

Love WHERE YOU *Live*

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

2025 Fairfield Area Benchmark Report

Hutchinson 
community
FOUNDATION



Innovation Economy Partners
OUR FOCUS: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

info@HutchCF.org | hutchcf.org

What Makes Our Community Special?

"The way the community comes together to help one another."

Anonymous

"Caring, helpful and sense of pride."

Dennis

"We care for our sick, injured or rehabilitating neighbors ourselves... We have a small gift economy that gives value to everyone regardless of economic ability and strengthens community bonds."

Kati

"The community has a very diverse population... a rising amount of optimism and pride in place."

Anonymous

"Everyone works together to make our town great"

Kay

"My community is special because it is both tightly knit and welcoming."

Lucy

"They are always thriving to pull people together... very supportive of community."

Jackie

"I love living in a small town and having a sense of community. Everyone here looks out for each other and it feels like family."

Kayley

"It is small yet large in personality... I met some wonderful people that are truly making Sylvia home."

Anonymous

"Collaboration between organizations, dedicated leaders who genuinely care, and a shared drive to continuously improve our community."

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

joe cannon **steve westphal** karen walker
megan bartley shelby harner
 rick smith jon richardson
 gary walker dennis wallace randy mathias
 nevin nisly darren schaffer **drew conrad**
 doug smith betsy trembley lacey mills
 ron hirst **steve trembley** betty murphy
 peggy boos miriam iwashige sheree collins
chris terrill keturah delehoy
 keith blaski cameron peirce david inskeep
 annette mathias **bob murphy**
 jamie funke abby stockebrand theresa kraus
 lisa king **aubrey abbott** **patterson** tricia fowler
dedria ashworth
 kenneth jorns **andrea schoenecker** krissi goetz
 addie ehling carolyn bontrager **james davis**
jim french pastor james davis joel iwashige
 connor peirce christena weber **bill murphy**
dawn johnson marilyn meirer kelsi depew
 lisa french **rhonda schaffter** ellis miller
 jean schweners **sam boxberger** tina roelfs
 darren busick **carlyn conrad**
 lois boxberger marvin mcnett
joann nisly edyie green
doug al jan jorns
 butch

Executive Summary:

Fairfield in 2025 stands at a crossroads—fueled by steady personal commitment and rising desire for revitalization, yet challenged by infrastructure decay, economic stagnation, and trust barriers in leadership. Residents continue to voice pride in their close-knit culture, long-standing families, and small-town values. They highlight emotional attachment, community meaning, and a willingness to serve one another as defining characteristics. However, years of unmet infrastructure needs—especially in water, sewer, and road systems—have eroded confidence in local systems. Investment interest remains low but positive, and skepticism persists about the fairness and effectiveness of leadership decisions, especially among younger residents. Yet signs of forward movement are emerging: residents are organizing around youth engagement, public spaces, and local food solutions.

pgs **4-5**

Economic Confidence

Cautious negative outlook grows in Fairfield, with calls for local services, youth investment, and stronger infrastructure leading the way.

pgs **6-8**

Community Engagement Confidence

Emotional commitment is strong, but trust in leadership and long-term planning remains uneven—especially among younger adults.

pgs **10-12**

Critical Community Priorities

Fairfield's top concerns are blight, infrastructure, and youth spaces, with rising urgency around food access and public gathering areas.

pg **13**

Survey Respondent Profile

Fairfield's older, long-term residents show stronger connection and optimism; younger adults and less-educated groups report more economic stress and concern about community conditions.

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

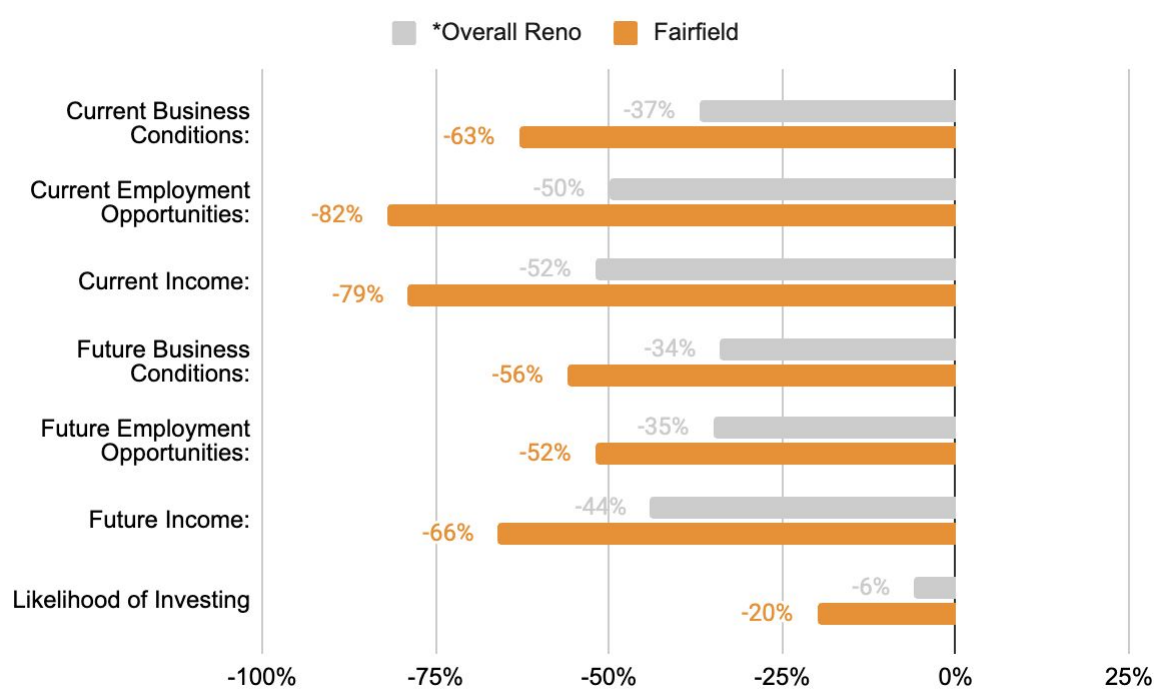
Economic Summary:

In 2025, Fairfield's economic outlook significantly dropped lower this year than in the previous year. Confidence in current business, income, and job conditions has dropped, with especially sharp concern in Fairfield compared to other Reno communities with regard to Current Employment Opportunities. Yet narrative feedback suggests slow but emerging optimism—particularly regarding future investment possibilities. Long-term residents display greater faith in future opportunity, while newer residents report more volatility in expectations and experiences. Food access and basic service availability remain top concerns, with renewed calls for a grocery store, affordable childcare, and accessible healthcare.

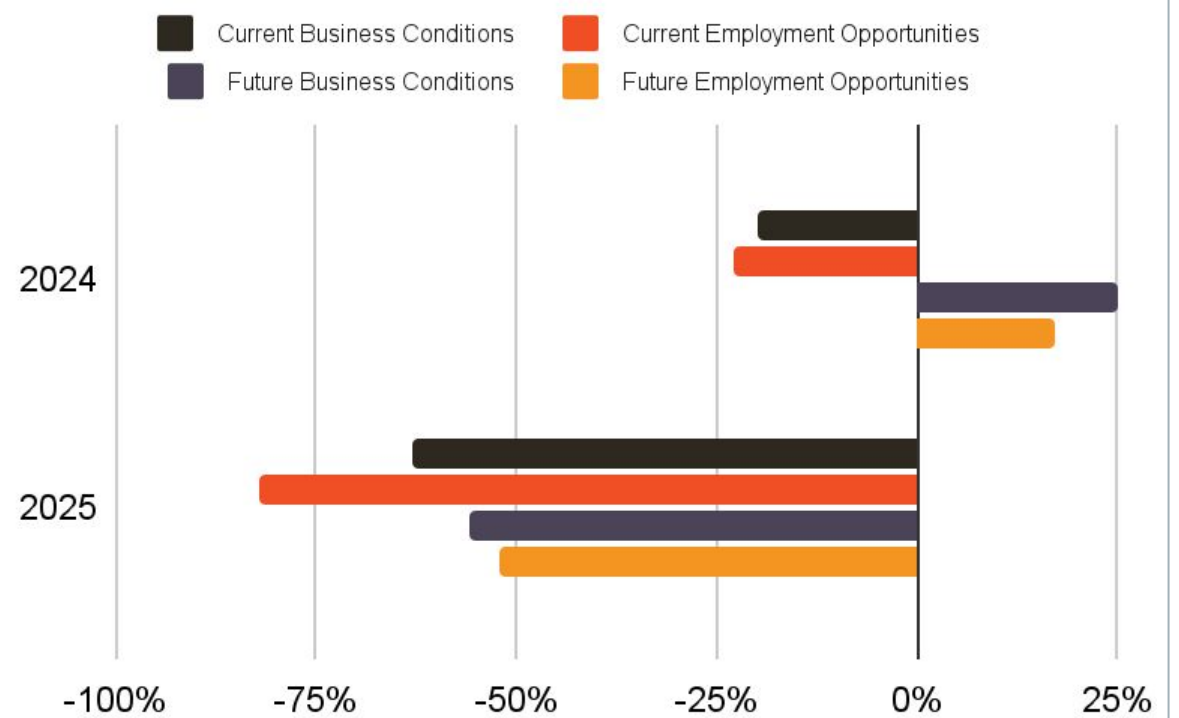
Businesses Needed In Our Town:

- **Grocery Store**—Many call it a food desert with no basic groceries
- **Gas Station**—Fuel access is limited
- **Convenience Store**—Needed for everyday essentials and quick access
- **Childcare**—Working parents need reliable and accessible options
- **Healthcare**—Residents cite need for clinics, addiction care, wellness
- **Restaurants**—Few local dining options, especially evenings
- **Employment Opportunities**—Lack of local jobs pushes commuting

Our Economic Perceptions



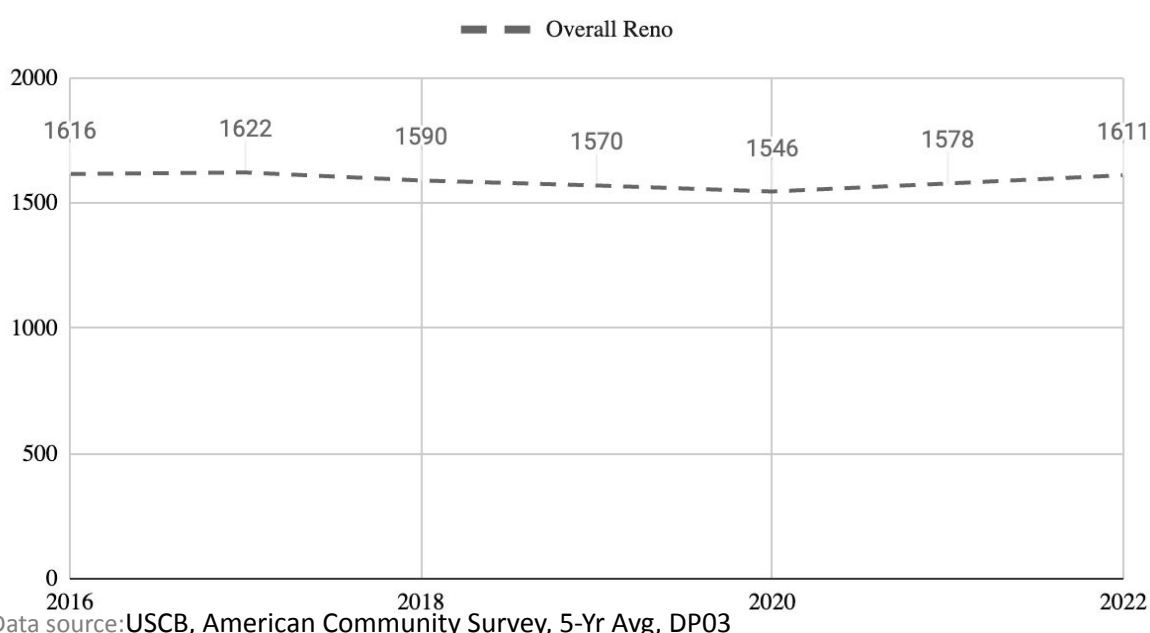
Year Over Year Change (2024 vs 2025)



Businesses in Our Town



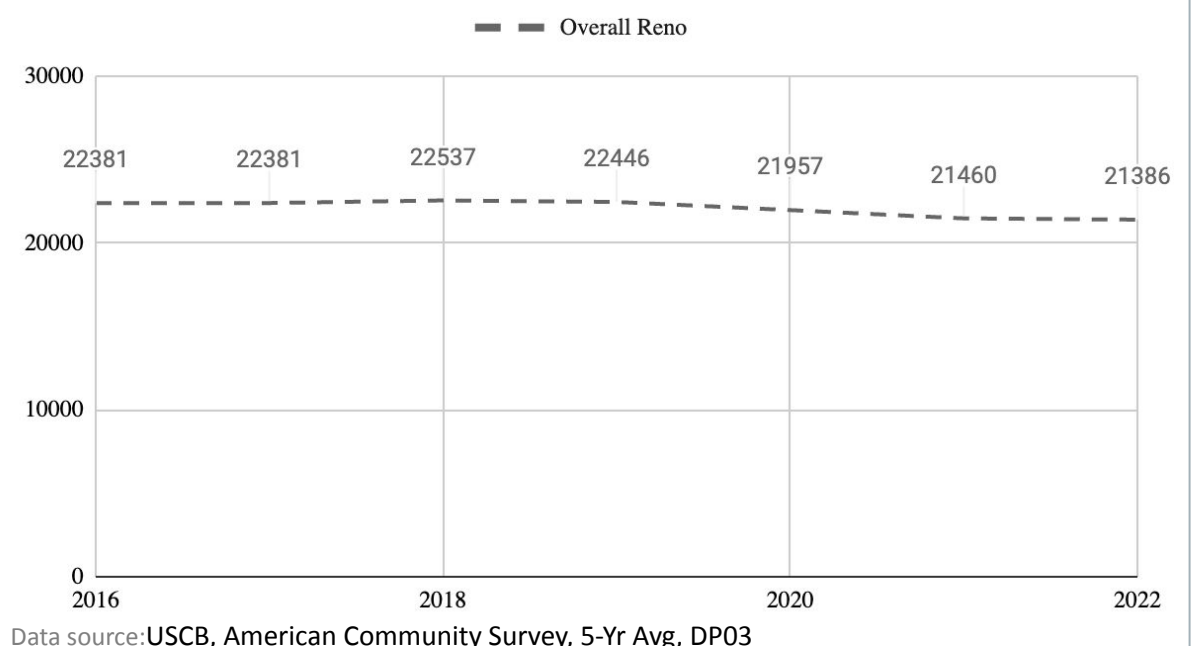
Businesses in Town



10 Year Shift in Local Jobs



Employment

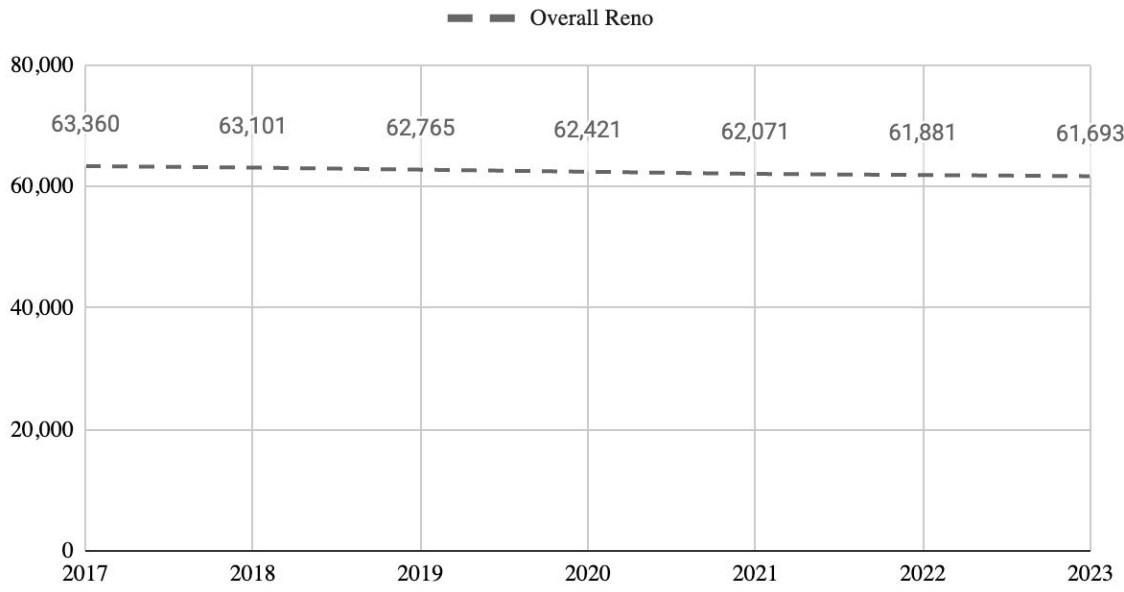


Local Economic Indicators (Cont'd)

Overall Population Trend



Population

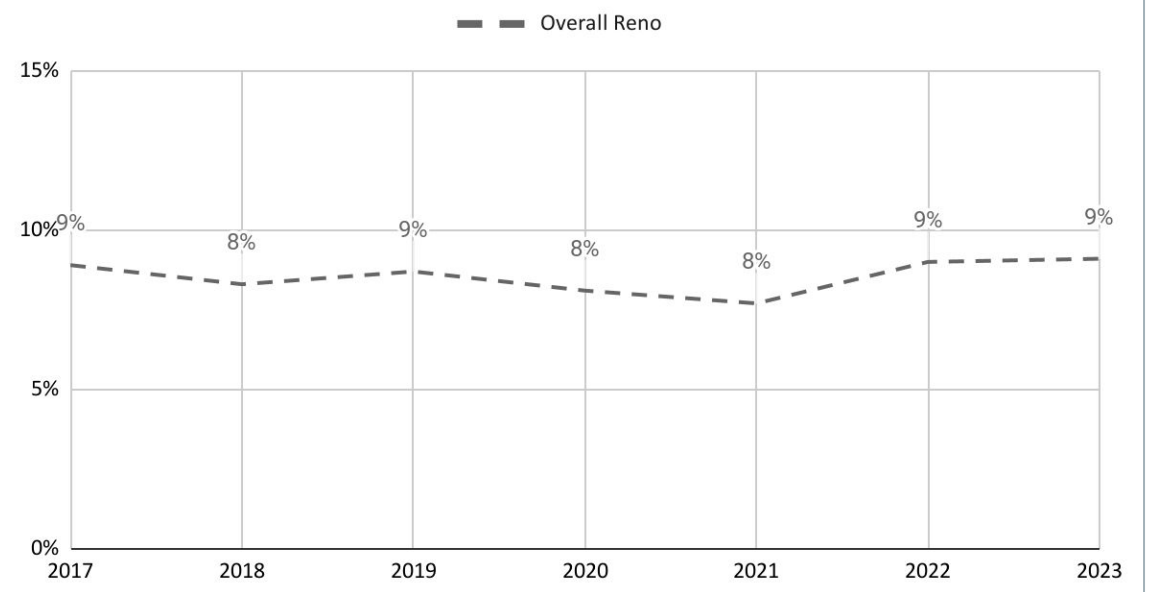


2020 official decennial census data for Fairfield, KS: 26
Data source:USCB, ACS 5-Yr Avg

Local Poverty Rate



Poverty Rate

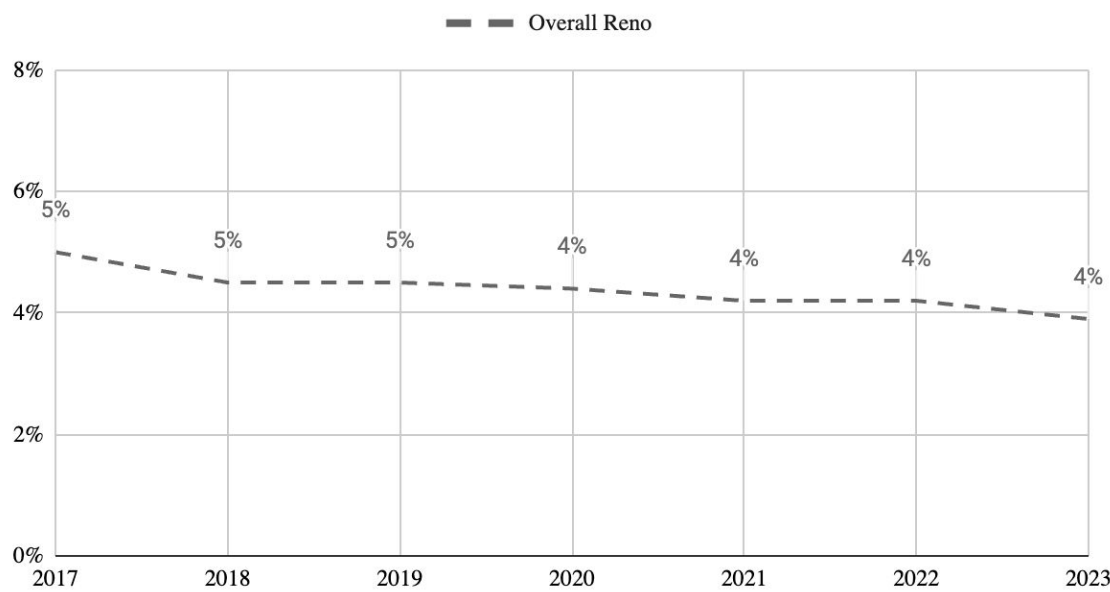


Data source:USCB, American Community Survey, 5-Yr Avg, DP03

Local Unemployment Rate



Unemployment Rate

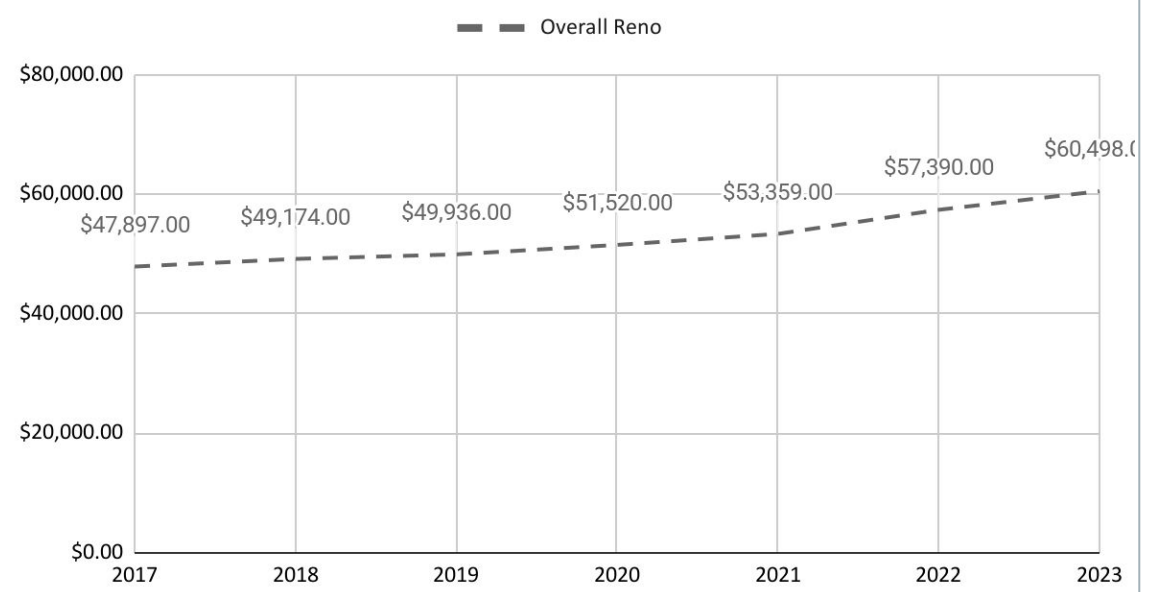


Data source:USCB, American Community Survey, 5-Yr Avg, DP03

Median Household Income



Median Household Income

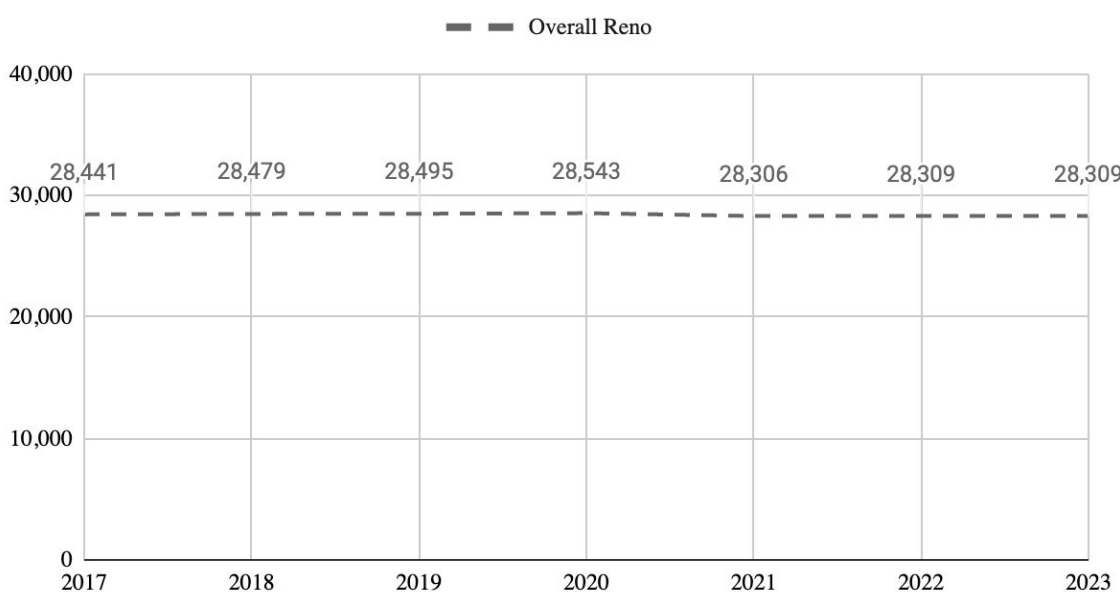


Data source:USCB, American Community Survey, 5-Yr Avg, DP03

Total Housing Units



Housing Units

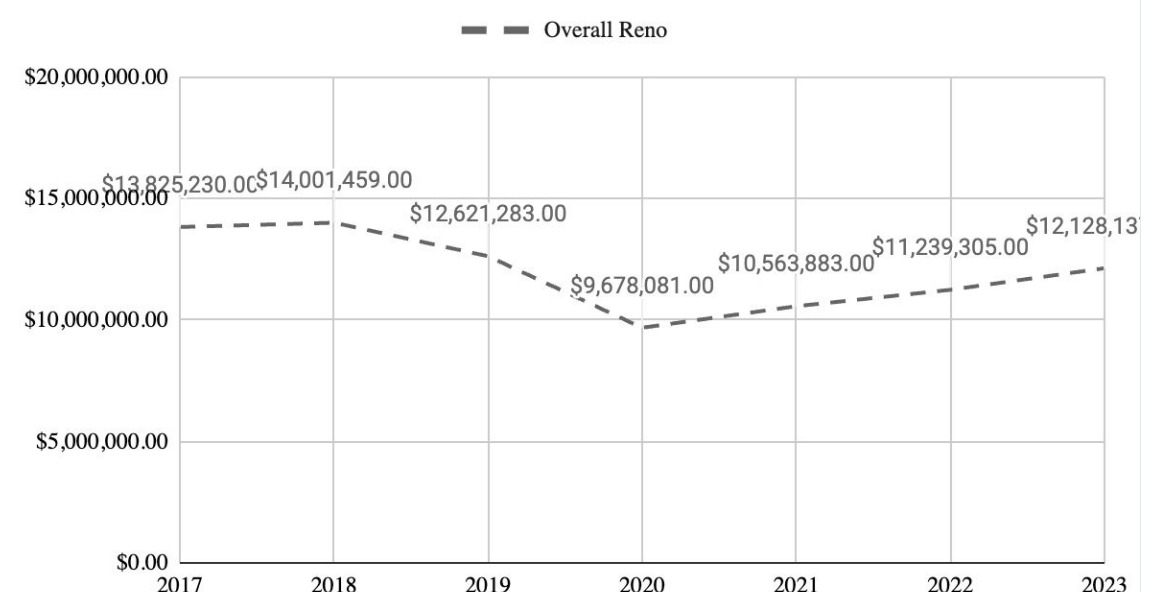


Data source:USCB, ACS 5-Yr Avg

Annual Sales Tax Collection



Annual Sales Tax Collection



Data source:Kansas Dept of Revenue

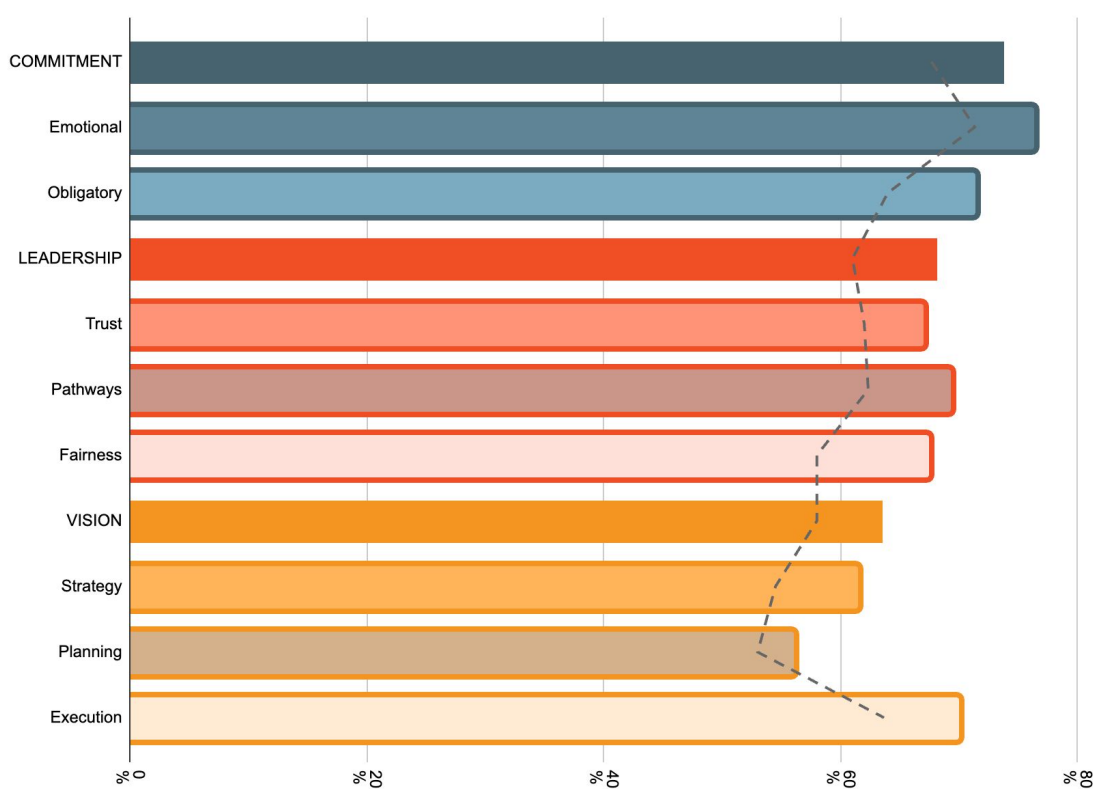
Confidence In Our Local Community

Engagement Summary:

Fairfield residents maintain strong personal & emotional commitment to their community in 2025, particularly among long-tenured individuals and families with children. Emotional connection, loyalty, and overall every category ranks above average within the Reno region. However, vision perceptions remain mixed. While residents increasingly believe they understand where the community is headed and recognize signs of progress, doubts persist about formal long-term planning. Accessibility to leadership is rated positively, but skepticism remains—especially among young adults—about decision-making fairness and transparency.



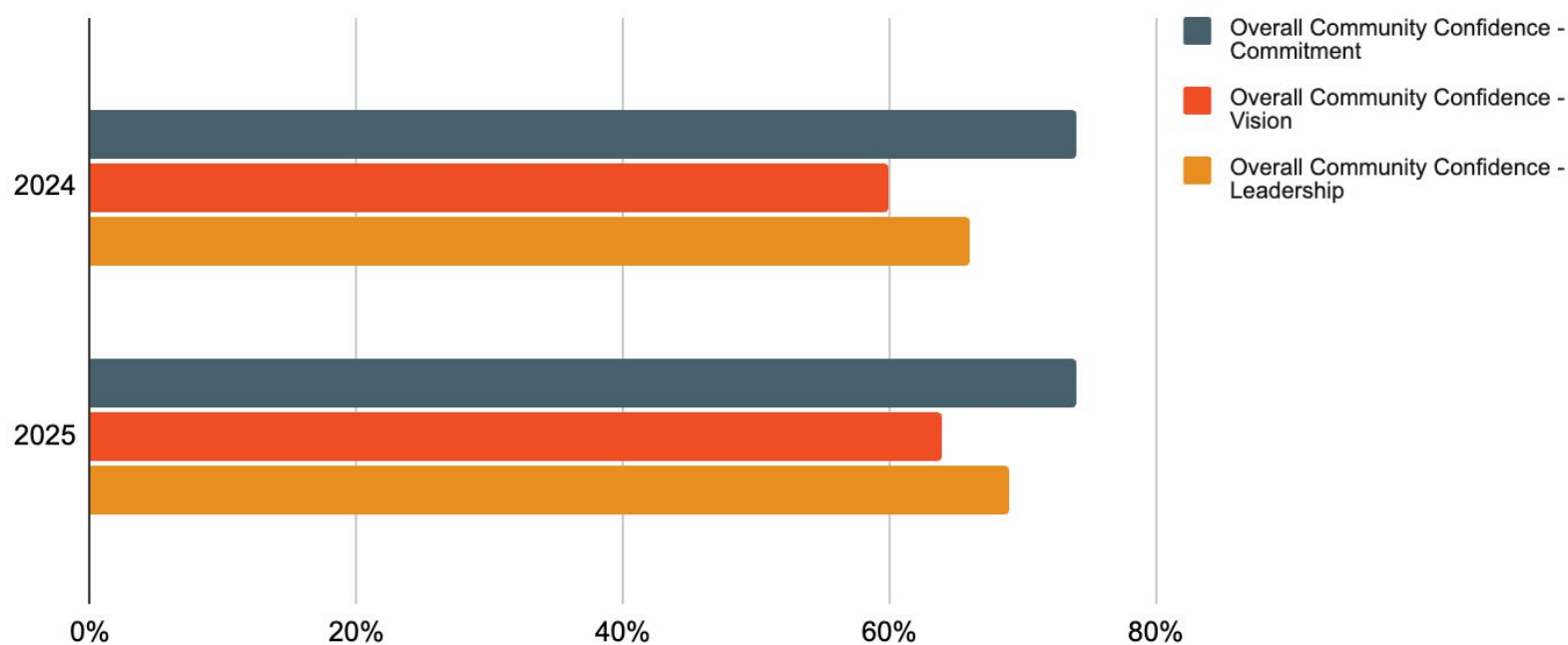
How do our residents view our community?



Questions:

- What drives the high emotional commitment in Fairfield, and how can it be strengthened?
- Why do residents feel more confident in execution than in planning?
- What can be done to improve understanding of the community's documented plans?
- How can leadership increase perceptions of fairness in decision-making?
- What are the barriers to improving trust and collaboration in the community?
- How can pathways to leadership be made more accessible for all residents?
- What caused the increase in Vision and Leadership scores from last year to this year?

Year Over Year Change

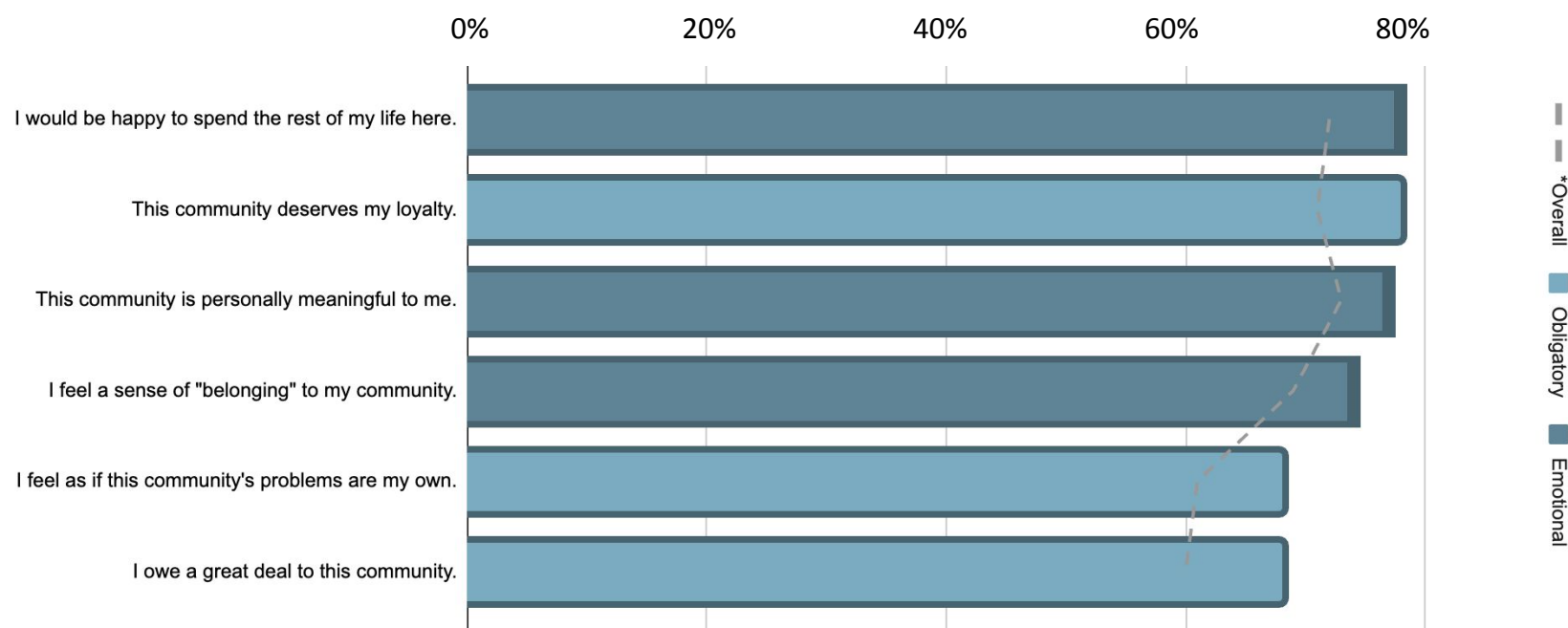


Confidence In Our Local Community

Average Reno County Score

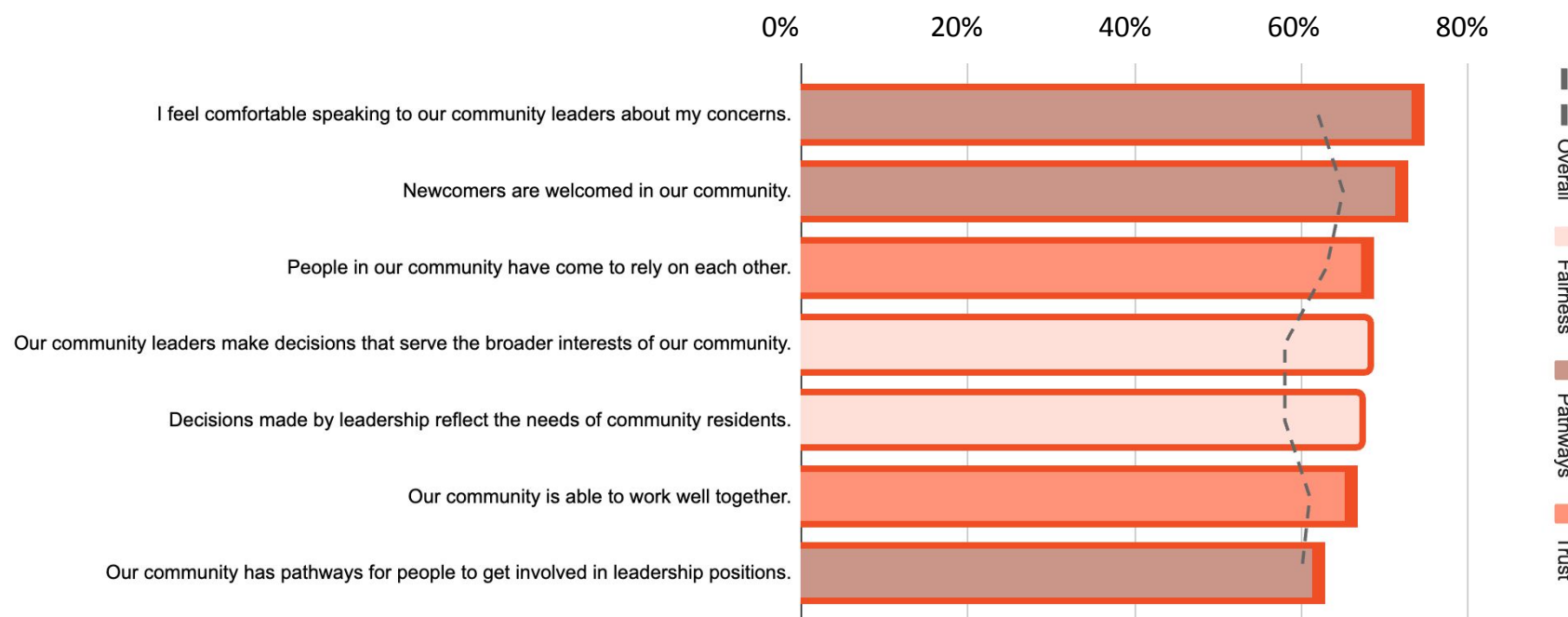
Portion of the community that is highly confident on the listed community dimensions (Rating range: 0-7)

Community Confidence: Personal Commitment



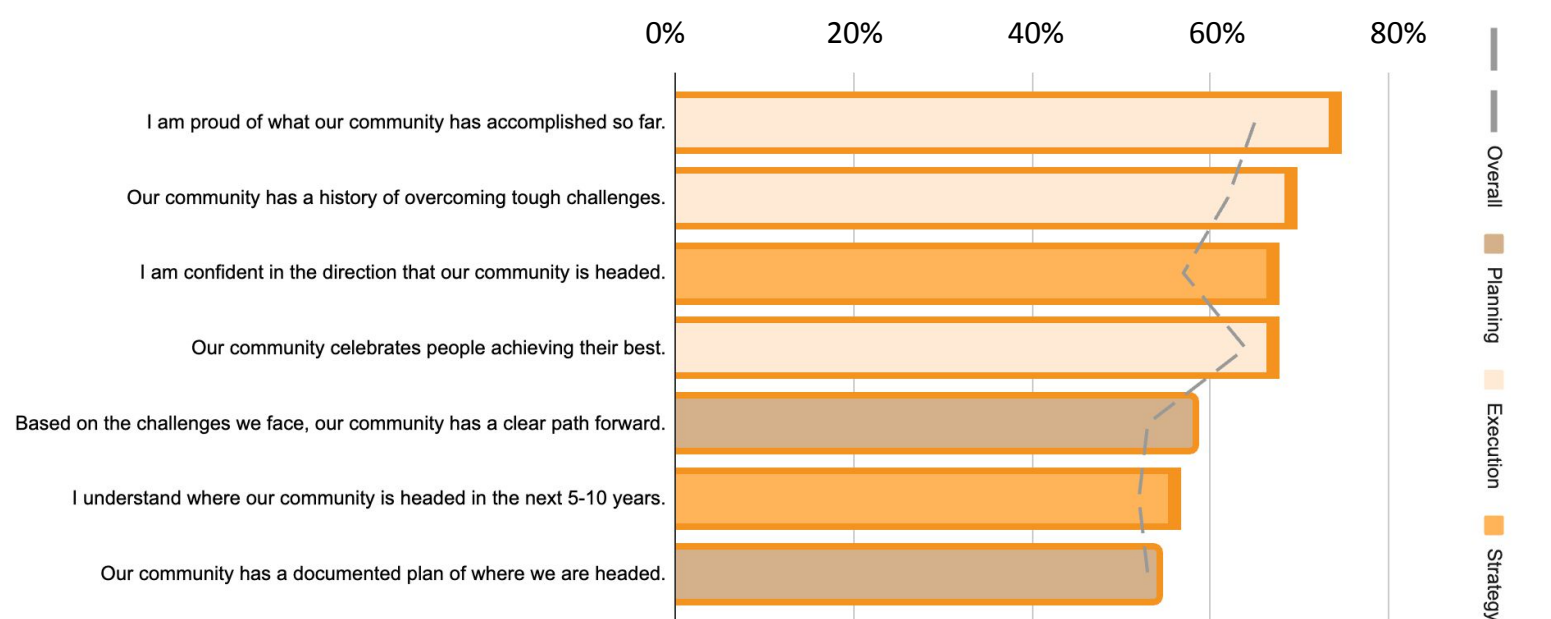
- What factors contribute to residents' strong emotional connection to Fairfield?
- Why do people feel such a deep sense of loyalty and belonging here?
- How can the community build from this emotional connection to increase its sense of shared responsibility for local problems?

Community Confidence: Local Leadership



- What builds or erodes trust between leaders and residents in Fairfield?
- Why do people feel more comfortable talking to leaders, yet score fairness slightly lower?
- How can leadership decisions better reflect community needs?
- What strategies can encourage broader participation in leadership?

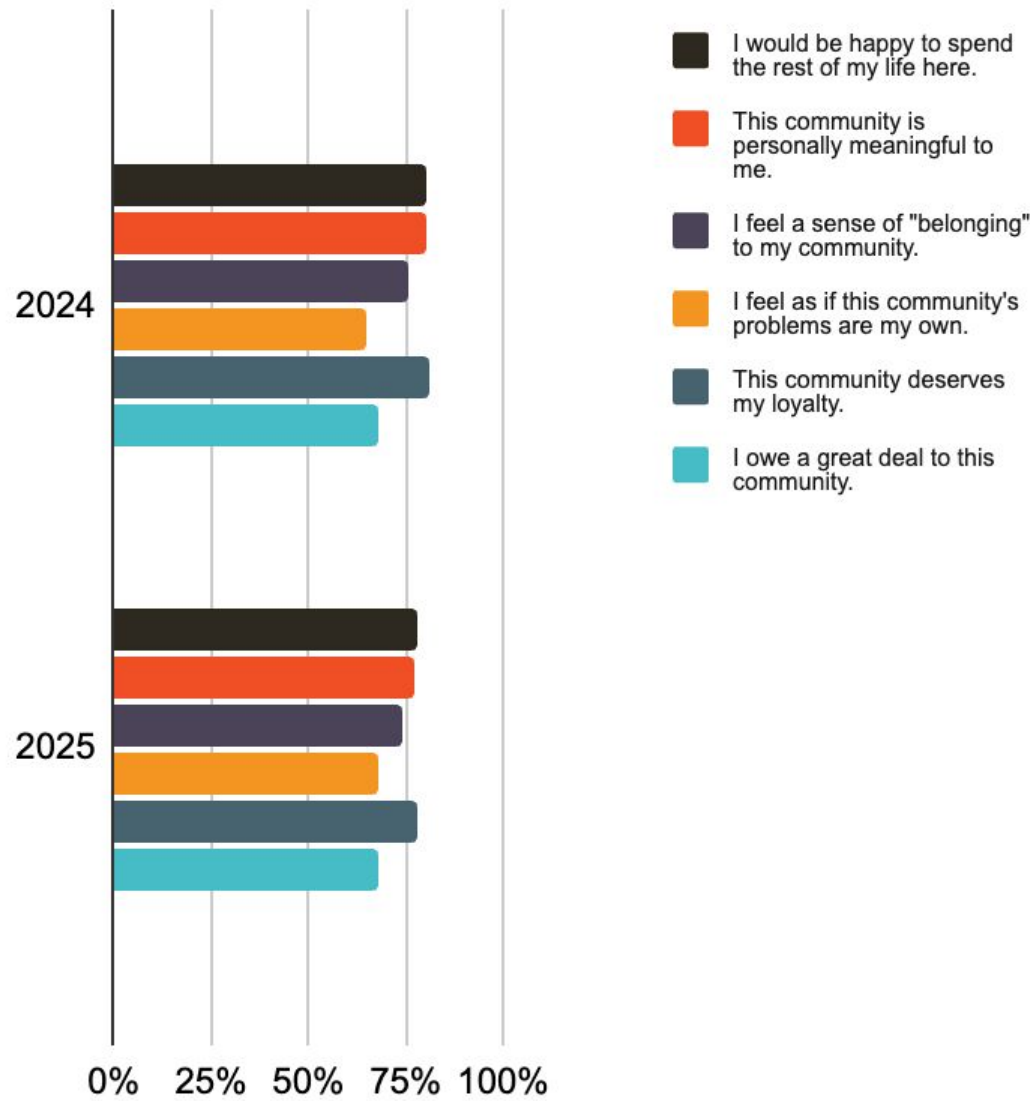
Community Confidence: Vision



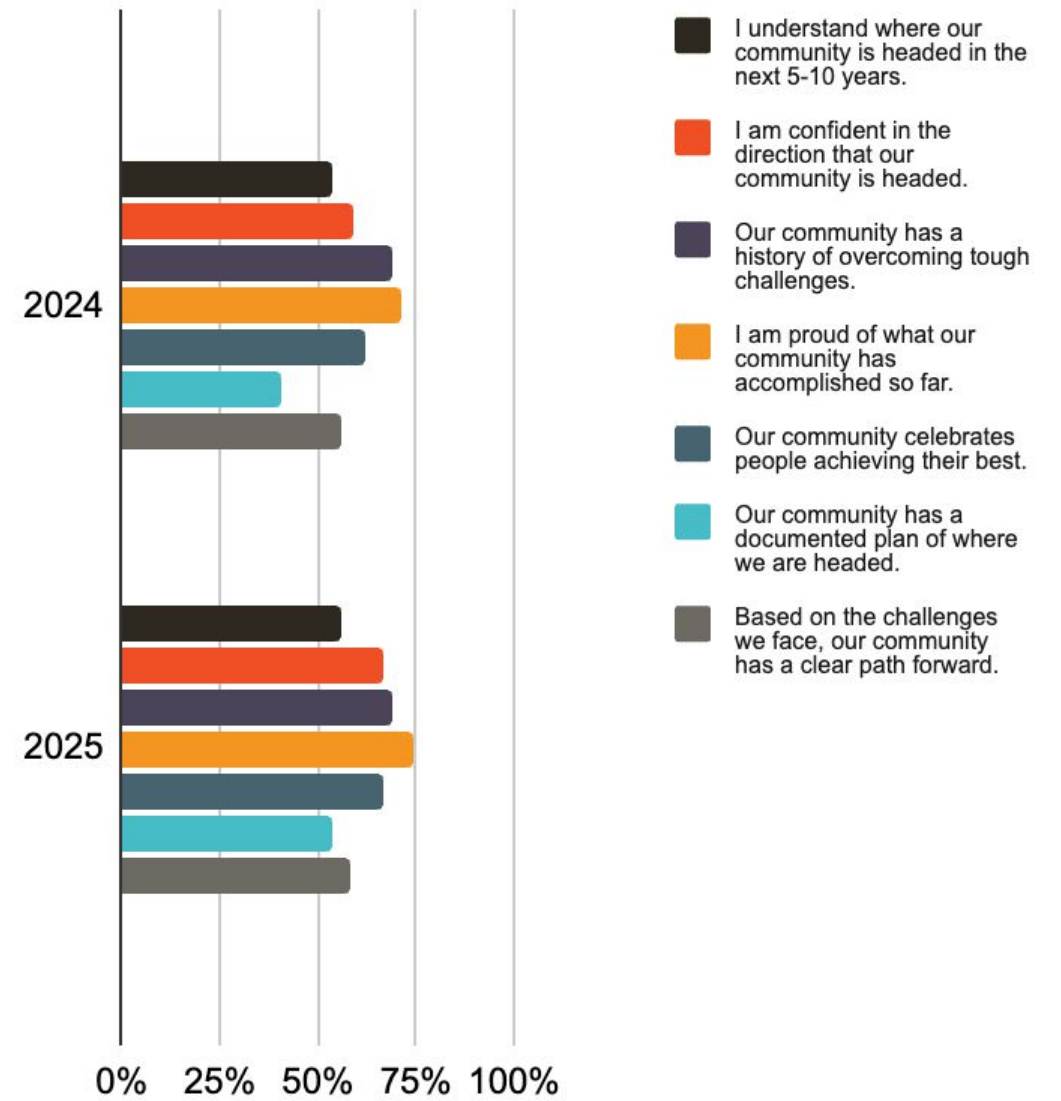
- Why do residents feel more confident in the community's direction than in its planning?
- How can Fairfield better document and share its vision for the next 5-10 years?
- What successes have helped shape current optimism, and how can they be amplified?

Confidence In Our Local Community

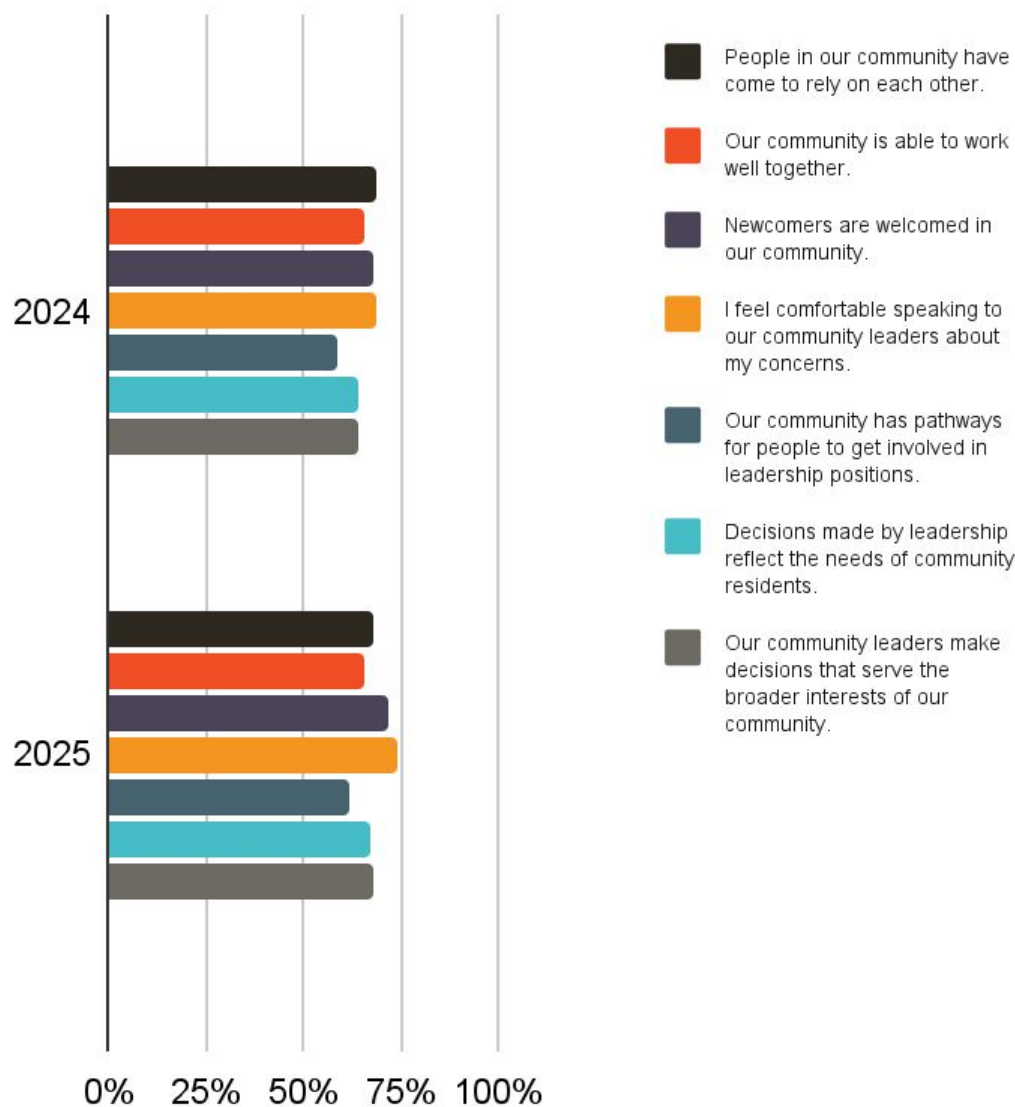
Commitment



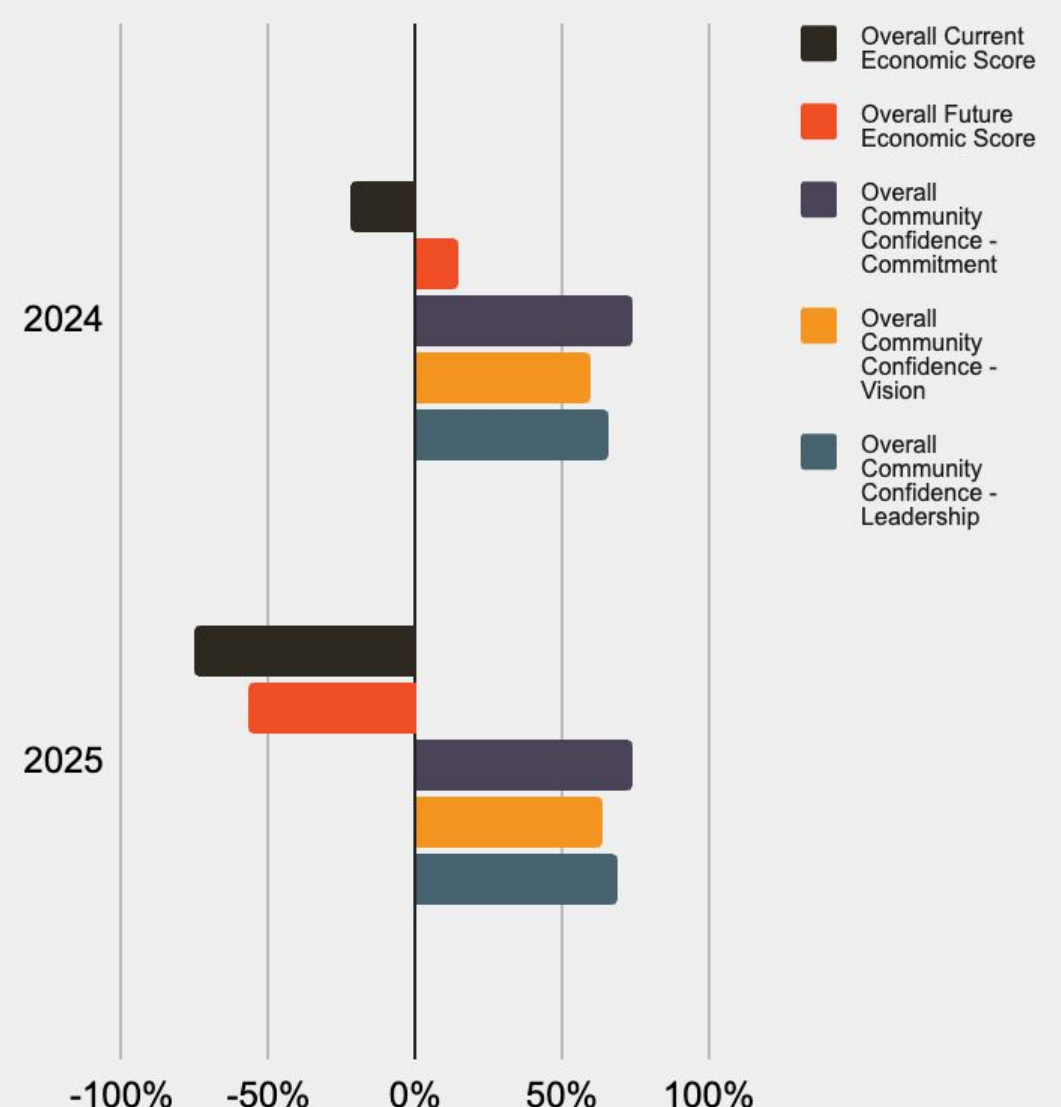
Vision



Leadership



Economic vs. Community Confidence

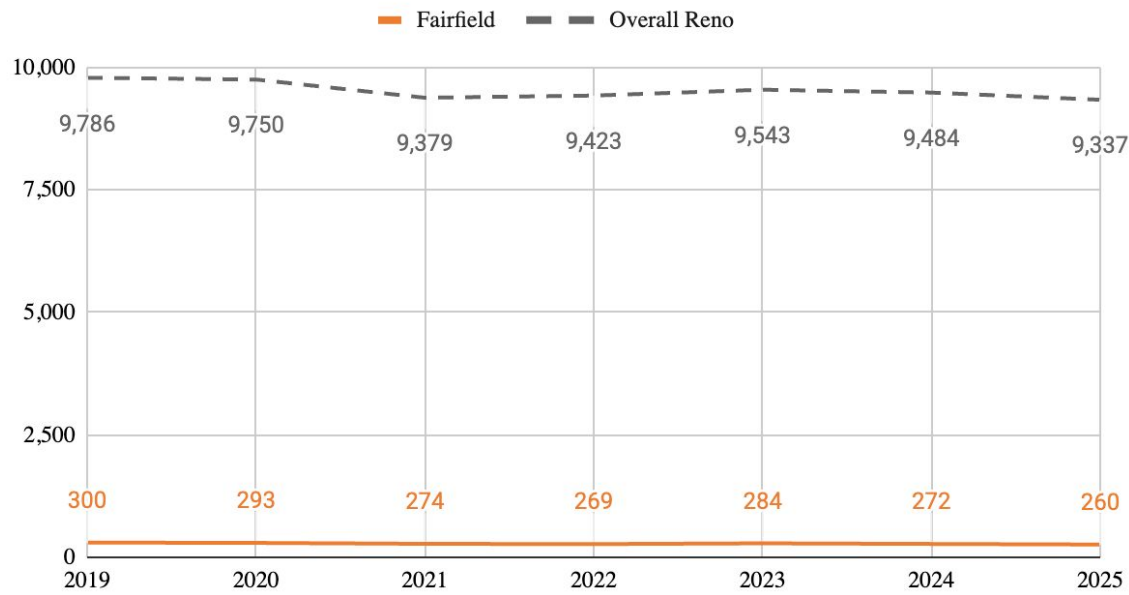


Local Community Indicators

Local School Enrollment



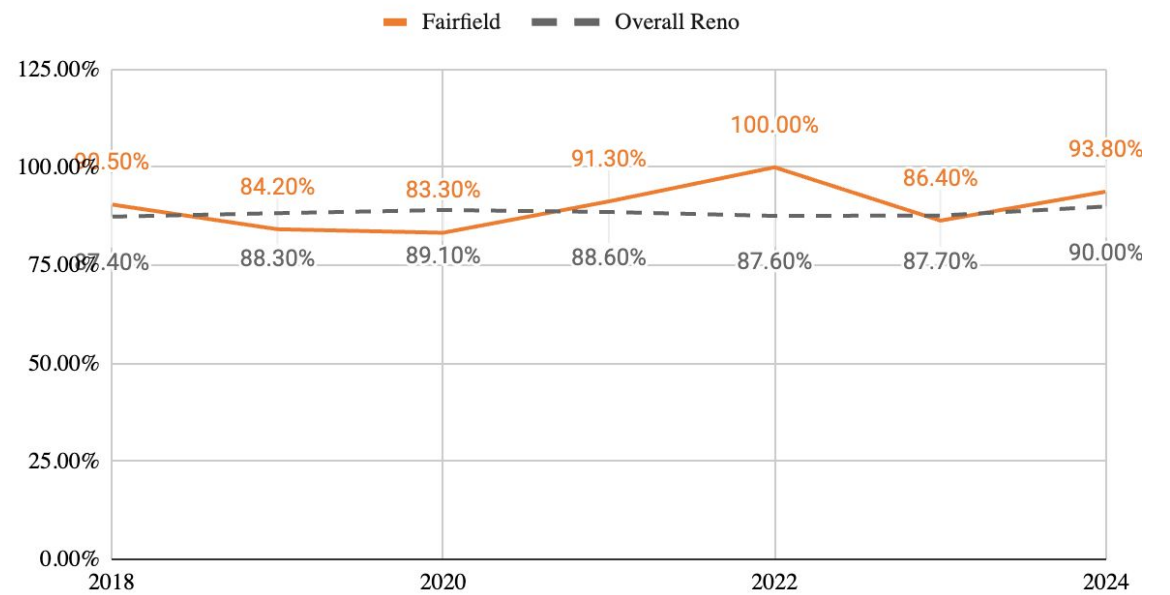
Enrollment



High School 4 Year Graduation Rate



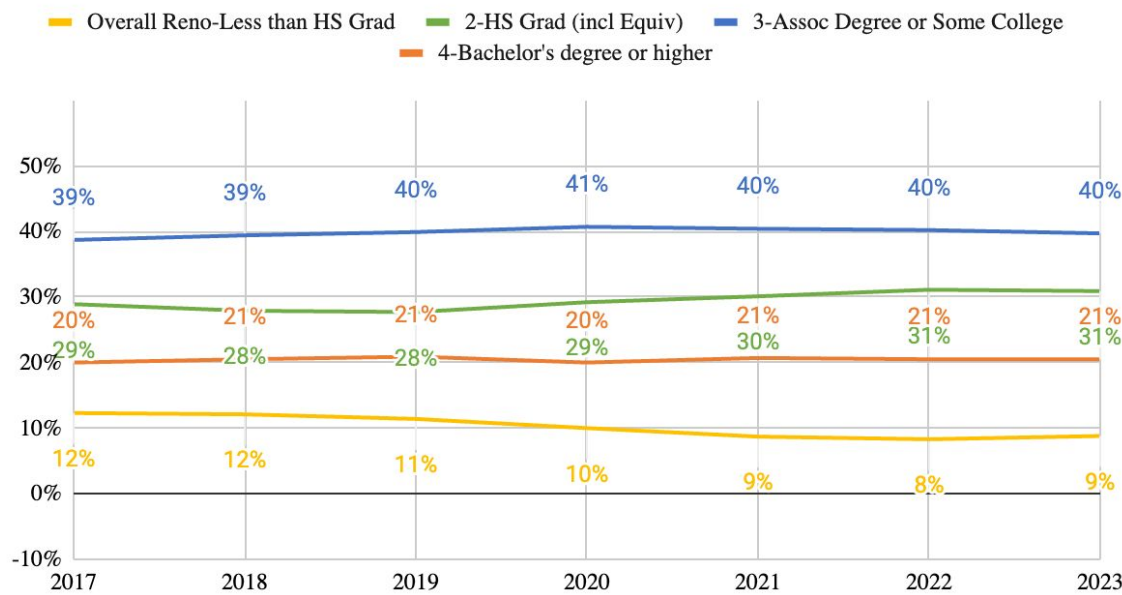
Graduation Rate



Local Educational Level



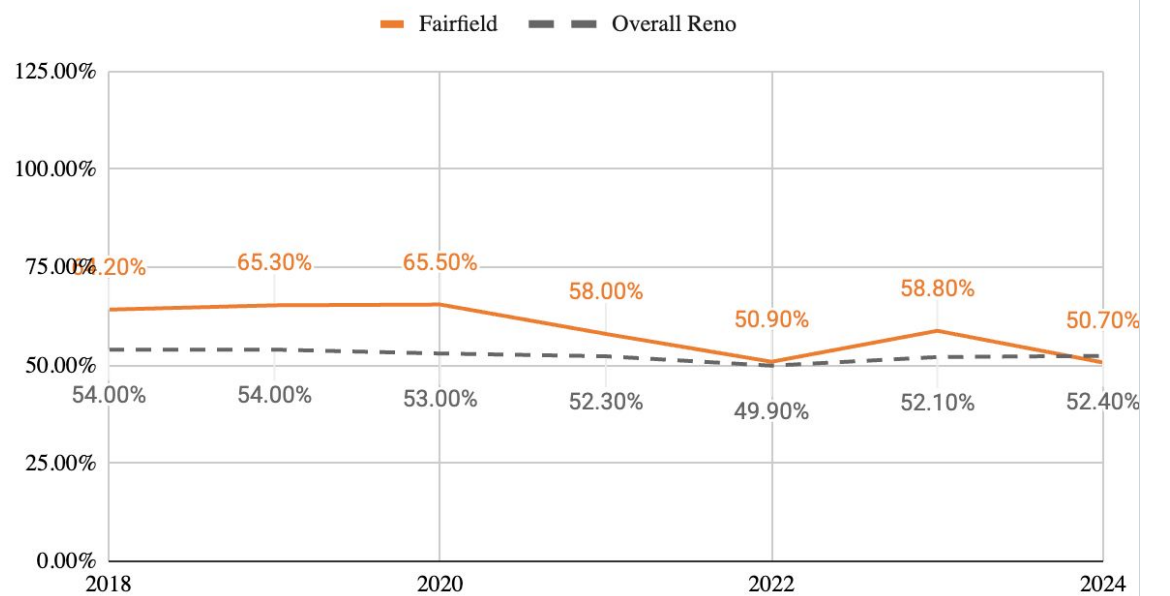
Education Level



School % Free-Reduced Price Lunch



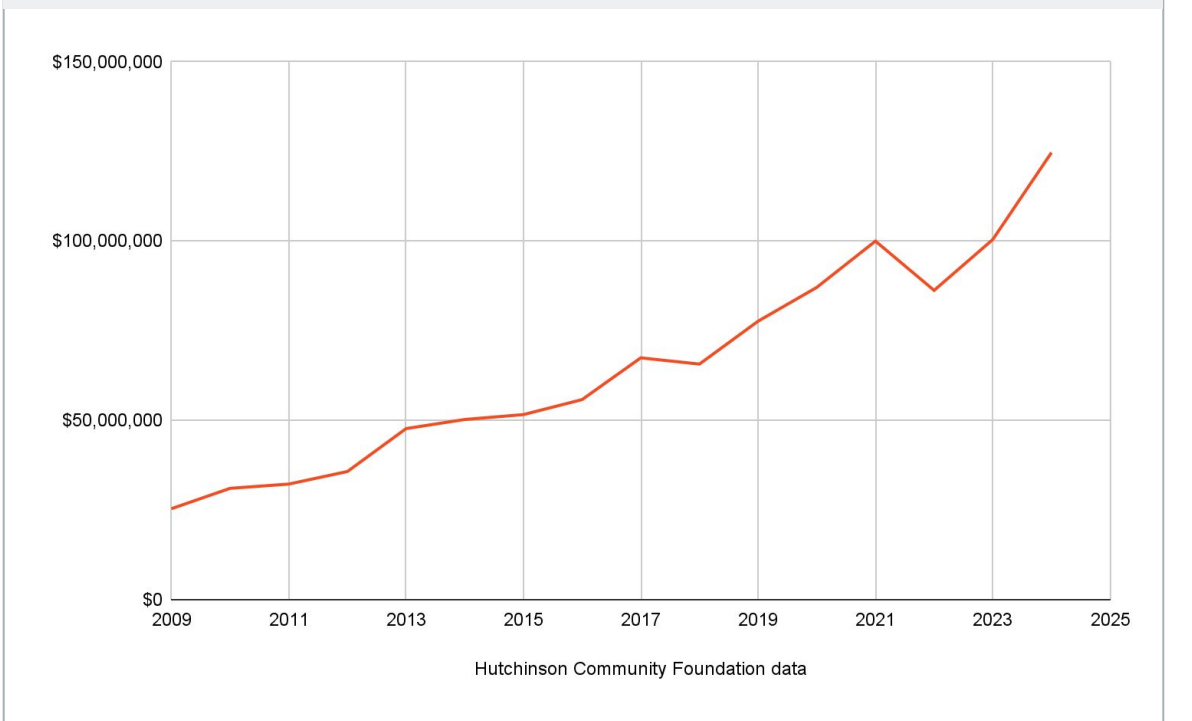
Free/Reduced Lunch



Hutchinson Community Foundation: Contributions & Grants



Hutchinson Community Foundation: Total Assets

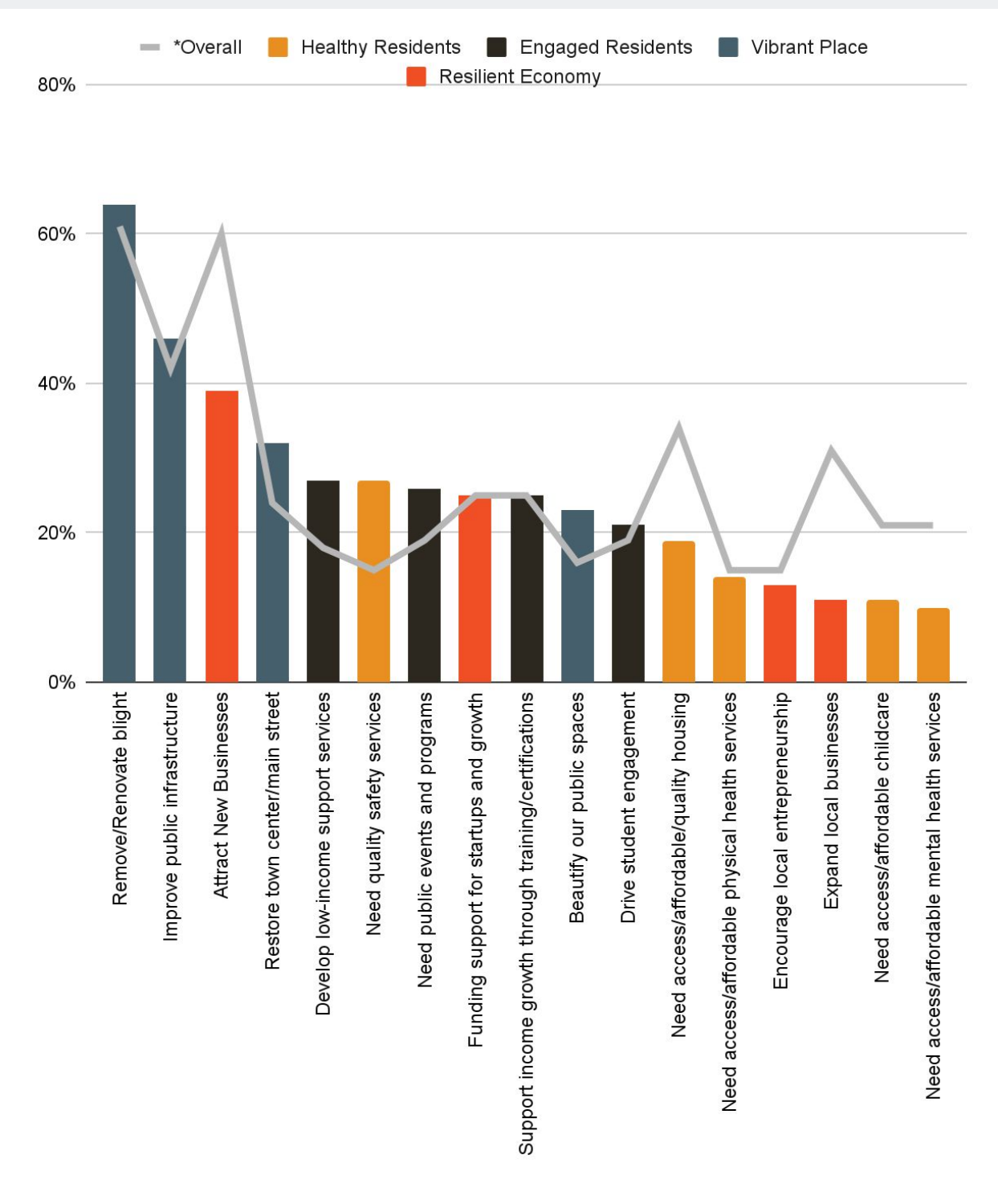


Community Program Priorities

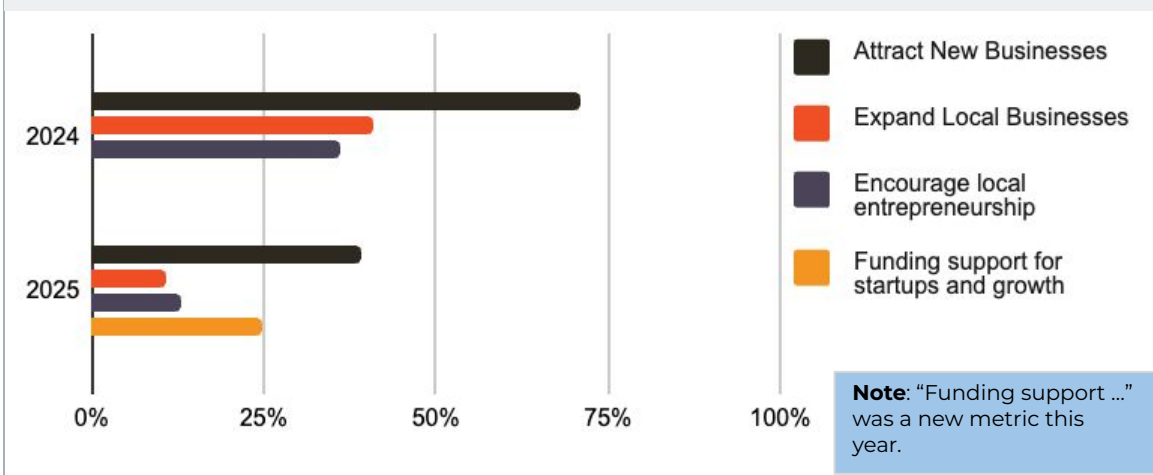
Priorities Summary:

In 2025, Fairfield’s priorities reflect a strong call for infrastructure improvement, beautification, and visible public investment. Residents’ top project ideas—whether under unlimited funds or constrained budgets—include fixing roads, drainage, and sewer lines, followed closely by downtown cleanup and creating spaces for families and youth. Across the board, removing blight stands out as Fairfield’s most urgent need, rising slightly higher than that same concern level of other Reno county areas. This concern is echoed in metric priorities, with “number of buildings in an acute state of blight” which is ranked far above other indicators.

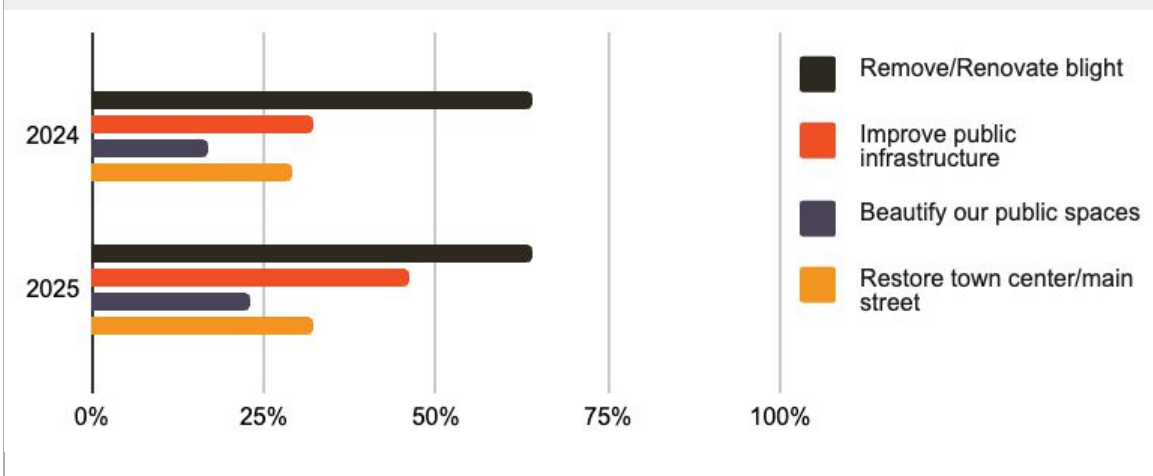
Program Priorities



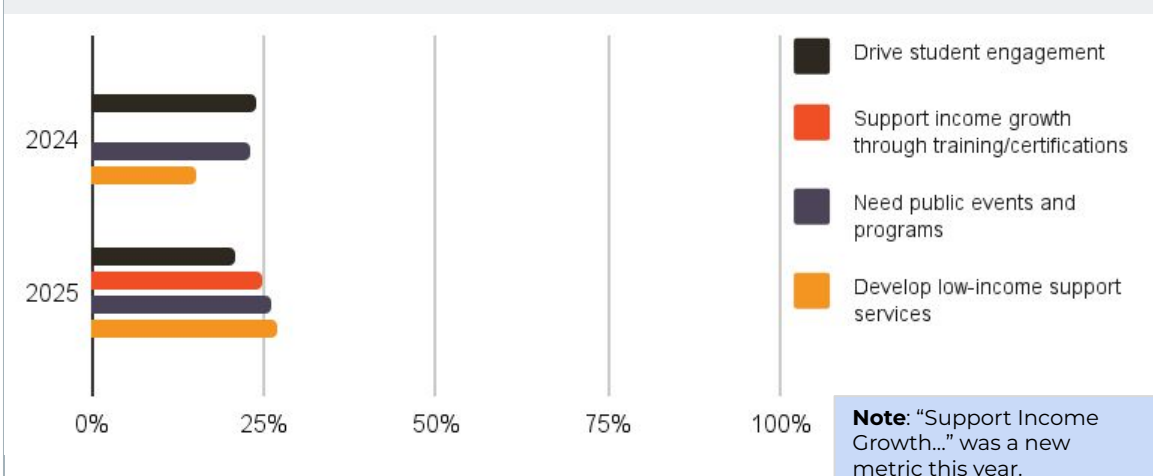
Resilient Economy



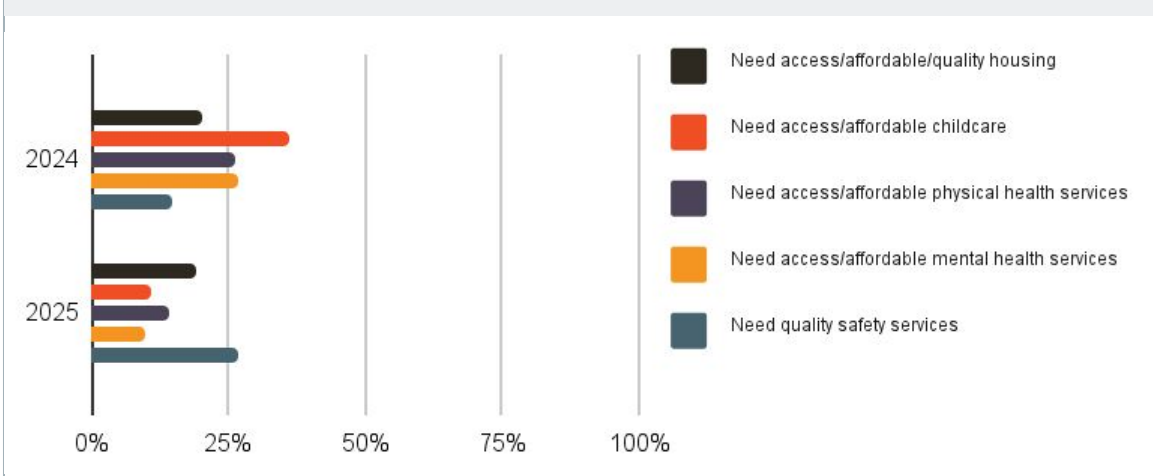
Vibrant Place



Engaged Residents



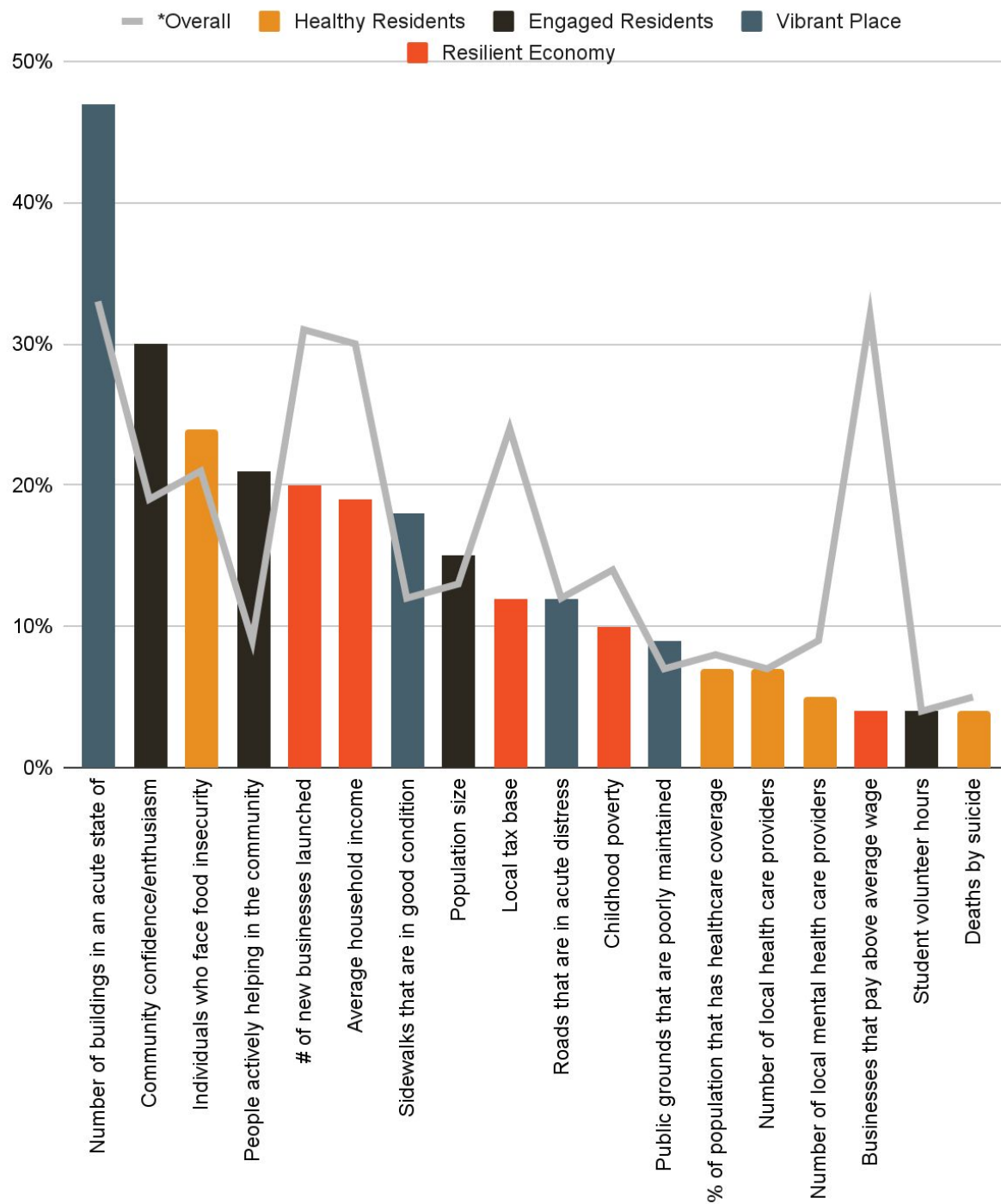
Healthy Residents



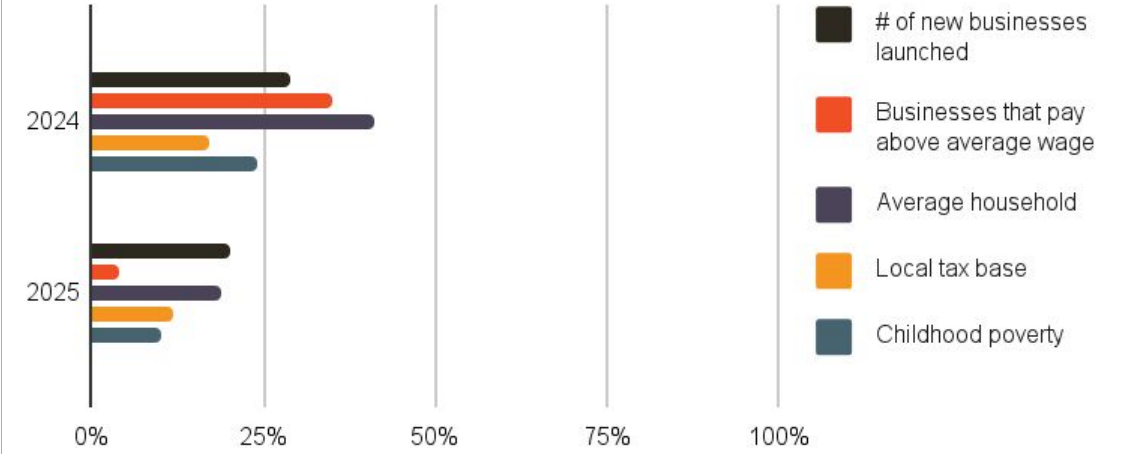
- Why is Fairfield not placing a strong emphasis on attracting businesses compared to neighboring areas?
- How can Fairfield balance large infrastructure upgrades with restoring main streets and removing blight under tight budgets?
- In what ways can public infrastructure investments also boost community engagement and youth involvement?
- Why is safety services the highest ranked "Healthy Residents" category program?

Community Priority Metrics

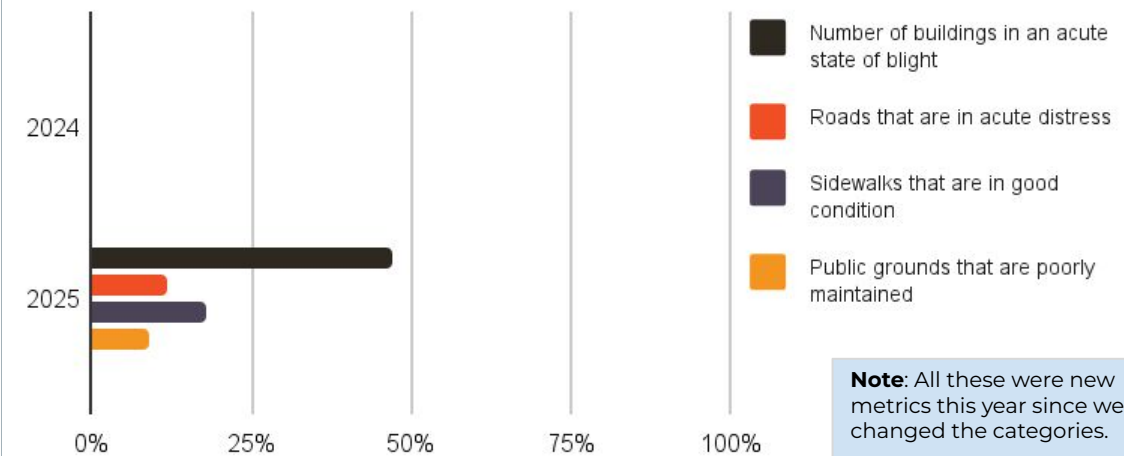
Priority Metrics



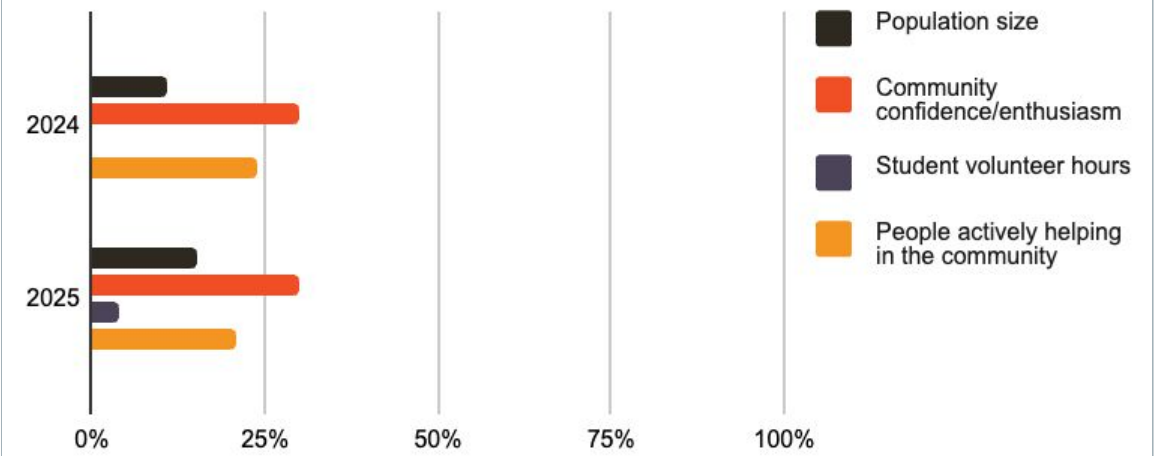
Resilient Economy



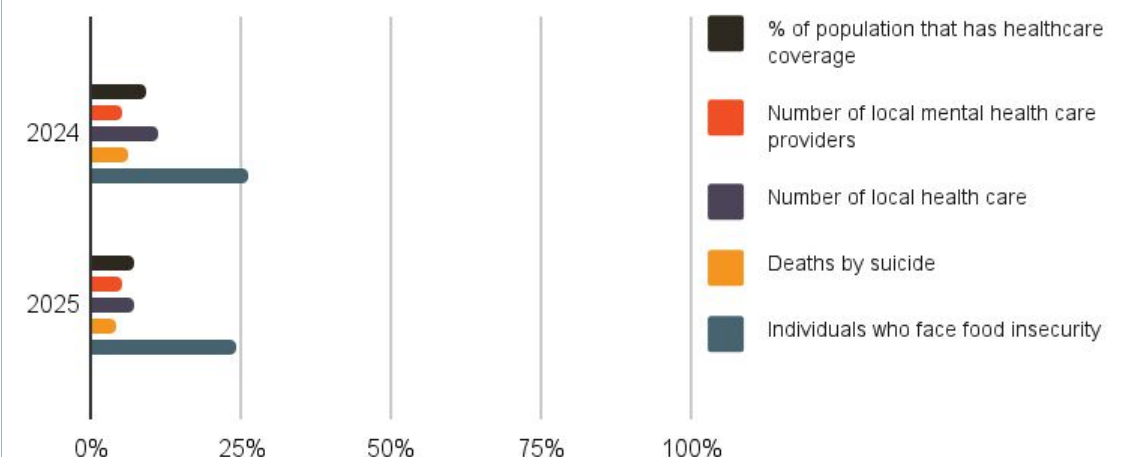
Vibrant Place



Engaged Residents



Healthy Residents



- Why does the number of blighted buildings stand out so strongly as a priority metric in Fairfield?
- Why is the “pay above average wages” metric much lower than the community average?
- What infrastructure challenges (e.g., roads, sidewalks) are most urgent to residents, and how can they be addressed?
- What are the causes behind rising concern about food insecurity, and what local solutions might be most effective?



Investing In Local Priorities

What project should be undertaken locally if money, time, or skills were not a constraint? What outcome would this create in the next 2-3 years?

- Fix Infrastructure—Improve water pressure, drainage, sewer, gas lines, and roads
- Community Clean-up & Housing—Remove blighted properties, renovate housing, and promote pride
- Grocery/Food Access Hub—Create a local food co-op or certified kitchen to address food insecurity and support local producers
- Youth & Community Spaces—Build parks, splash pads, or community centers to foster social interaction and youth engagement
- Business & Economic Development—Support small businesses, downtown revitalization, and workforce development to attract jobs and investment

If we could only invest \$15k in a program each year for the next 3 years, what project should we work on? What outcome would this create in the next 2-3 years?

- Infrastructure Repair—Address water pressure, sewer, drainage, and road fixes to improve health, mobility, and community appearance
- Blight & Property Clean-up—Demolish or renovate dilapidated homes and storefronts
- Community Food Access—Create local food giveaways or a small co-op market to fight food insecurity and support local agriculture
- Youth & Family Programs—Establish after school or family events, childcare support, or a splash pad to foster safe, supportive spaces
- Downtown Revitalization—Support small business development, renovate Main Street buildings, or fund beautification to spark local pride

Serving your community!

How do you serve your community today?

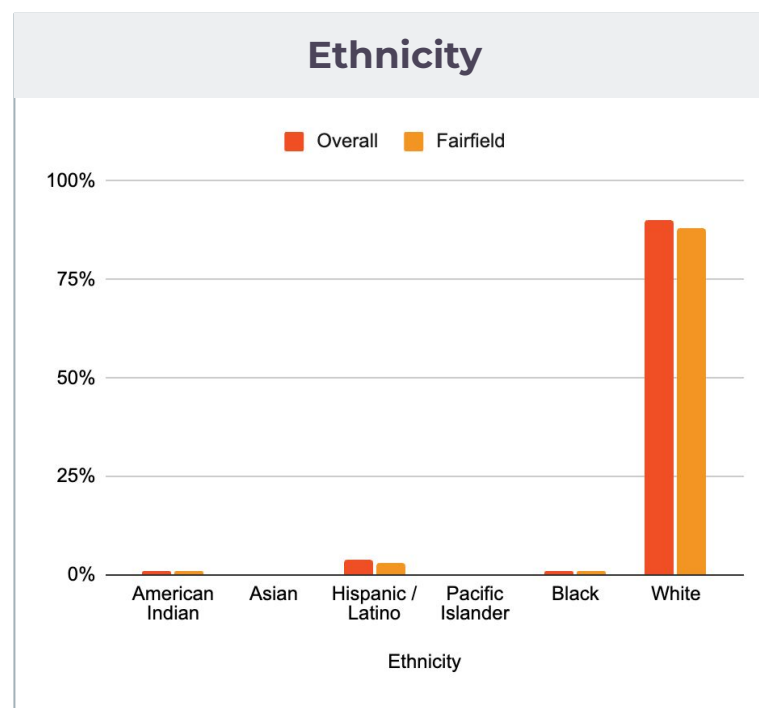
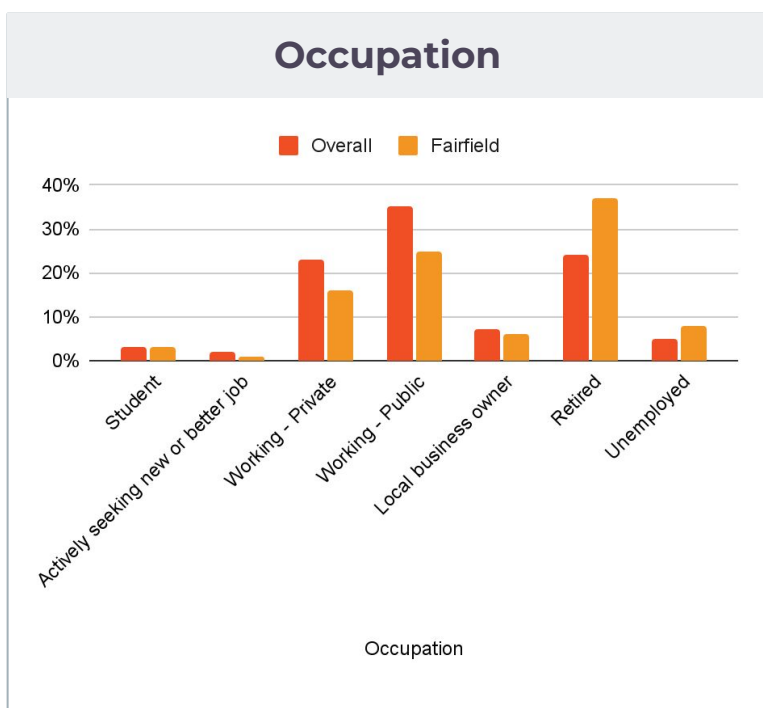
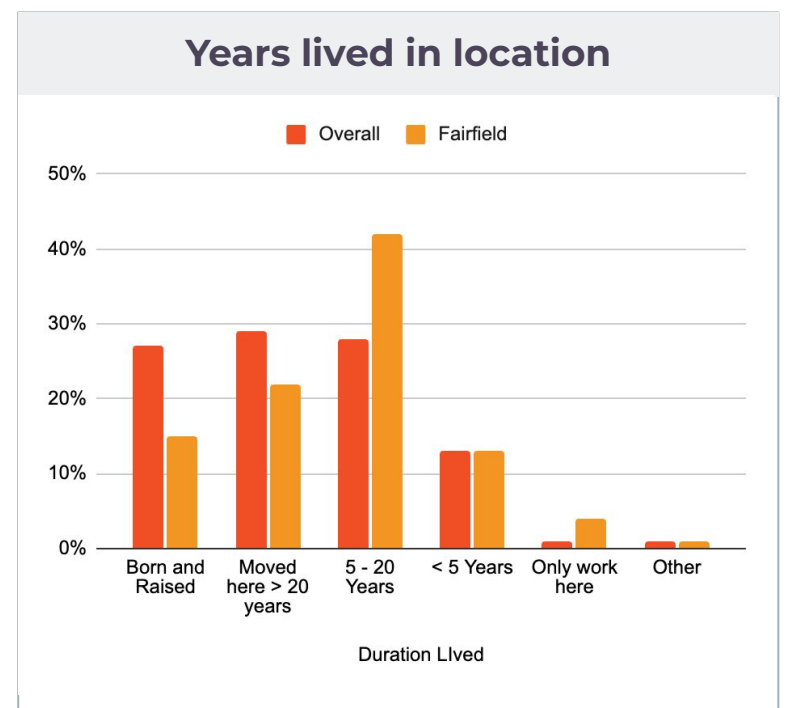
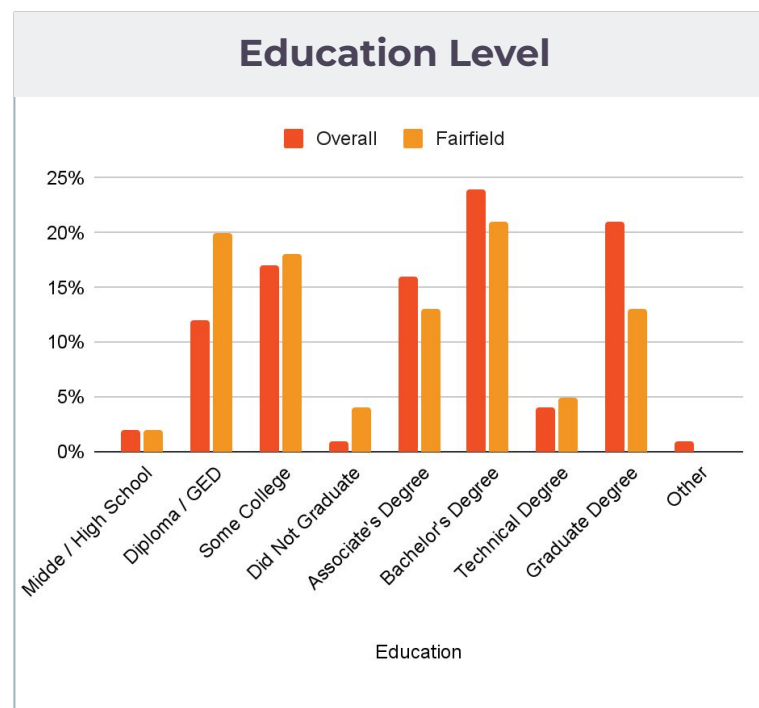
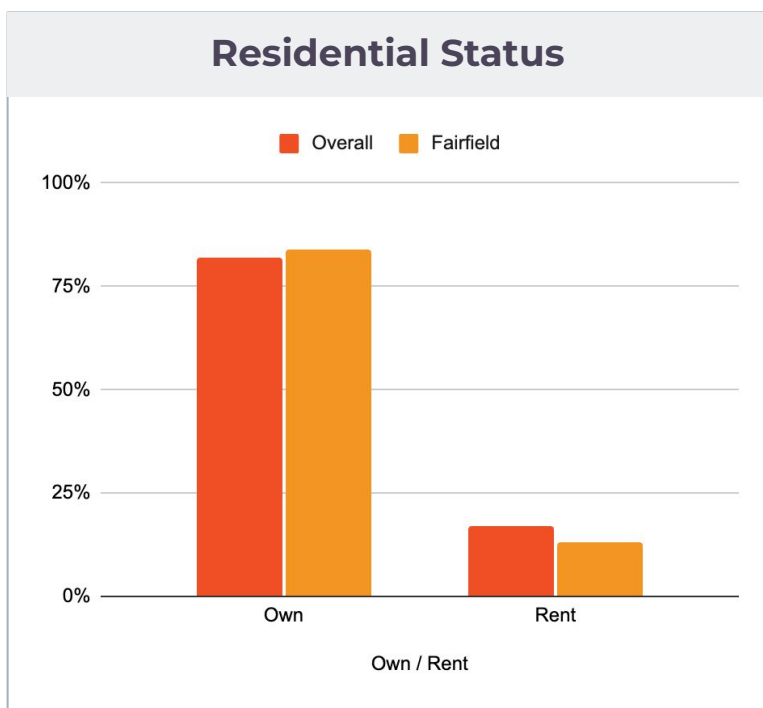
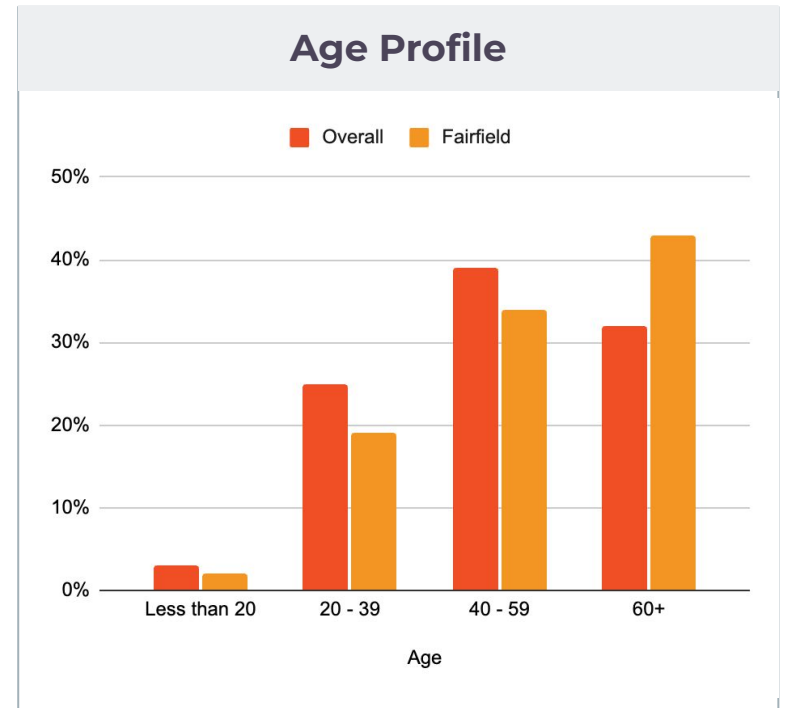
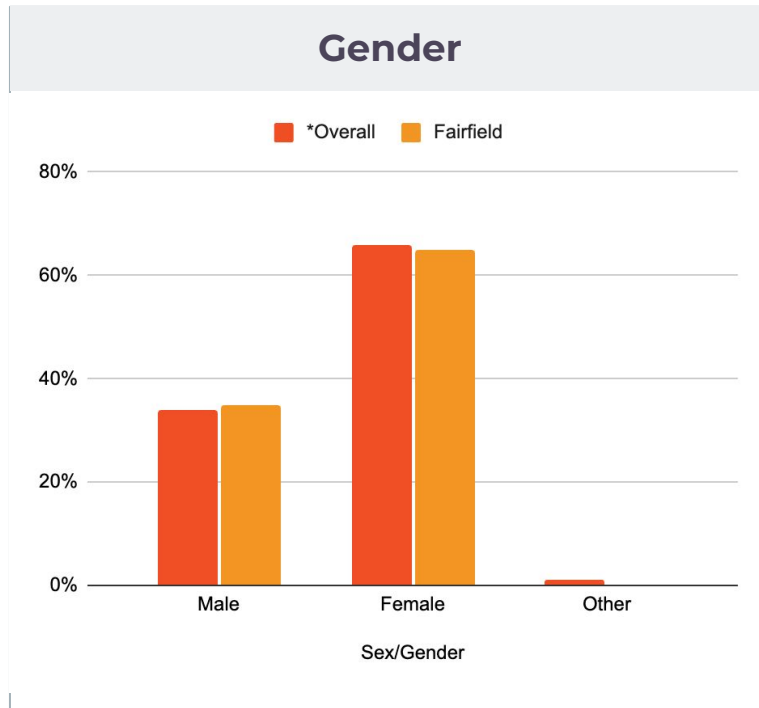
- Community Volunteering—Residents assist with clean-up days, school repairs, and local projects
- Food Support Programs—Many run or help with food pantries, giveaways, and donations
- Church & Senior Center Service—Involvement in faith-based efforts and support for elderly programs
- Leadership Roles—People serve on city council, planning boards, library boards, and local committees
- Community Beautification—Individuals maintain property, clean public areas, and support gardens

How would you like to serve your community in the future?

- Volunteering & Clean-Up—Many hope to help more with events, city beautification, and property clean-up
- Community Connection & Support—Residents want to assist others by networking, asking questions, and connecting people to resources
- Youth & Future Generations—There's interest in mentoring, supporting young people's dreams, and long-term community resilience
- Creative & Professional Skills—Some want to use talents like law, design, writing, or business skills to give back locally
- Community Programs & Pride—People express a desire to increase involvement

Survey Respondents

112
Total Responses



- Individuals with an Associate's Degree have significantly lower optimism (-100%) about future income opportunities compared to those with a Graduate Degree (-36%).
- Retired residents find the community more personally meaningful (6.26) than those working in the private sector (4.31).
- Residents with a Graduate Degree are far more supportive of driving student engagement (55%) than those with a Bachelor's Degree (0%).

Average Community Score
Town Score

37
Number of people who expressed an interest in volunteering to better the community (33%)