

*Love* WHERE YOU *Live*

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

# 2024 Nickerson Benchmark Report

Hutchinson   
**community**  
FOUNDATION



Innovation Economy Partners  
OUR FOCUS: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

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## What Makes Our Community Special?

"It's a small community and ... people are friendly."

- **Felissa Wiens**

"Our connectivity to each other."

- **Haley**

"Small town close relationships."

- **Kayla Chronister**

"The people, and the town's history."

- **Noah Carmichael**

"The small town feel."

- **Brooke Hart**

"The events that take place."

- **Brecka Katzenmeier**

"We are together."

- **Gabriel Penn**

"The town friends."

- **Kody Harrison**

"The people willing to help no matter what."

- **Shiann Benson**

"How everyone knows each other and is very welcoming."

- **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](https://hutchcf.org).

## Leaders That Make Our Community Special

jim gladden  
bill murphy  
jason probst  
june gladden  
brent berridge  
brad berridge  
peggy ruebke  
clinton willhaus  
angela richard  
april beshears  
lynette brown  
david sotelo  
jake daily

# Executive Summary:

A total of 51 individuals responded to the survey. The major patterns that can be seen in the report are a general lack of confidence in the local economy, a need for improvement in core infrastructure and blight removal, followed by a need for safety and security. The economic confidence sentiment is lower than that of an average county resident. On a positive note the median household income is trending up and the unemployment rate is trending downwards. Perhaps the one metric that should be paid close attention to is the local population level, which is trending downwards. Population decline is perhaps the most critical element in sustaining a town.

pg **4, 5**

## Economic Confidence

The community feels uncertain about current and future business conditions, with subdued views on employment opportunities and income stability. Residents seek stronger programs to boost economic resilience.

pg **6, 7, 8**

## Community Engagement Confidence

Community members show a lower sense of community confidence than the average county resident. Views towards local leadership is closest to the average county perspective. The local leaders are also seen quite positively in their ability to execute programs and projects.

pgs **9a-9b**

## Critical Community Priorities

Critical priorities for the community center on improving the economy by attracting businesses, addressing light and public infrastructure, and paying greater attention to public health and safety.

pg **10**

## Survey Respondent Profile

The majority of respondents are long-term residents, homeowners, and middle-aged. Most have post-secondary education, and many are employed in service-oriented professions. Women participated more in the survey.

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.**



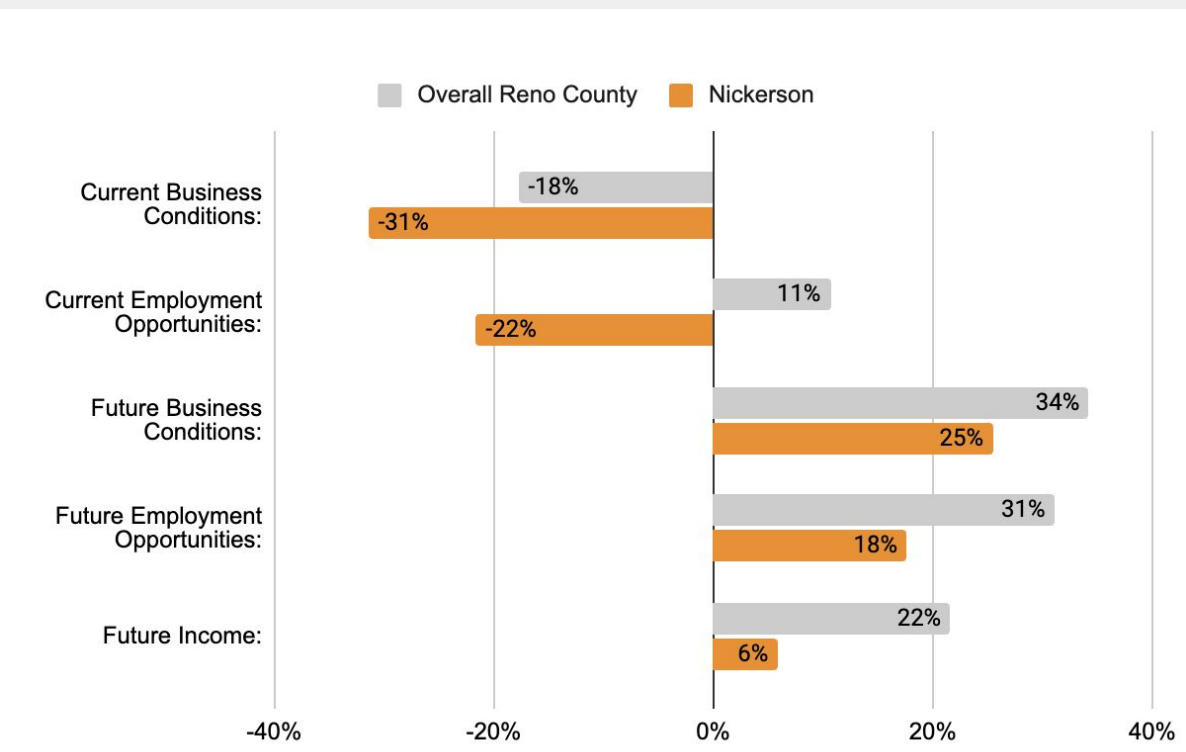
# Confidence In Our Local Economy

## Economic Summary:

The survey responders highlight the need for greater economic development in the town. The economic confidence assessment suggests that the local residents generally have a subdued sense of the current and future economic outlook of the town. This assessment is significantly lower than that of an average Reno County resident. Furthermore, respondents clearly prioritize business attraction and economic indicators. There are clear positive trends in the economic data, however, with a low unemployment rate, decreasing poverty rate, and increasing number of housing units.

## Survey Responses

### Our Economic Perceptions

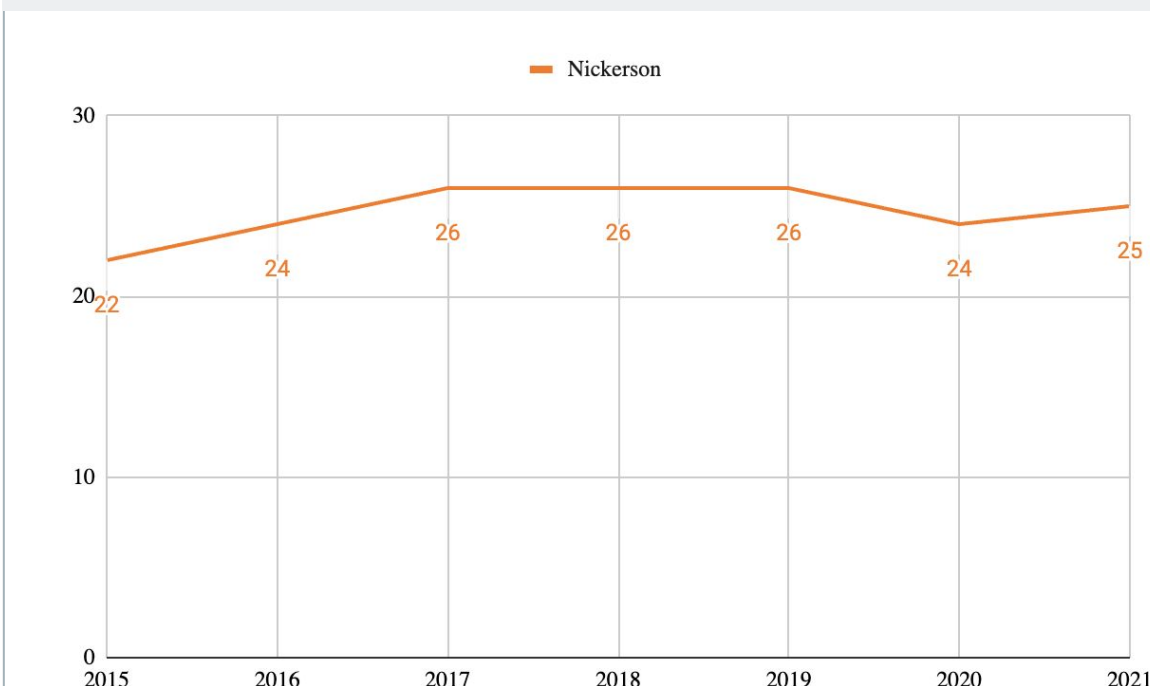


### Popular Ideas for the Town:

- The park is an important area for development. Improving and maintaining these green spaces seems to be a popular suggestion.
- Ensuring the local police department is properly supported and resourced, with multiple mentions emphasizing its significance for safety.
- A greater variety of stores, including a clothing store and more affordable food options.
- Ensuring that homes are available and affordable while also addressing dilapidated properties has been highlighted.
- Clear demand for quality childcare services and high-paying jobs, especially in tech or manufacturing.

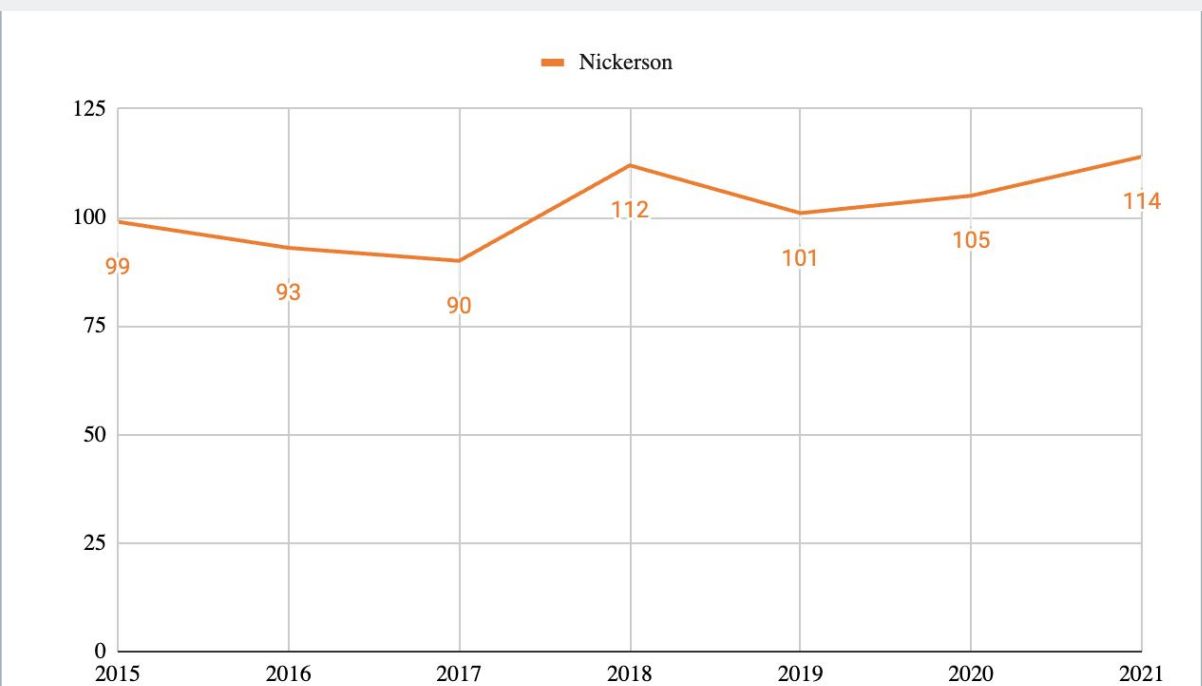
## Local Economic Indicators

### Total Businesses in Our Town



Data source:USCB, County Business Patterns

### Employment in Our Town

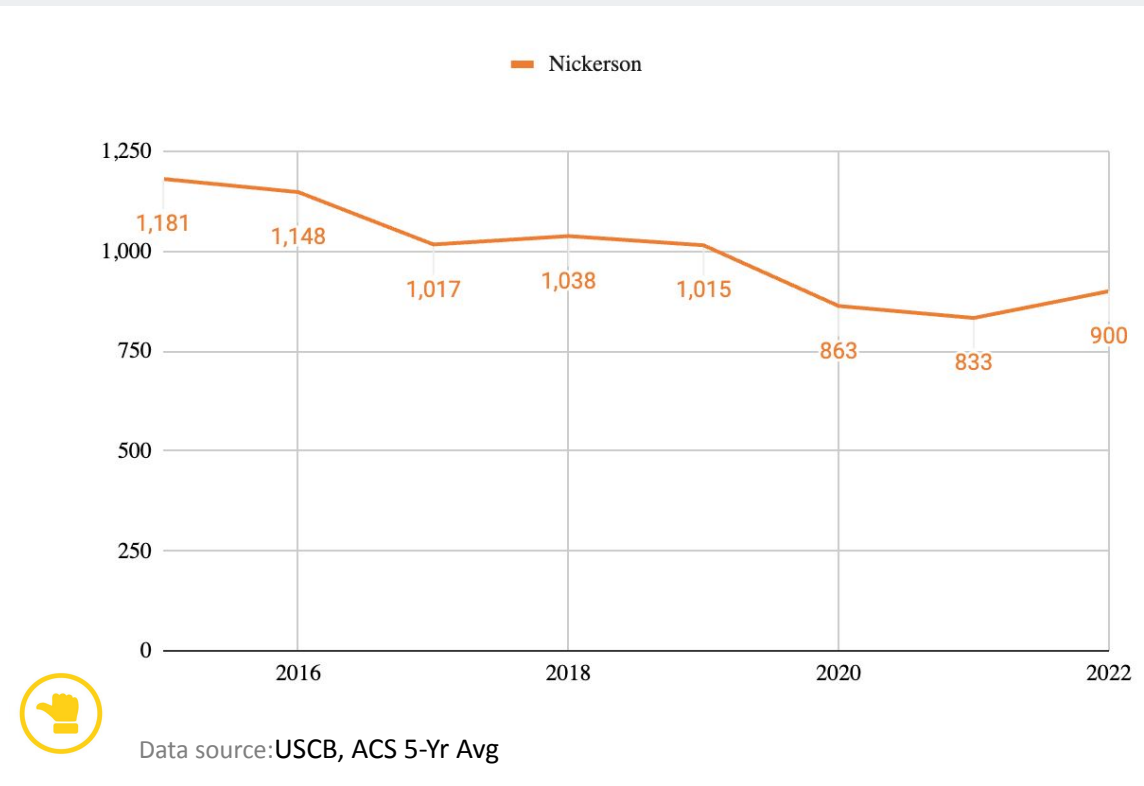


Data source:USCB, County Business Patterns

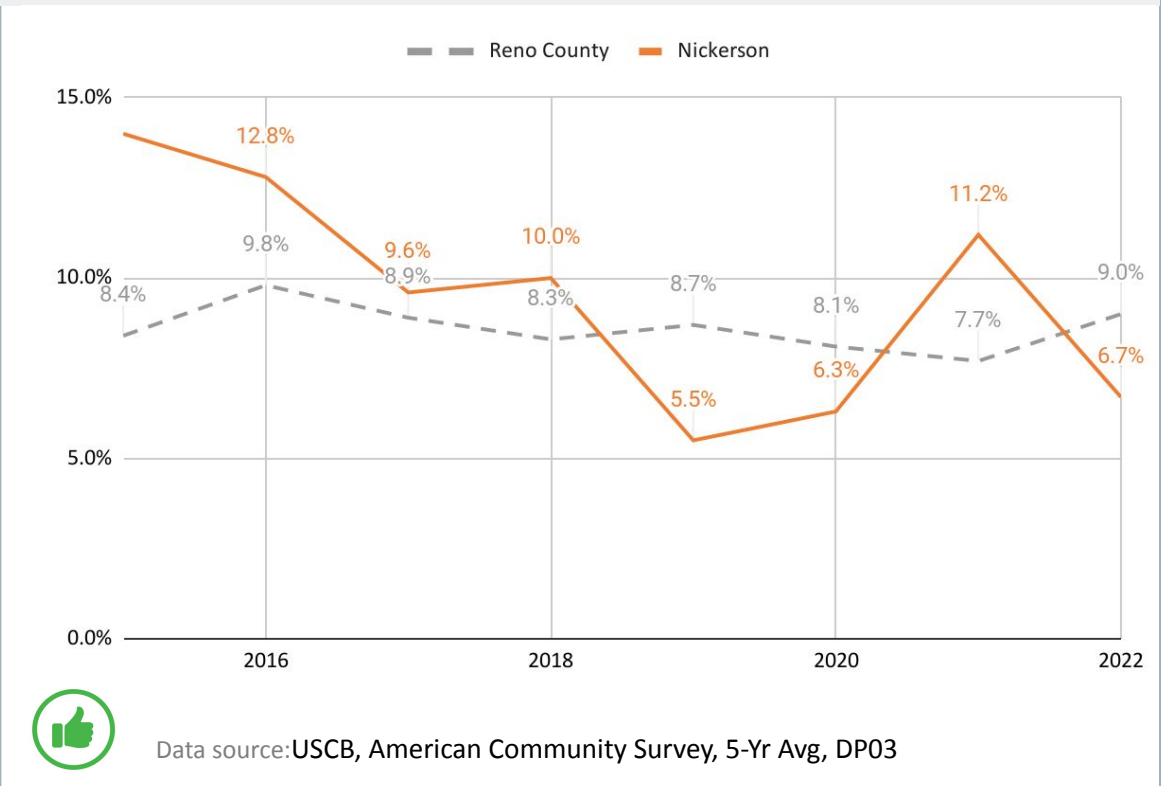


# Local Economic Indicators (Cont'd)

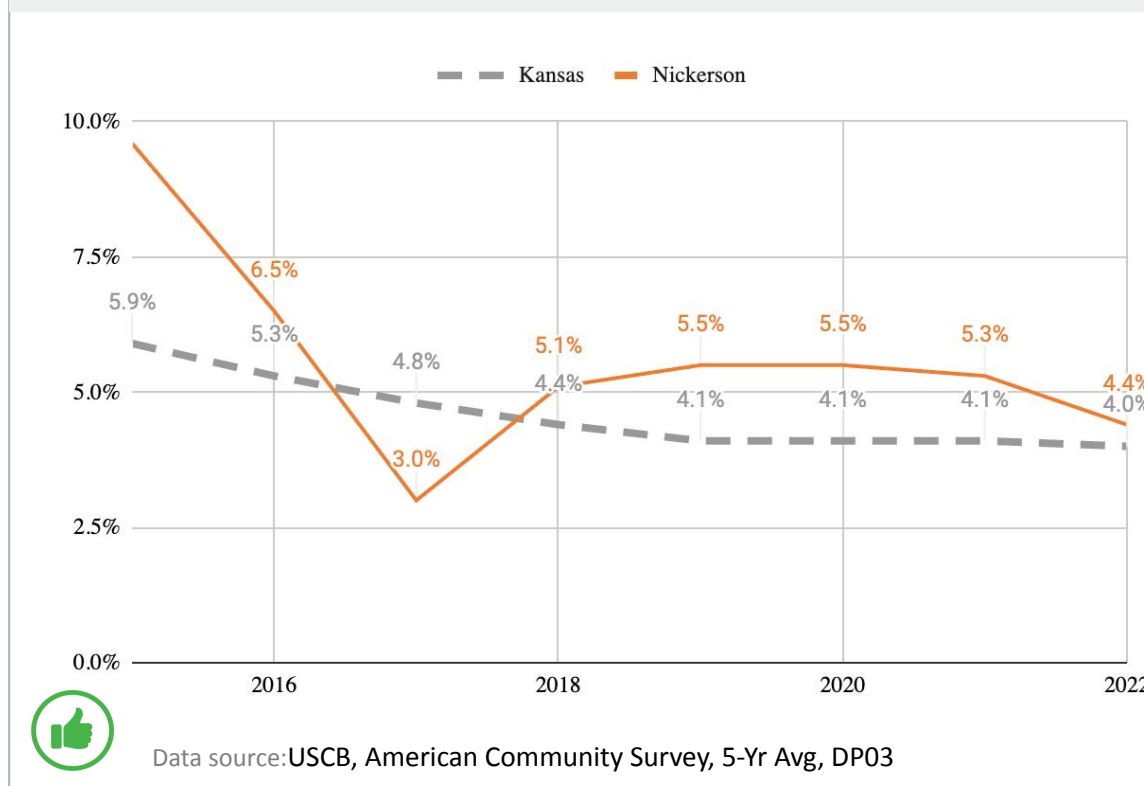
## Overall Population Trend



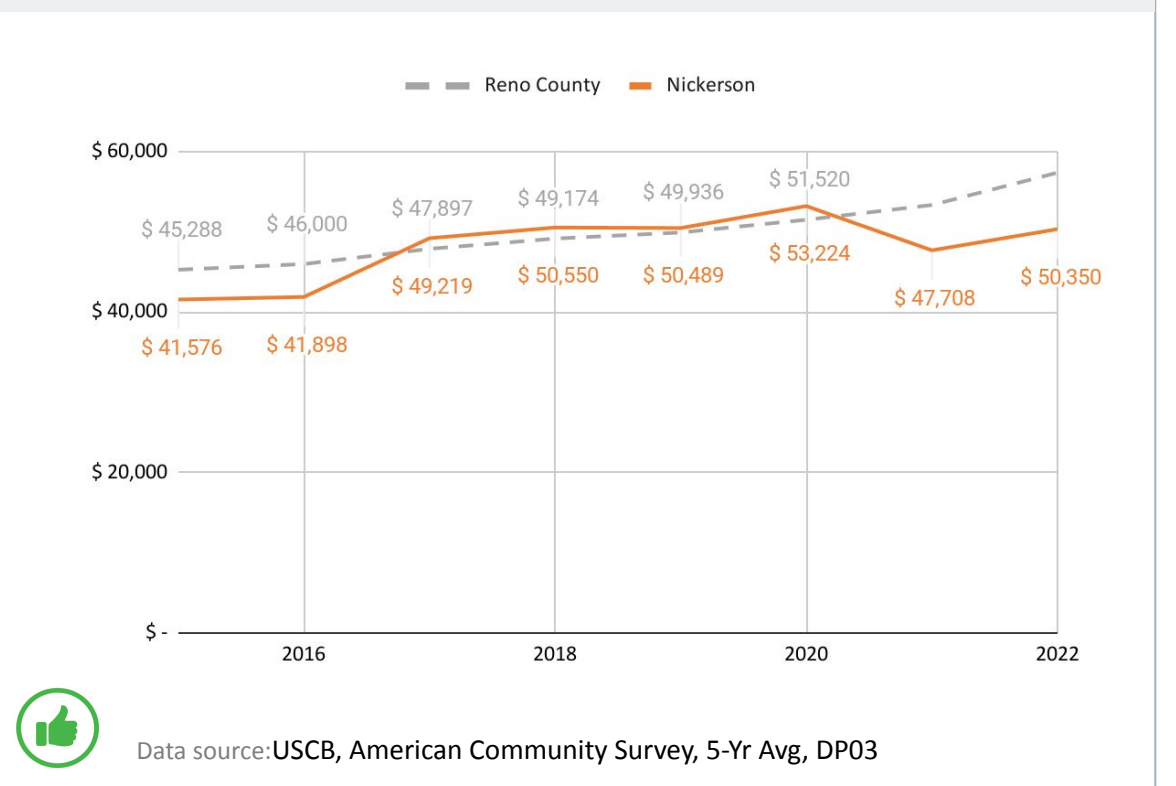
## Local Poverty Rate



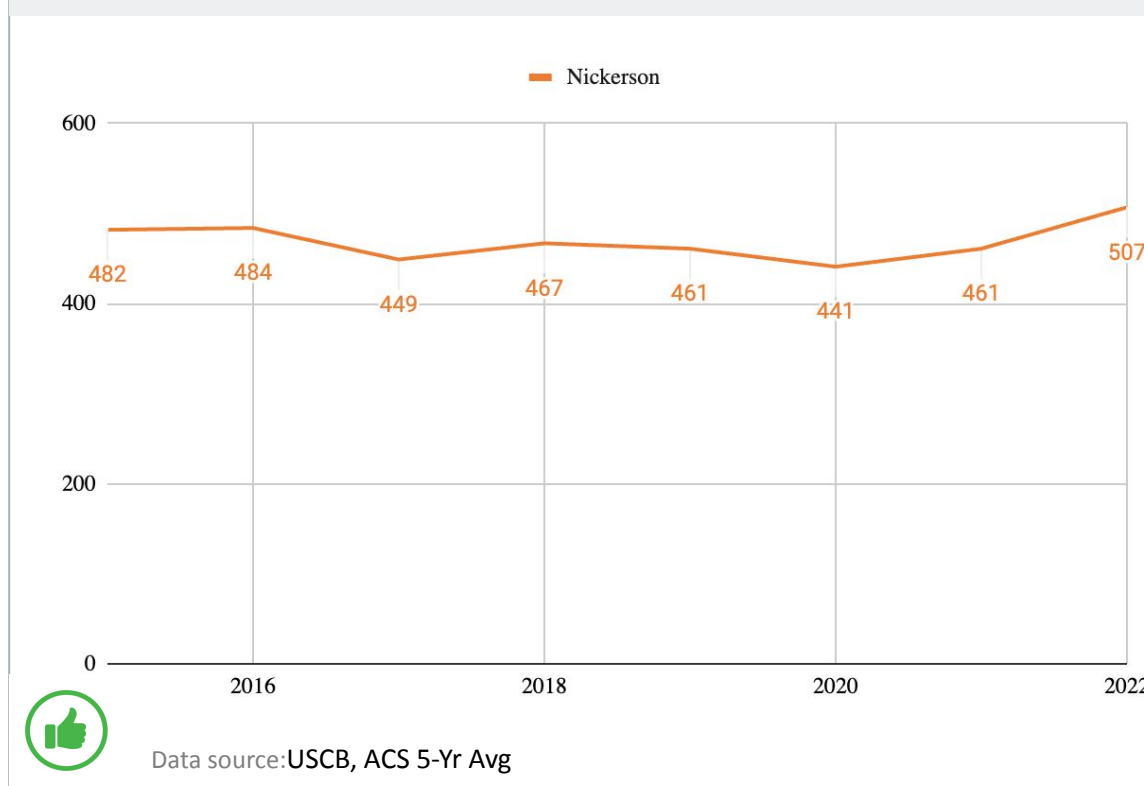
## Local Unemployment Rate



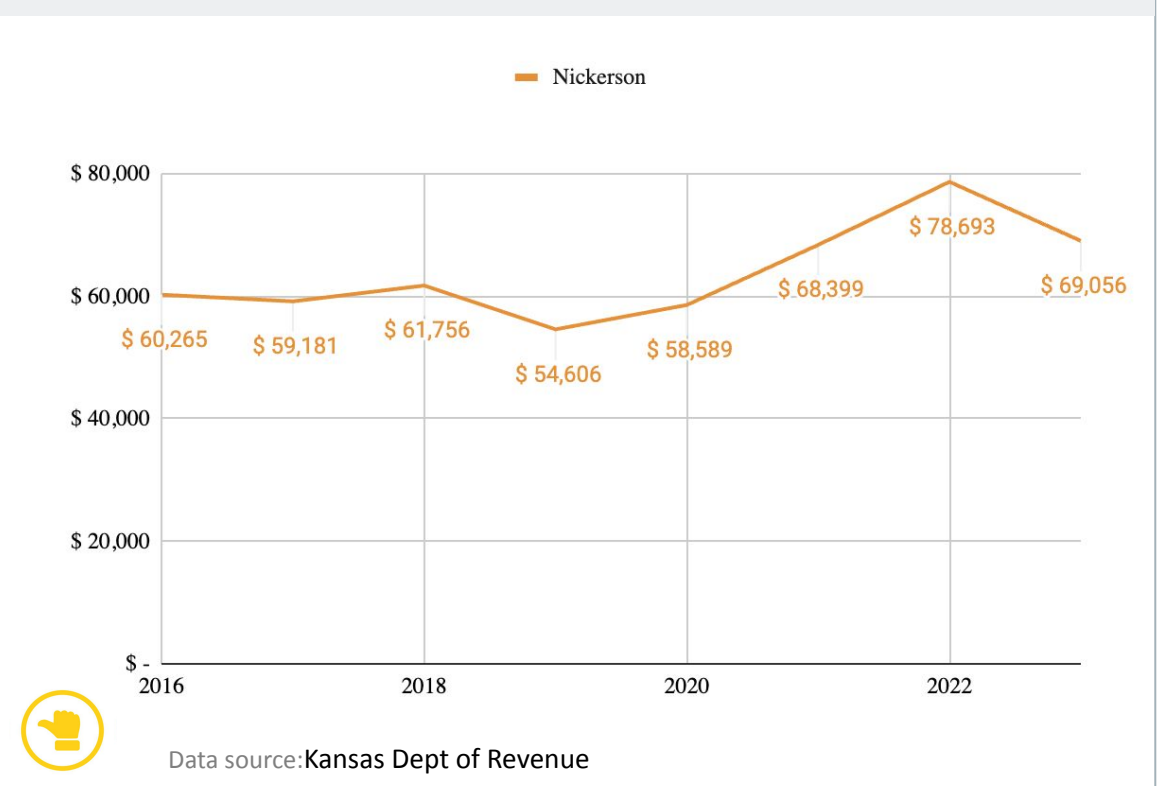
## Median Household Income



## Total Housing Units



## Annual Sales Tax Collection



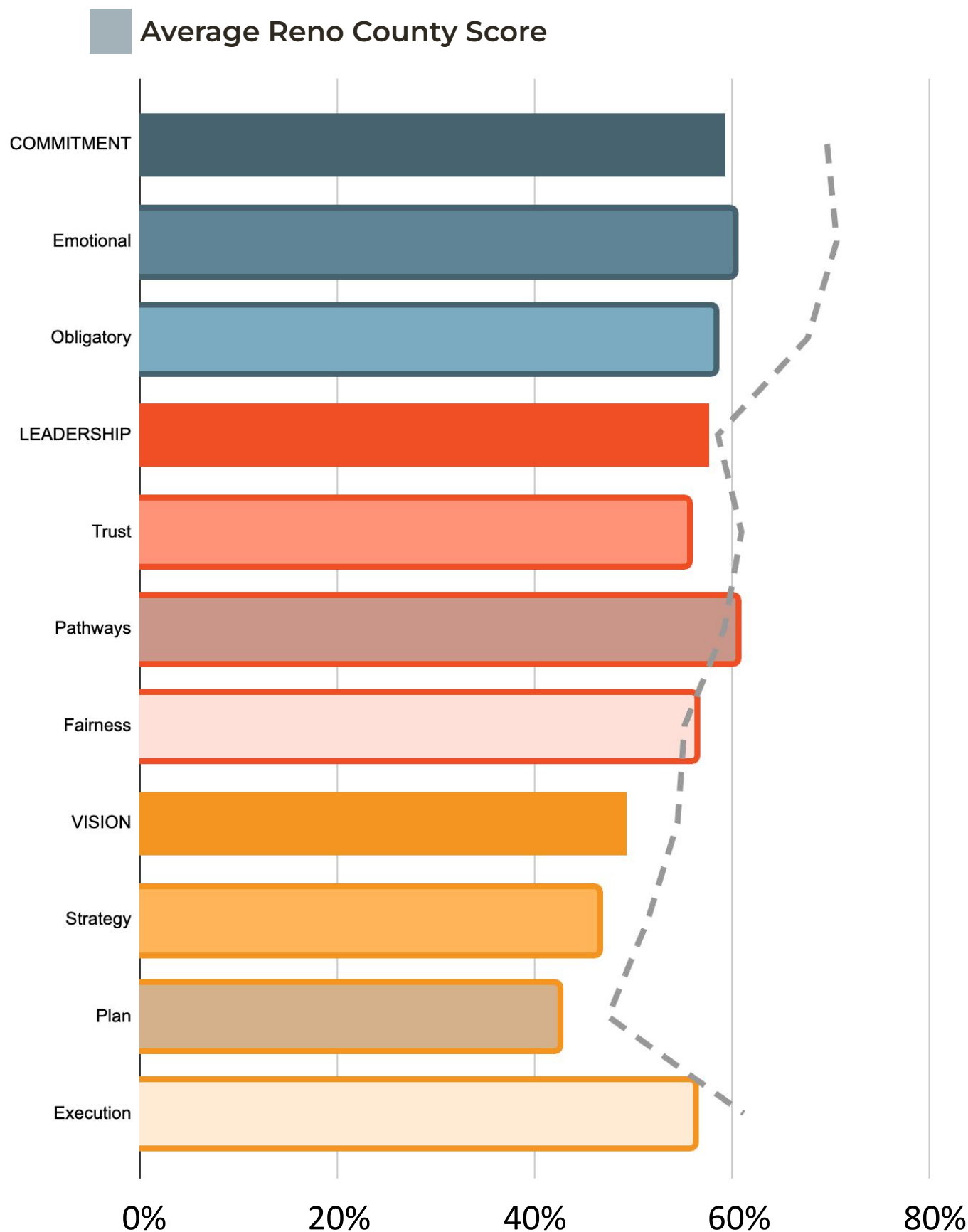
# Confidence In Our Local Community

## Engagement Summary:

The community shows strong levels of personal commitment, with many residents feeling a deep connection to their town and investment in its success. Leadership engagement is generally viewed positively, though some feel there's room for growth in transparency and collaboration. When it comes to the community's vision, residents are hopeful but seek more clarity and direction on long-term goals. To foster even greater engagement, leadership should ensure open communication channels and involve residents in shaping future plans.



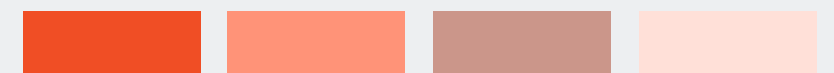
## How do our residents view our community?



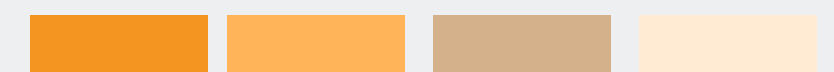
### Commitment



### Leadership



### Vision



The biggest challenge residents face is a need for clearer communication and transparency between leadership, their plans for the future and the community. While many are committed to the town, some feel disconnected from decisions being made and long-term plans. The biggest opportunity for the community lies in the ability for the leaders to create more effective plans.

**How can leadership improve communication and involve residents?**

**What new initiatives would best reflect the community's long-term vision?**

**How can we better support and engage residents to turn their commitment into action?**

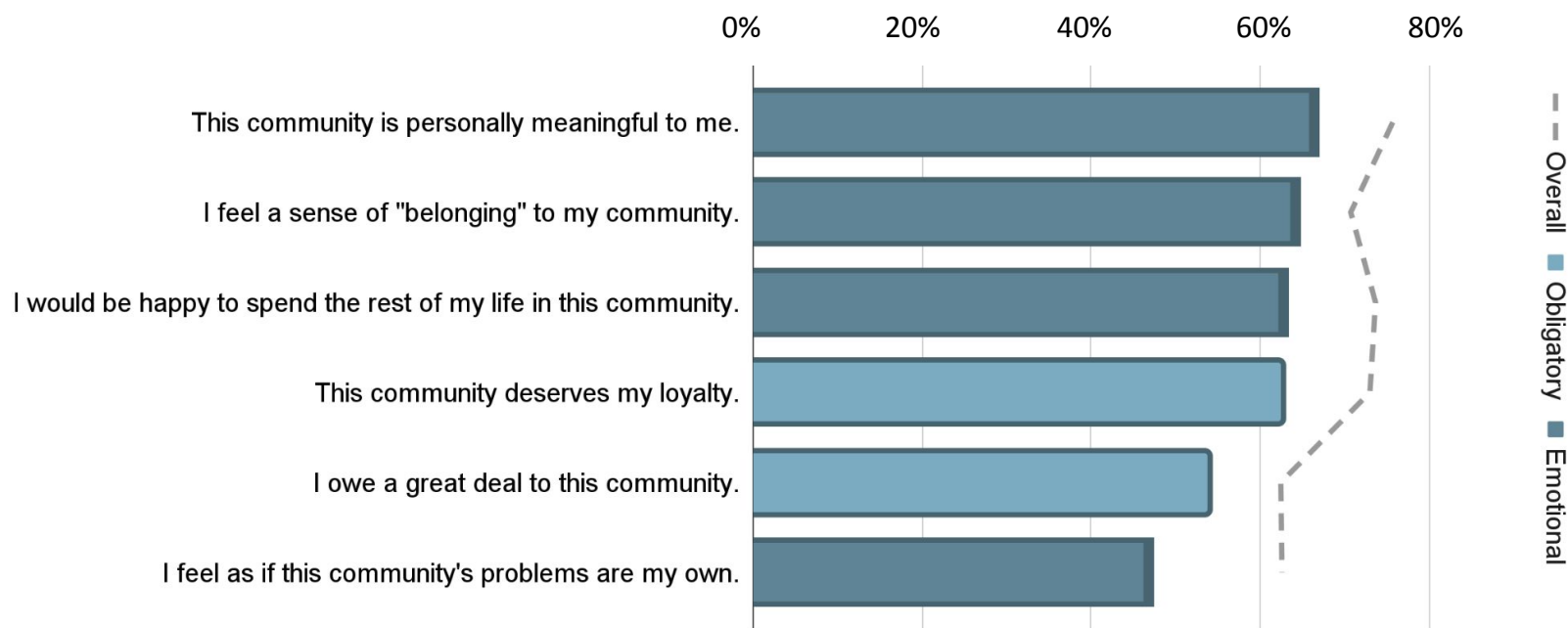


# Confidence In Our Local Community

## 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



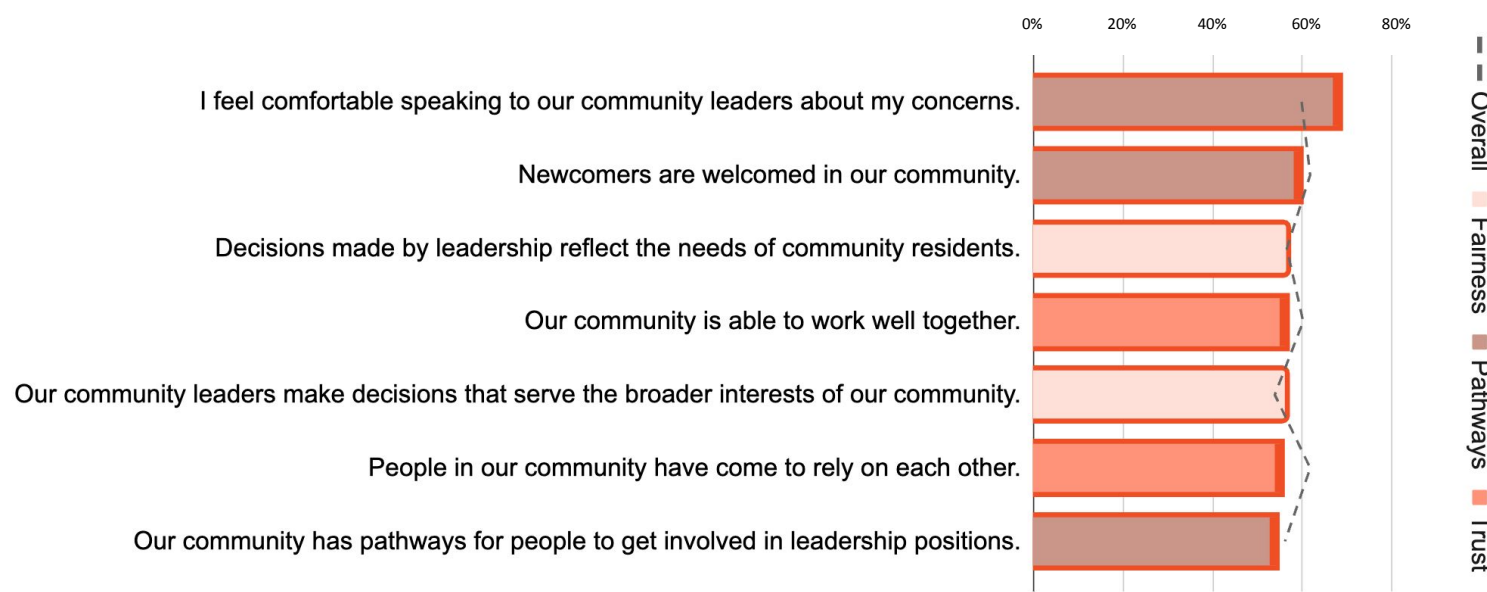
The personal commitment levels are significantly lower than the average responses across the county. Emotional commitment scores are slightly higher than obligatory commitment.

Questions to consider:

**Is a sense of personal commitment helpful to nurture in local citizens? If so why?**

**What can be the value of developing this sentiment in the residents?**

### Community Confidence: Local Leadership



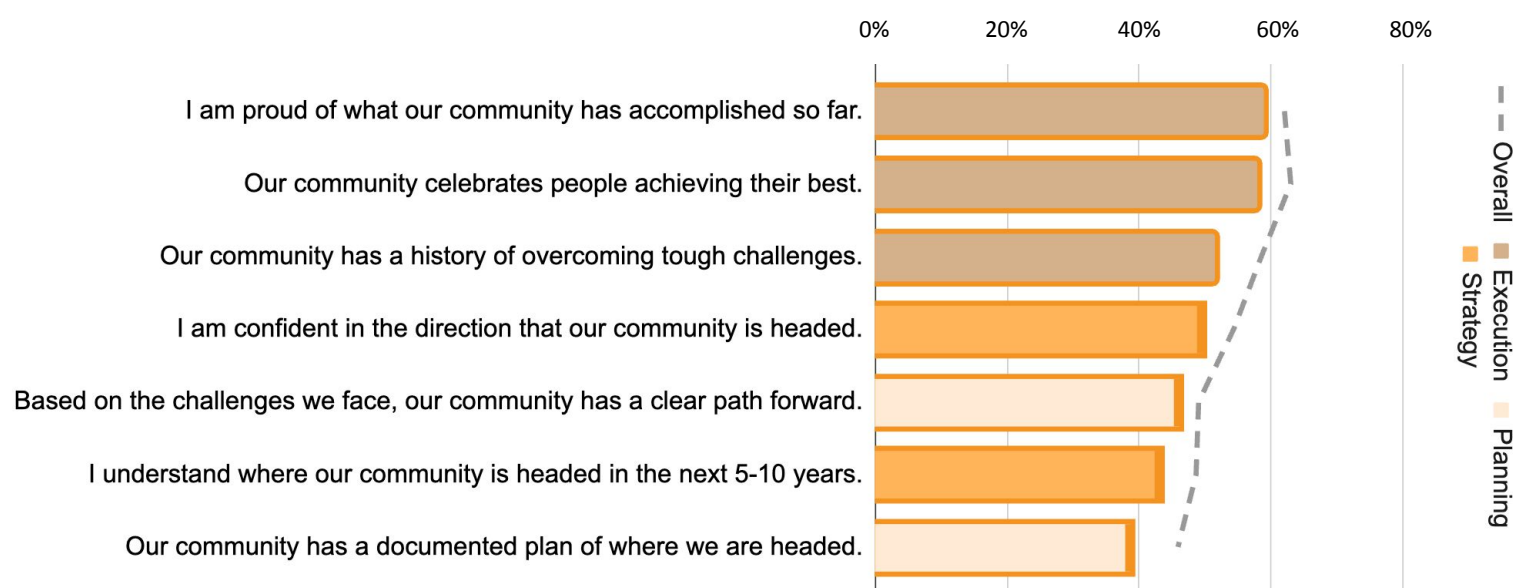
Interestingly, the local leadership assessment is at par with the county assessment. Of the categories, the sense that there are pathways to access leadership positions in the community is seen more strongly than other categories.

Question to consider:

**How can existing leaders help build more trust amongst the local residents?**

**What can be the value of building this psychology?**

### Community Confidence: Vision



The responders gave the best rating to the ability of the local residents to execute on projects and programs. And the lowest assessment was given to the ability of the local leaders to plan community efforts.

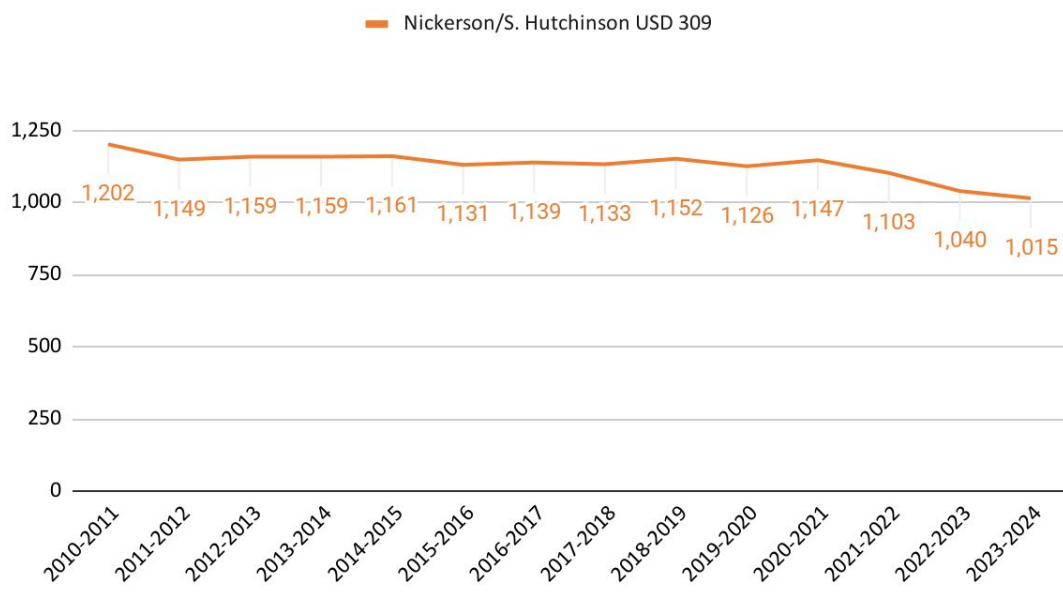
Questions to consider:

**Are there simple efforts that can be taken to help the residents gain a better sense of the effort that is going on in the community?**

**How can residents become more involved in shaping the community's vision?**

# Local Community Indicators

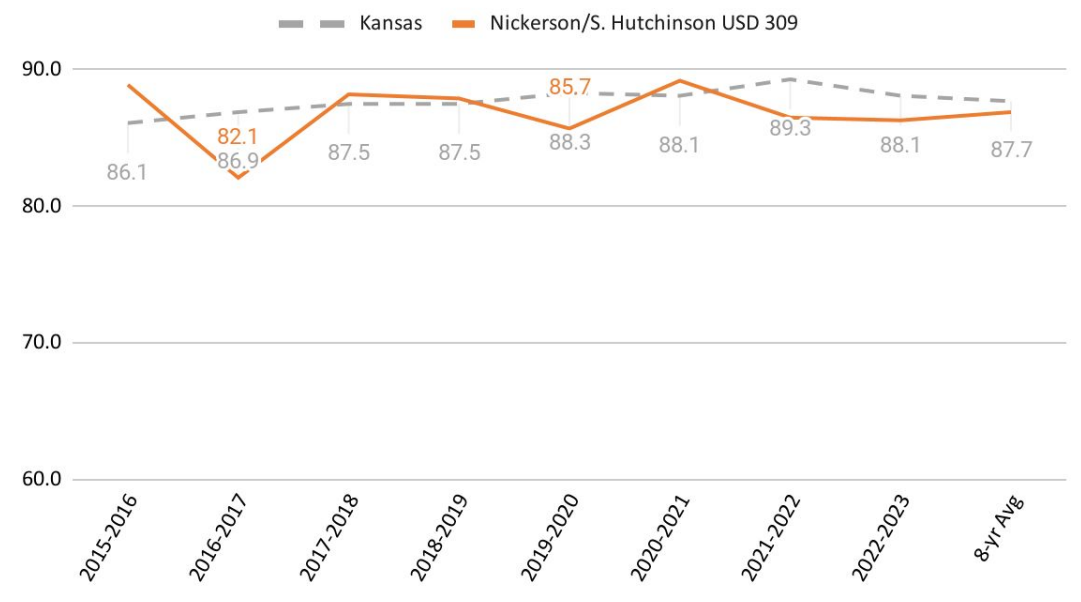
## Local School Enrollment



Source: Kansas State Dept of Education, KSDE Data Central



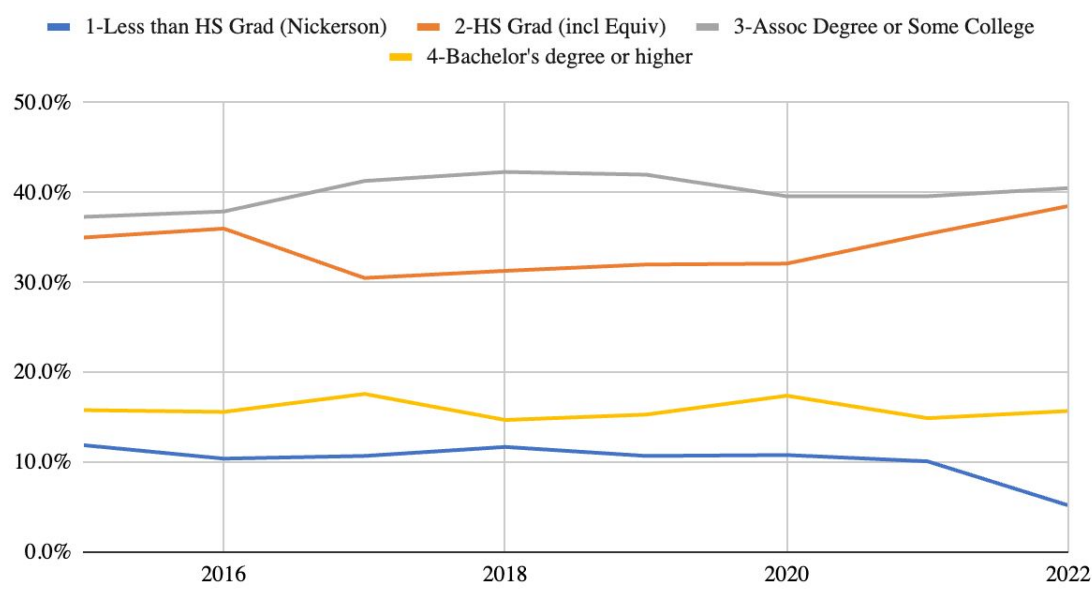
## High School 4 Year Graduation Rate



Source: Kansas State Dept of Education, KSDE Data Central



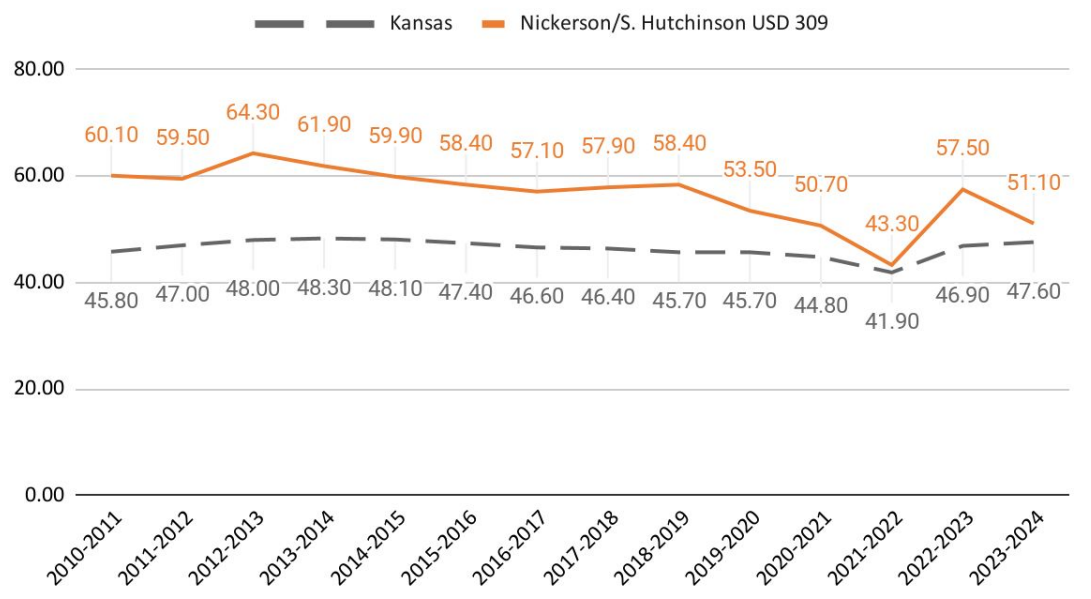
## Local Educational Level



Source: Kansas State Dept of Education, KSDE Data Central



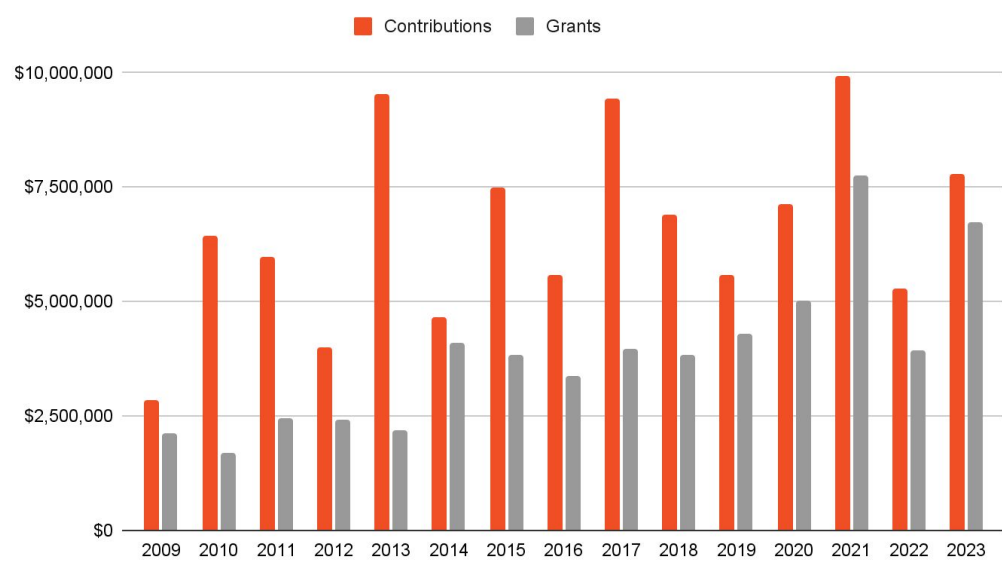
## School District % Free-Reduced Price Lunch



Source: Kansas State Dept of Education, KSDE Data Central

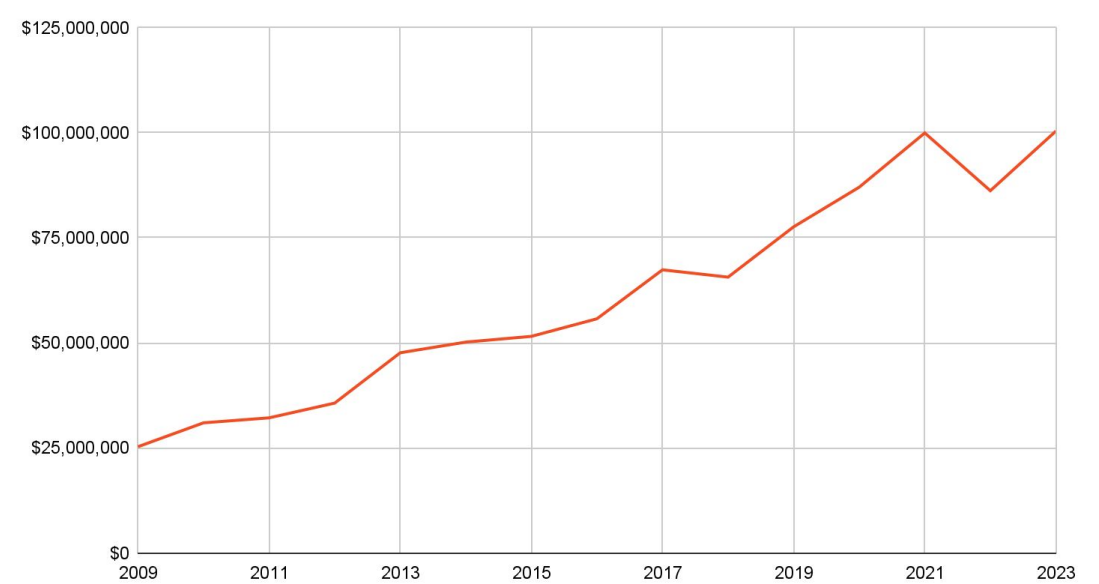


## Hutchinson Community Foundation: Contributions & Grants



Hutchinson Community Foundation Data

## Hutchinson Community Foundation: Total Assets



Hutchinson Community Foundation data



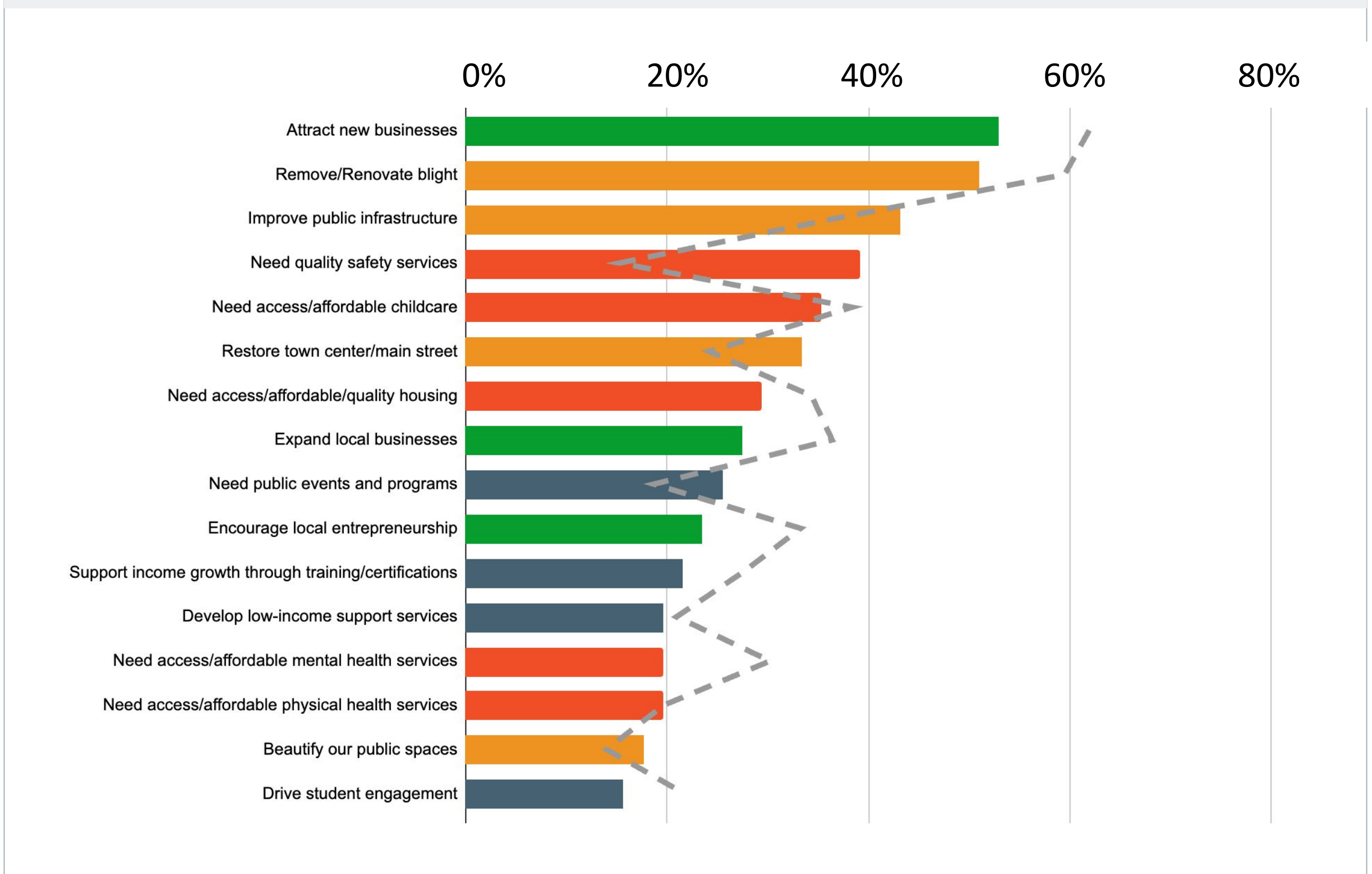
# Community Program Priorities

## Priorities Summary:

The community prioritizes attracting new businesses, removing blight and improving the public infrastructure. It is also interesting to note that the top two priorities are in fact weighted lower than the average county resident. The priority that jumps to the top, when compared with the overall county, is the need for safety services. This is a program that is weighed lower by the rest of the county, but clearly a very important issue in Nickerson. The area where the locals and the county residents have similar views is in the priorities of Improving Public Infrastructure.

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

## 2024 Economic and Community Development Priorities



### Vibrant Place:

Top priorities are Removing Blight and Improving Public Infrastructure, followed by Restoring town center/main street.

### Resilient Economy:

Attracting new businesses is the community's top priority, followed by expanding local businesses and encouraging entrepreneurship.

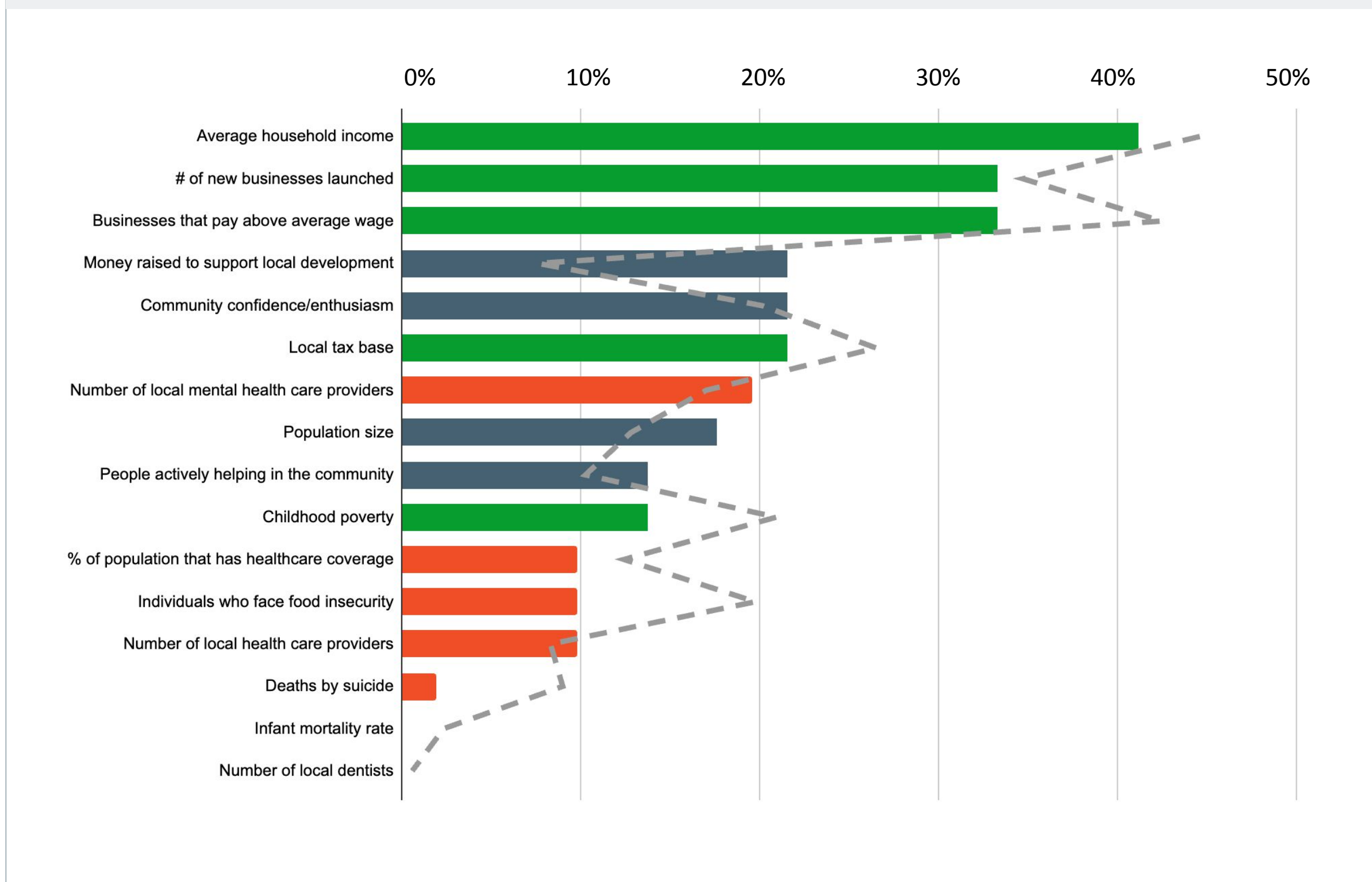
### Healthy Citizens:

Need for quality safety services, accessible and affordable childcare services and accessible, affordable and quality housing are the three most critical priorities identified.

# Community Progress Indicators

Health Economy People Average Reno County Score

## 2024 Community Progress Indicators



### Economy:

Economic priorities focus on increasing average household income and launching new businesses that pay above-average wages. Improving the local tax base is also key for residents seeking stronger economic growth.

### Community Engagement:

Community priorities center on raising funds for local development, boosting confidence and engagement, and increasing the population. A need for more active involvement in development efforts is highlighted.

### Health:

Health priorities focus on improving access to primary health care and addressing food insecurity. Mental health resources are also a concern, though less attention is given to suicide and dental care issues.

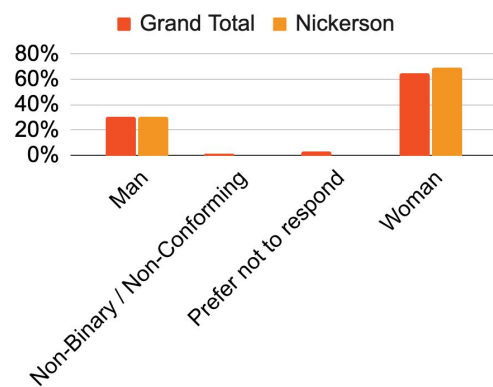


# Survey Respondents

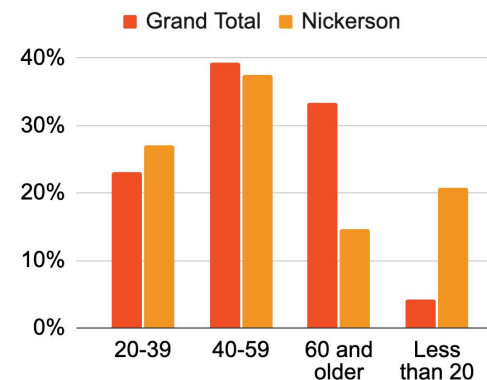
## Number of Participants



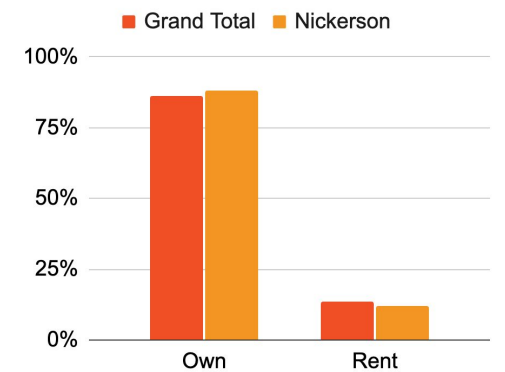
## Gender



## Age Profile



## Residential Status



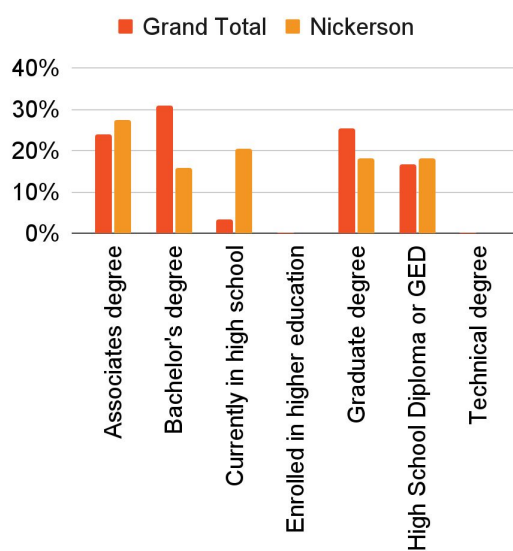
The majority of respondents have lived in the community for more than 20 years, showing a high level of long-term residence and commitment.

Female respondents outnumber male respondents. The main takeaway is that women are more engaged in responding to the survey, potentially indicating stronger community involvement.

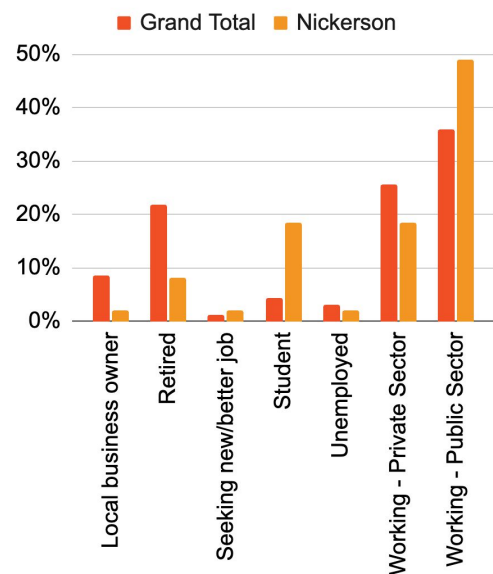
The largest age group is 40-59 years, highlighting that middle-aged residents are the most represented demographic and could be driving the community's direction.

Homeowners dominate the survey responses, indicating that people with long-term investments in the community are more engaged in community-related discussions.

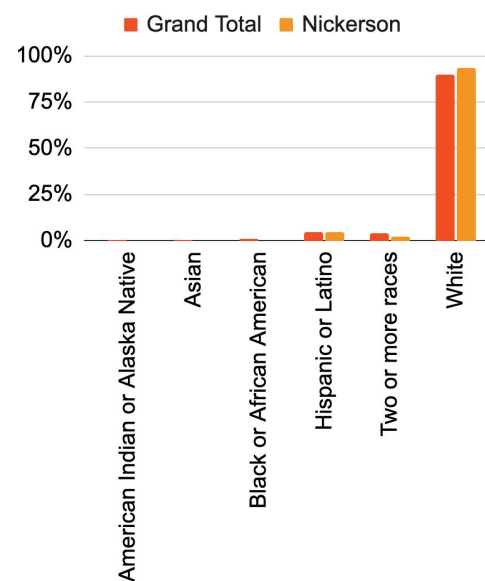
## Education Level



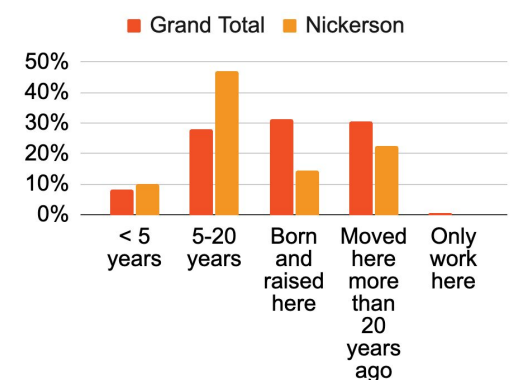
## Employment Status



## Ethnicity



## Years lived in location



The biggest takeaway is that most respondents have some form of post-secondary education, suggesting a well-educated population invested in the community's future.

A significant portion of respondents are actively working, particularly in public services. This could indicate that many residents are involved in service-oriented professions.

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 majority have lived in the community for 5-20 years, demonstrating a fairly strong, established population with possible deep roots in the area.

■ Town Score

■ Average Reno County Score

**18**

Number of people who expressed an interest in volunteering to better the community  
18 of 51 (35%)