



TRUCKEE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# 2025 Business Listening Tour Report

# Executive Summary

In late 2025, the Truckee Chamber of Commerce conducted its second annual Business Listening Tour to better understand how local businesses are experiencing current economic conditions, the challenges they face, and the opportunities for continued resilience and growth. Through one-on-one, in-person conversations with businesses across sectors, the Chamber gathered candid, qualitative insights that reflect the lived realities of doing business in the Truckee Region today.

The dominant message from this year's Listening Tour is not one of crisis, but of volatility. Many businesses describe themselves as "doing okay," yet few feel truly stable. Seasonal swings feel sharper than they have since the "Covid bomb," planning feels harder, and the uncertain economic, regulatory, and environmental landscape is influencing decision-making across industries. Even businesses that are busy or growing report operating closer to capacity, with less margin for error.

At the same time, the Listening Tour revealed a highly adaptive community. Businesses are adjusting offerings, narrowing focus, rethinking growth, and prioritizing sustainability, both financial and personal. Owners are making intentional choices to protect quality, retain staff, and avoid burnout, even when expansion may be possible.

Across conversations, businesses expressed appreciation for the Chamber's role as a connector, advocate, and trusted intermediary. There is a clear expectation that the Chamber will continue to elevate business voices, improve visibility, and help navigate complex systems within our community and beyond. This report is intended to support that work by translating individual experiences into shared themes that can inform advocacy, programming, and collaboration in the year ahead.

# About the Business Listening Tour

The Business Listening Tour is an annual initiative of the Truckee Chamber of Commerce that gathers direct input from the business community. In 2025, Chamber leadership and the Economic Vitality and Workforce Development Committee conducted confidential, 30-minute, in-person conversations with a broad cross-section of businesses operating in and around Truckee.

Rather than structured interviews, conversations were guided by four open-ended questions focused on:

- How is business going for you right now?
- What are the biggest challenges your business is currently facing in Truckee?
- What opportunities or changes would help your business grow or operate more successfully?
- How can the Truckee Chamber better serve or advocate for your business?

Participants represented a wide range of sectors, business sizes, and stages, including long-standing businesses, new ventures, sole proprietors, employers, nonprofits, and professional services.

Individual responses remain confidential; findings are reported only in aggregate to identify shared patterns and themes.

# What We Heard



**1** A Volatile Business Climate, Not a Uniform Downturn

**2** Costs, Capacity, and Burnout Are Growing Pressures

**3** Adaptation Is the Common Thread in Resilience

**4** Navigation, Visibility, and Process Still Matter

# A Volatile Business Climate, Not a Uniform Downturn

Most businesses did not describe their situation as “bad,” but very few described it as predictable.

The prevailing sentiment was one of unevenness, strong periods followed by seasonal slowdowns, shorter booking windows, and difficulty forecasting demand.

Businesses reported:

- Increased last-minute decision-making by customers
- Seasonal patterns that feel less reliable than in past years
- Hesitation tied to broader economic uncertainty, even when local demand exists

**“It’s not slow, it’s inconsistent.”**

This volatility is influencing how businesses staff, invest, and set expectations. Many are operating cautiously, preserving flexibility rather than committing to long-term expansion.

**“We’re not failing, but it’s harder to plan. Things change faster than they used to.”**

# Costs, Capacity, and Burnout Are Growing Pressures

Across sectors, businesses emphasized that being busy does not necessarily mean being comfortable. Rising operating costs, staffing challenges, and limited capacity are placing sustained pressure on owners and managers.

Common themes included:

- Difficulty recruiting and retaining staff in a high-cost region
- Owners are taking on multiple roles to manage expenses
- Thin margins despite steady revenue
- Emotional fatigue and concern about long-term sustainability

Several businesses described intentionally limiting growth to protect quality of service and personal well-being.

“Payroll stress never really goes away, even when things are going well.”

These conversations reflect a shift away from growth-for-growth’s-sake toward more deliberate, values-driven business decisions.

**“I could probably grow more, but I don’t want to break myself doing it.”**

# Adaptation is the Common Thread in Resilience

Businesses that described themselves as stable or improving almost always pointed to adaptation as the reason. Rather than relying on a single model, many have adjusted repeatedly in response to changing conditions.

Examples of adaptation included:

- Refining or narrowing service offerings
- Diversifying revenue streams
- Shifting pricing or scheduling models
- Leveraging word-of-mouth and hyperlocal networks
- Prioritizing quality and consistency over scale

“We stopped chasing everything and focused on what actually works.”

These adjustments often reflect deep local knowledge and a strong connection to community needs, underscoring the importance of local context in business resilience



# Navigation, Visibility, and Process Still Matter

A challenge that was raised again during the Listening Tour was understanding processes, timelines, and where to turn for help when opening or improving a business in Truckee.

Businesses frequently cited:

- Uncertainty around permitting and approval timelines
- Difficulty identifying the right point of contact
- Missed opportunities due to delays or unclear processes
- A sense that systems are hard to navigate without prior experience

Importantly, these comments were generally framed as frustration rather than hostility. Businesses expressed a desire for clarity, transparency, and predictability.

These insights highlight the importance of coordination, communication, and navigation; roles that businesses increasingly look to the Chamber to help fill.

**“It’s not that help doesn’t exist, it’s knowing where to start.”**

# The Role of the Chamber & Looking Ahead

Throughout the 2025 Business Listening Tour, businesses consistently described the Truckee Chamber of Commerce as a trusted connector, convener, and advocate. Participants value the Chamber's ability to translate business realities into actionable conversations with local government and partners, while also creating meaningful opportunities for visibility, education, and peer connection.



- 1** **Strengthening Economic Vitality Through Data & Direct Input**
- 2** **Improving Navigation & Reducing Friction**
- 3** **Bolstering Workforce & Long-Term Capacity**
- 4** **Cultivating Community Connection & Business Visibility**
- 5** **Supporting Infrastructure, Housing & Smart Growth Conversations**

# Strengthening Economic Vitality Through Data & Direct Input

Businesses made clear that unpredictability and volatility are making planning more difficult. In response, the Chamber's commitment to strengthening economic intelligence is critical.

The Chamber is looking to create a Truckee-specific economic data analytics platform, maintain standardized dashboards, and produce an annual Economic Snapshot Report starting in FY 26-27.

The goal is for these tools to directly respond to what businesses are asking for: clearer signals, stronger trend tracking, and better-informed decision-making. The Chamber is also looking to other regional partners to help gather and report out on economic data for our region, something that is difficult but can be done.

## Improving Navigation & Reducing Friction

One of the most consistent signals in this year's Listening Tour was the need for clearer navigation of processes, particularly around permitting, approvals, and understanding timelines.

The Chamber, in partnership with the Town of Truckee's Economic Development Analyst, is working on the development of a Business Success Program and a comprehensive "How to Do Business in Truckee" Guide. The goal of this program will be to help new business owners navigate the process with not just the Town of Truckee, but all of the agencies involved in business operations.

The Listening Tour reinforces that predictability and clarity are as important to business confidence as demand itself.

# Bolstering Workforce & Long-Term Capacity

Workforce pressures, burnout, and long-term sustainability surfaced repeatedly across sectors. Business owners described being stretched, not necessarily because of declining revenue, but because of limited capacity and rising costs.

The Chamber's workforce development initiatives, including our annual regional job fair, youth programs such as TNT Tech Teens, ongoing leadership programming, and exploration of workforce conversion strategies, are working to address these challenges.

In 2026 the Truckee Chamber, in partnership with the Destination Stewardship Council, North Tahoe Chamber and Tahoe Chamber, launched Destination Champions, an online customer service and regional knowledge program for our workforce. The Chamber will continue to promote this program and look towards other ways to engage our local workforce.

# Cultivating Community Connection & Business Visibility

Several businesses emphasized the importance of visibility, storytelling, and stronger connections across the community. Word of mouth remains powerful in Truckee, but many participants acknowledged that broader amplification helps stabilize demand.

In the coming year, the Truckee Chamber is looking at ways to help boost our businesses' visibility during our slower periods. Ideas such as Restaurant Week or Locals Month are currently being explored.

# Supporting Infrastructure, Housing & Smart Growth Conversations

While not always framed as policy discussions, many Listening Tour conversations touched on broader structural issues, housing costs, infrastructure reliability, and the long-term affordability of operating in California.

The Chamber's Public Policy Platform outlines clear positions in support of:

- Streamlined housing approvals
- Innovative workforce housing solutions
- Infrastructure investment in energy, broadband, transportation, and water
- Balanced environmental regulation
- Fair and predictable tax policy

These issues are not abstract; they shape the daily operating environment for Truckee businesses.

The Listening Tour underscores the importance of the Truckee Chamber maintaining a proactive, solution-oriented presence in these policy conversations.



# Looking Ahead: From Listening to Action

The 2025 Business Listening Tour reinforces three core realities:

1. Truckee's business community is resilient but operating in a volatile environment.
2. Navigation, predictability, and workforce stability are central to business confidence.
3. The Chamber is expected to continue leading, not just by hosting events, but by shaping outcomes.

In the year ahead, the Chamber will use the insights from this Listening Tour to:

- Inform Government Action Committee priorities
- Shape business education and outreach programming
- Refine advocacy positions at the local, regional, and state levels
- Strengthen partnerships with the Town of Truckee and other public agencies
- Continue elevating real business experiences in policy conversations

As one participant noted:

"The Chamber is where I feel like someone's actually listening."

The Listening Tour ensures that listening translates into informed action, reinforcing Truckee's commitment to a strong, balanced, and opportunity-rich business climate.



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