

Love WHERE YOU *Live*

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

2024 Buhler Benchmark Report

Hutchinson 
community
FOUNDATION

BUHLER 
community
FOUNDATION



Innovation Economy Partners
OUR FOCUS: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

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Photo Credit: Randy Sawatzky

What Makes Our Community Special?

The people and how they come together to help, to serve, to celebrate, to enjoy life together.

- Anonymous

Small town with big ideas.

- Shelly Bartel

Buhler has been a very accepting and open community for my boys and I to move to. We have had a great experience with the community and the school system.

- Kali

It's small, the kids can ride their bikes all over town, our grocery store, library, and park.

- Brooke Harper

This community cares about its fellow residents. It has a superb school district, a quaint little downtown, and some great businesses.

- Samantha Neill

The simplicity of a small town.

- Jacob Mille

Love the small town, quiet community, friendly neighbors, local grocery, great school system.

- Dana Weast

Very close community, hospitality.

- Anonymous

In June 2024, Hutchinson Community Foundation launched Love Where You Live, a three-year community empowerment initiative that centers resident perceptions, dialogue, and collaborative action. Alongside community partners, our goal is to provide Reno County communities (and the county as a whole) with data and a process that will empower residents to make positive change and boost community pride. Learn more at hutchcf.org.

Leaders That Make Our Community Special



Executive Summary:

The survey data, which includes responses from 94 residents, reflects a community willing to invest in its future. While current economic opinion is low, the future is seen as bright with possibility. There are varied opinions on the vision of the overall area but once a plan is in place, the execution to bring about results is optimistically high. Respondents are primarily homeowners, with a significant proportion aged 40-59. The critical priorities identified focus mainly on the economic programs and metrics while also recognizing the need to improve the current infrastructure and remove unsightly visuals first.

pg **4, 5**

Economic Confidence

Survey responses indicate mixed economic confidence about the past and future. The majority believe current economic conditions are lower than normal, but there is much positivity about future prospects. With Sales tax collection going up and unemployment rate going down, the future looks increasingly positive.

pg **6, 7, 8**

Community Engagement Confidence

Respondents generally feel the same in commitment to their community with regard to the county as a whole. Strategizing and planning is viewed as an area needing the most improvement, with residents desiring more pathways to positions to leadership roles.

pgs **9a-9b**

Critical Community Priorities

The top priority programs and metrics all point to economic growth and sustainability. These priorities include supporting small businesses as well as the people they employ. Respondents did mention the need to raise the bar back to normal on investing in infrastructure and removing blight from view.

pg **10**

Survey Respondent Profile

The majority of respondents are homeowners, with a higher number in the 40-59 age range. Most have a degree of some kind, and many are actively working with most employed in the public sector. This demographic profile suggests a community of established, educated individuals who are invested in the future of their town.

The Community Benchmarking report has been commissioned by Hutchinson Community Foundation to help local residents gain a better understanding of the most pressing opportunities Reno County towns face. The annual reports that are generated will help leaders determine the extent to which community efforts are having an impact on local residents. The reports are also a way for towns in the area to pursue grants to help further their local efforts.

**Local leaders can use this framework to help inspire change.
This report provides the clues on what fellow residents are craving.**



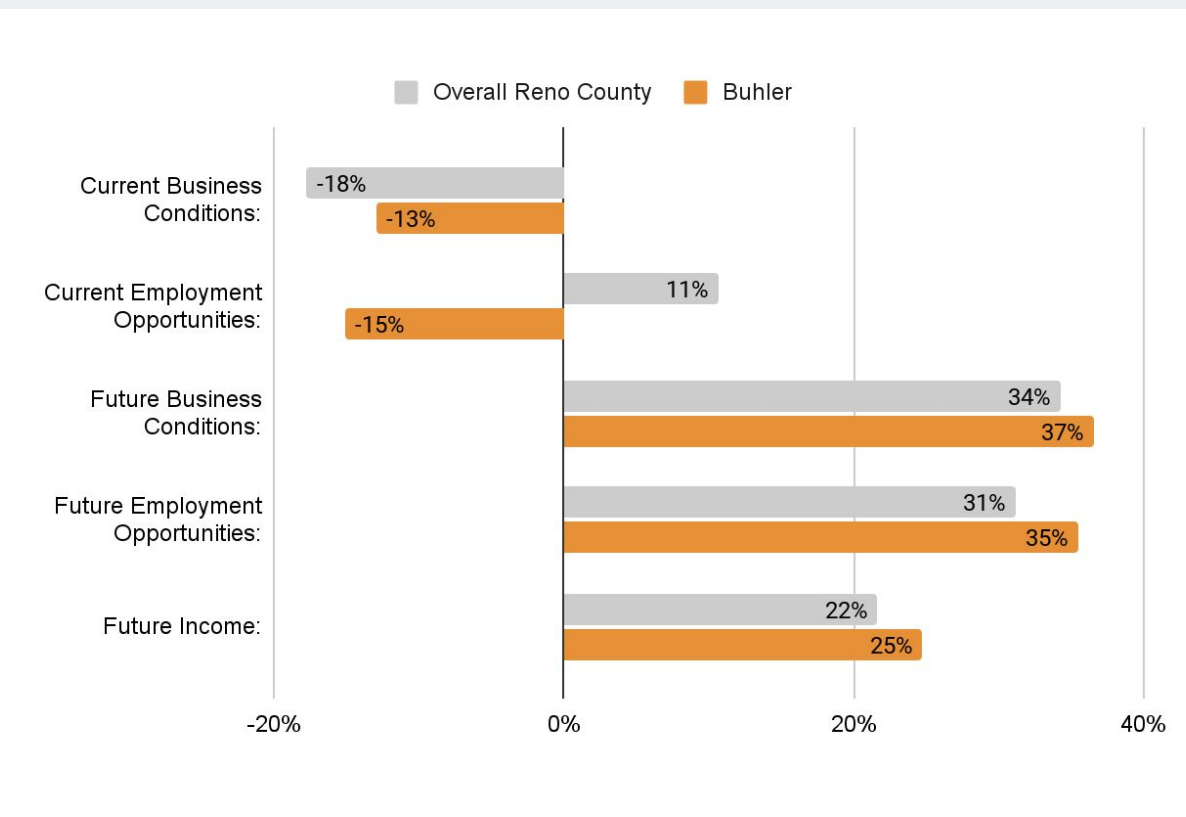
Confidence In Our Local Economy

Economic Summary:

Respondents expressed concerns about the area's current employment opportunities and business conditions. The current employment situation is seen as being poorer than the County average, but the future on all fronts is seen as more positive. Priority project and metrics highlight a need to focus on economic development efforts such as attracting new businesses, providing support to existing businesses and encouraging entrepreneurship. Interestingly while local poverty level is going up, the employment level is going down. **How is this?**

Survey Responses

Our Economic Perceptions

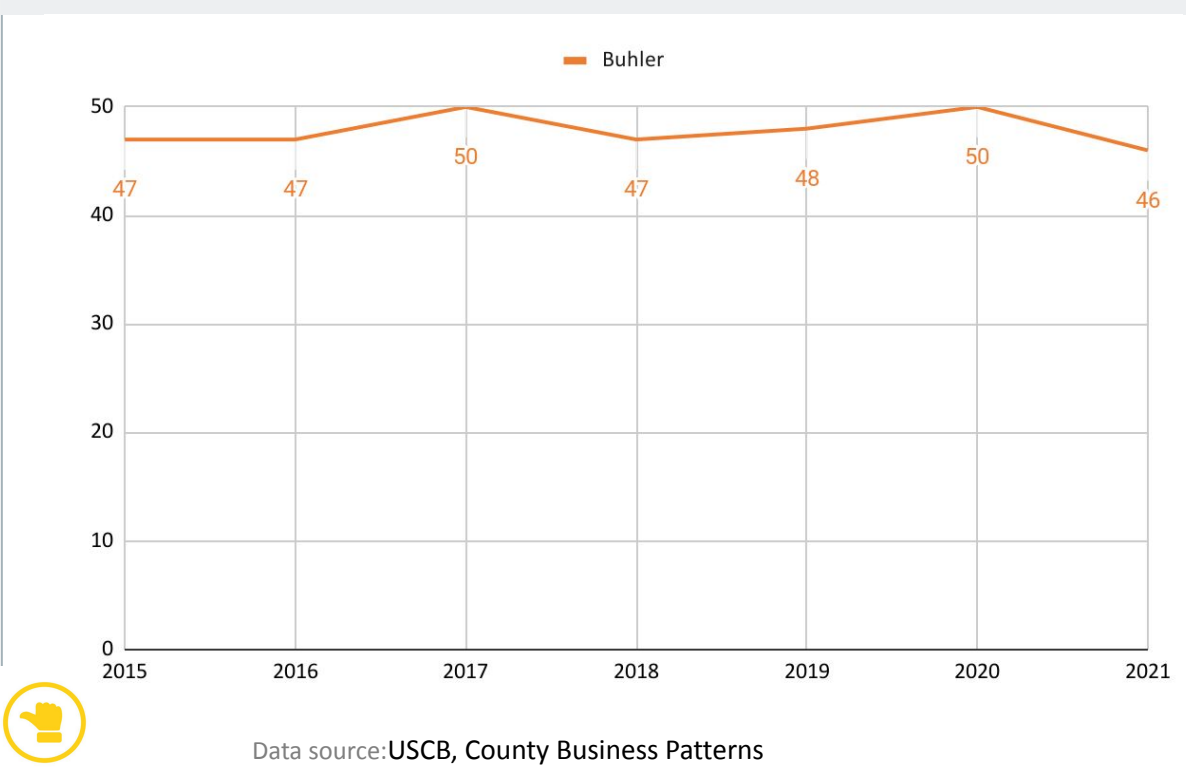


Popular Ideas for the Town:

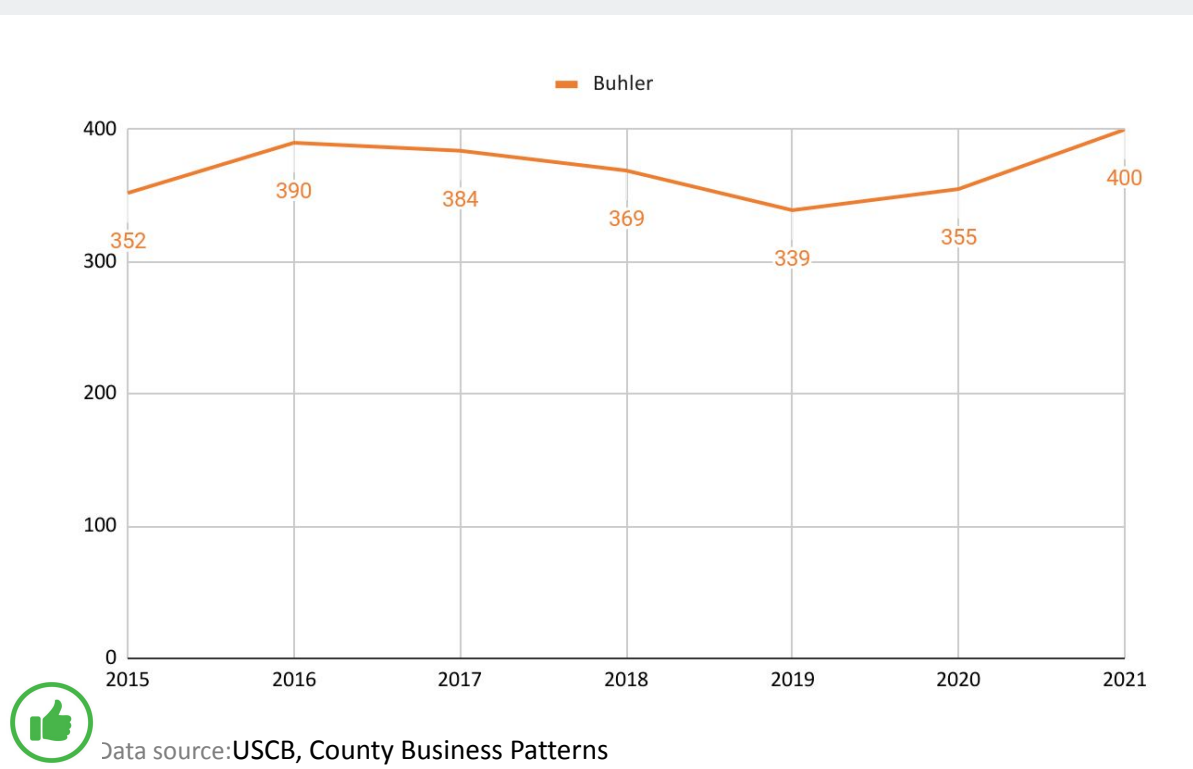
- **Evening dining and gathering place**
- **More activities for youth and young families beyond school and church**
- **More community collaboration**

Local Economic Indicators

Total Businesses in Our Town

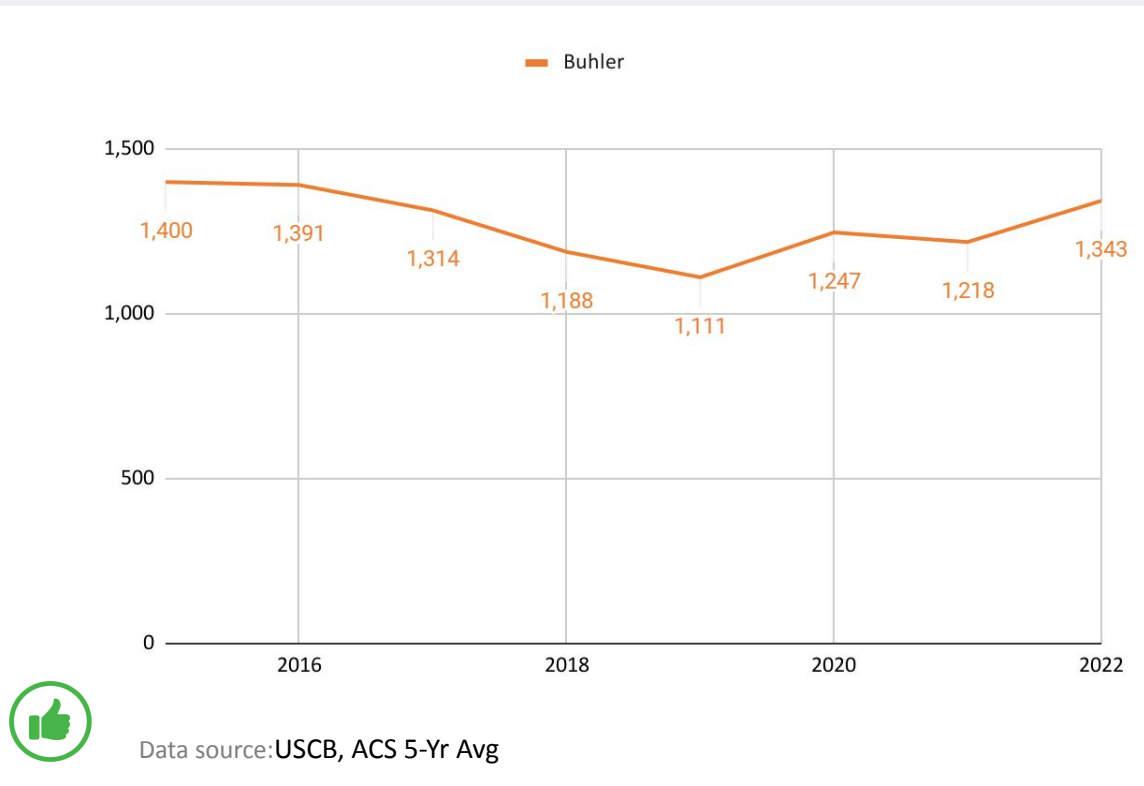


Employment in Our Town

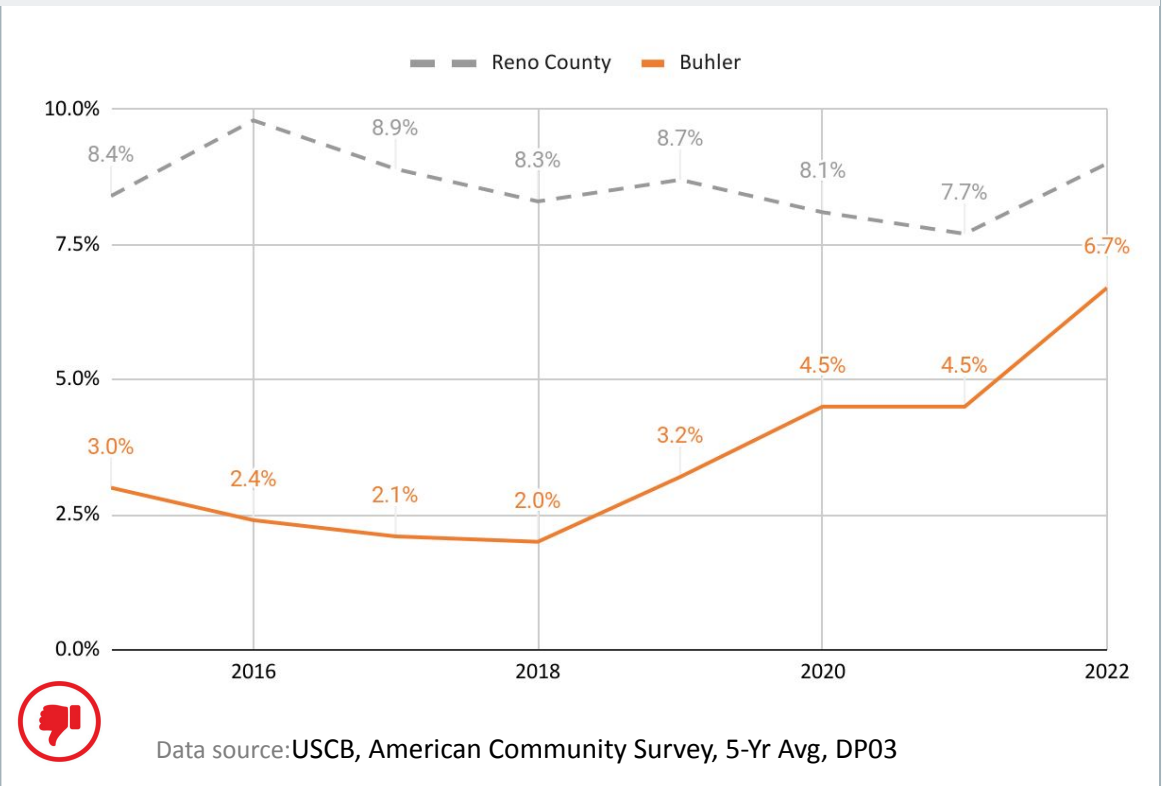


Local Economic Indicators (Cont'd)

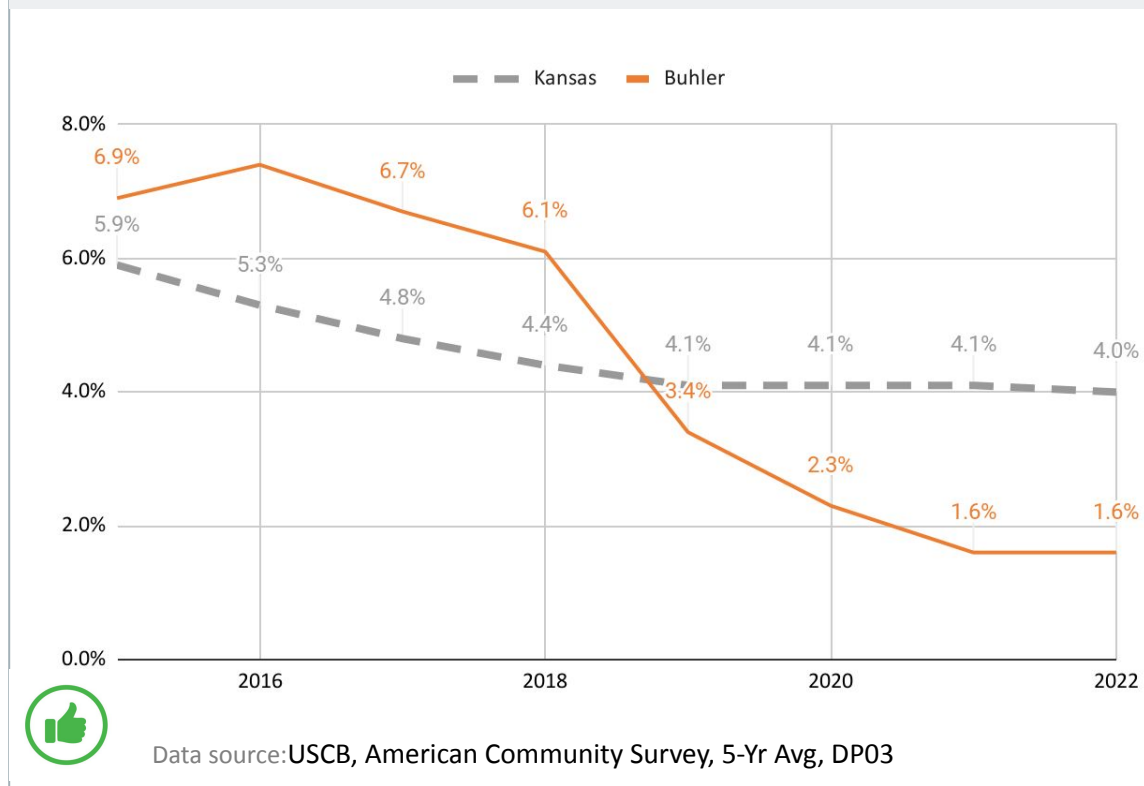
Overall Population Trend



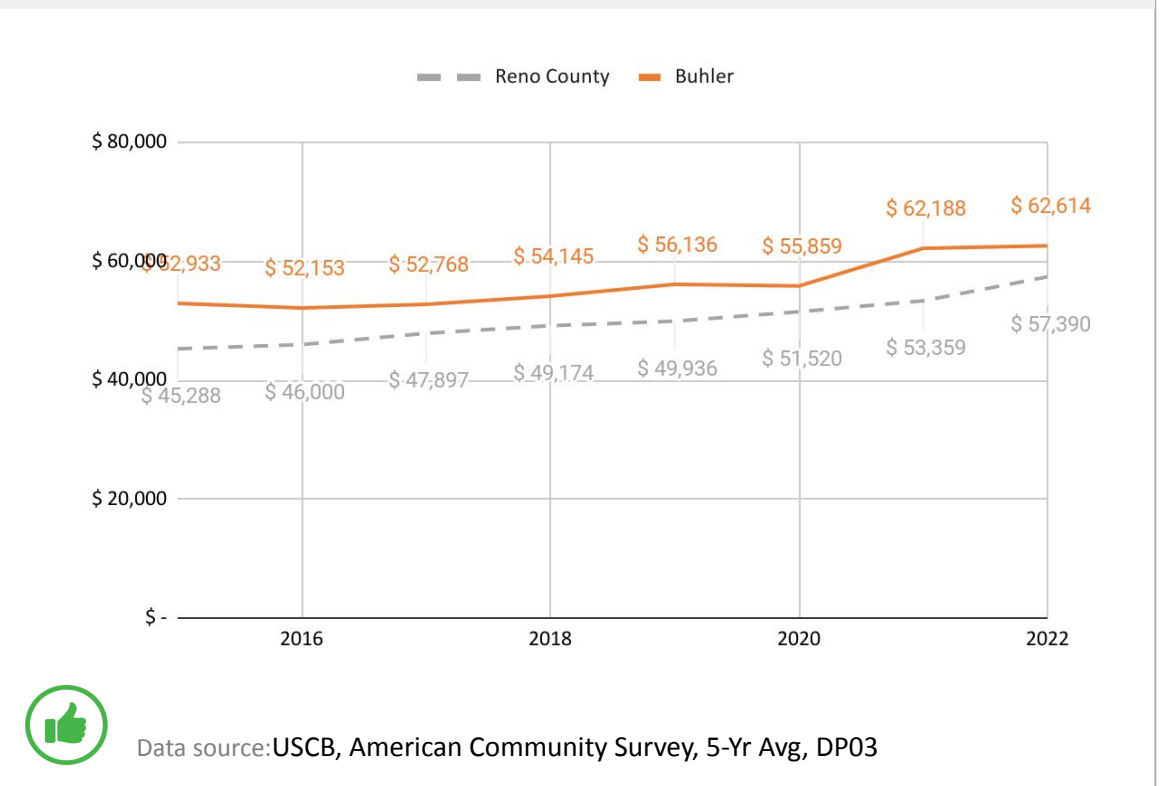
Local Poverty Rate



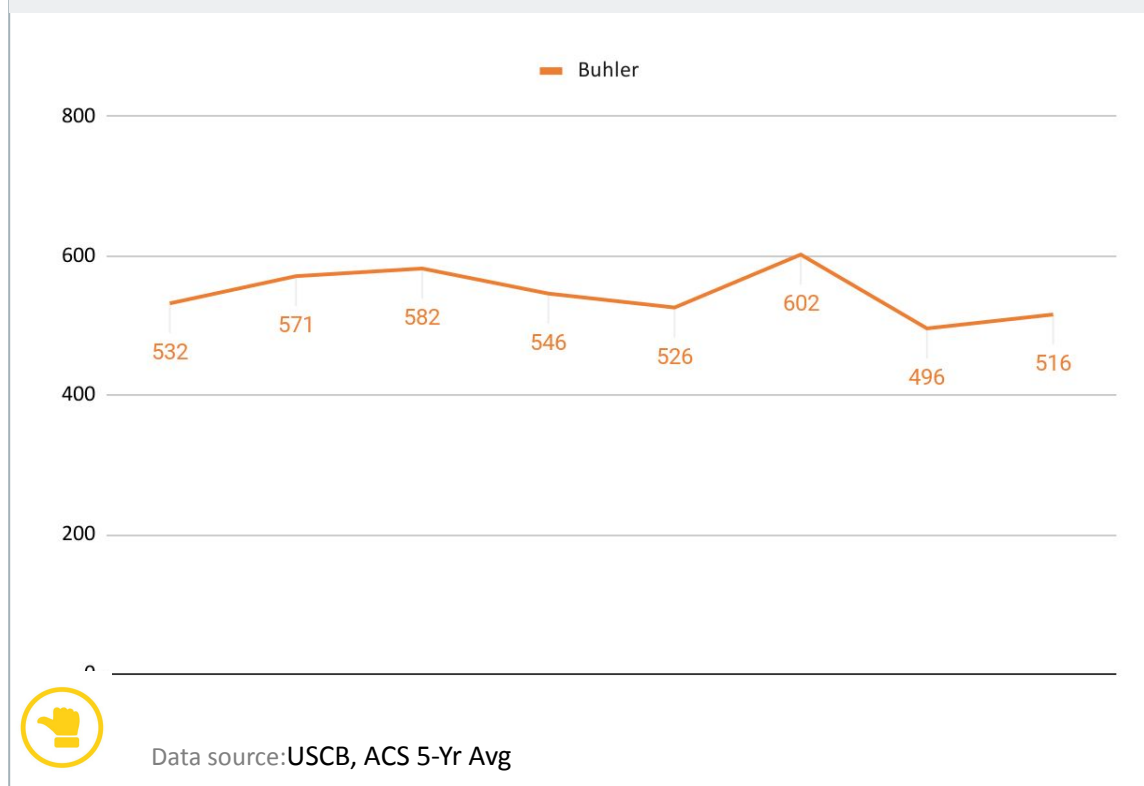
Local Unemployment Rate



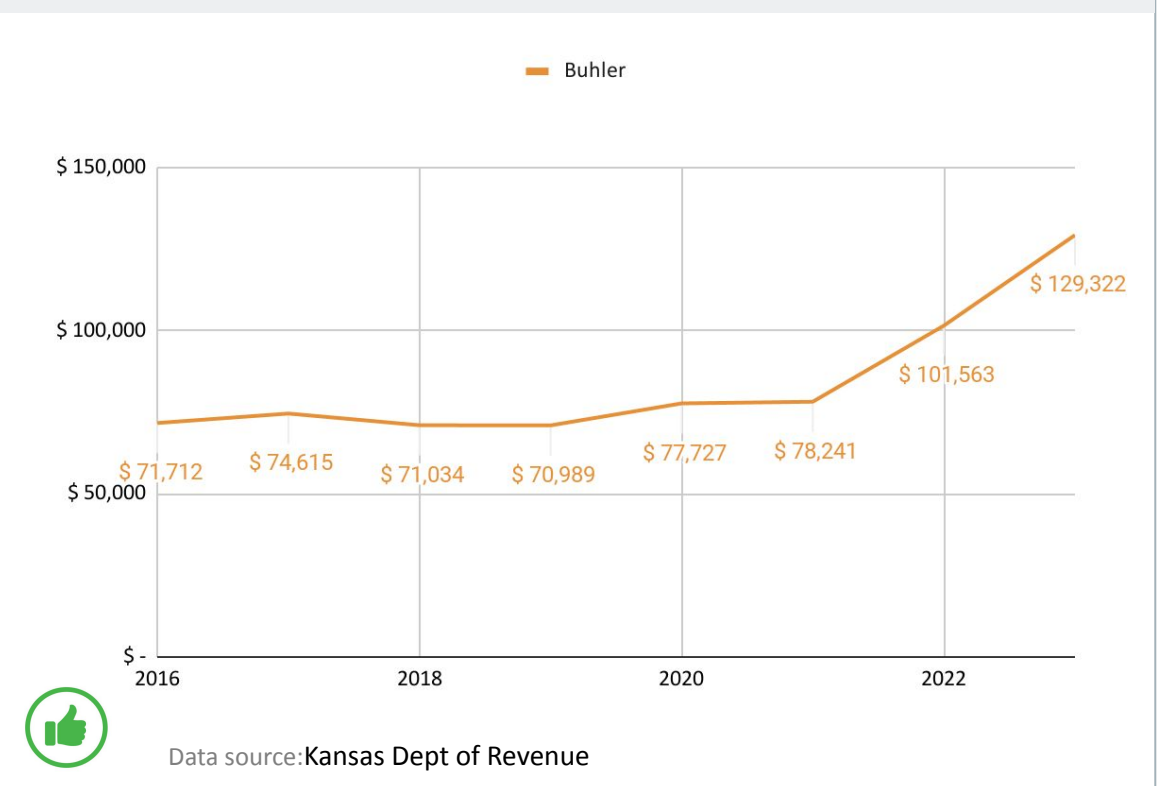
Median Household Income



Total Housing Units



Annual Sales Tax Collection



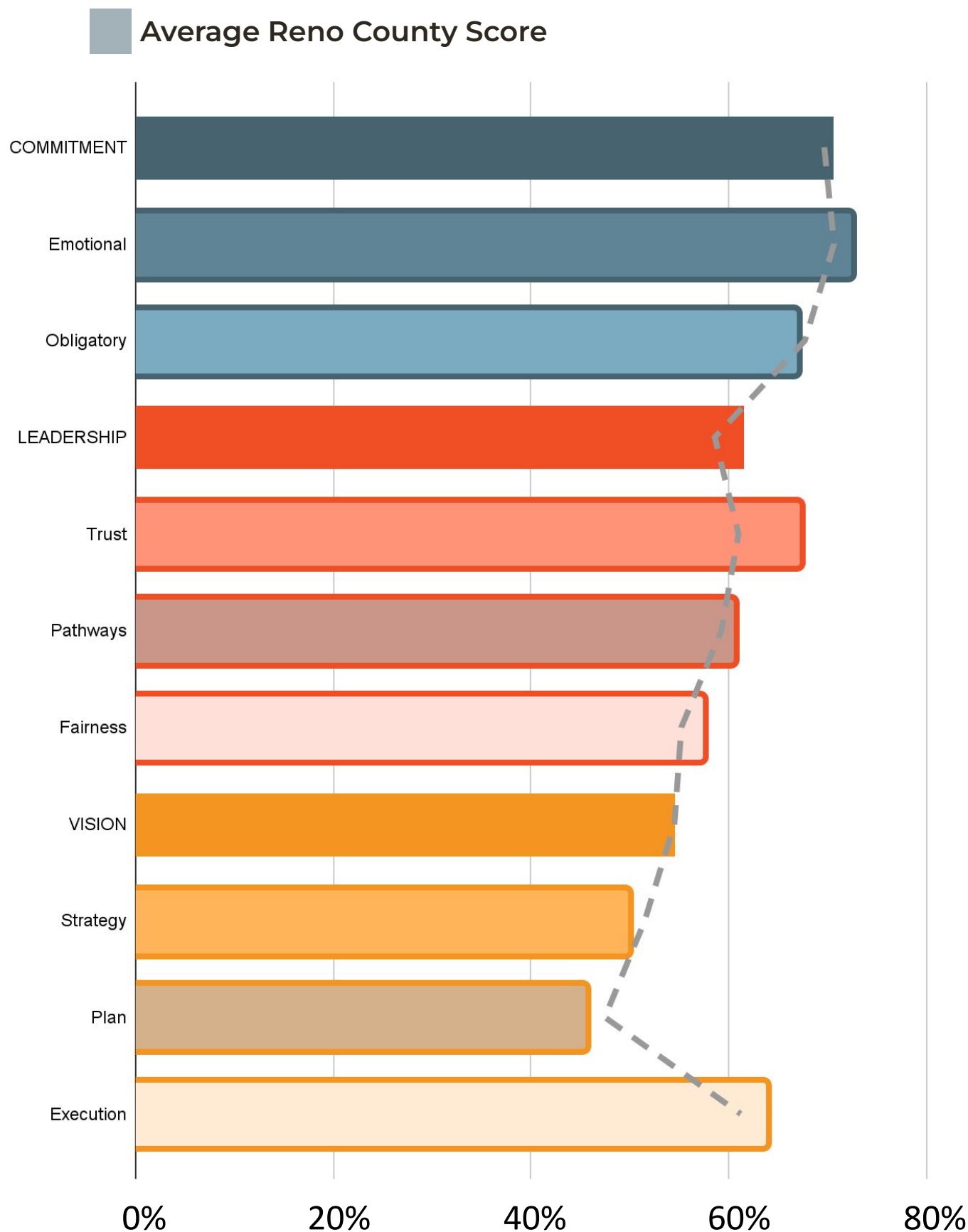
Confidence In Our Local Community

Engagement Summary:

The two overall categories of Commitment and Leadership are ranked better than the residents of other communities. Emotional commitment by local residents is ranked at the highest across all the categories. The lowest assessment relates to local **planning efforts**, while in parallel, **execution** efforts initiatives are ranked very high. The town has the benefit of the resident's commitment. **How can this momentum be leveraged?**



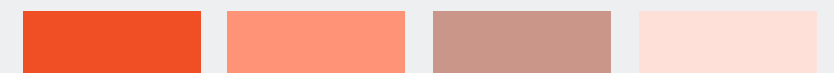
How do our residents view our community?



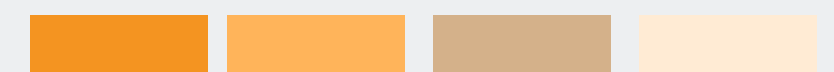
Commitment



Leadership



Vision



The biggest challenge identified is a perceived lack of planning when it comes to the vision of the town. However, the commitment of the citizens remains high which can be helpful when planning for the future.

How can local leadership be more effective in engaging residents with planning sessions?

How can communication between residents and leadership be improved to build on their apparent trust as well as pathways to involve more residents in leadership roles?

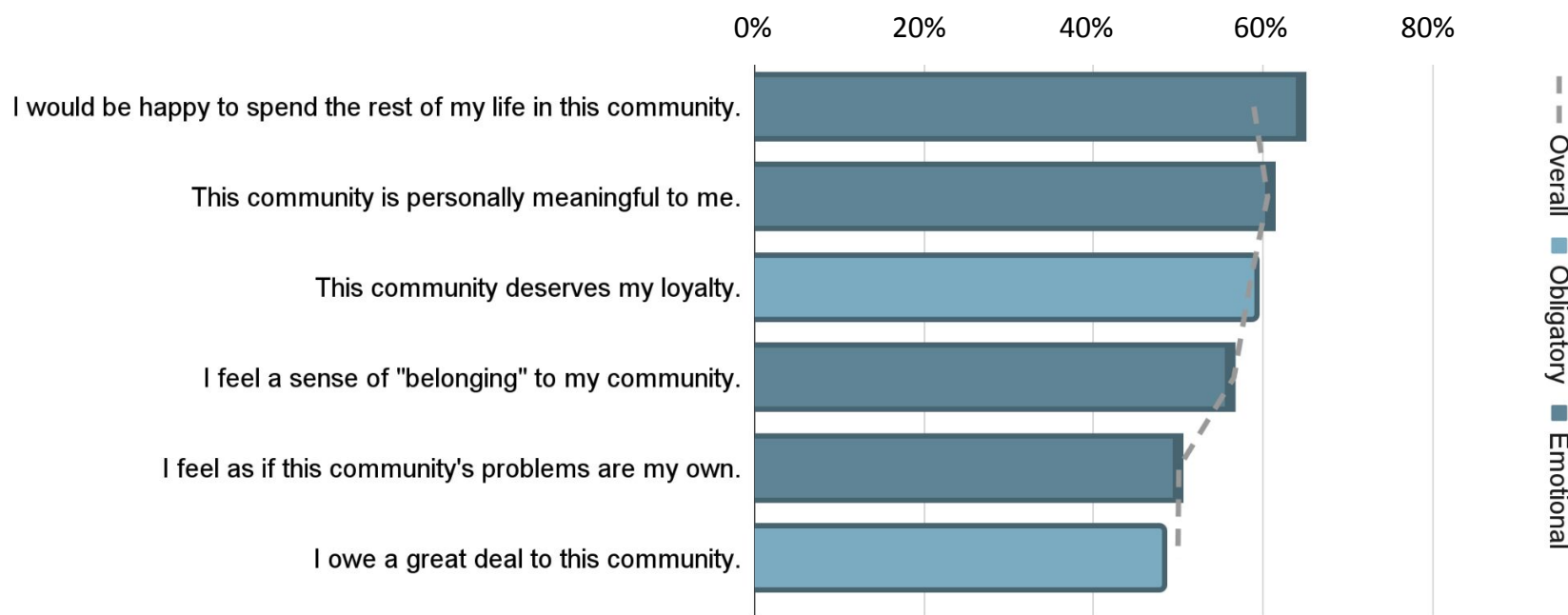
What are locals committed to specifically, and how can that be capitalized into creating more leaders with better communicated plans.

Confidence In Our Local Community

Average Reno County Score

Portion of the community that is highly confident on the listed community dimensions (Rating range: 0-7)

Community Confidence: Personal Commitment

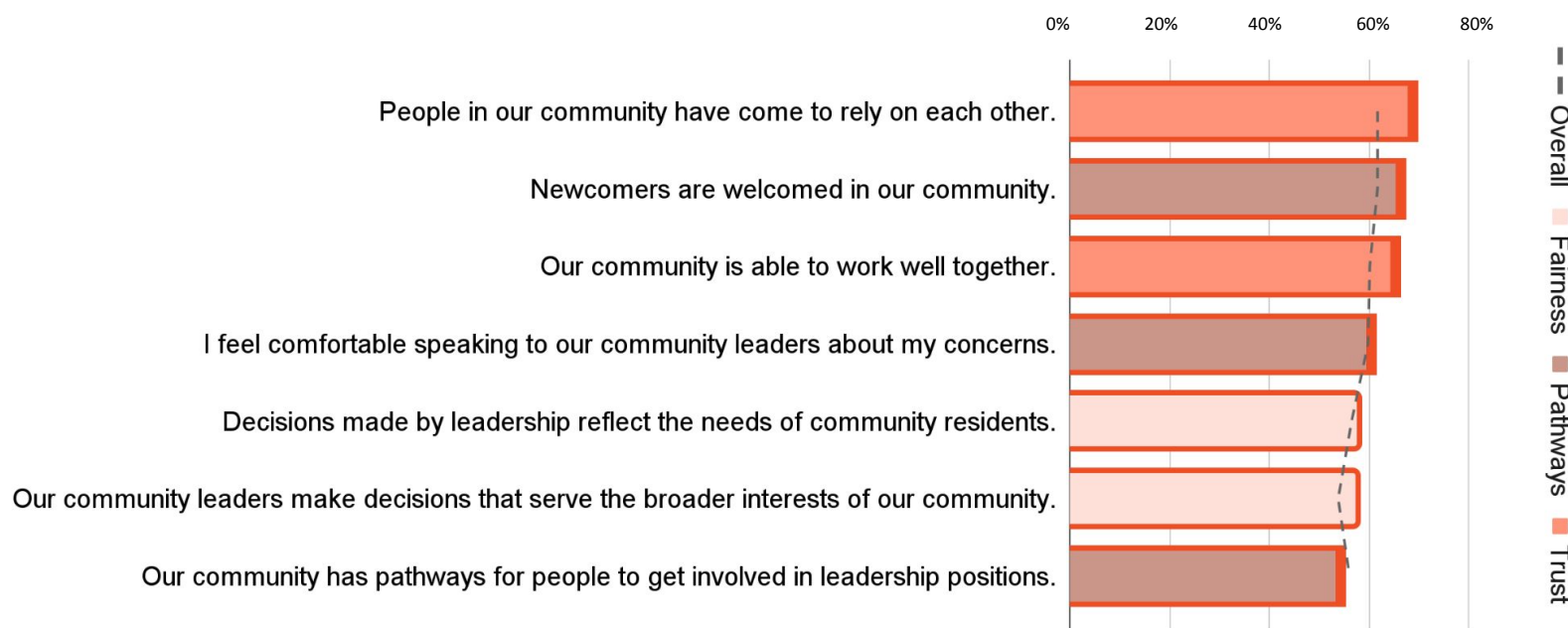


Many of the commitment areas are right on par with the rest of the county. The desire to make the community their forever home tops the list. There is a strong emotional tie, and not quite as strong of an obligatory relationship.

What steps can be taken to tap into this positive sentiment?

What types of community projects could further increase personal commitment?

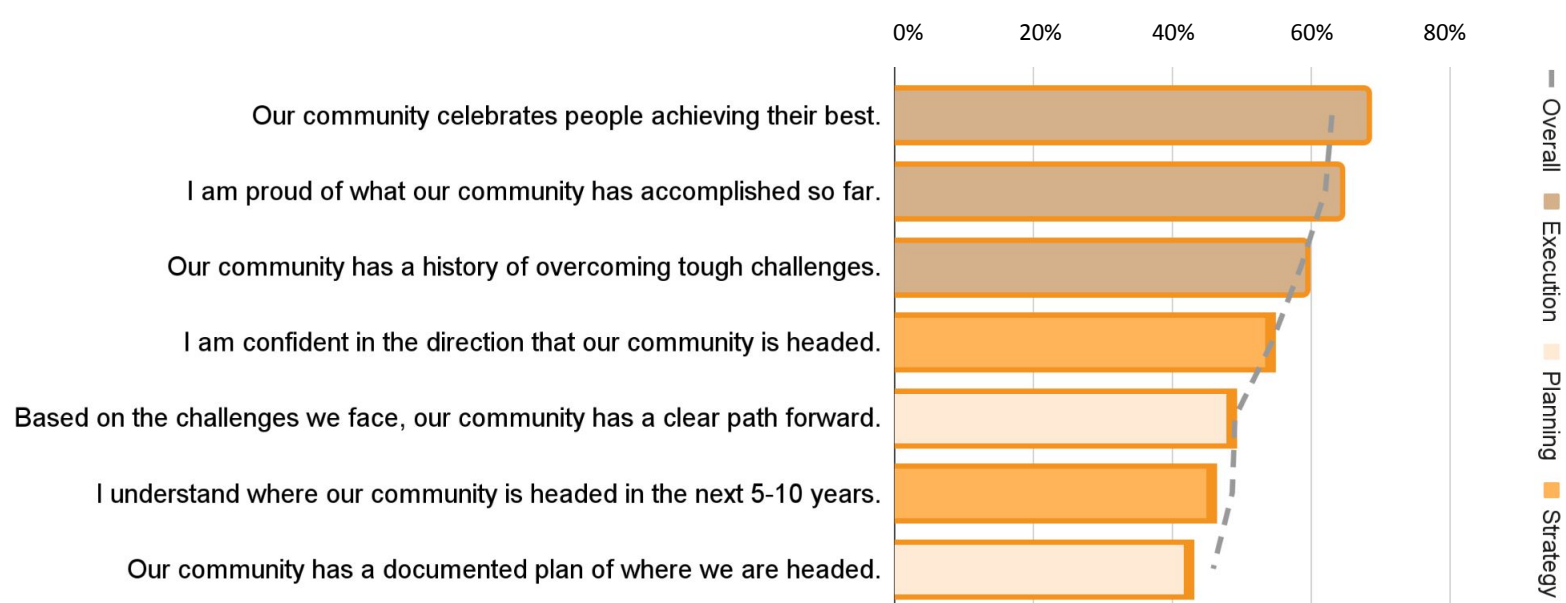
Community Confidence: Local Leadership



An opportunity is to find how to have local residents view the efforts of the leaders as being more fair. The resident's emotional relationship with the town and the positive view of the leaders can catalyze more resident engagement in the community.

How can leaders demonstrate accountability and responsiveness to community concerns?

Community Confidence: Vision



Confidence in program execution within the community is very high, even compared to the county results. Planning and strategizing however need improvement.

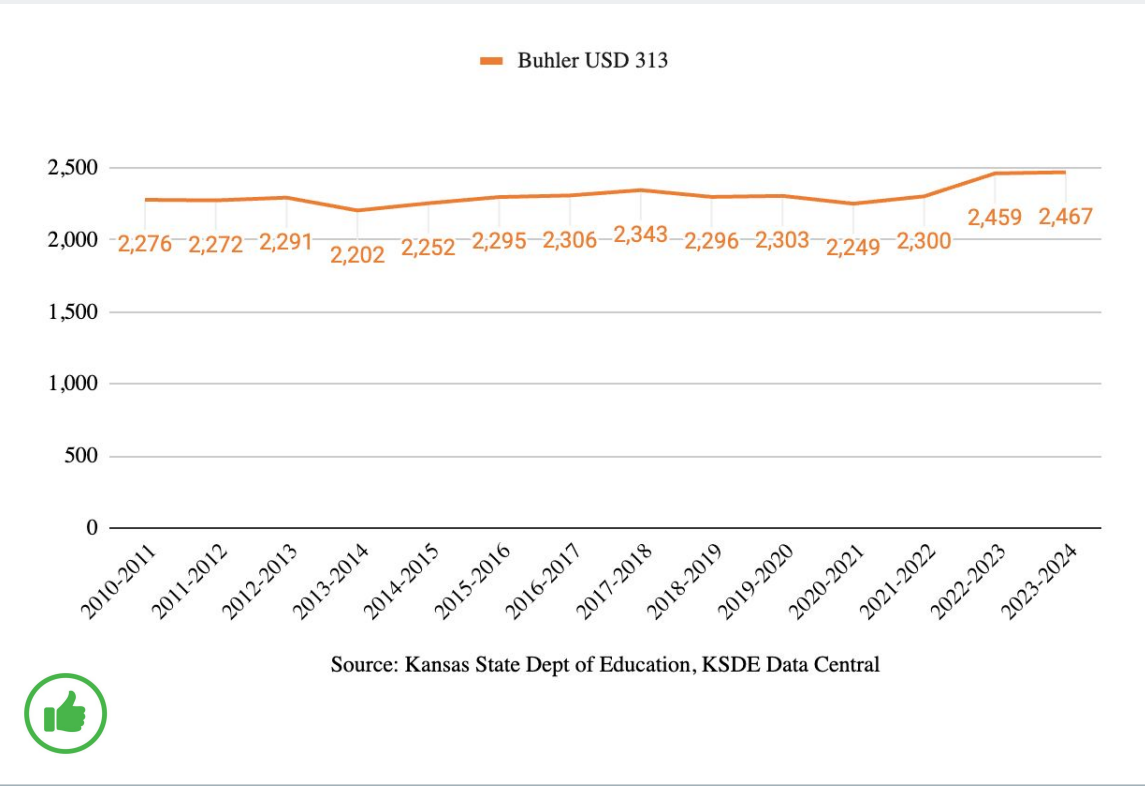
What is the long-term vision that residents would like to see for their community?

How can the community's vision be more clearly communicated to all residents?

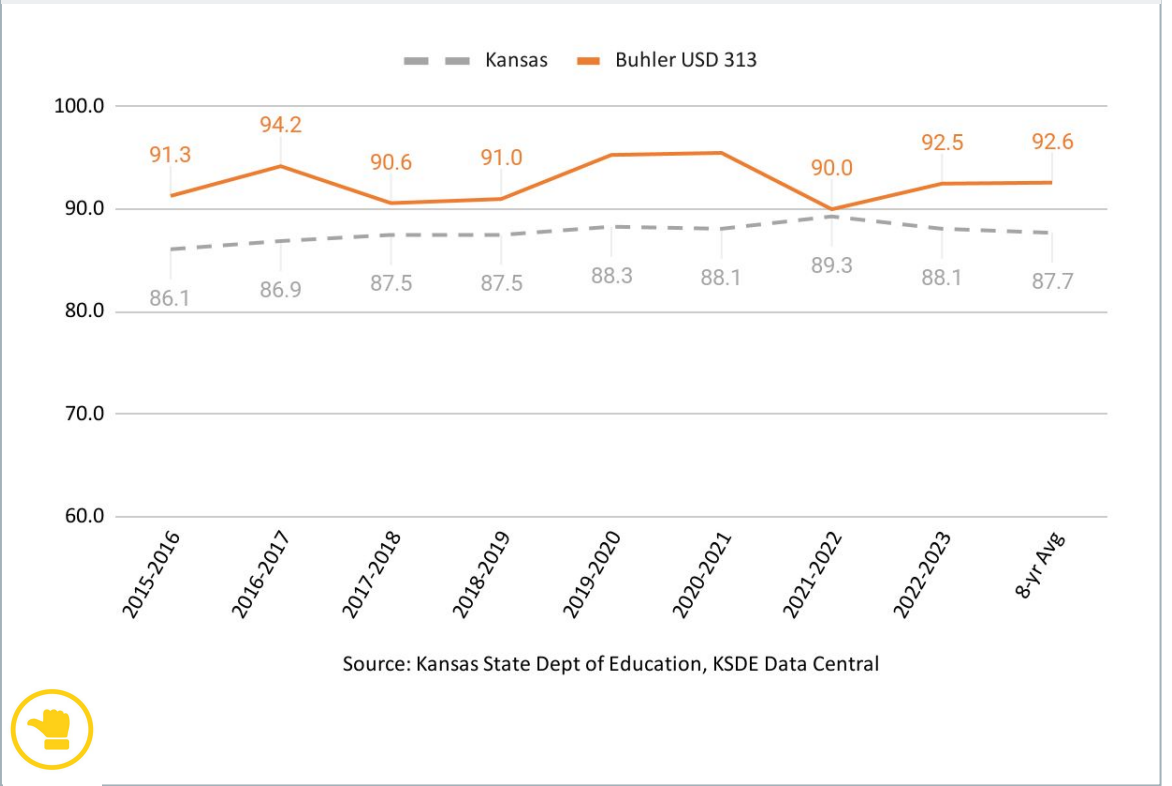
What role can residents play in shaping and realizing this vision?

Local Community Indicators

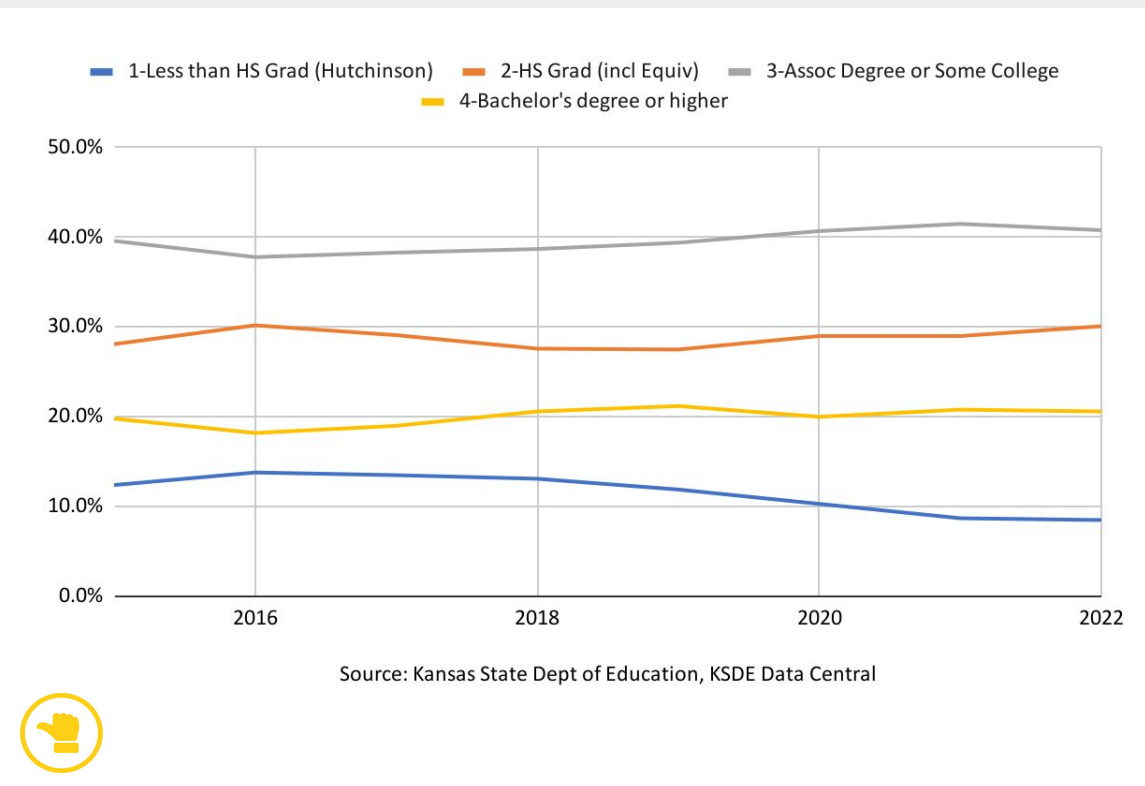
Local School Enrollment



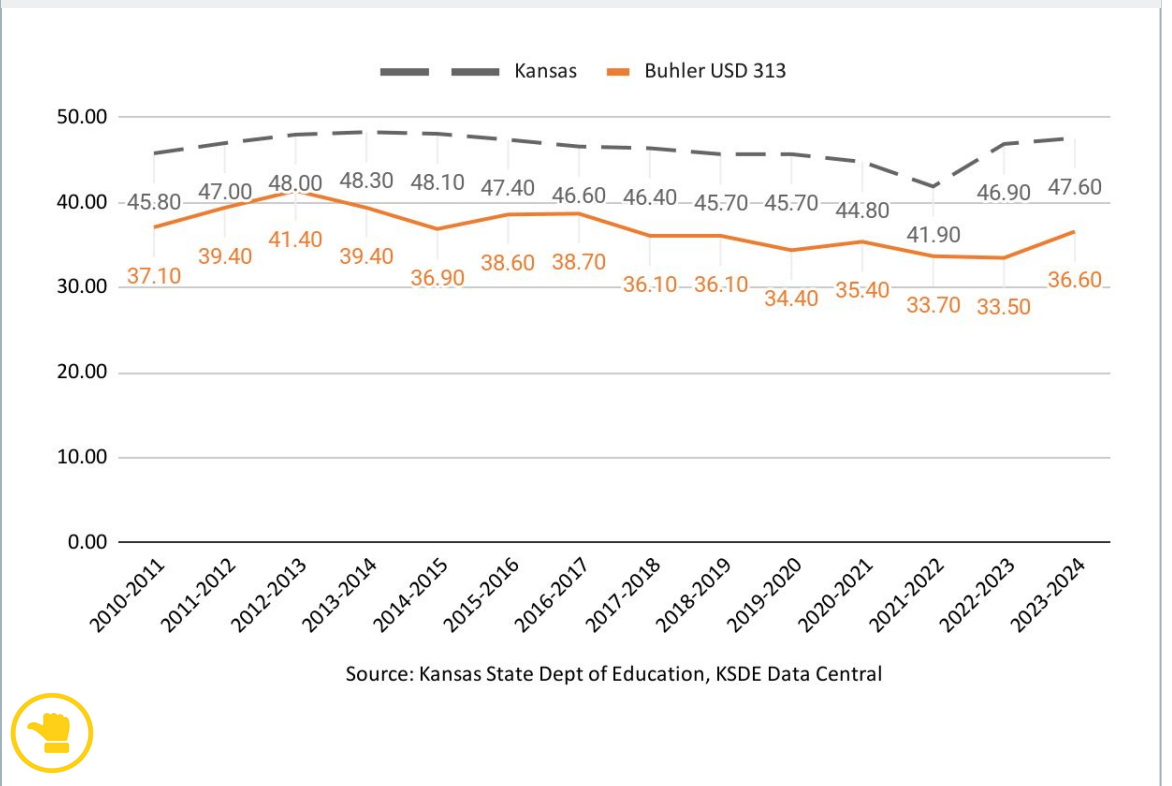
High School 4 Year Graduation Rate



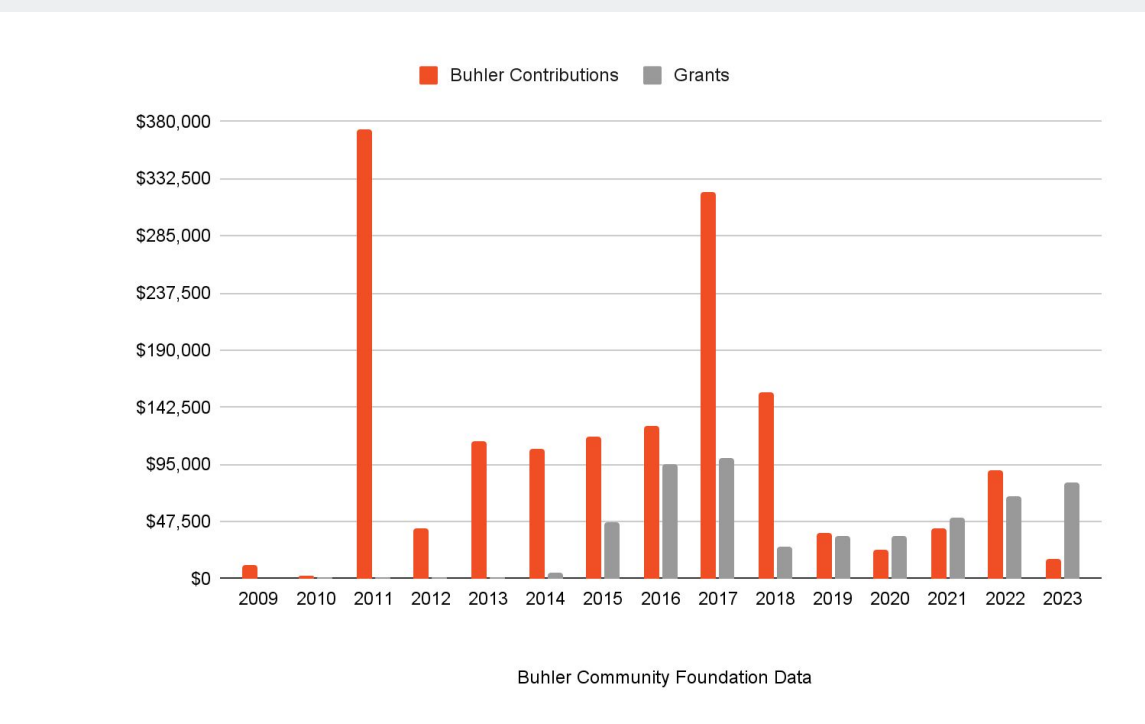
Local Educational Level



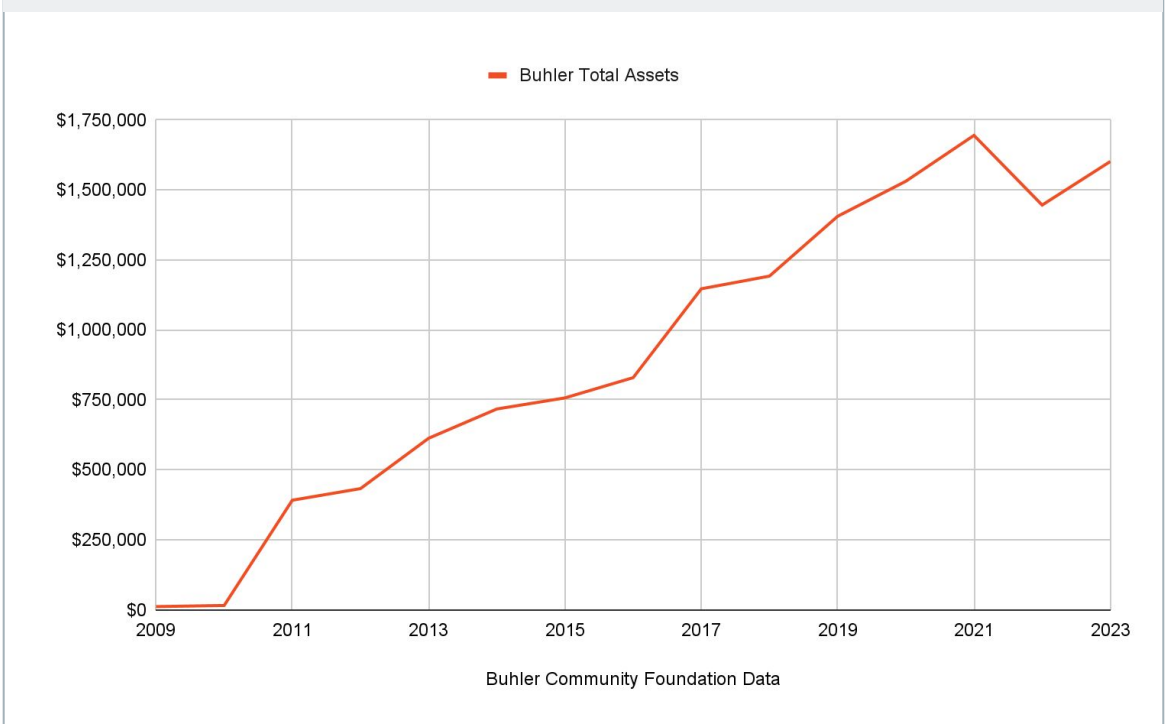
School District % Free-Reduced Price Lunch



Buhler Community Foundation: Contributions & Grants



Buhler Community Foundation: Total Assets



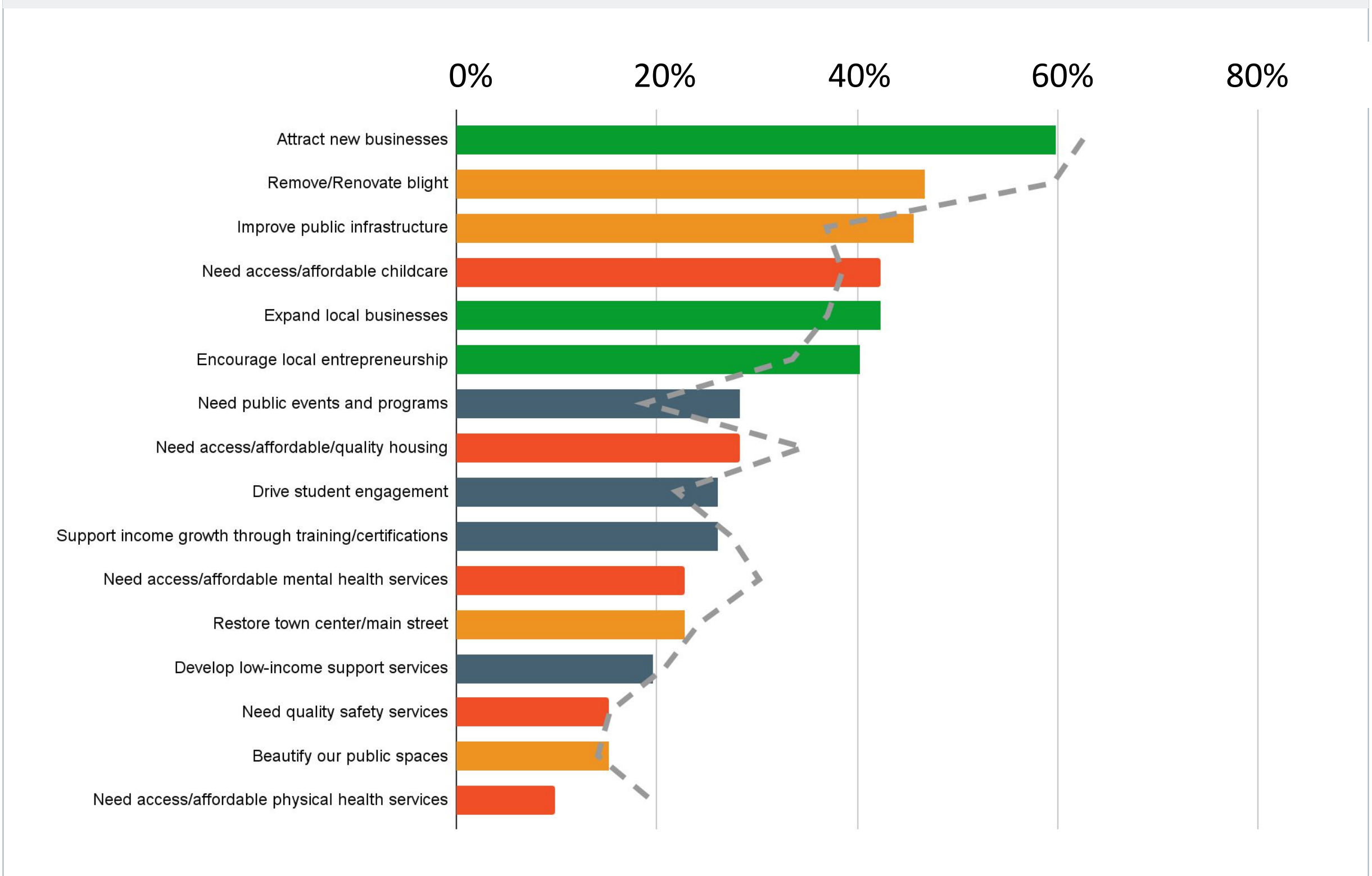
Community Program Priorities

Priorities Summary:

Top priorities focus on economic resilience, with a strong emphasis on **attracting new businesses, expanding local businesses, and encouraging local entrepreneurship**. Improving public infrastructure and renovating areas of distress around the town, is also a key concern. Community engagement and creating events / programs to support the level of confidence and enthusiasm within the community is a promising opportunity, and one that is prioritized far more than in other parts of the county..

■ Health
 ■ Placemaking
 ■ Economy
 ■ People
 ■ Average Reno County Score

2024 Economic and Community Development Priorities



Vibrant Place:

A significant focus among respondents is on maintaining unkempt spaces throughout the community. There is a strong desire for enhanced infrastructure also. Both of these speak to the need to maintain what the community already has.

Resilient Economy:

Economic growth is a priority as seen in next graph regarding metrics. Many respondents highlight the need for new businesses to join the community and support for the expansion of businesses already established.

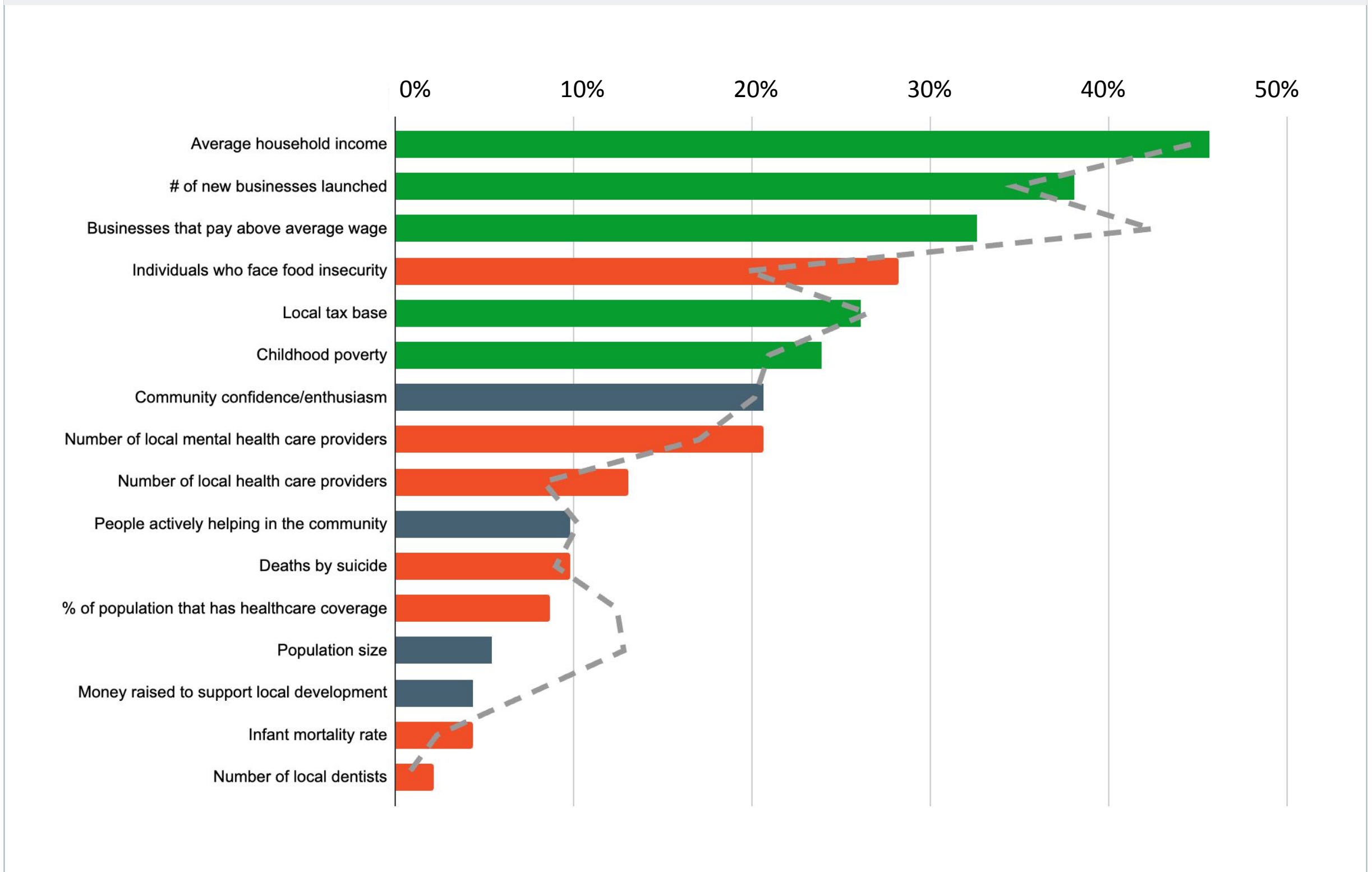
Healthy Citizens:

While many of the health-related categories are ranked lower, the need for affordable childcare ranks as number one in the area. The other rankings for health are sporadic throughout the rest of the priorities.

Community Progress Indicators

Health Economy People Average Reno County Score

2024 Community Progress Indicators



Economy:

Economic concerns dominate the feedback from Buhler and across Reno County. The residents would like to see more explicit focus on efforts that raise economic metrics in the community like household income, new businesses and the wages they pay.

Community Engagement:

The town's most important priority is around driving community confidence and enthusiasm. This is followed by people actively helping the community.

Health:

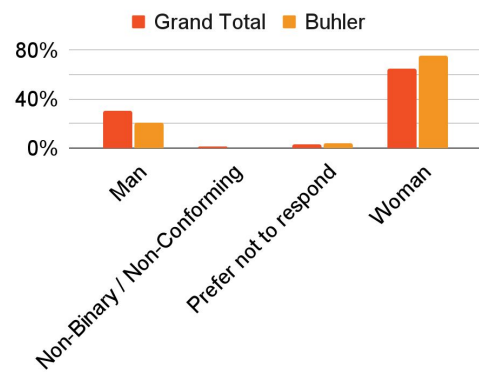
Health and wellness are not necessarily significant priorities except for helping those who face food insecurity. The next highest priority in the health category involve respondents expressing the need for better healthcare services, and mental health support.

Survey Respondents

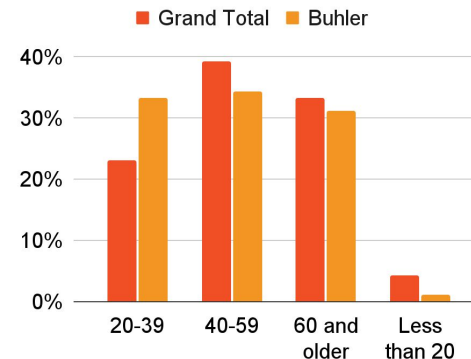
Number of Participants



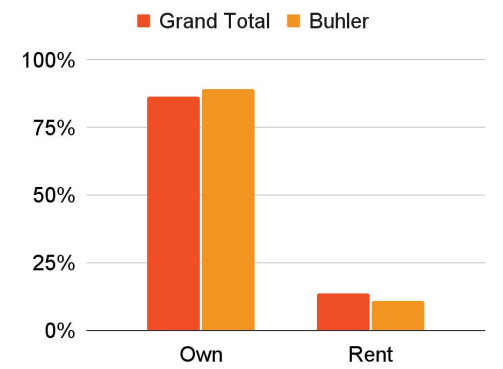
Gender



Age Profile



Residential Status



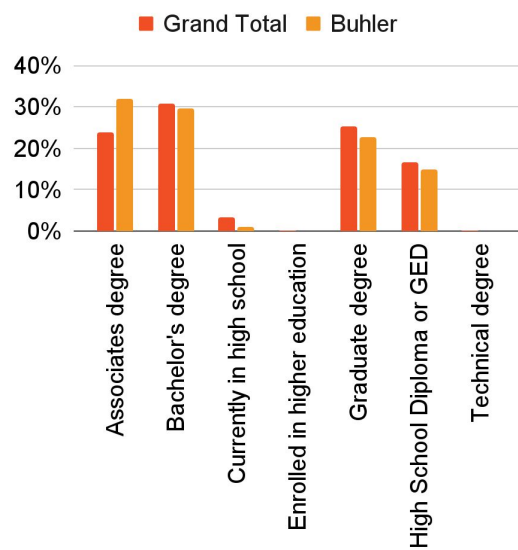
The largest demographic group captured in the survey consists of homeowners aged 40-59, highlighting the established nature of the community.

The biggest takeaway from the gender data is that women constitute the majority of respondents, indicating a potential gender imbalance in community engagement or interest.

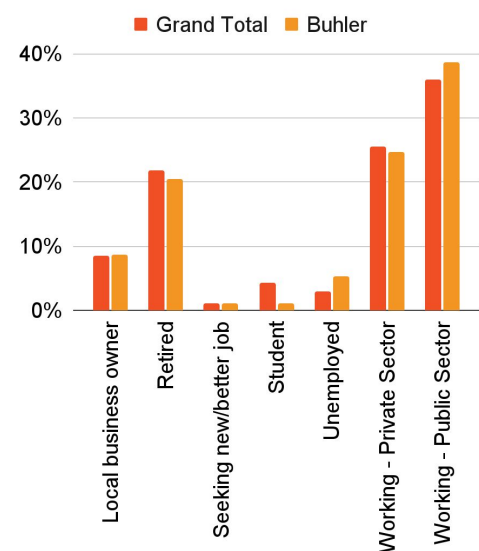
The most notable insight from the age profile is the significant representation of the 40-59 age group, suggesting that middle-aged residents are most engaged in community matters.

Homeowners overwhelmingly dominate the survey, reflecting a community with a strong sense of permanence and investment in the area.

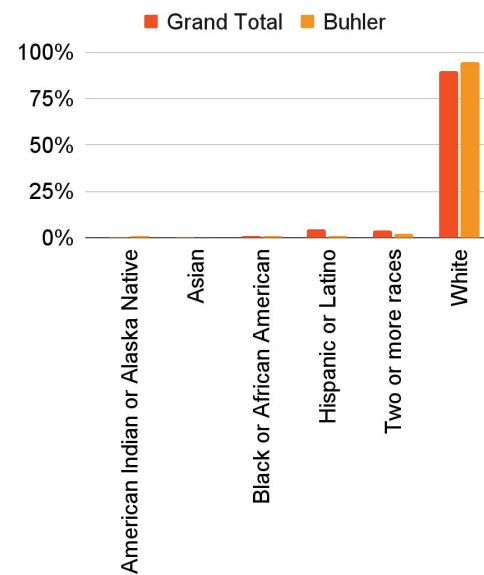
Education Level



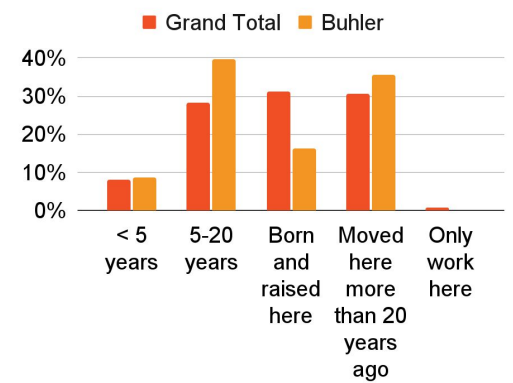
Employment Status



Ethnicity



Years lived in location



A high level of educational attainment is evident, with most respondents holding at least a bachelor's degree, indicating a well-educated community.

The data reveals that most respondents are actively employed, with a significant portion working in public or private sectors, highlighting a community with a stable workforce.

The respondents are predominantly white, but survey results may not fully reflect the ethnic percentage profile of the community. Some important voices may still need to be engaged.

The data shows that a large portion of respondents have either lived in the community their entire lives or for more than 20 years, indicating a deeply rooted population with strong ties to the area.

■ Town Score
■ Average Reno County Score

17 Number of people who expressed an interest in volunteering to better the community
17 of 94 (18%)