

Love WHERE YOU *Live*

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

2024 Fairfield Area Benchmark Report

Hutchinson 
community
FOUNDATION



Innovation Economy Partners
OUR FOCUS: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

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What Makes Our Community Special?

- "Our church family."
- Colleen Floyd
- "A set of people, especially connected with Partridge church, who care about community building, sustainability, etc."
- Joel Iwashige
- "It's a quiet community, nestled along the Ninnescah River."
- Kevin
- "It's quiet and relatively safe, with opportunities to learn to know your neighbors."
- Miriam Iwashige
- "Definitely the small town feel, and the events city hall puts on."
- Jamison Nisly
- "Relationships & Connections."
- Colton Biehler
- "A very small community with an active group of citizens both in the town and in the adjoining region."
- Jim French
- "Neighbors who become friends and family. I have countless neighbors who I could trust to watch my children for a week if an emergency arose."
- Anonymous
- "Everyone knows everyone and looks out for each other"
- Anonymous
- "Lots of community involvement, friendly people "
- 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:

A total of 66 community members took the survey and of these 16 provided their contact information, because they are interested in serving in a greater capacity locally. The community survey reveals a strong sense of loyalty and personal connection among residents, with many viewing their community as meaningful. However, concerns about the vision, specifically the planning and future strategy, are evident. There is a desire for better opportunities for involvement in leadership roles and greater engagement. Most priorities focus on economic growth, as well as removing blight and strengthening public infrastructure.

pg **4, 5**

Economic Confidence

Economic confidence is mixed, with some seeing future business conditions as improving, while others view employment opportunities as only slightly better than they are now. Income levels are largely expected to remain the same or increase slightly, reflecting a chance of uncertainty in economic stability.

pg **6, 7, 8**

Community Engagement Confidence

Residents feel a strong sense of loyalty, commitment and connection to their community, though many express concerns about the vision of the community especially in the area of planning and strategizing.

pgs **9a-9b**

Critical Community Priorities

Community priorities focus on expanding local businesses, improving public infrastructure, and fostering entrepreneurship. Residents aim to boost the local tax base, household income, and business development, making it extremely apparent that the economy should be the community's first priority.

pg **10**

Survey Respondent Profile

Most respondents have lived in the community for over 20 years, are aged 60 or older, and are homeowners. They are predominantly retired or employed in the working sector. The majority hold a bachelor's degree or higher and there is a significant number of business owners in the community as well.

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.**



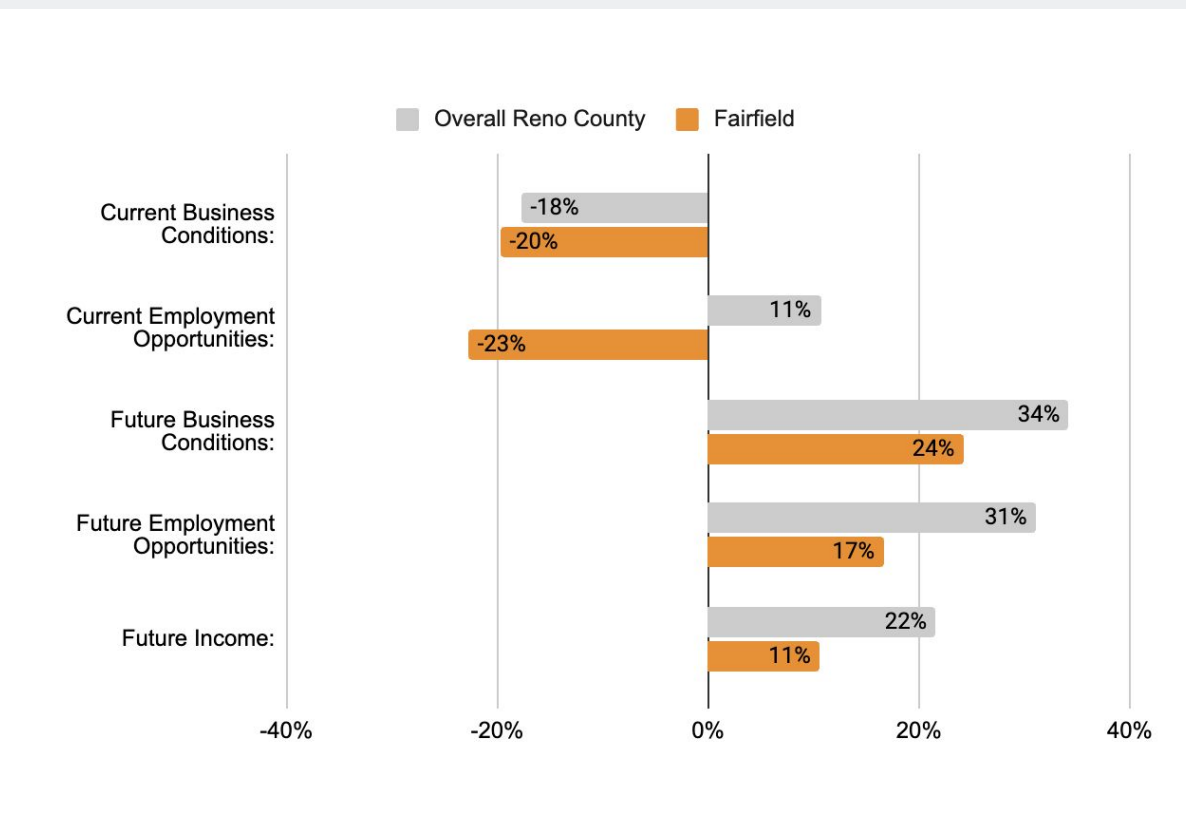
Confidence In Our Local Economy

Economic Summary:

The community's economic outlook reflects very cautious optimism. Current business conditions and employment opportunities are seen as being poor. The future outlook is seen more positively. However, all 5 of the economic variables are lower than the average county resident perspective. Other economic variables such as number of businesses in town and median household income also seem to be stagnant or declining. On a positive note, the local unemployment rate and poverty levels are trending well.

Survey Responses

Our Economic Perceptions

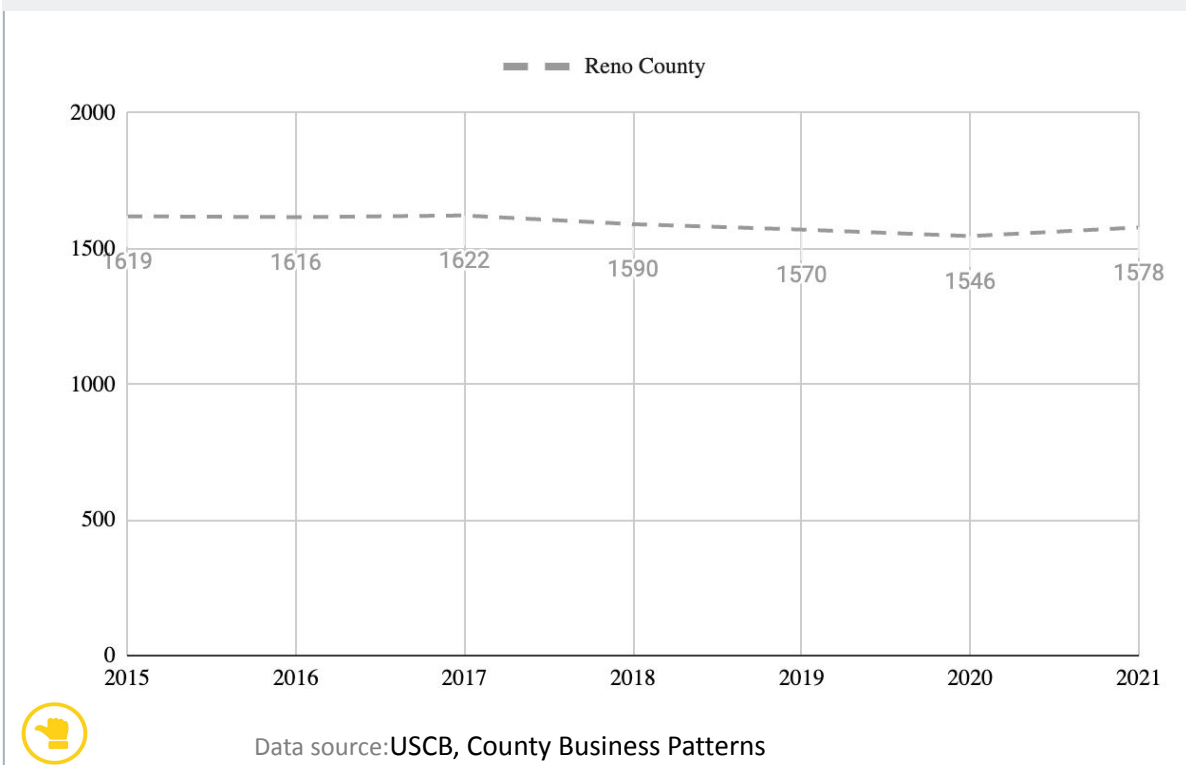


Popular Ideas for the Area:

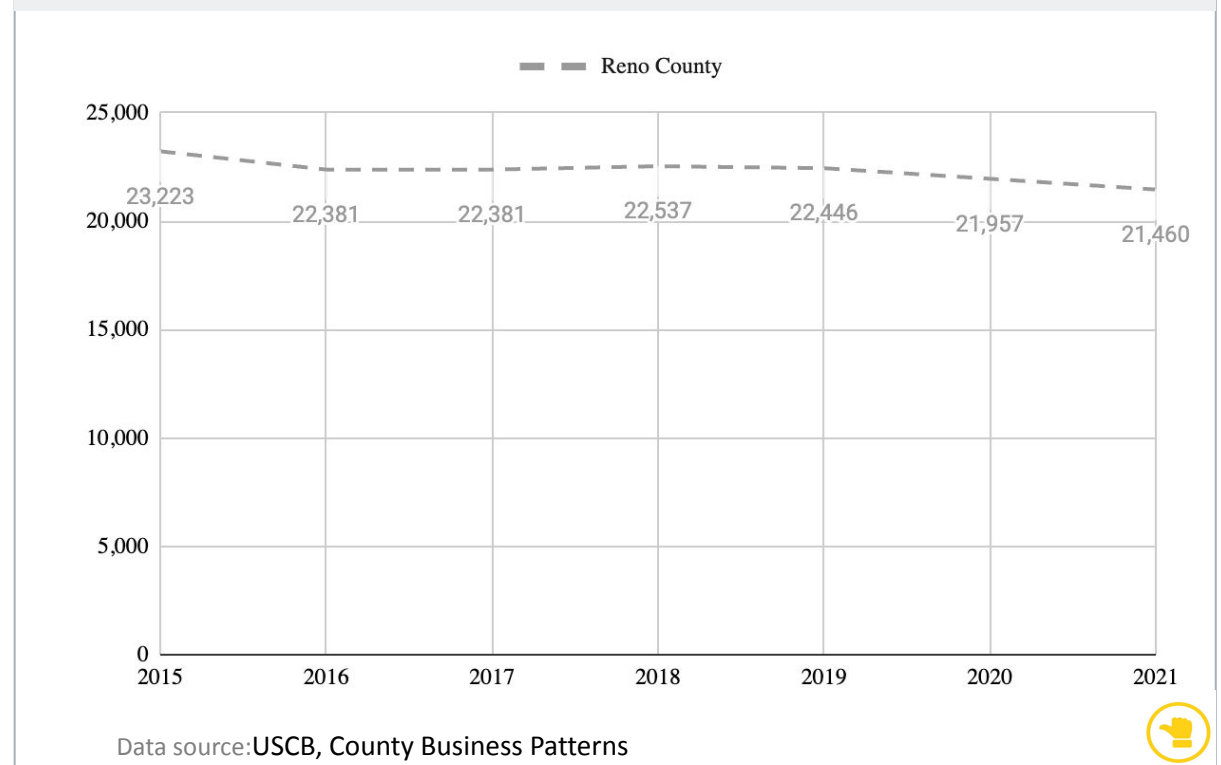
- Encourage new stores, such as Dollar General or hardware stores, especially in rural areas like Arlington.
- Support the transfer of unused buildings to entrepreneurs.
- Increase housing options for all income levels.
- Provide incentives for property repairs and renovations.
- Improve Sheriff presence in smaller communities.
- Preserve historic properties and clean up town entryways.
- Promote community gardens and food preservation education.
- Clean up neglected areas in town.

Local Economic Indicators

Total Businesses in Our Area

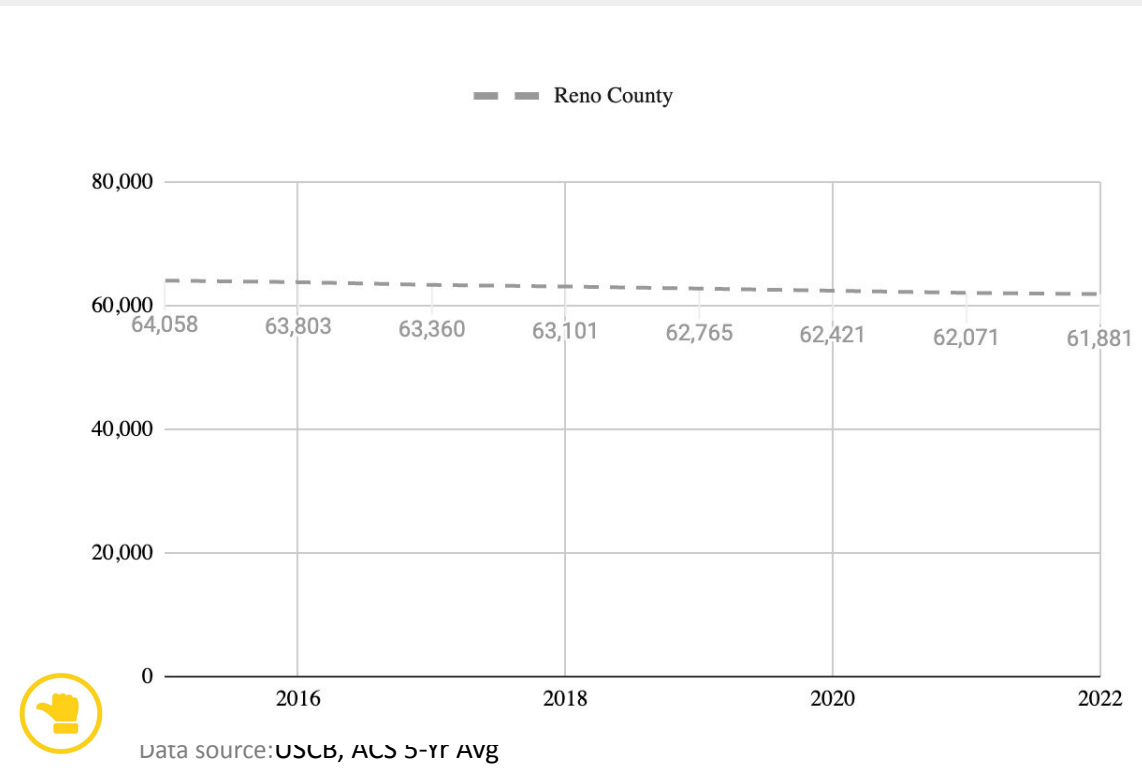


Employment in Our Area

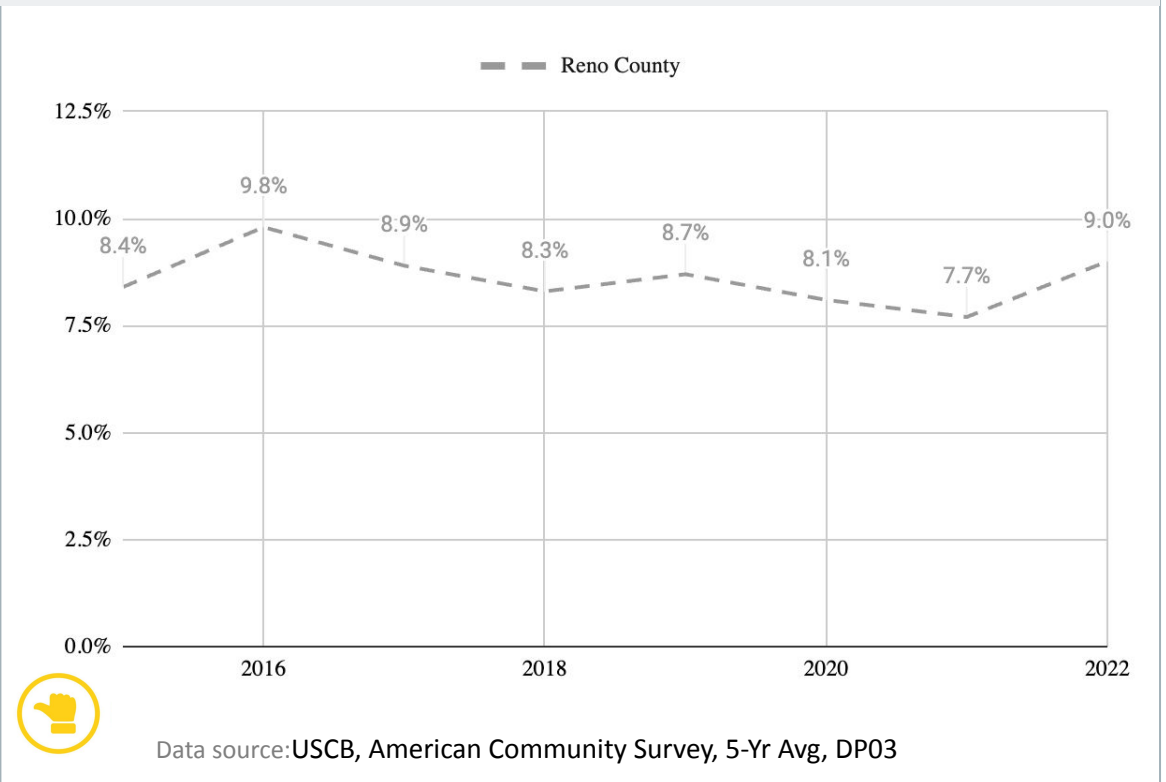


Local Economic Indicators (Cont'd)

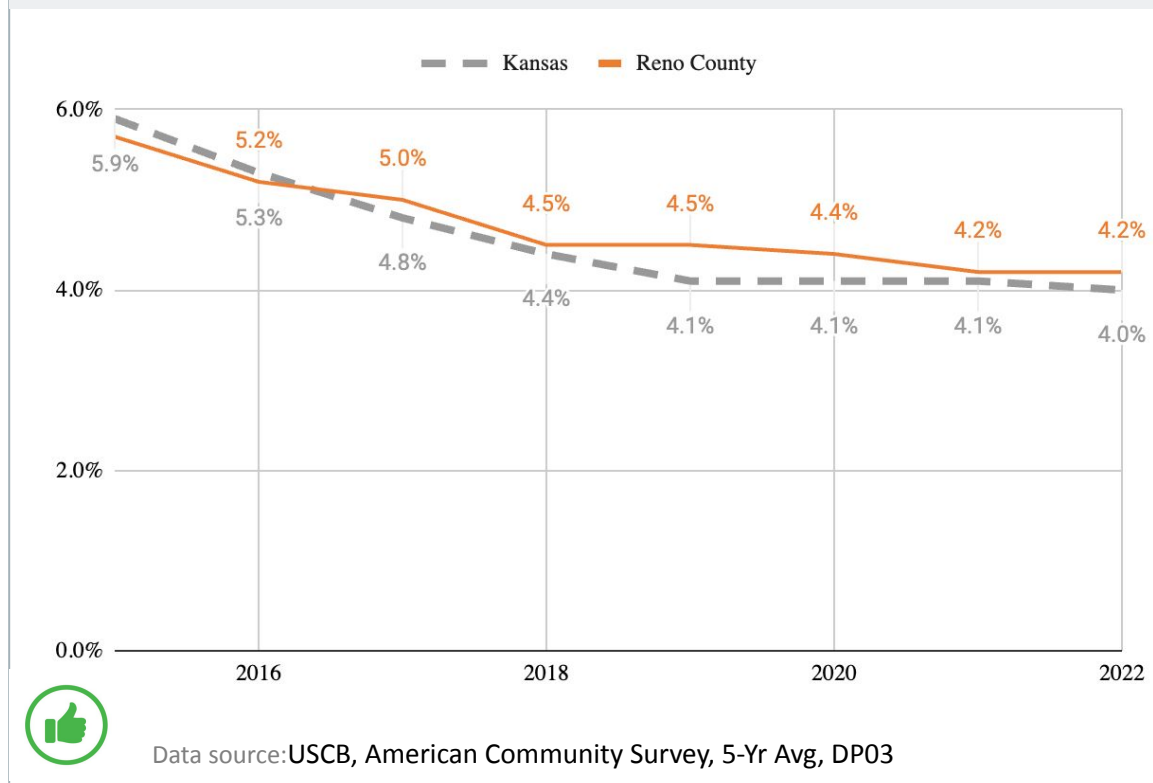
Overall Population Trend



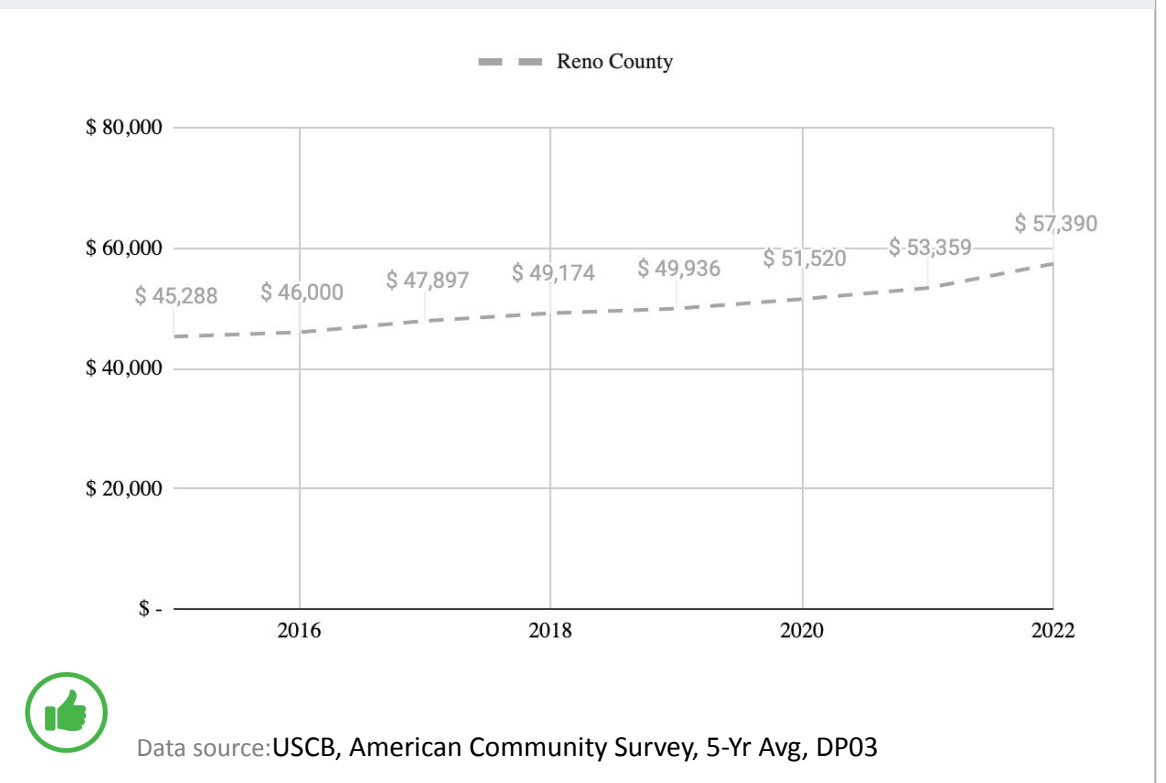
Local Poverty Rate



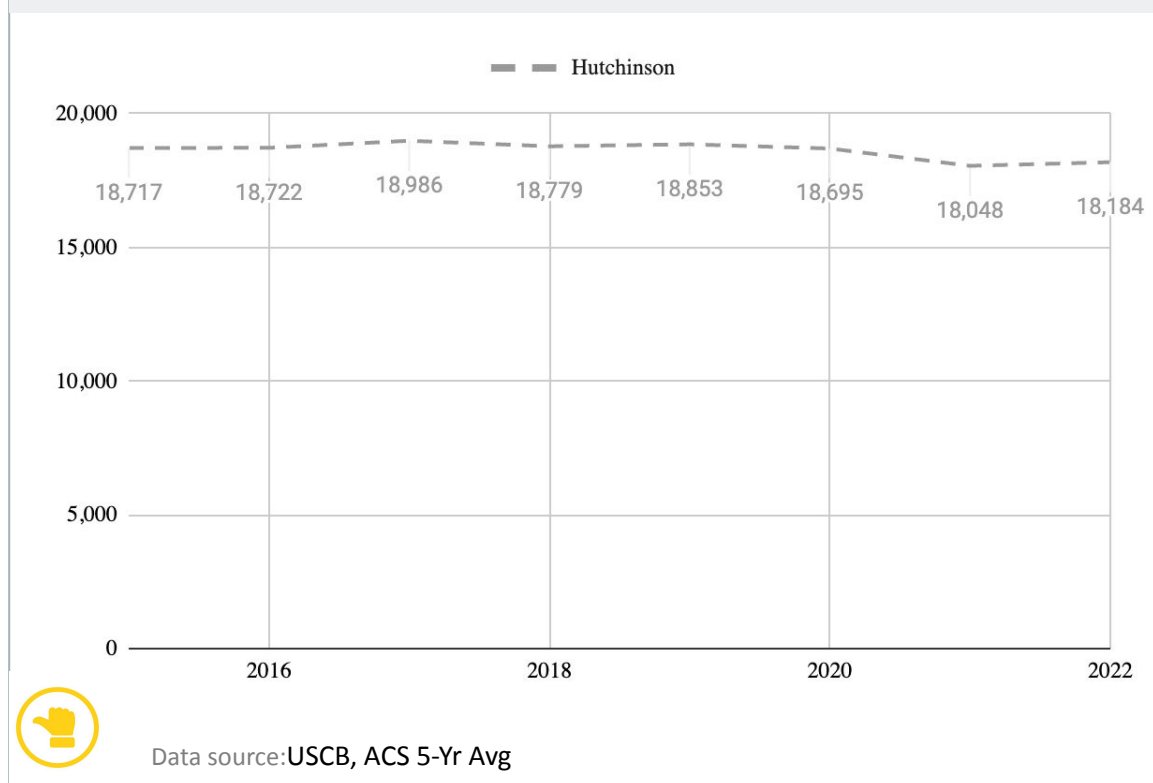
Local Unemployment Rate



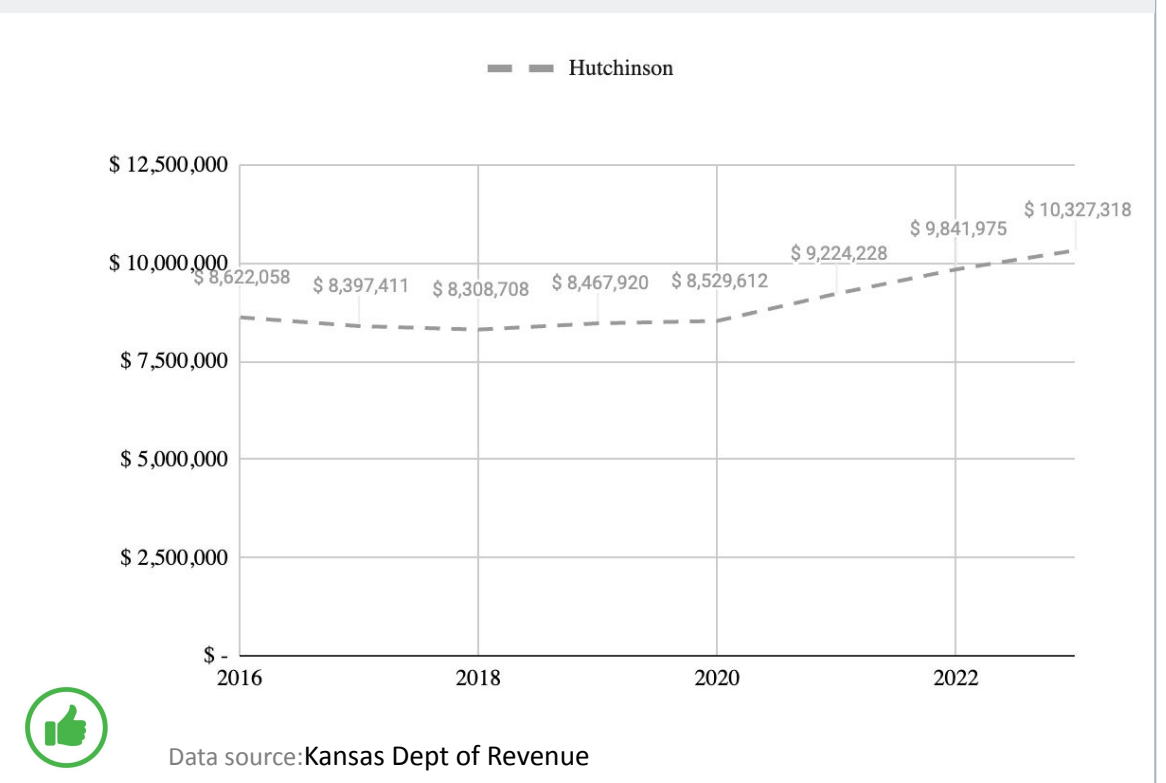
Median Household Income



Total Housing Units



Annual Sales Tax Collection



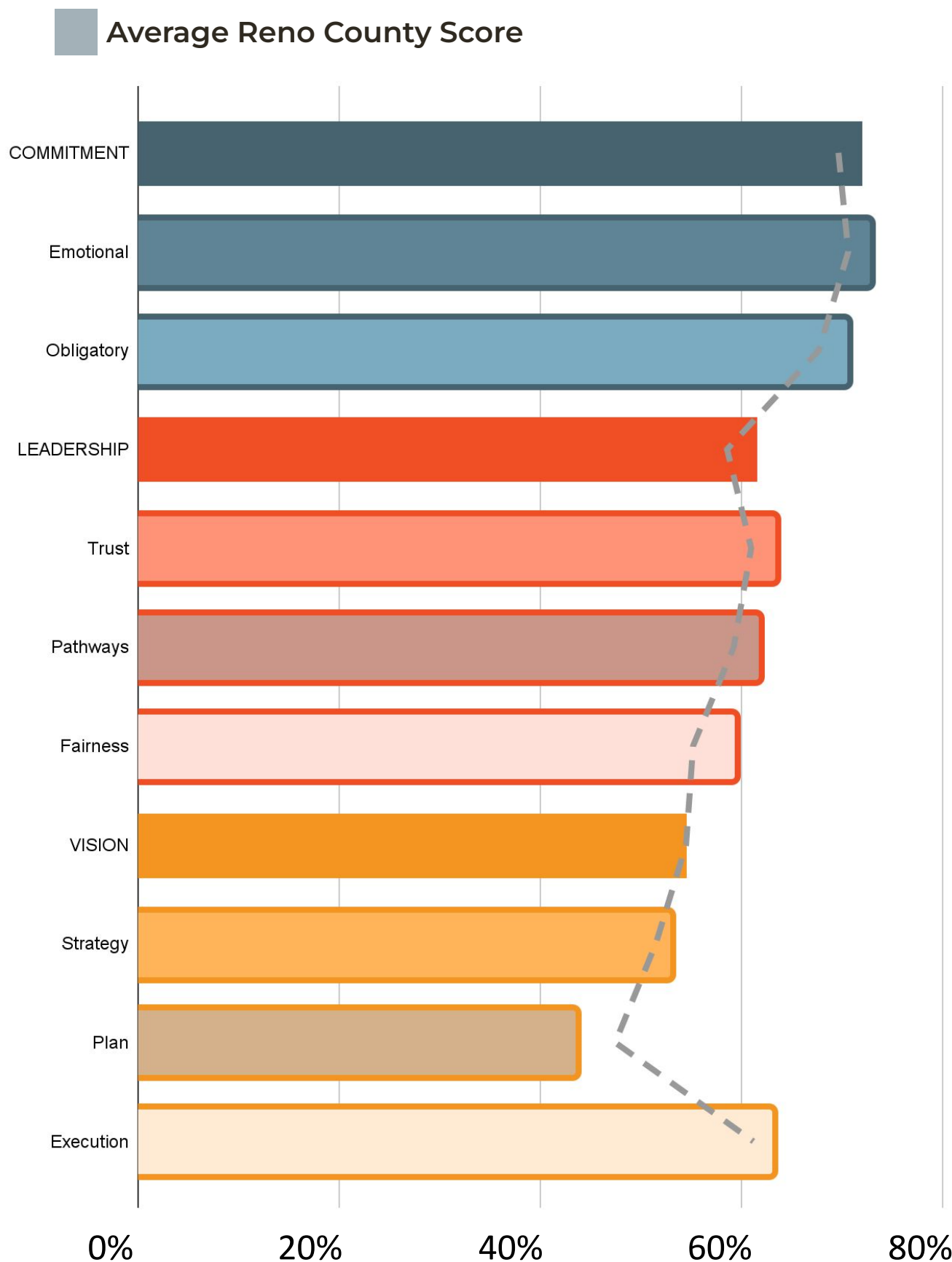
Confidence In Our Local Community

Engagement Summary:

Community members generally feel a strong sense of loyalty and personal connection to their community. Many express that the community is meaningful to them and that they are willing to spend their lives here. However, there are some who are concerned about the fairness of community decision-making. Moving forward, fostering more opportunities for leadership engagement and improving transparency in decision-making will be key to addressing these concerns, while continuing to build on the positive feelings of loyalty and belonging.



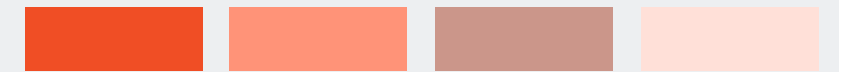
How do our residents view our community?



Commitment



Leadership



Vision



The biggest challenge residents see is the community's ability to plan for the future effectively. The biggest opportunity for growth lies in harnessing the strong personal connections and loyalty residents have. There is a foundation of pride and meaning that, if leveraged, could foster greater collaboration of plans and strategies.

How can we ensure more transparency in leadership decisions?

What new opportunities can we create for residents to engage in leadership?

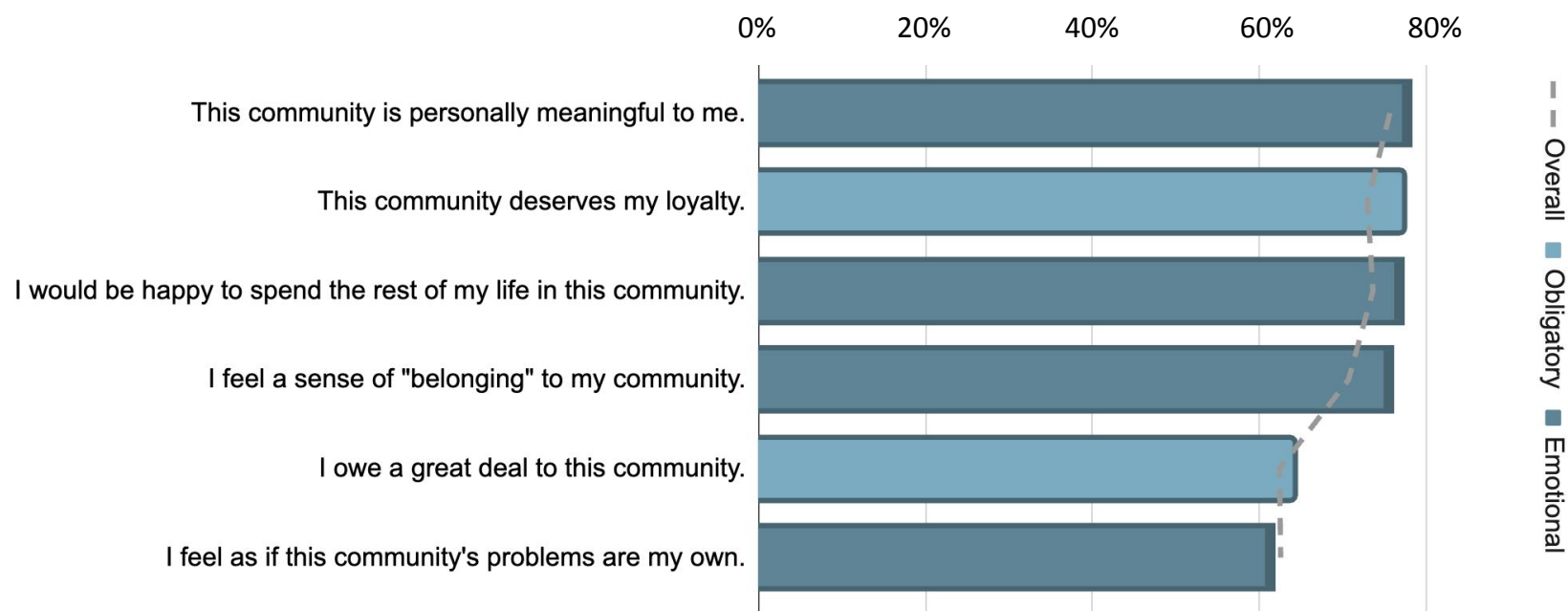
How can we involve more community members in the local planning process?

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

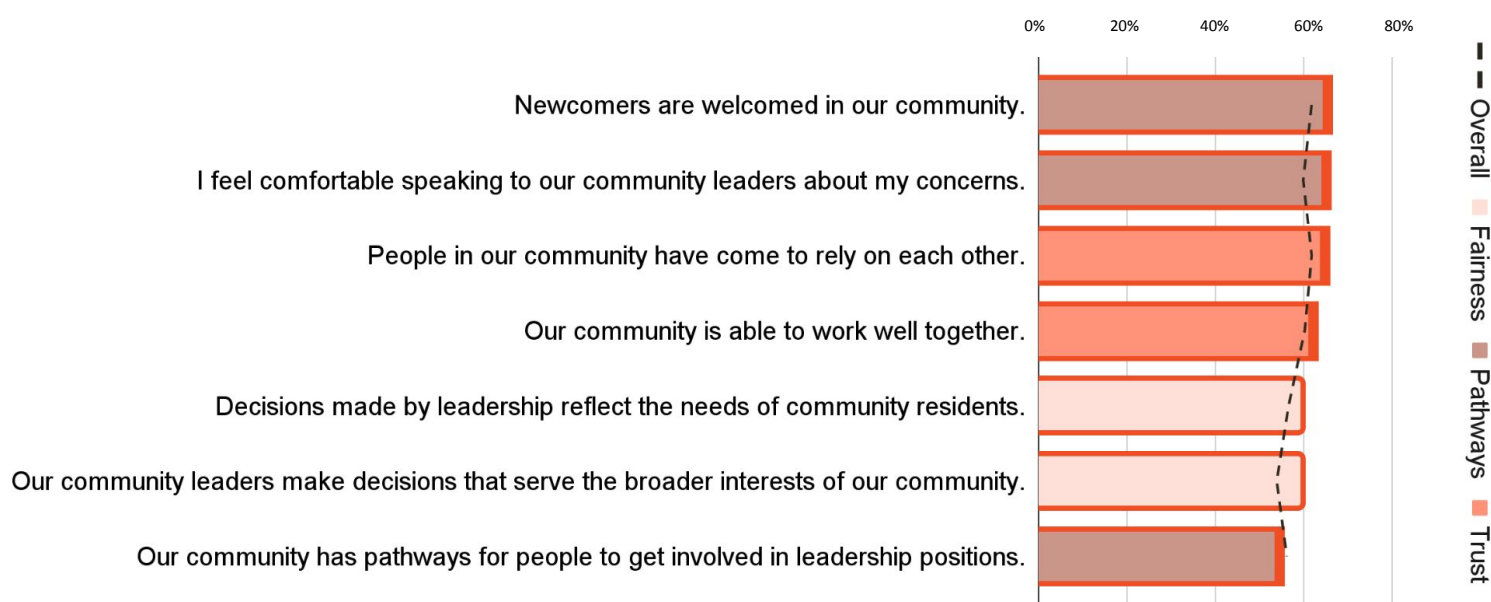


Personal commitment is generally very strong in the community. The sentiment related to commitment is higher than that of an average county resident. This sentiment can be an opportunity to help engage more residents into community development and betterment efforts.

How can local leaders capture this local enthusiasm?

What opportunities do you see in this data?

Community Confidence: Local Leadership

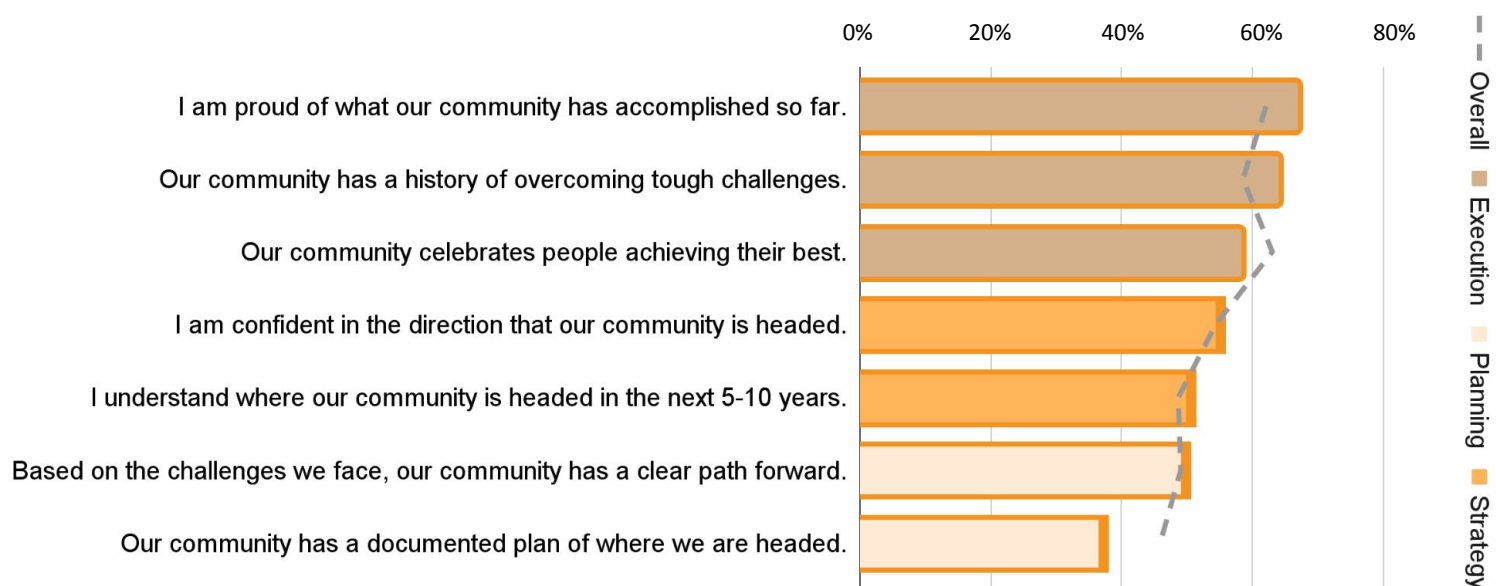


The local leadership ratings too are above the average county rating. Residents believe that ranked pathways towards leadership and trust in local leaders higher than the idea of leadership 'fairness'.

How do the leaders incorporate those that want to be involved?

What are some of the current initiatives that could benefit from more community involvement?

Community Confidence: Vision



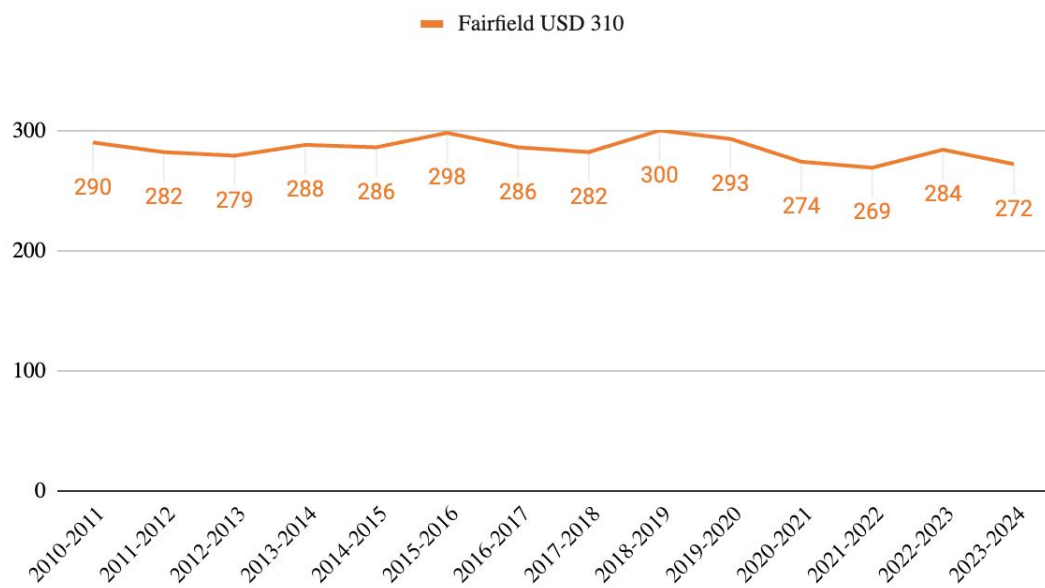
The local leadership ability to execute programs and projects is seen very positively in the community. This too generally exceeds the average county resident's perception.

The biggest challenge is the lack of a clear, documented plan for the future. Many residents feel uncertain about the community's direction, but hopeful when a plan is made.

What steps can be taken to address the sentiments shared by the residents?

Local Community Indicators

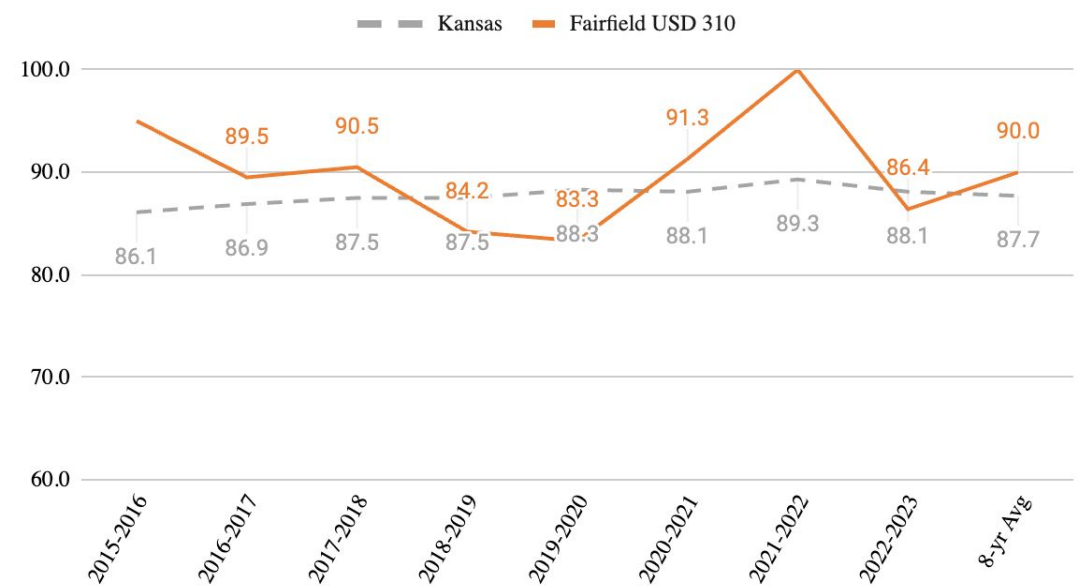
Local School Enrollment



Source: Kansas State Dept of Education, KSDE Data Central



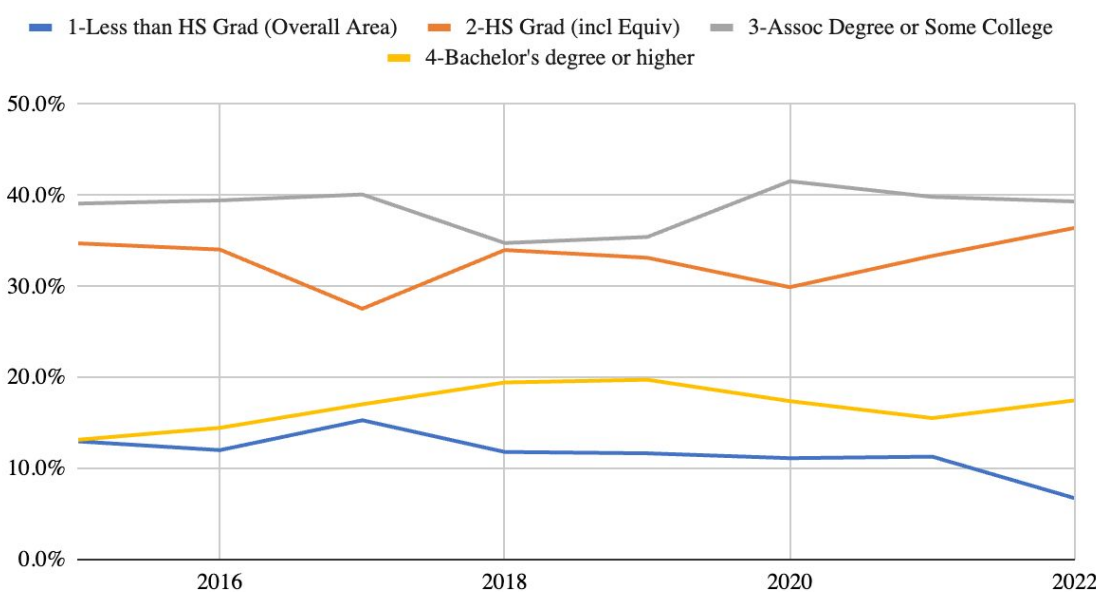
High School 4 Year Graduation Rate



Source: Kansas State Dept of Education, KSDE Data Central



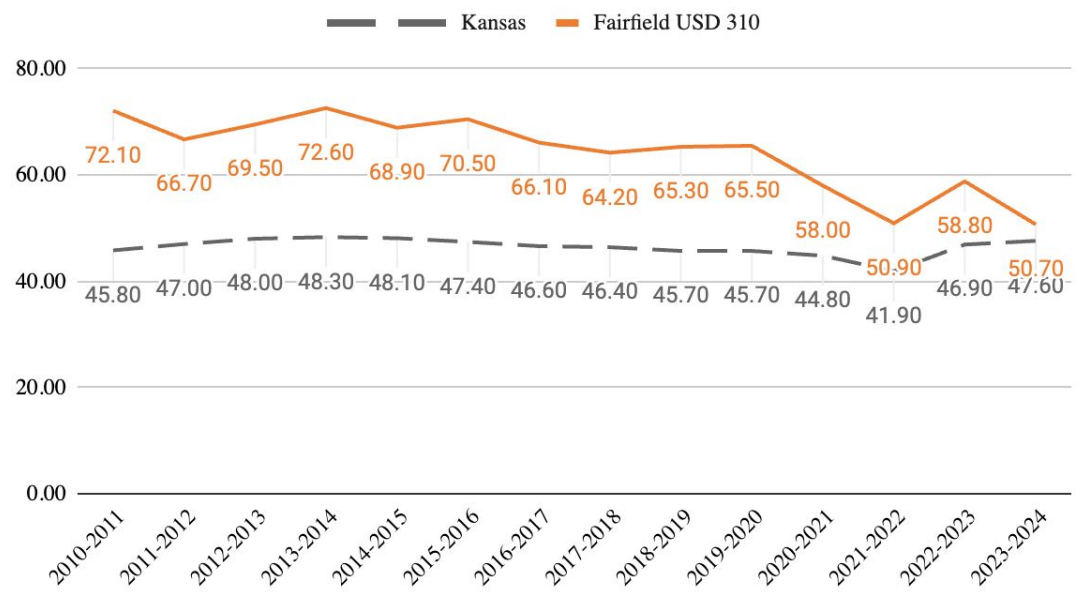
Local Educational Level



Source: Kansas State Dept of Education, KSDE Data Central



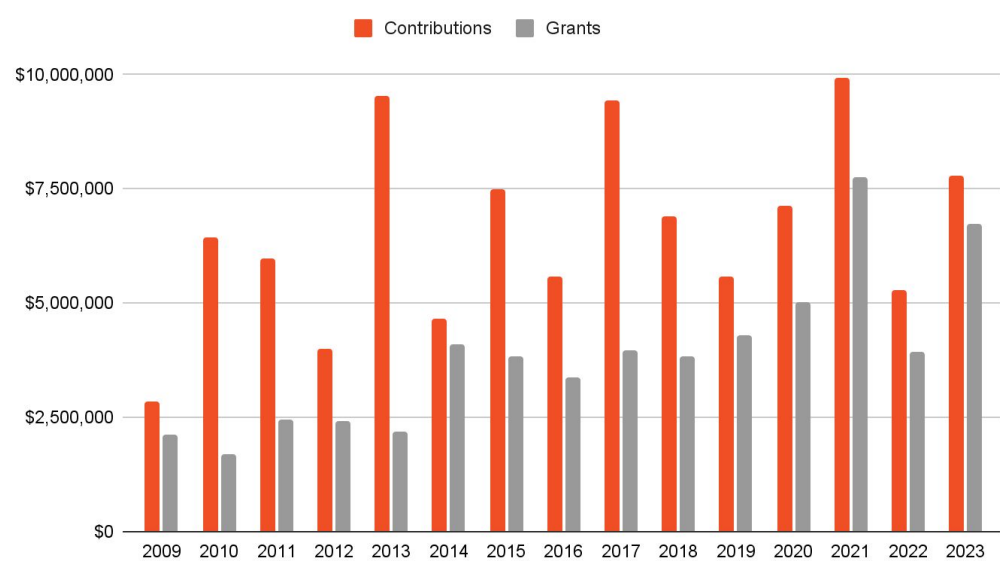
School District % Free-Reduced Price Lunch



Source: Kansas State Dept of Education, KSDE Data Central

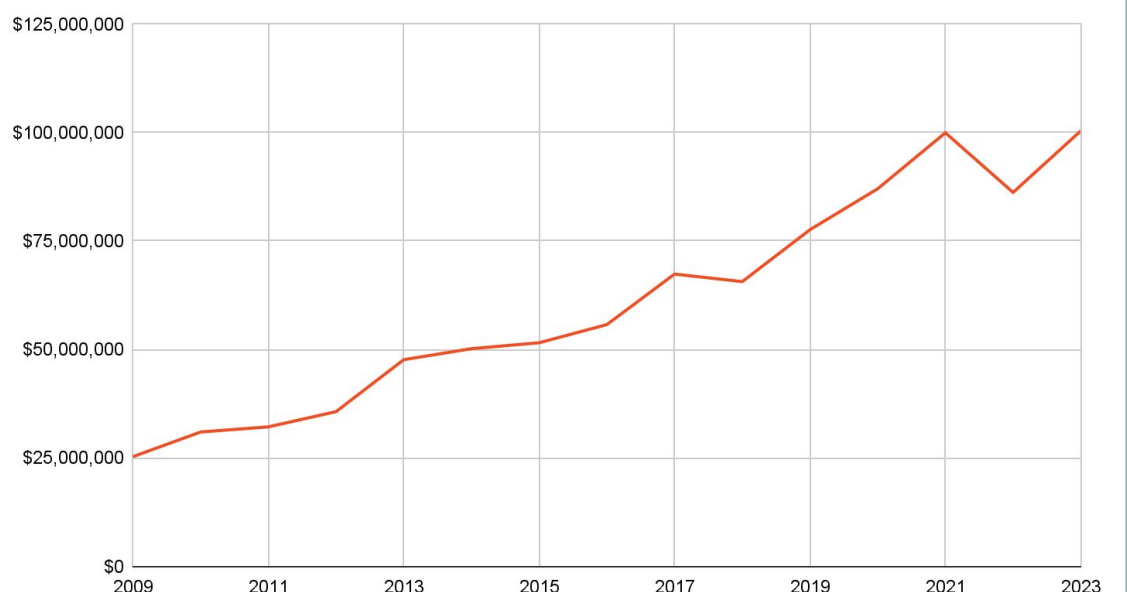


Hutchinson Community Foundation: Contributions & Grants



Hutchinson Community Foundation Data

Hutchinson Community Foundation: Total Assets



Hutchinson Community Foundation data

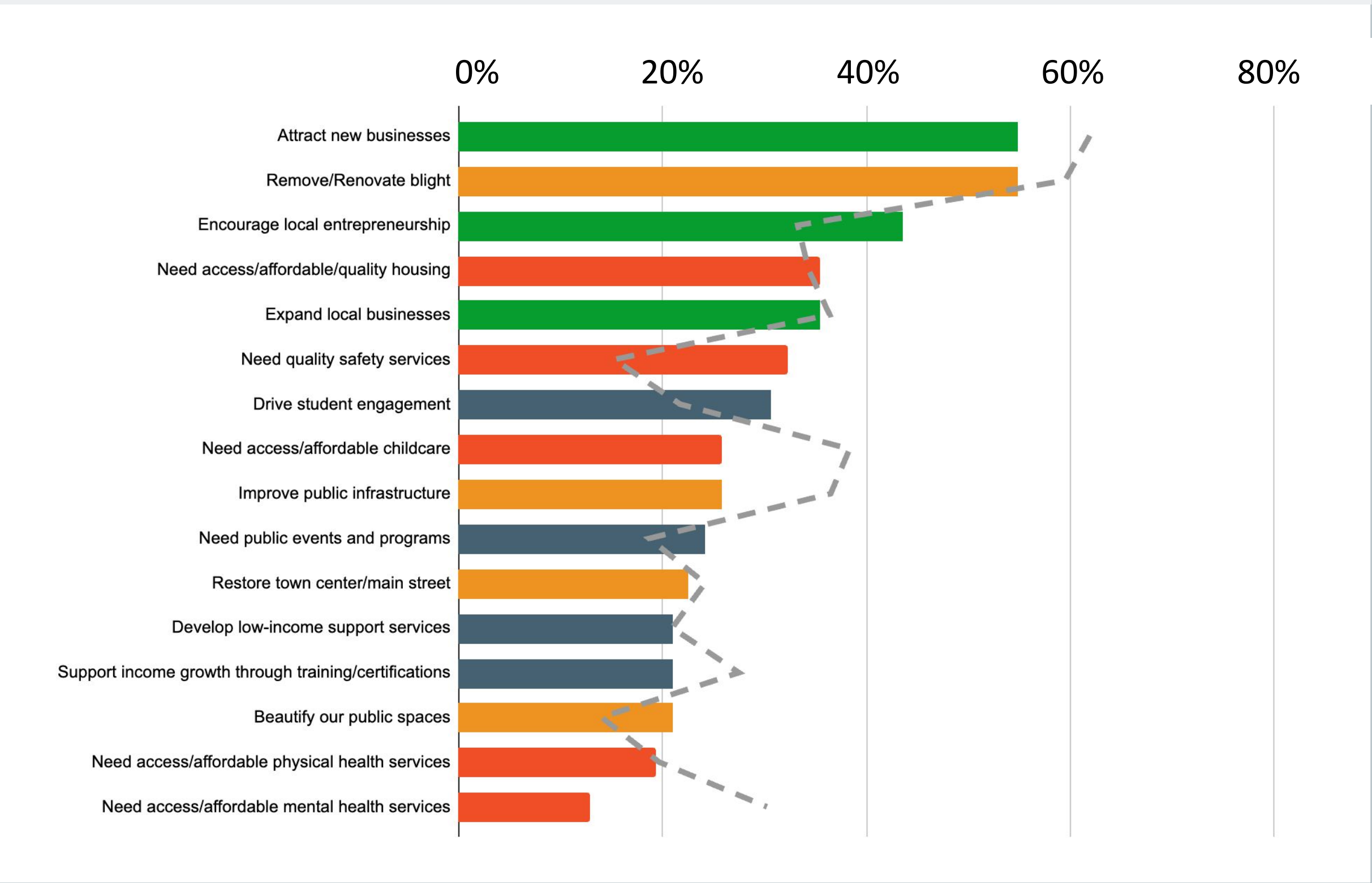
Community Program Priorities

Priorities Summary:

The area's top category of focus is with the economy, which includes attracting new businesses, encouraging local entrepreneurship, and expanding local businesses. The critical area is the removal of blight and renovating key public areas. Finally, a top 5 priority is the need for access to affordable and quality housing. It is also interesting to note that the top two priority items are a lower priority in the Fairfield Area compared to the county average, whereas encouraging entrepreneurship is seen as a more important priority than elsewhere in the county.

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

2024 Economic and Community Development Priorities



Vibrant Place:
Considering the majority of metrics surveyed are in the bottom half of priorities, there is one that stands out. This is the call for removing unwanted blight from town. Improving the infrastructure was the second highest in this category.

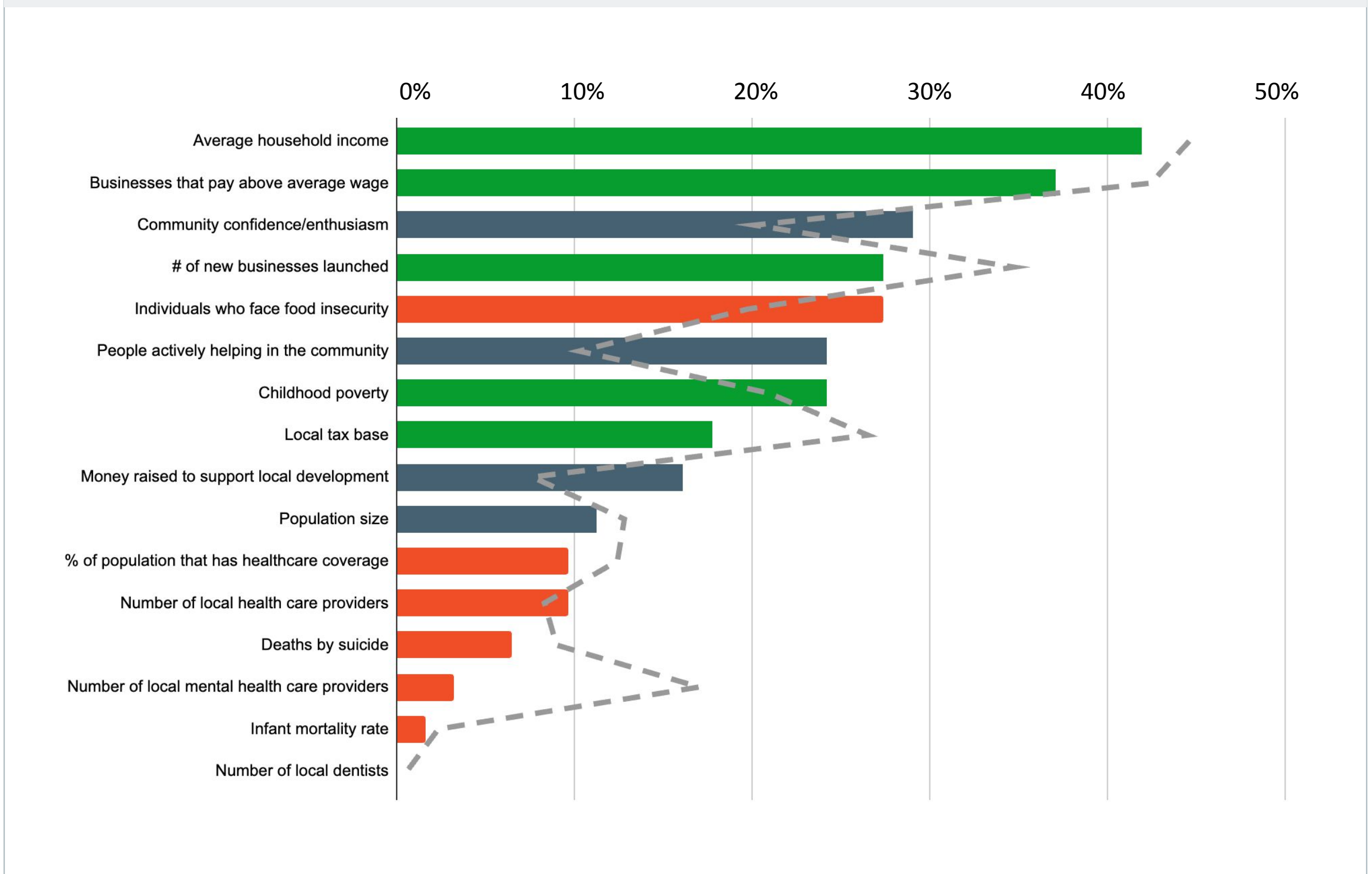
Resilient Economy:
The community's main focus is on attracting new enterprises. This first priority coupled with encouraging local entrepreneurs is extremely telling of how the economy is very important to the local residents. Many of the locals also see the established businesses as very important and their desire to help those businesses expand and grow along with the town itself.

Healthy & Engaged Citizens:
Housing and safety concerns are the top two programs with regard to health in the area. Student engagement also resonated with the locals which was somewhat higher than the score for the overall county.

Community Progress Indicators

Health Economy People Average Reno County Score

2024 Community Progress Indicators



Economy:

Residents aim to strengthen the local economy by paying attention to household income and having businesses pay above average wages. Prioritizing sustainable economic growth through business development and income elevation can be essential for long-term financial stability and community prosperity, which is relevant given the high metric for individuals who face food insecurity.

Community Engagement:

Residents emphasize the need to boost community confidence and enthusiasm, along with increasing active participation. Fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging greater involvement in community initiatives are critical steps toward improving overall engagement and unity. While the population priority metric is relatively low, the residents seem to enjoy the small community feel.

Health:

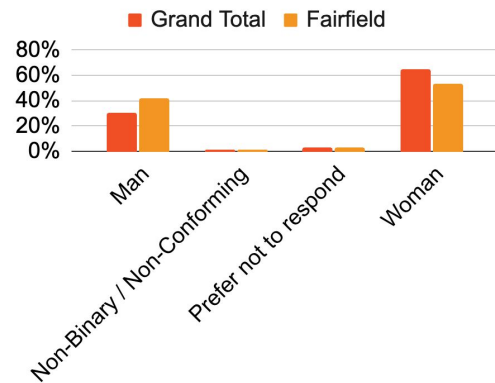
Although responses related to health are lower than others, there is a clear focus on improving the landscape of individuals who face food insecurity. By enhancing the economic priorities and metrics, the community can ensure the well-being of all residents and build a healthier, more resilient population.

Survey Respondents

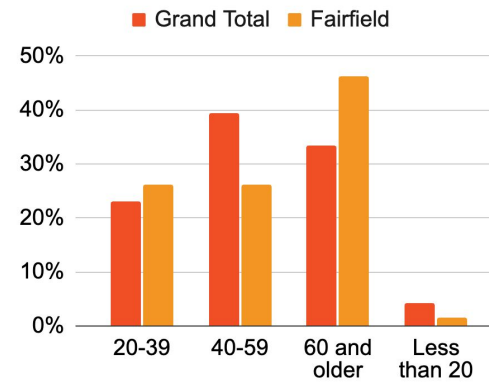
Number of Participants



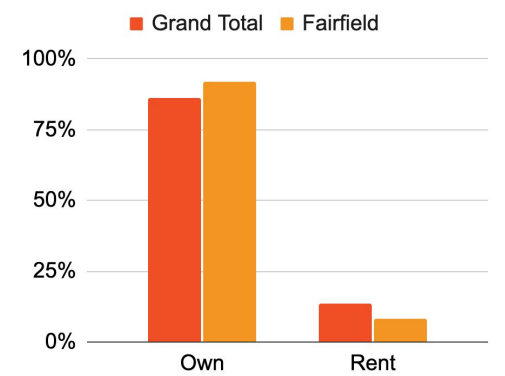
Gender



Age Profile



Residential Status



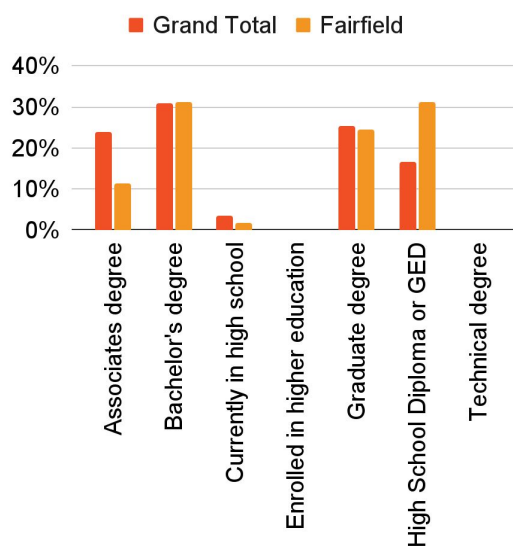
The largest demographic captured in the survey is female respondents. Additionally, the majority of participants are aged 60 and older, with most owning their homes and having lived in the community for over 20 years.

Female respondents slightly outnumber male respondents. The survey reflects a balanced gender representation, though the number of non-binary or non-conforming individuals is minimal.

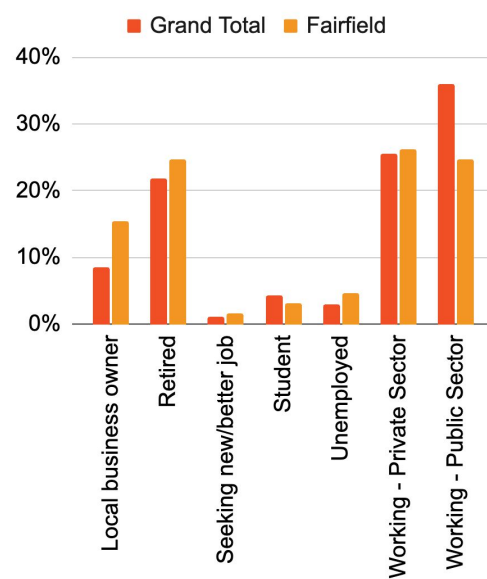
Most respondents are 60 years or older, indicating that older adults make up the largest age group in the community. A similar representation is found in the 40-59 and 20-39 age groups.

The vast majority of respondents are homeowners, which suggests that long-term residency and investment in the community are common. Renters are a small portion of the population.

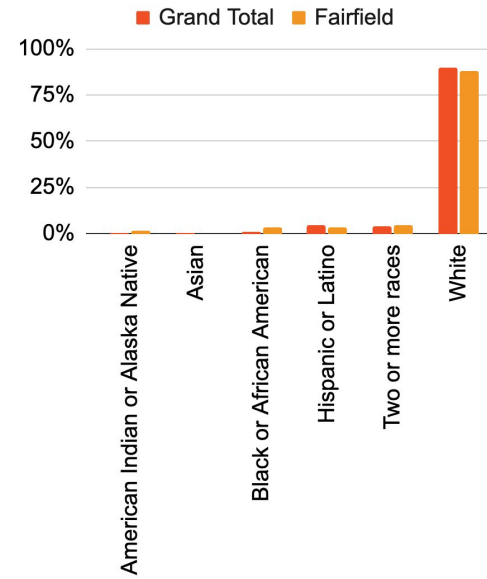
Education Level



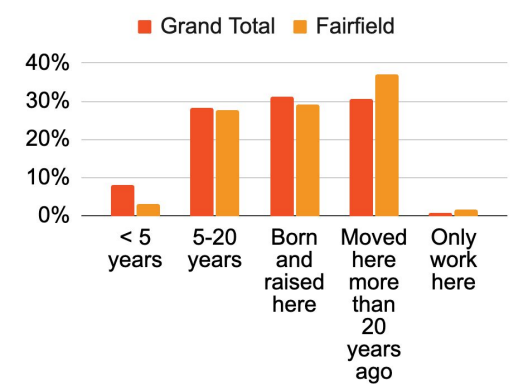
Employment Status



Ethnicity



Years lived in location



A significant portion of respondents have attained a Bachelor's or Graduate degree. High school graduates and those with some college education also form a notable portion of the demographic.

Most respondents are either actively working in the private or public sector or are retired. There is also a solid representation of local business owners, reflecting the community's entrepreneurial spirit.

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.

Most respondents have lived in the community for over 20 years or were born and raised there. This indicates a strong base of long-term residents, suggesting deep-rooted community ties.

■ Town Score
■ Average Reno County Score

16 Number of people who expressed an interest in volunteering to better the community
16 of 63 (25%)