

Love WHERE YOU *Live*

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

2024 Hutchinson Benchmark Report

Hutchinson 
community
FOUNDATION



Innovation Economy Partners
OUR FOCUS: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

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Photo Credit: Nick Hemphill

What Makes Our Community Special?

"A genuine desire to be a healthy and thriving community."
— **Sean Faulkner**

"The People."
— **Laura Meyer Dick**

"Friendly, clean, safe, friendships, great education."
— **D'ana Heinlein**

"We have many things to offer people that live here, and they can get involved in their community."
— **Jessica Owens**

"Moved to Hutch 10 months ago. Still learning about it, but enjoying the experience."
— **Cindy Shirley**

"Small but promoting growth with activities and events."
— **Debbie Graber**

"Friendly."
— **Cheryl**

"The caring people."
— **Brian Schmidtberger**

"Collaboration focused on community/growth."
— **Cheri Fahrbach**

"The people."
— **Anthony Frischenmeyer**

"The Cosmosphere and Salt Museum, community events, and local attractions."
— **Kevin Bohling**

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:

With 723 responses the response rate in Hutchinson has been massive. The other related metric that is quite promising is that about 200 of these respondents shared an interest in getting more engaged in the community development efforts, and in fact provided their contact information to do so. The community generally has a positive sense of its economy and community, and demonstrates a high sense of personal commitment. The community is highlighting a focus on economic development, especially business attraction. The one area that is highlighted as needing more work is in creating and communicating community plans.

pg **4, 5**

Economic Confidence

Economic confidence is generally quite positive, and reflects a sense of optimism towards the future. Interestingly, the number one priority identified by the community leaders is the ability to attract new businesses to town. All of the top 5 metrics ranked also relate to economic development.

pg **6, 7, 8**

Community Engagement Confidence

Community engagement reflects a strong sense of belonging and loyalty, though trust in leadership and future direction is moderate. Residents value collaboration and seek clearer paths for involvement and improved communication from leadership.

pgs **9a-9b**

Critical Community Priorities

Critical community priorities focus on enhancing business growth/attraction, followed closely by removing blight. The next two issues relate to creating greater access to quality and affordable childcare and housing.

pg **10**

Survey Respondent Profile

Survey respondents are primarily long-term residents, mostly owning their homes. The majority are aged 40-59 and hold a bachelor's or graduate degree. Most are employed in either the public or private sector, with women representing the largest gender group. Ethnically, respondents are predominantly white.

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.**



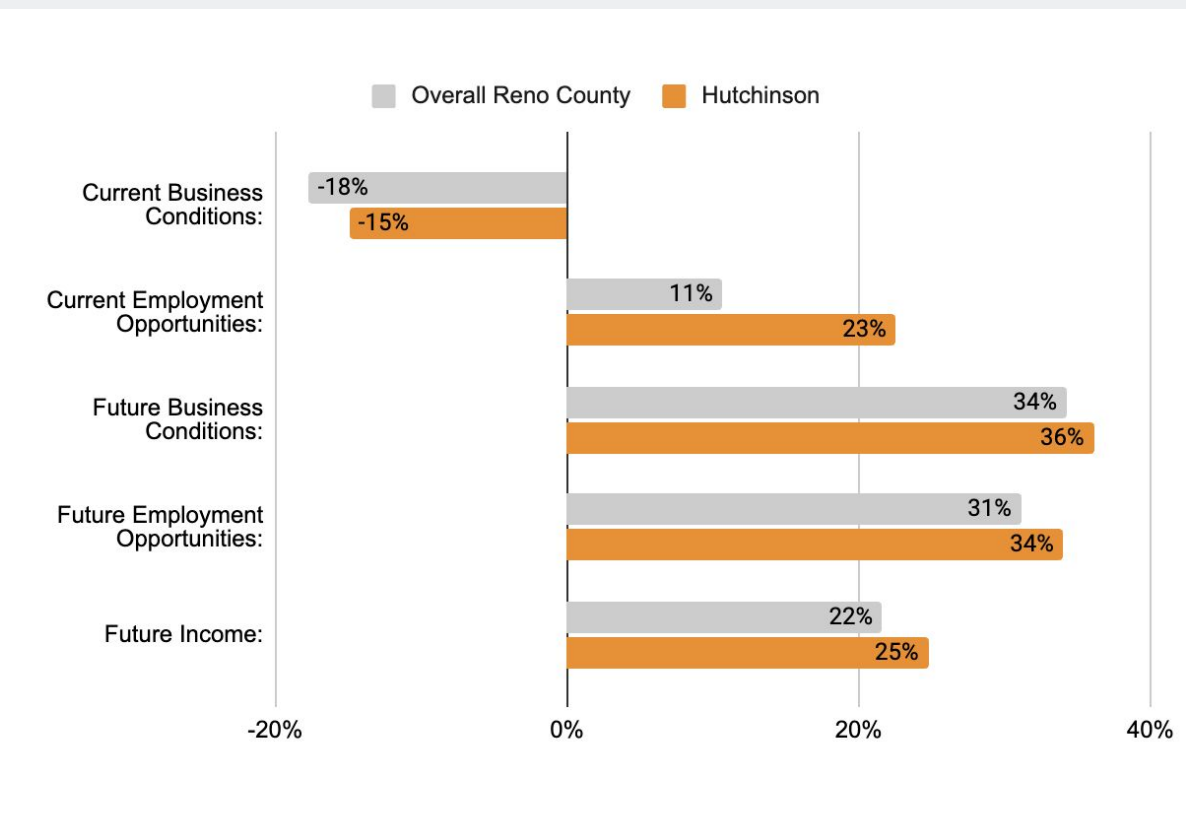
Confidence In Our Local Economy

Economic Summary:

The survey respondents demonstrate generally a positive view of the current and future economic outlook for the community. The one area that lags a bit is current business conditions. There is supporting data that the economy in the community may be a bit stagnant, as can be seen in the number of businesses in town, and local employment. On a more positive note, the unemployment is low, and the median household income is increasing. Perhaps the most concerning of the metrics is that the overall population in the community is trending slightly down and the poverty rate is trending upwards. Finally, when asked about local priorities, the residents explicitly are stating that economic development is the most critical issue and also prioritize measuring economy as the number one progress metric.

Survey Responses

Our Economic Perceptions

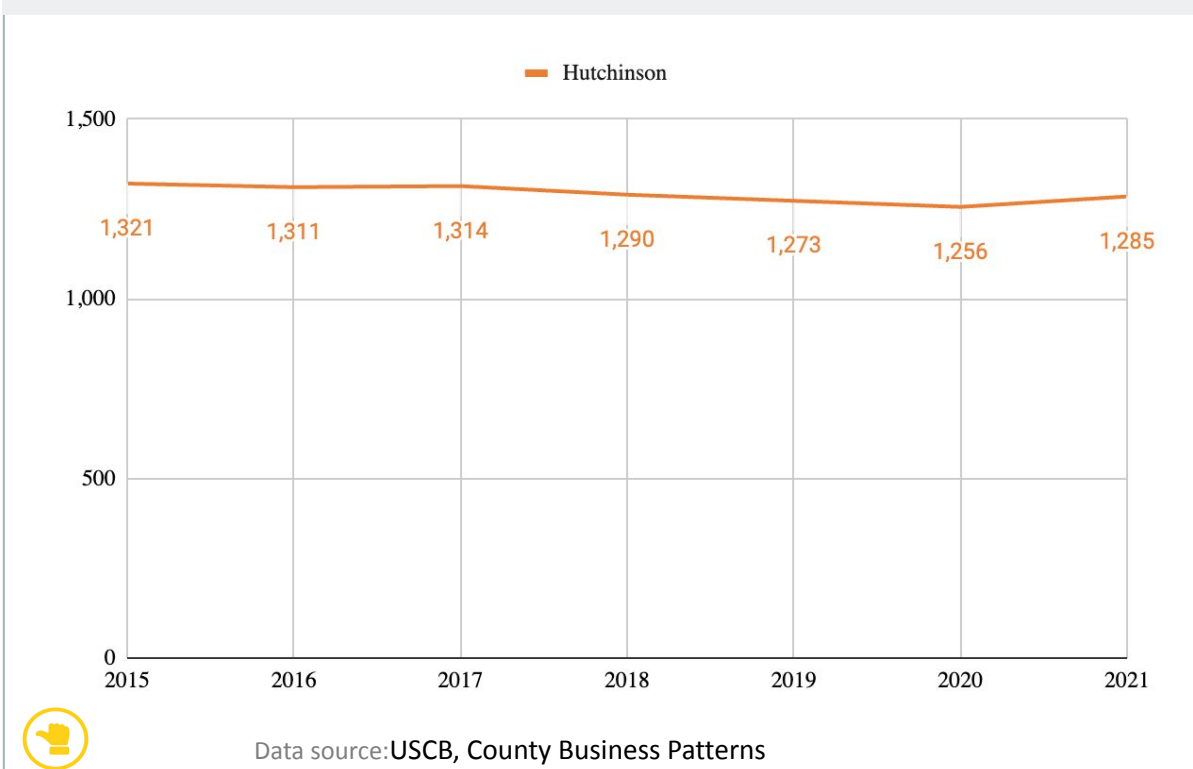


Popular Ideas for the Town:

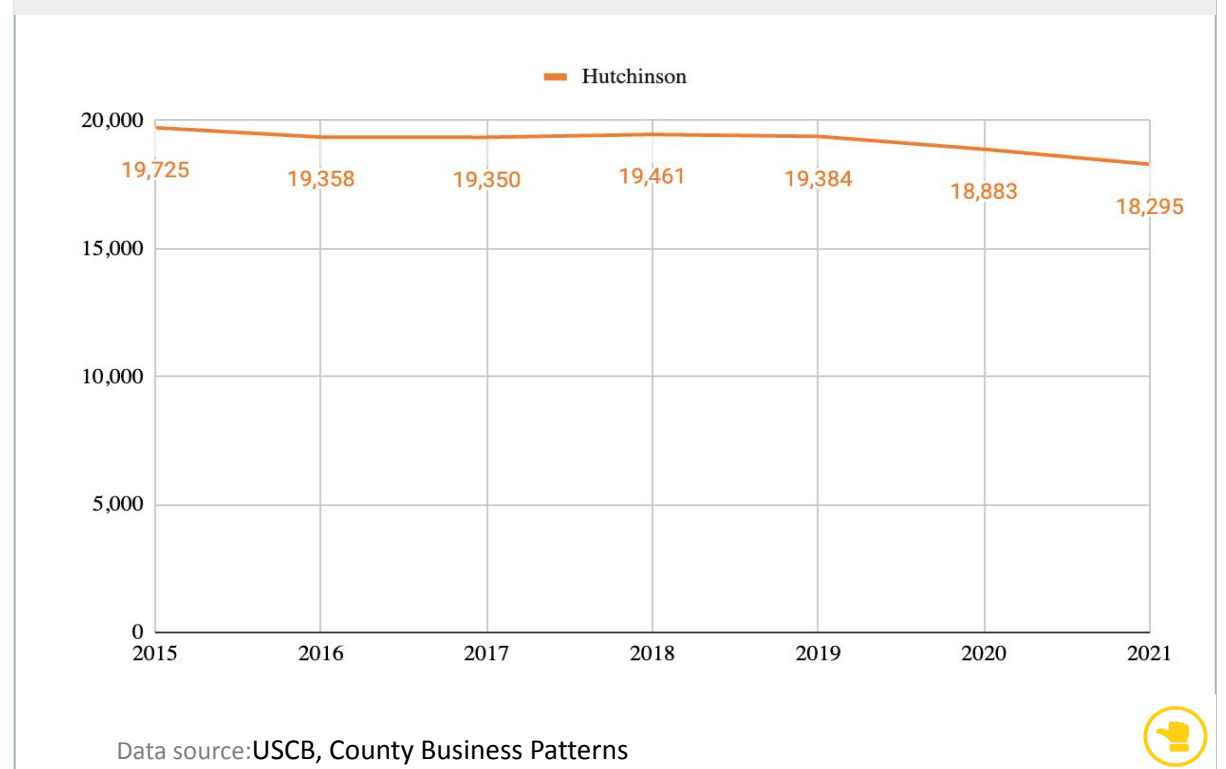
- Improving business development. People want more businesses, shops, and job opportunities.
- More affordable housing options, new developments, and improved real estate availability.
- More green spaces, trails, and places for families to enjoy outdoor activities.
- Community events, such as festivals and public gatherings, are another popular idea.
- Improving schools and providing better educational opportunities for youth.
- Infrastructure improvements, such as better roads and public transportation, and safety enhancements, including addressing crime and supporting local law enforcement.

Local Economic Indicators

Total Businesses in Our Town

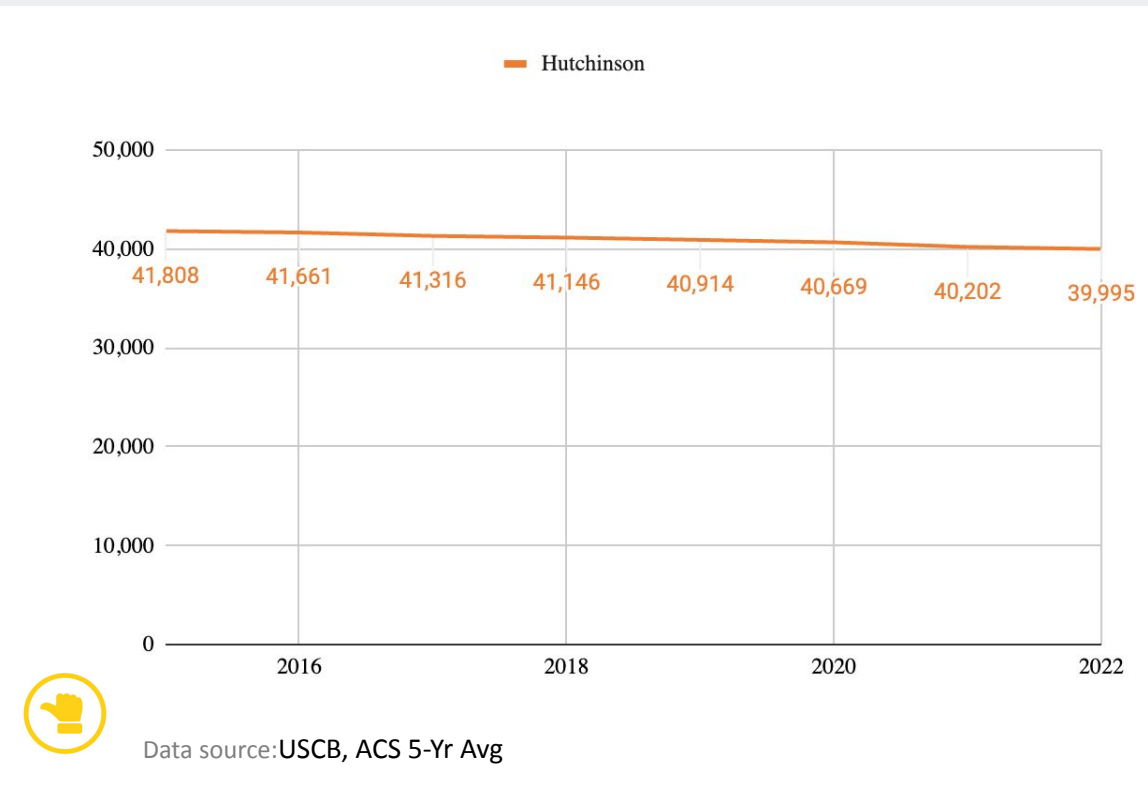


Employment in Our Town

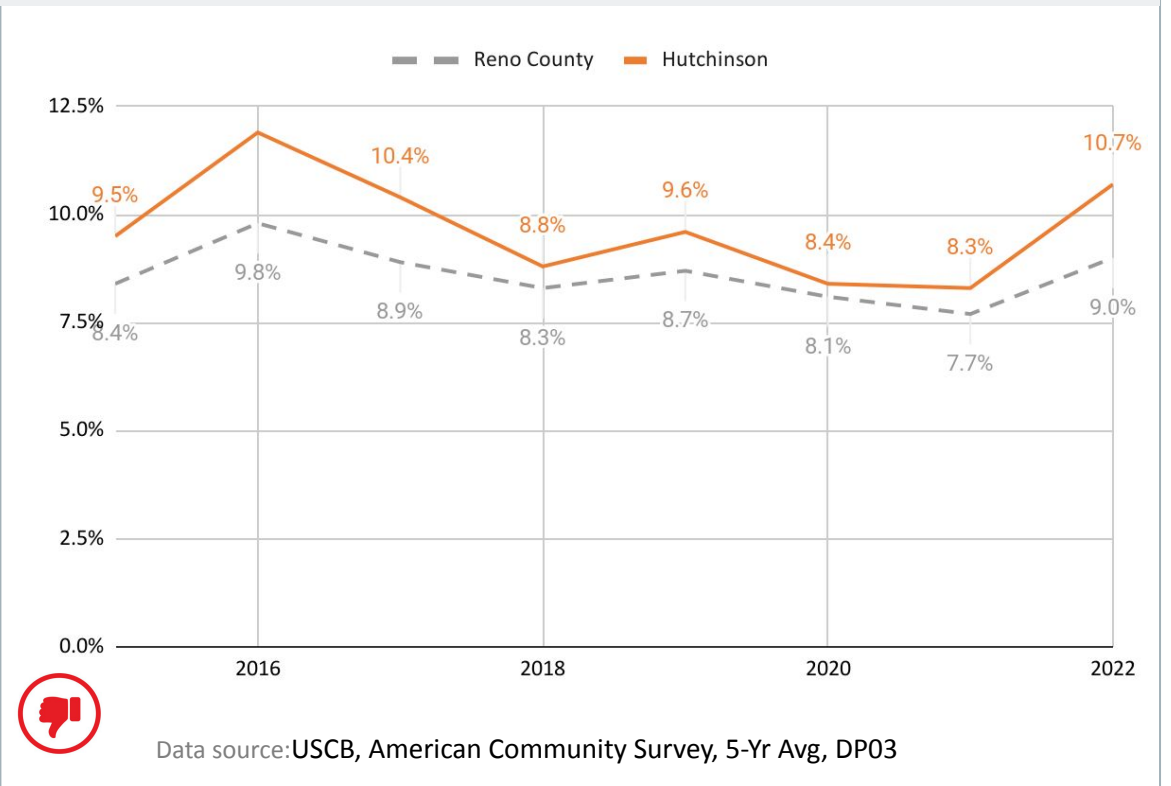


Local Economic Indicators (Cont'd)

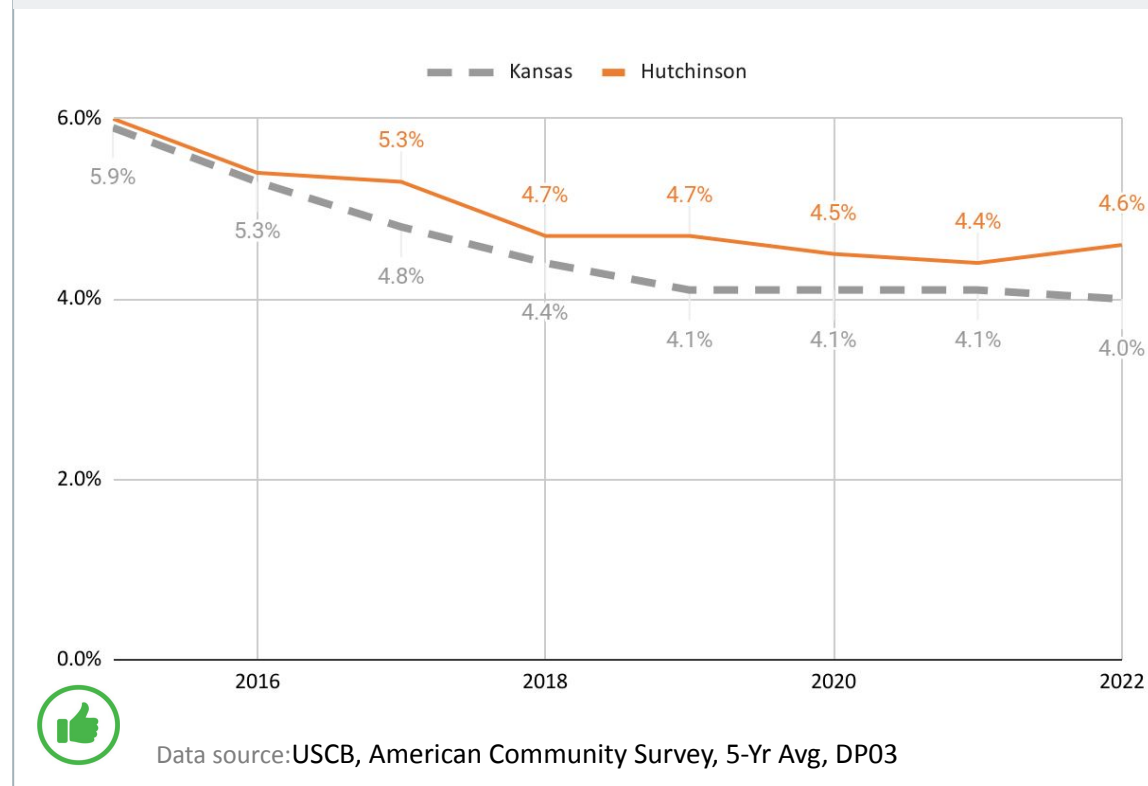
Overall Population Trend



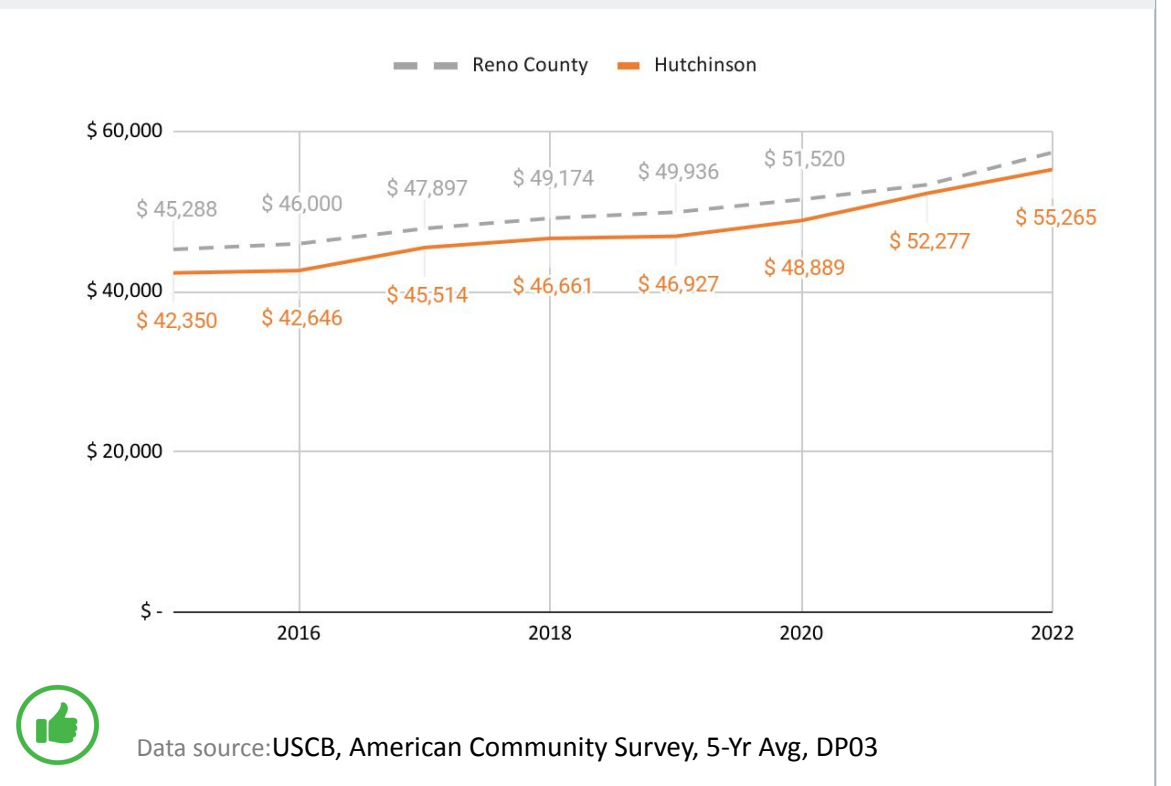
Local Poverty Rate



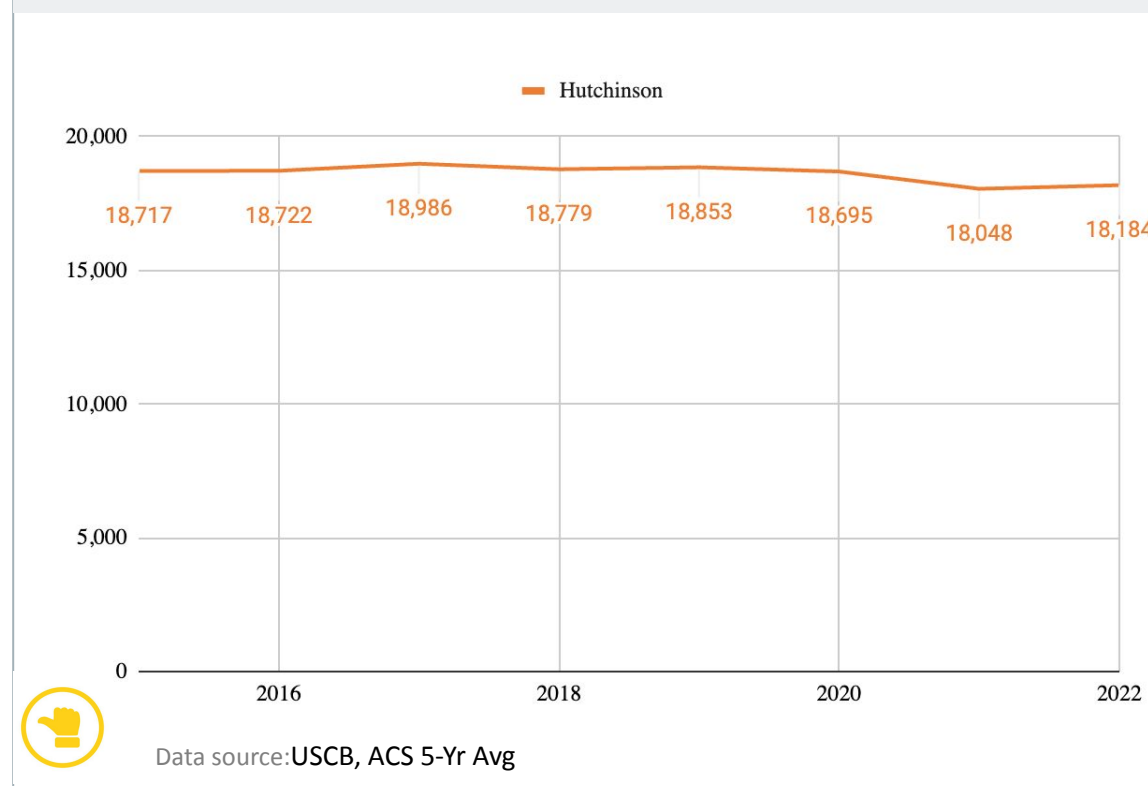
Local Unemployment Rate



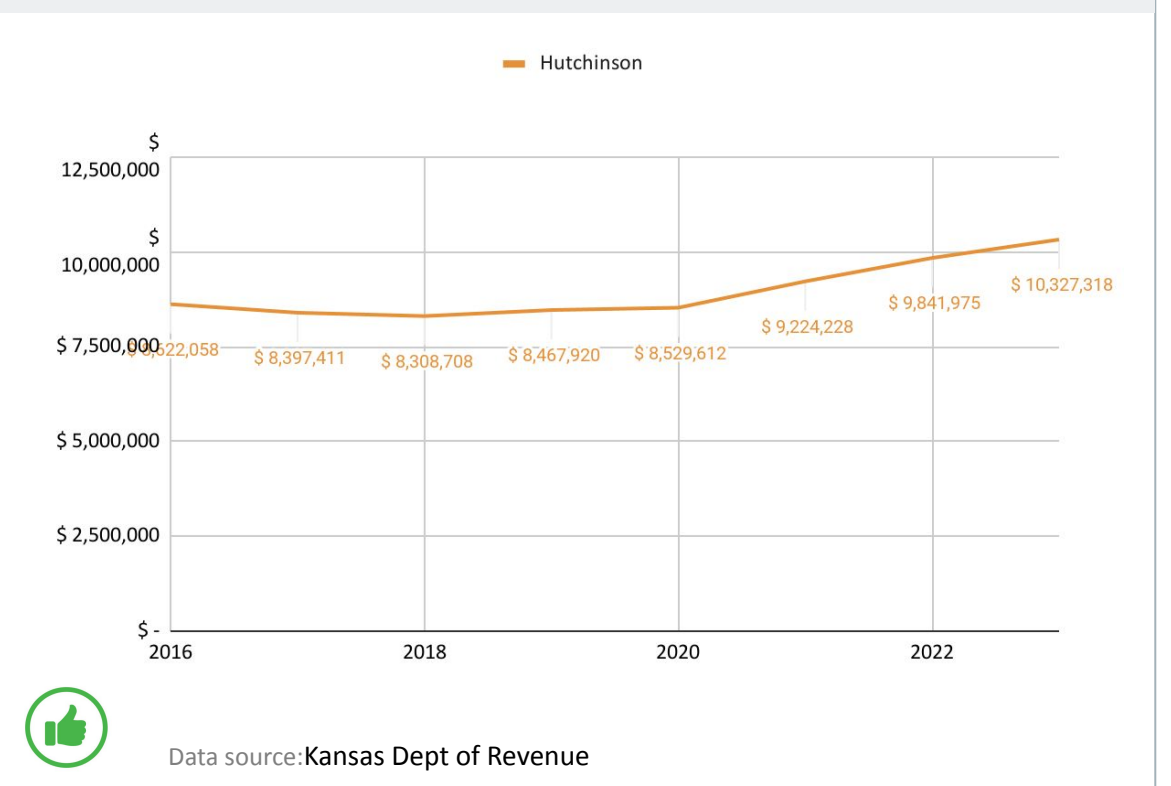
Median Household Income



Total Housing Units



Annual Sales Tax Collection



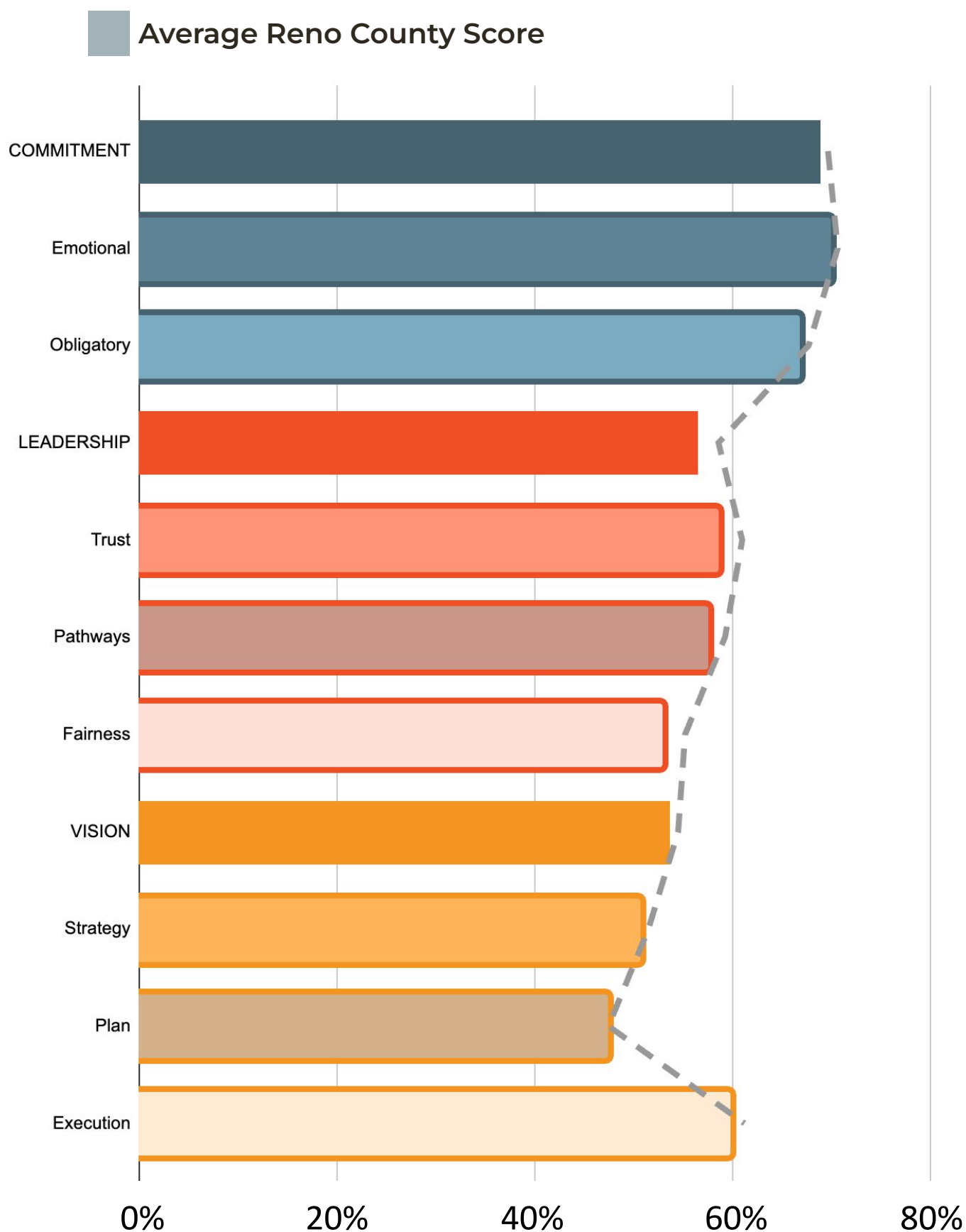
Confidence In Our Local Community

Engagement Summary:

Residents demonstrate a strong personal commitment to their community, expressing a sense of belonging and responsibility for its well-being. This suggests deep-rooted ties and loyalty, indicating a solid foundation for community engagement. The big opportunity for the community leaders is to share more explicitly the plans that they have for community growth and sustainability. While the respondents appreciate the great work that is happening, they would like more clarity on the underpinning planning efforts.



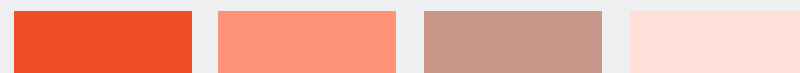
How do our residents view our community?



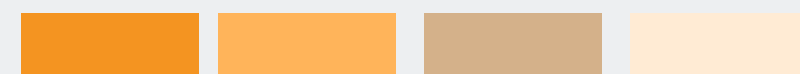
Commitment



Leadership



Vision



The opportunity in the community is a the slight discrepancy between personal commitment and confidence in leadership. While residents feel deeply tied to their community and express strong loyalty, there is a slightly lower confidence in the local leadership. This gap suggests that communication and decision-making processes may not fully align with resident expectations. Addressing this will be key to building trust and improving engagement.

The lowest variable rated is the ability for the community to plan its future, which is an anomaly, because the community also is seen as good at executing projects.

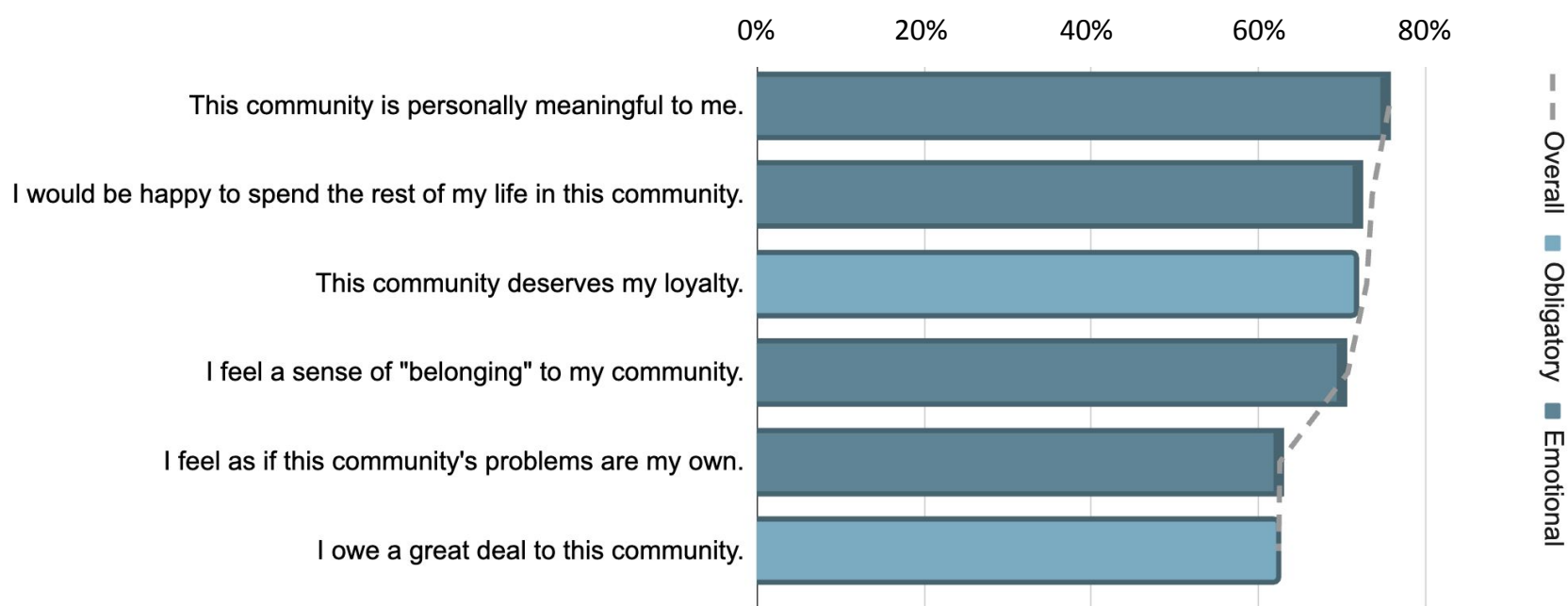
What opportunities do you see here?

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



Overall the responses are quite favorable. The community sees a high sense of personal commitment to the community.

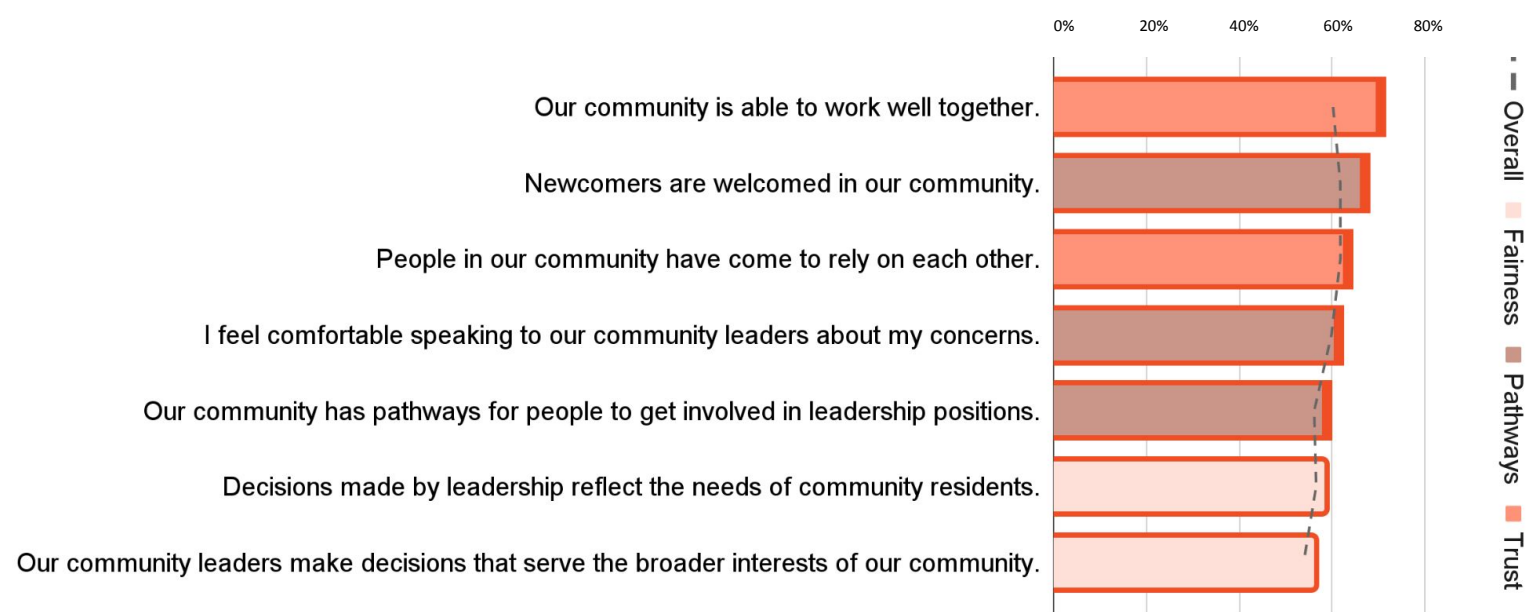
Questions for consideration:

What patterns do you see in the data?

What steps can be taken to tap into the local pride and drive more community engagement?

Why could this dimension be important towards creating a more sustainable community?

Community Confidence: Local Leadership

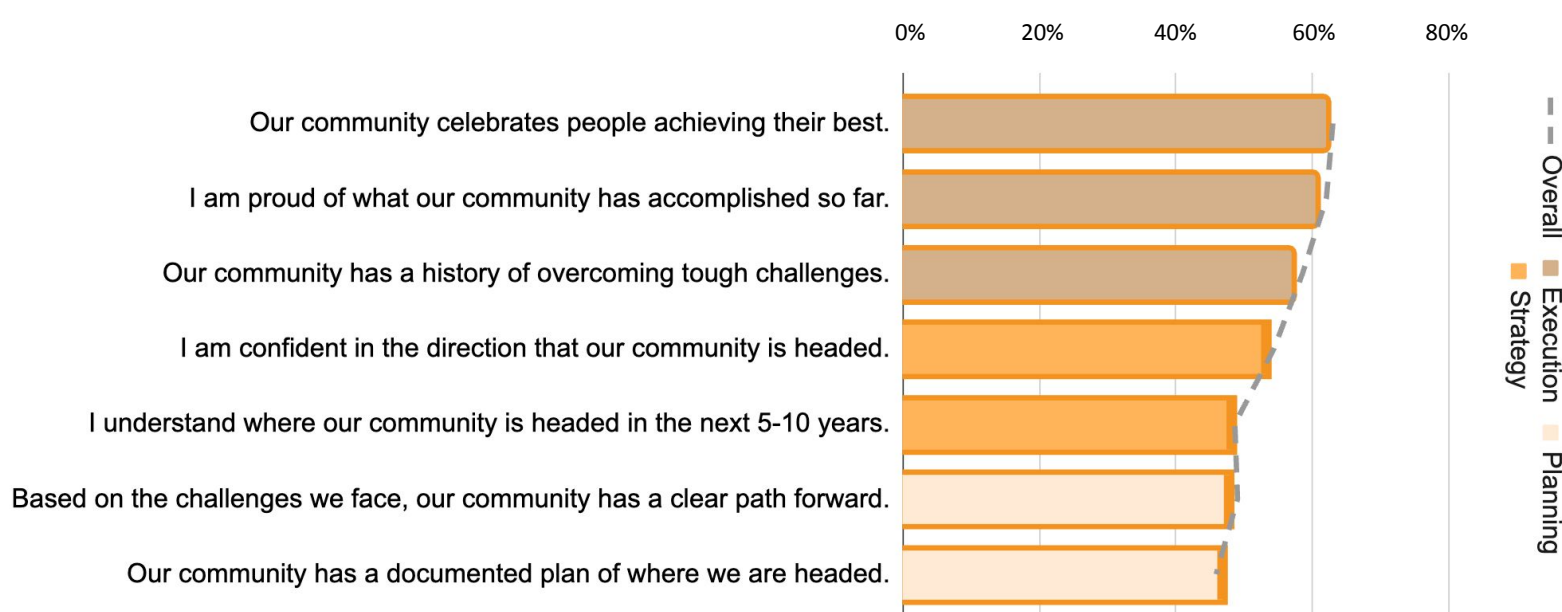


Across the categories, Trust seems to be rated well and fairness on the lower end of the spectrum. Generally the responses are higher than the county average.

How can residents have a stronger voice in leadership choices?

How can the strength related to how people rely on each other be organized such that this energy can translate to more leadership opportunities locally?

Community Confidence: Vision



The local perceptions related to the community vision are at par with the county average. A clear pattern emerges where the town is perceived as being better at executing than developing strategies and locally perceived as worst in developing strong plans.

Questions to consider:

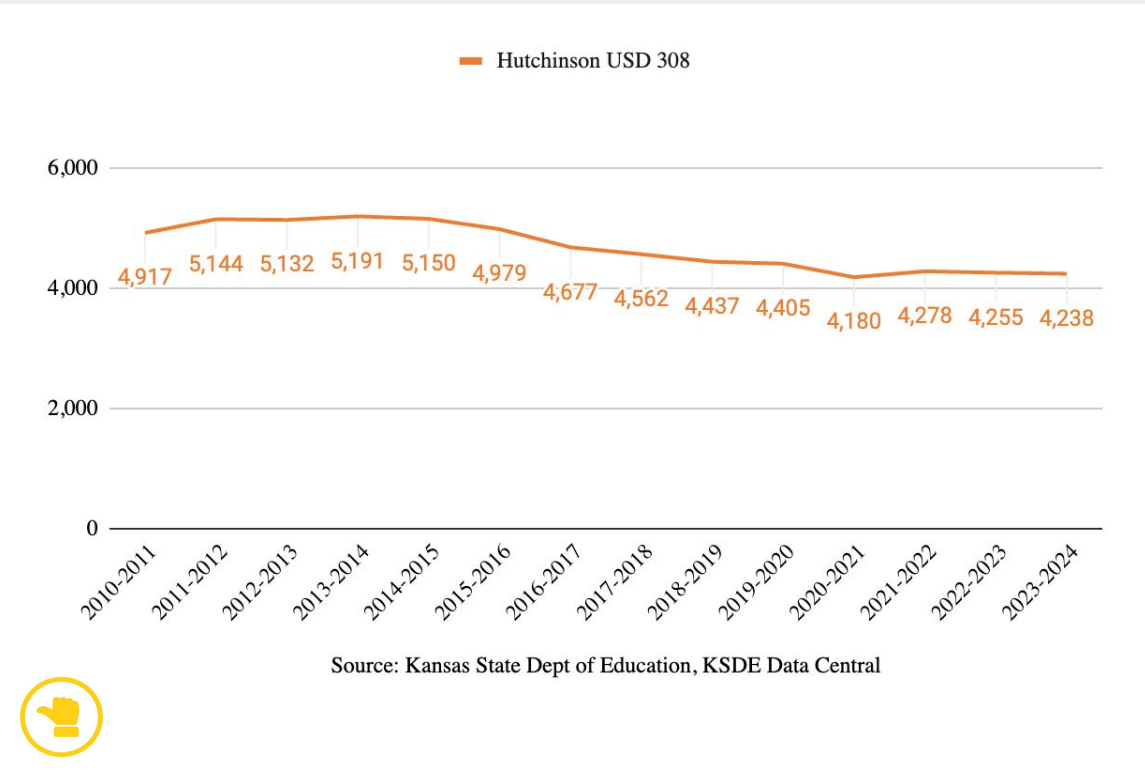
Is it important for local residents to understand the community plans for growth and sustainability?

What steps can be taken to help address this opportunity?

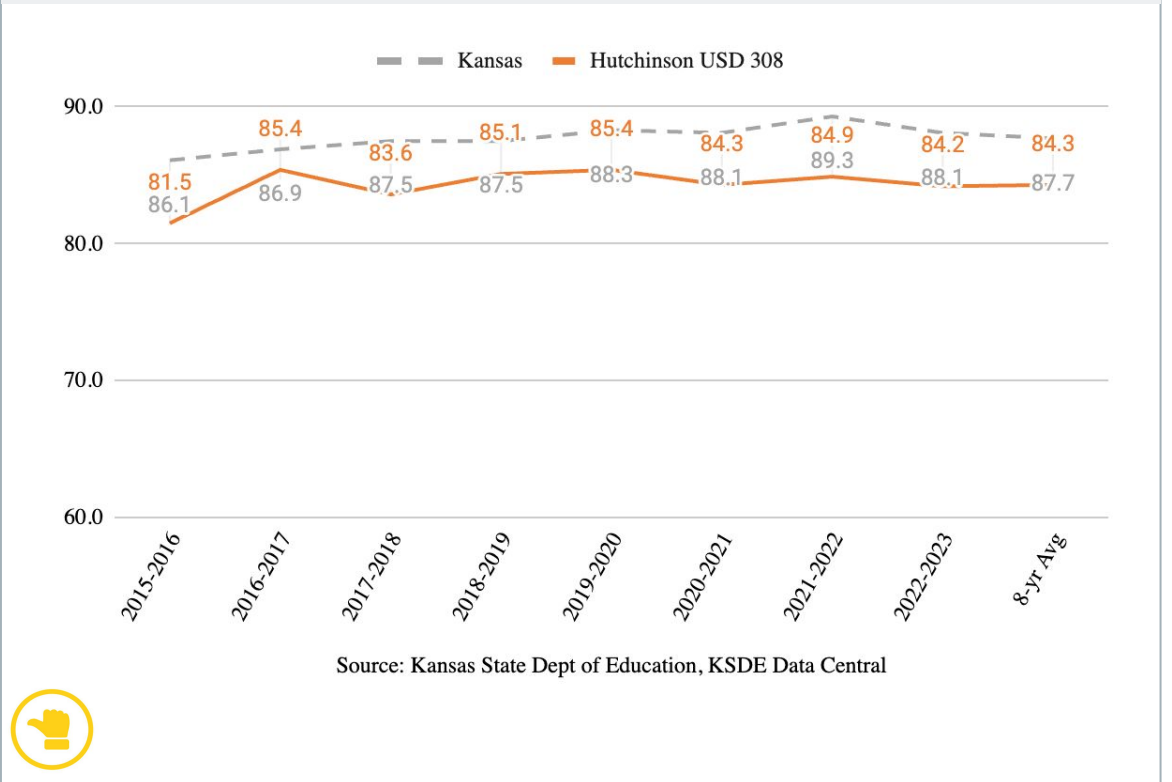
Why do residents believe that there is good work is being done?

Local Community Indicators

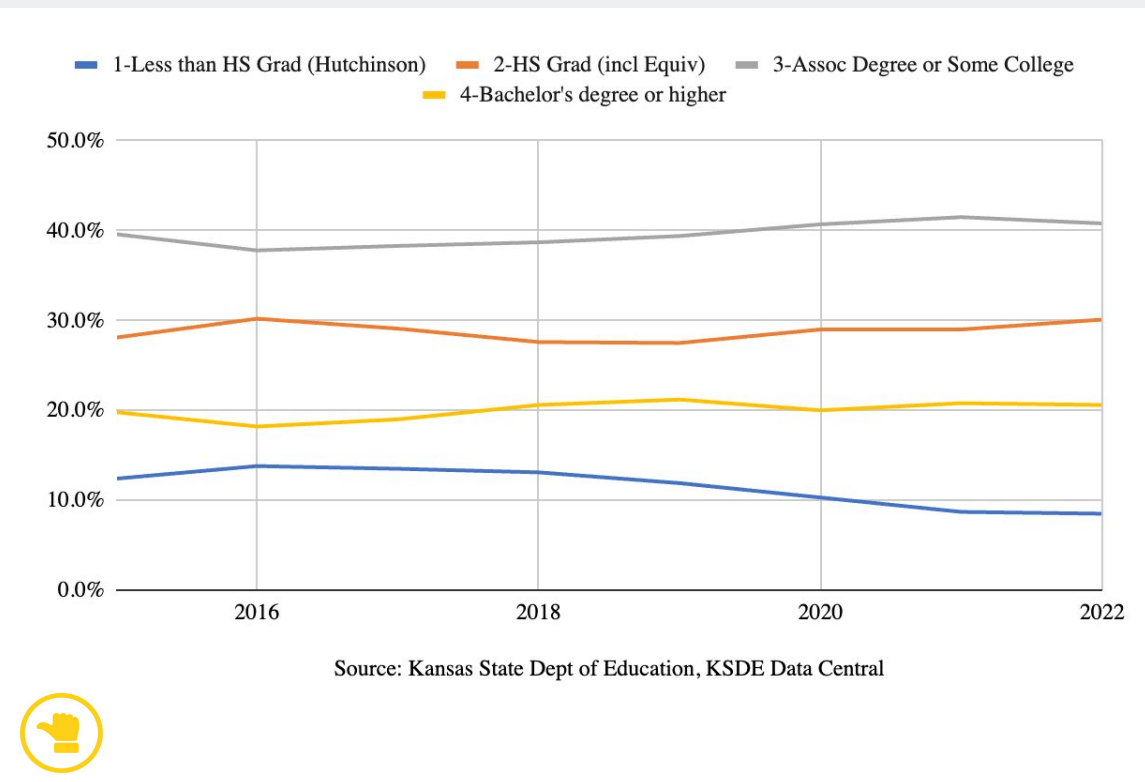
Local School Enrollment



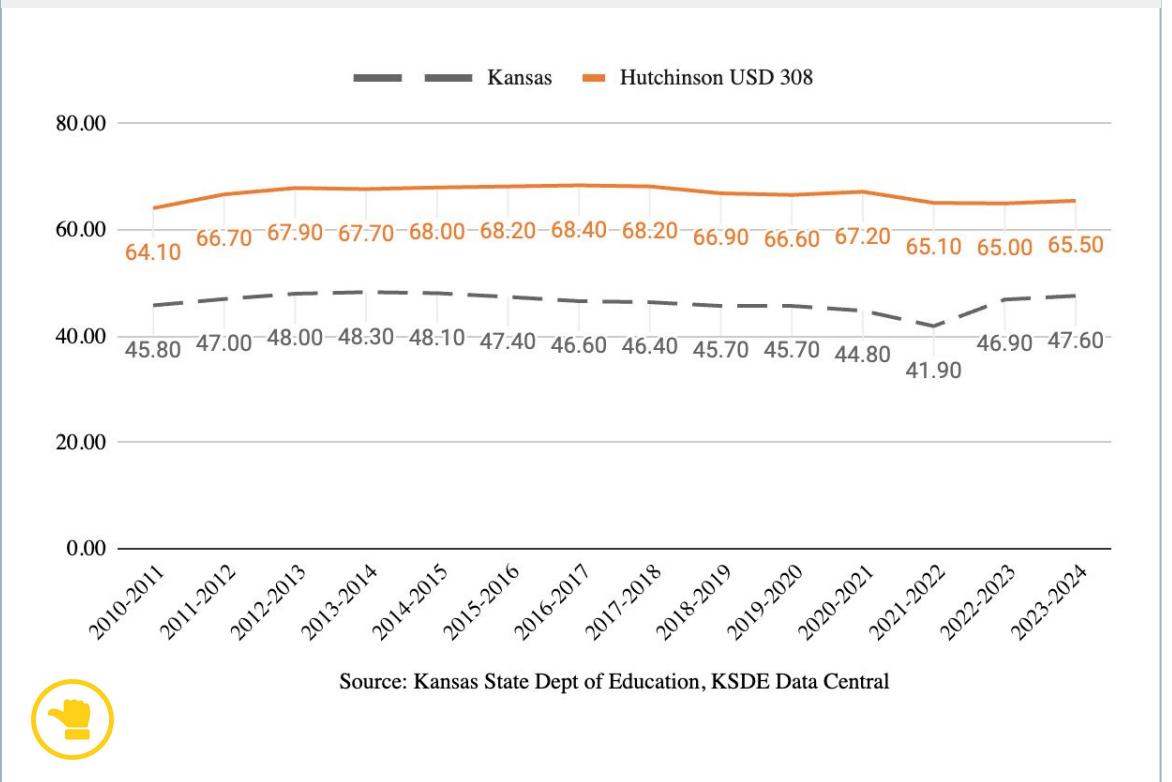
High School 4 Year Graduation Rate



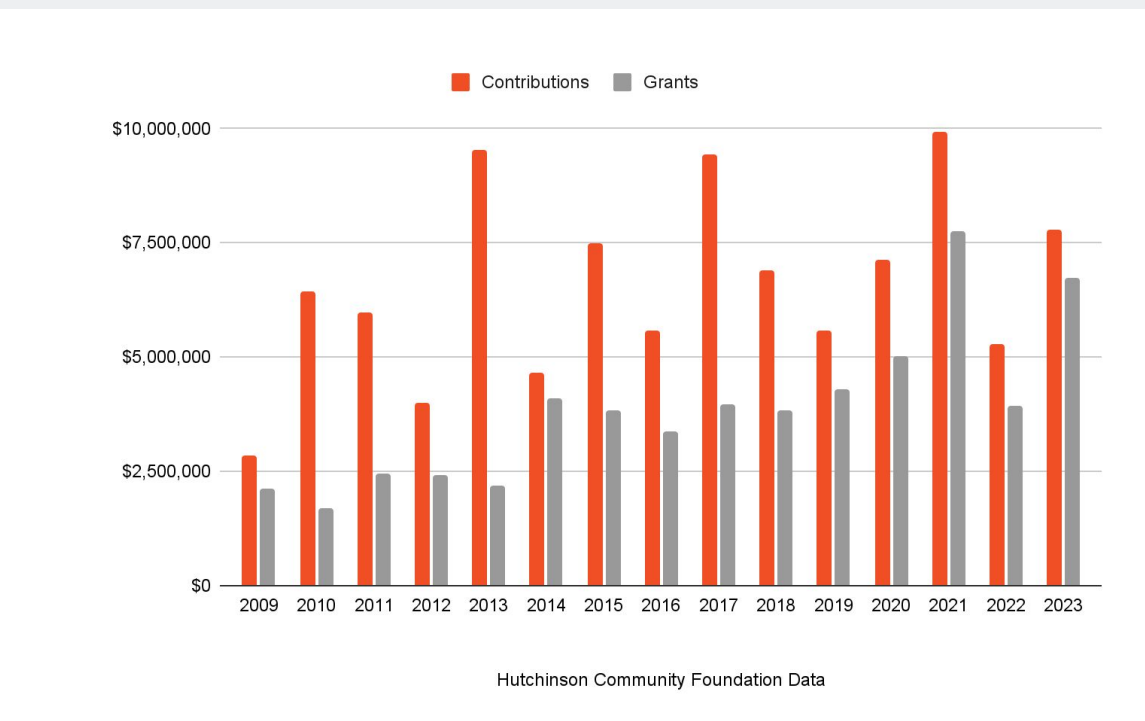
Local Educational Level



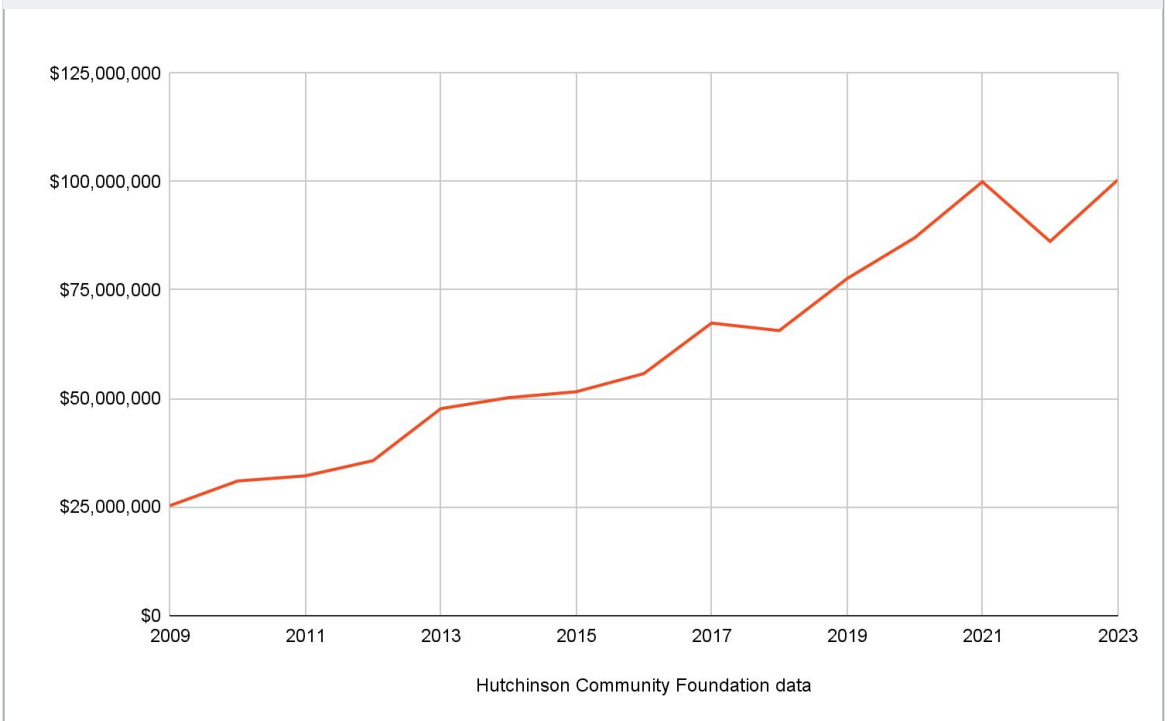
School District % Free-Reduced Price Lunch



Hutchinson Community Foundation: Contributions & Grants



Hutchinson Community Foundation: Total Assets



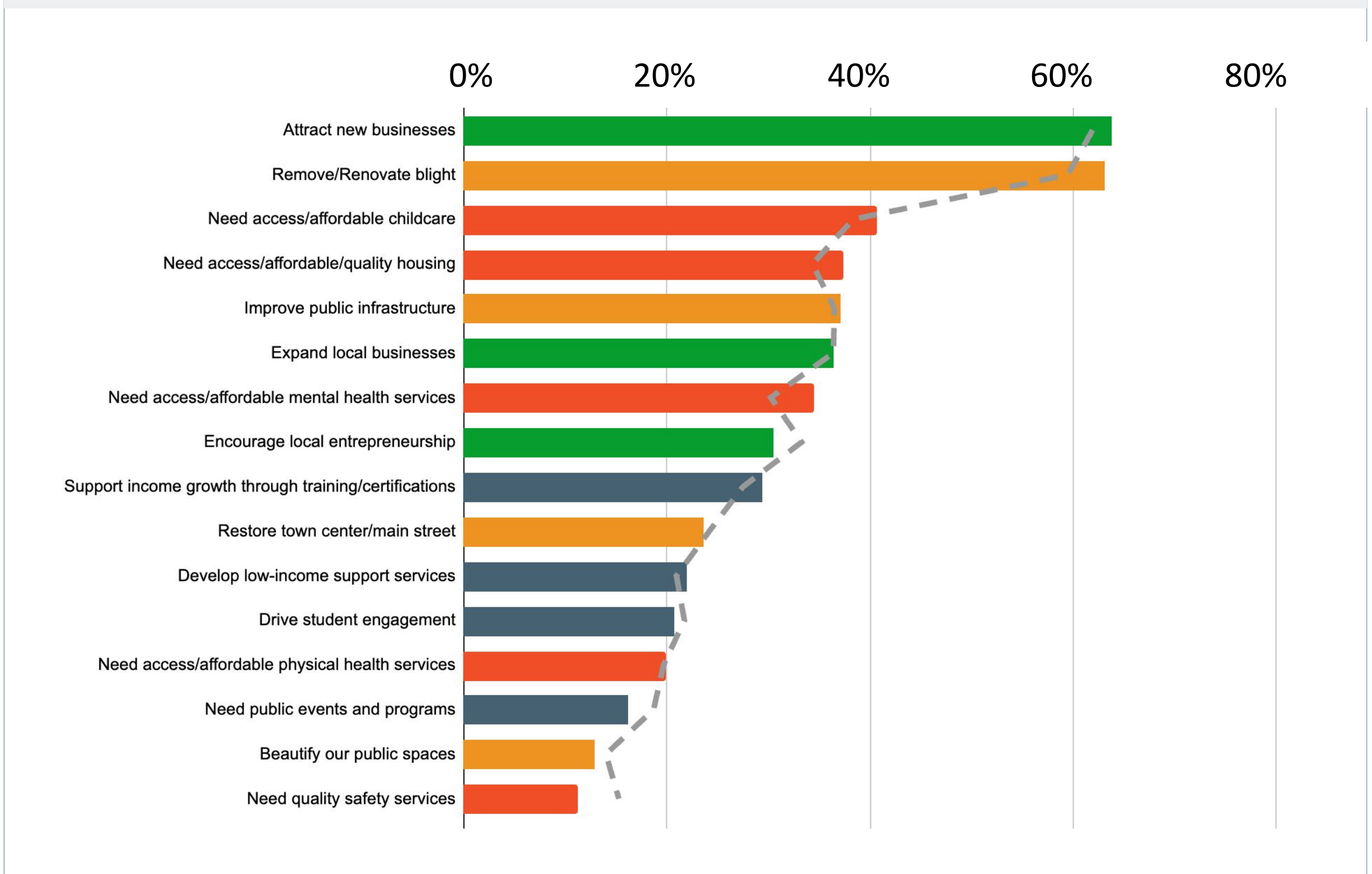
Community Program Priorities

Priorities Summary:

The community's priorities focus on economic growth, with a strong desire to attract new businesses and increase wages. Expanding access to affordable housing and childcare also ranks high. There's emphasis on improving mental and physical healthcare services, as well as enhancing community engagement and pride through public events and development programs. Beautification and infrastructure improvement, particularly addressing run-down properties, are also key focus areas for revitalization.

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

2024 Economic and Community Development Priorities



Vibrant Place:

The respondents value removing blight from the community, followed by the need for improvement in public infrastructure. Although beautifying public spaces was the lowest priority in this survey, it's apparent that the first step includes getting the local environment back to normal.

Resilient Economy:

There is a strong focus on promoting economic stability by attracting new businesses. Strengthening the local economy is key to ensuring sustainable growth, providing long-term benefits to the entire community.

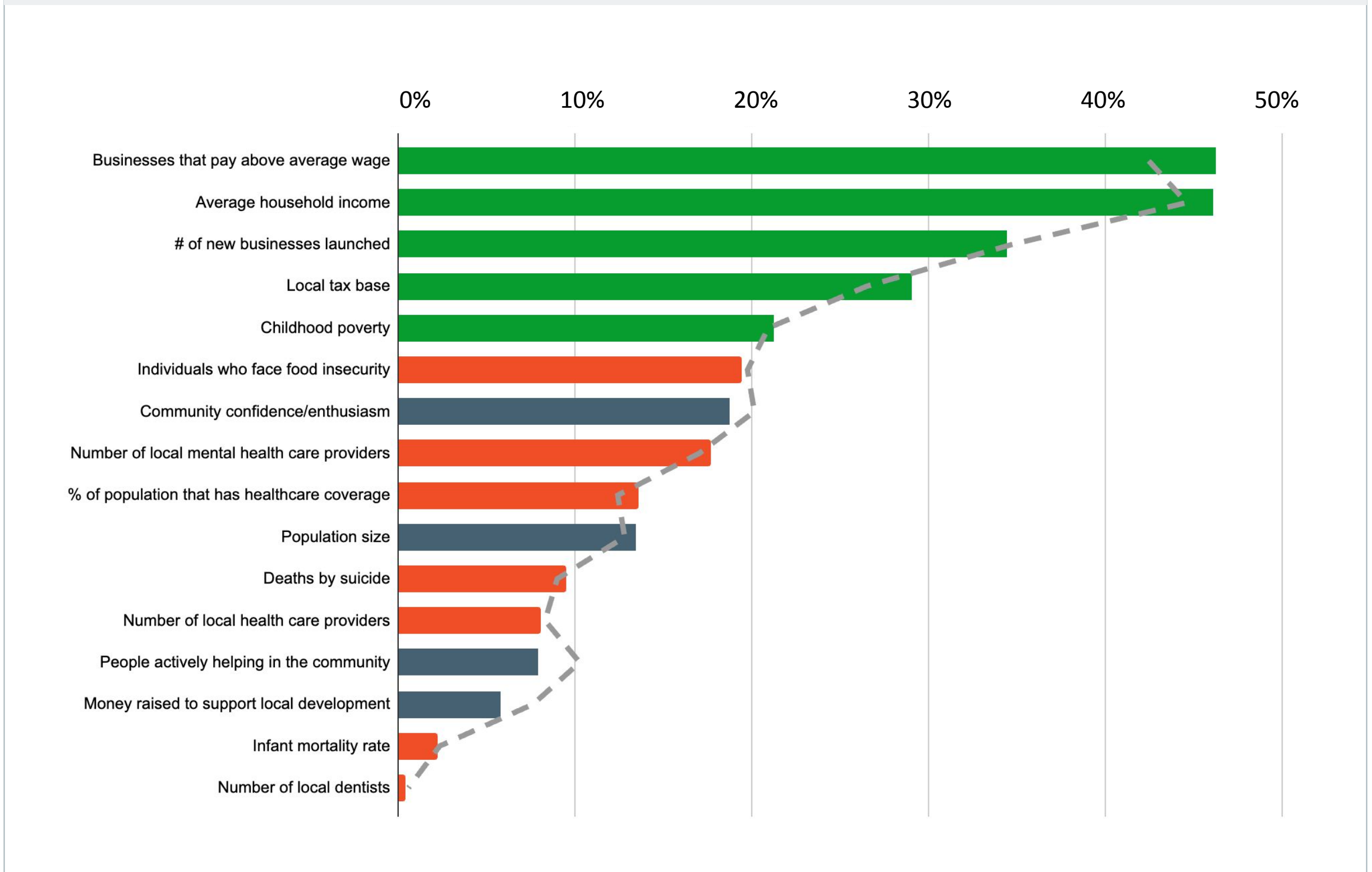
Healthy Citizens:

Of critical importance: Community members want to see more affordable and accessible housing and childcare options in the community. This is followed closely behind with access to mental health services.

Community Progress Indicators

Health Economy People Average Reno County Score

2024 Community Progress Indicators



Economy:

The focus on improving average household income and creating jobs that offer above-average wages reflects the community's desire for greater economic security. Expanding the local tax base and launching new businesses are also key goals, highlighting a push for sustainable growth.

Community Engagement:

Boosting community confidence and enthusiasm is a high priority. Residents also seek to increase active engagement in local development and grow the population. Supporting efforts to raise funds for local development will further drive progress and create a sense of unity.

Health:

The number one issue identified is people who face food insecurity. This is followed by measuring how many people have access to mental health services, and access to general health care services.

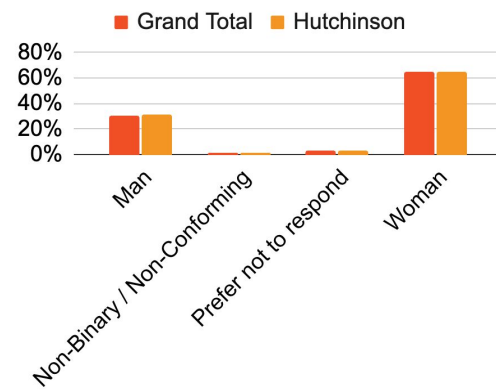
Survey Respondents

Number of Participants



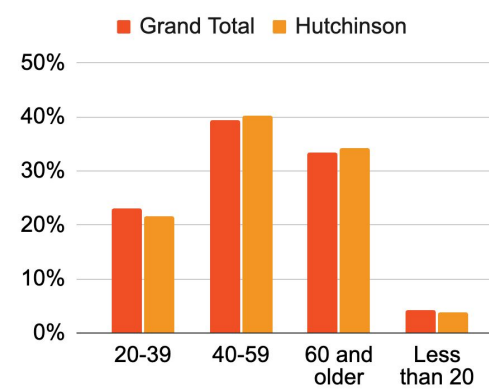
The biggest demographic captured in the survey is those who were "Born and raised here," reflecting strong ties to the community.

Gender



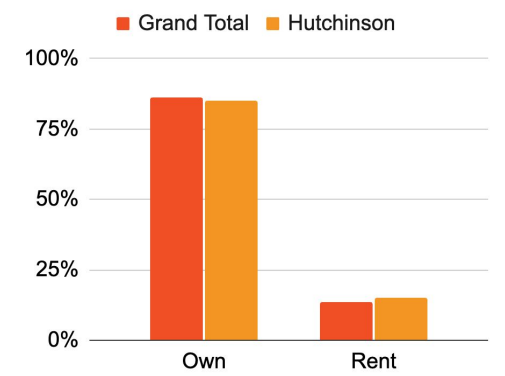
Female respondents represent the majority, highlighting the active engagement of women in the community compared to other genders.

Age Profile



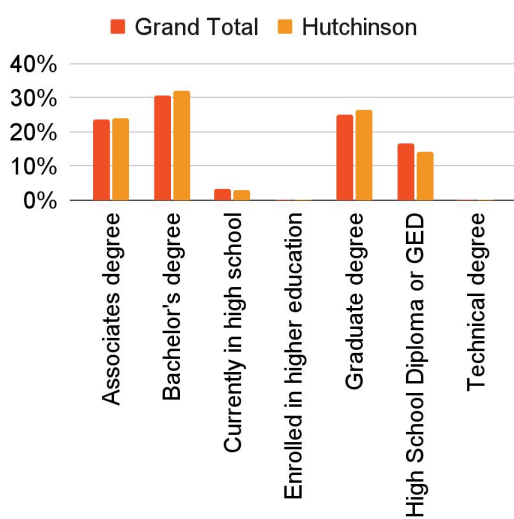
The largest age group in the survey is between 40-59 years old, followed by those 60 and older, indicating strong participation from older adults.

Residential Status



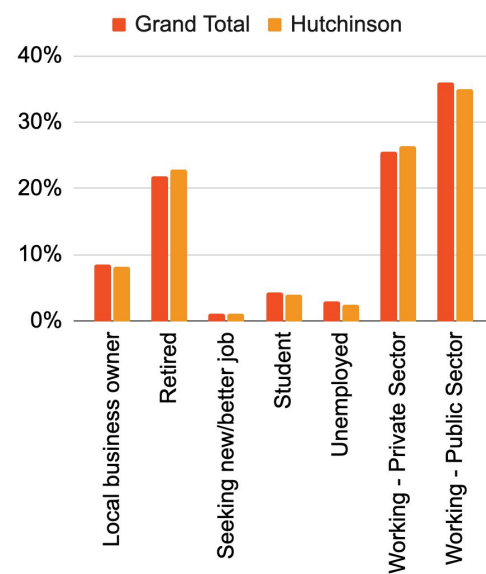
Homeowners overwhelmingly outnumber renters, suggesting a stable residential base with long-term community investment.

Education Level



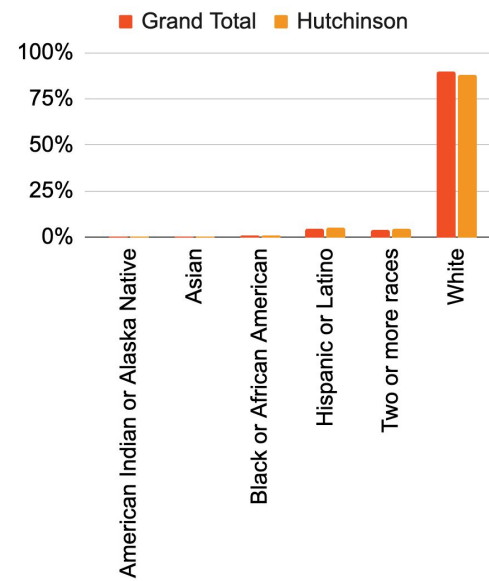
Most respondents hold a bachelor's or graduate degree, pointing to a highly educated community with a focus on formal higher education.

Employment Status



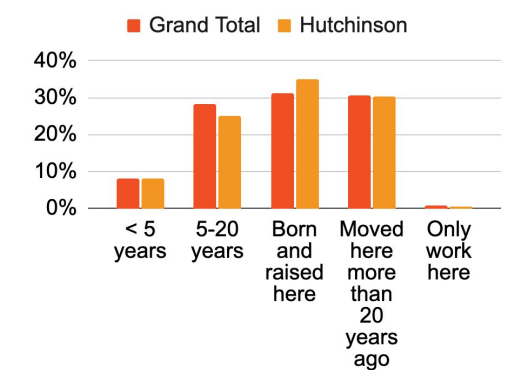
The majority are actively working in either the public or private sectors, with a significant portion retired, showing diverse professional backgrounds.

Ethnicity



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

Years lived in location



A significant portion of respondents have lived in the community for over 20 years, indicating long-term residency and deep community roots.

■ Town Score
■ Average Reno County Score

201 Number of people who expressed an interest in volunteering to better the community
201 of 723 (28%)