk, held twice a year, is part of Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corporation (YSEDC) and Yuba-Sutter Business Consortium's (YSBC) targeted approach to business retention and expansion. The program focus is to have city or county officials, business resource providers and business leaders meet with business owners or senior management to understand their unique needs and concerns and to help in creating an environment in which businesses can succeed, and the community can prosper.

BUSINESS WALK SUMMARY

In May 2025, 94 businesses in Sutter County were contacted by mail to inform them that the Yuba-Sutter Business Consortium would be conducting a Business Walk in their area. The letter explained the purpose of the walk and the date it would take place. Subsequent follow-up calls granted permission to visit 32 businesses in person and conduct a survey. Sixteen volunteers working in eight teams visited these businesses in two hours.

The focus of the visit covered three areas: How business is doing; What are the challenges in operating your business; What business resources are you needing or looking for, if any?

Businesses visited included:

Sutter Food & Gas	The Rock Yard
Hi & Dry Warehouse	Platt Electric Supply
Close Lumber	Sander's Pump & Irrigation
Sutter City Autobody & Towing	El Taco Azteca
Taco Time	Raquel's Barber Shop
Sweco Products	Waffle Shop
South Butte Market	Cigarette City
Orchard Machinery Corp	Dowd Interiors
N&S Tractor	Holy Grounds Coffee Co LLC
Applied Industrial Technologies	Tiff's Gas Mart
NorCal Escape Co	Rodriguez Tire & Auto
De WITT Bros & Co Inc	Martin's Smog & Auto Repair
Master Mechanic	Live Oak Donut
Martin's Canvas	Penny Candy Store LLC
Twin Rivers Fencing	99 Experts Wheels
Mack's Autobody	Dollar General Store #14170

The businesses surveyed are located the industrial corridor of West Yuba City, town of Sutter and the city of Live Oak. There are a wide variety of industry types in these areas and are comprised of Accommodation/Food Service, Retail Wholesale, Manufacturing, Other Services, and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation. Of the 32 businesses visited, 26 participated in the business walk survey.

Question 1. How is Business? 1.B. and how long have you been in business?

Overall, 35 percent reported business was steady, 31 percent reported business was up, and 27 percent reported business was down. Manufacturing and Accommodation & Food Service showed stronger upward trends, Retail/Wholesale and other Services were more mixed in their health status. The average length of time spent in business in this area was 27 years, ranging from 3 months to 102 years.

STATE OF BUSINESS BY INDUSTRY TYPE						
Industry Type	Up	Down	Steady	Up & Down	New	Totals
Accommodation/ Food Service	1	1	1	0	1	4
Retail	1	3	3	2	0	9
Retail/Wholesale	2	1	2	0	0	5
Other Services - Auto	1	2	1	1	0	5
Other Services - Barber	1	0	0	0	0	1
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	1	0	0	1
Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1
TOTALS	7	7	8	3	1	26

Unsolicited comments made on the health of their business

Sutter City Auto - Roller Coaster of peaks and valleys
Master Mechanics - Down from prior year, slower this year but plugging along
Martins Canvas - Swamped
Mack's Auto Body- was down last year and this first quarter was hard, but are now back up
Sanders Pump - up due to increase in walnut and crop prices
Rock Yard - business is good, slow during winter but increasing now
Platt - Substantial increase in sales, especially the last month
Waffle Barn - Steadily increasing
Dowd Interiors - Overall consistent but down since COVID
99 Express Wheel - During COVID business was great but now they are down

Question 2. What do you consider your largest challenges in operating your business? (funding, marketing, workforce, government relations)

The top three challenges facing businesses in the walk area were **Economic Conditions** (42%): Concerns included customer spending power, rising costs and overall economic climate. The second most common challenge was **Marketing Difficulties** (35%): Businesses cited challenges attracting customers, generating foot traffic and competing effectively. The third challenge most frequently mentioned was **Regulatory & Tax Complexity** (31%). Businesses cited it was challenging to navigate government regulations, tax compliance, and bureaucratic process. Other businesses responses were varied, and reported the following issues:

- High cost of Insurance
- Workforce issues
- Access to capital such as grants and loans
- Homelessness issues

Business Comments Sutter

#2 What do you consider your largest challenge in operating your business?
Economy, no construction jobs, state bureaucracy, sales tax, Ag. Tax, lumber tax, and constant changes in tax laws
Government rules & regulations, cost of goods increasing, and tariffs on alcohol
This is a small community, and it is hard to change people from shopping out of town and there is a lack of apartments, however increasing business and keeping the customers we have.
Economy. People are not repairing light dents and dings due to high deductibles and insurance rates going up. Business insurance and increasing rental rates.
Yuba City
#2 What do you consider your largest challenge in operating your business?
Marketing and funding. Joined the Chamber but feel unsupported and find it has a clique culture. Need to expand local market. Had issues with the Summer Stroll in Yuba City regarding cost and location.
Marketing
Marketing & workforce (Corp. placed a hiring freeze) but is willing to consider WEX program with Sutter County One Stop
Needs qualified staff - diagnostic technician
Everything is good but can always use a qualified laborer for "grunt" work. Owner is adverse to any changes
Competing against corporate owned businesses
Business is seasonal so workforce is difficult to keep employees.
High cost of insurance, can't see cost benefits of paying Yuba City for license, water quality is bad.
Live Oak
#2 What do you consider your largest challenge in operating your business?
Expanding hours to increase business. I want to add a patio for outdoor dining and need assistance with building codes and zoning
Economy - customers don't seem to have much disposable income to spend on supplies
Generating Foot traffic to businesses
Increasing cost of doing business especially with utilities. Food Trucks parked in front of my restaurant competing for business
Marketing to overcome slow days particularly Mondays and Wednesdays.
Access to capital and workforce. Finding people to work flexible hours
Workforce assistance
Increasing cost of doing business which makes it difficult to keep costs down
High taxes
Limited parking which is a common customer complaint
High taxes
Homelessness is affecting business image - such as trash and drug usage
Parking is an issue, easy to get in but impossible to get out. Find it difficult to market the business

Question 3. What business resources are you needing, if any?

There were 18 responses to this question with **Marketing Assistance** (46%) being the most common response. The assistance requested webinars, training, networking and signage guidance. **Tax & Labor Law Education** (35%) was the second most followed by **Workforce Development** (27%). Most businesses indicated that the best way to contact them would be via email.

Sutter
#3 What Business resources are needing
Tax & Labor Laws education
Sales Tax assistance

Access to capital
Younger employees, employment and work experience training programs
Yuba City
#3 What Business resources are needing
How do AI and tangibility come together
Webinar for Marketing, assistance with business structure, tax and labor laws. How to form an LLC with another company
Tax & Labor Laws workshop
Training and resources at the college for shop owners
Workforce assistance
Marketing webinars and training, networking
Live Oak
#3 What Business resources are needing
Assistance with City coding and zoning to install outdoor patio dining
Getting more involved with community organizations - Agency points of contact. Networking
Assistance to improve marketing skills to publicize business. Assistance regarding signage
Social Media and AI training, workshops or webinars
Marketing webinars and training, networking. Assistance regarding signage
Assistance in finding grants or other financial resources
Marketing webinars and training, networking.

Question 4. For future Business Resource Seminars, what topics are of interest to you?

Responses to this question were light but those that did indicated that **Hiring Support and Training, Marketing and Promotional Training** and Access to **Financial Tools and Capital** were the most important topics for future Business Resource Seminars. Businesses indicated they prefer short, focused training sessions during mid-morning hours. Most businesses indicated that the best way to contact them would be via email. Some recommended workshops are as follows:

1. **Effective Digital Marketing on a Budget** - Social media strategies, local SEO, and cost-effective promotion
2. **Navigating California Tax & Labor Regulations** - Updates on tax codes and compliance requirements
3. **Technology Integration for Small Business** - Implementing AI, automation, and digital tools
4. **Accessing Capital** - Grants, Loans, and Alternative Financing
5. **Employee Recruitment & Retention Strategies**
6. **Navigating Local Zoning & Permits** - Expansion guidance and compliance

Recommendations and suggested actions

The business community across Sutter, Yuba City, and Live Oak demonstrates resilience with a balanced distribution of growth and stability despite economic challenges. The long average tenure (27 years) suggests a stable business foundation, though economic pressures and marketing challenges are creating significant barriers.

Marketing and Networking Support

- Host marketing workshops to address the high demand for marketing assistance and provide strategies to counter challenges from online retailers.
- Organize networking events to help local businesses build connections and foster partnerships.

Financial Support and Resources

- Increase awareness of loan options. Provide additional support for application processes, as many businesses are unaware or uncertain about accessing these resources.
- Offer educational sessions on tax and labor laws, a notable area of interest among business owners.

Educational Seminars and Workshops

- Schedule seminars focused on business management, financial planning, and disaster preparedness to support resilience.
- Consider flexible timing for sessions to allow all businesses the opportunity to access the resources or training.

Customized Support for Specific Needs

- Offer specialized assistance for businesses facing unique challenges

By implementing these actions, the Yuba-Sutter Business Consortium and partners can address the unique needs and challenges faced by businesses in the three areas covered by this walk.