



MCPHERSON COUNTY
**Community
Foundation**

2025 Community Benchmark Report McPherson County, KS

Be The Movement!

Connect with local changemakers, local community projects, resources & grants, and much more.

www.mcphersonfoundation.org



Innovation Economy Partners
OUR FOCUS: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

What Makes Our Community Special?

"We look out for one another."

Anonymous

"The people in this community want the best for everyone and love to make everyone feel like they are important."

caroline

"We are a generous community. Small town benefits."

Denise

"Everyone helps everyone in McPherson."

Anonymous

"The small town feel has a great sense of community and Swedish pride."

Lacey

"Tiny town with big hearts. Comradely, no hesitation or questions asked."

Anonymous

"We have a strong sense of community and people in the community try to keep Lindsborg a good place for everyone to live."

Laurin

"People do what they can when they know there is a need. We rally for each other."

Kieryn

"Everyone is nice and willing to help each other. Fundraisers are very easy to put on."

Anonymous

"We all come together to make preserve the culture and history in addition to adding fun new attractions and events."

Rita

The Leaders That Make Our Community Special



Executive Summary:

McPherson County communities are proud and emotionally invested in their future—but they’re weathering a tough moment. Economic confidence is low across all core indicators: job outlook, income, and business vitality. The only exception is a cautious willingness to invest, suggesting hope remains. Residents feel a deep emotional tie to their communities, but they don’t always feel responsible for solving shared problems, nor do they believe there’s a clear roadmap for the future. Priorities show a drive to rebuild and expand, with infrastructure and new business attraction topping the list. Engagement metrics show a community that values collaboration but lacks faith in fair representation and inclusive leadership. Bridging these gaps will define McPherson’s ability to truly thrive.

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Economic Confidence

Economic confidence is low across jobs, income, and business. Optimism about investing offers a glimmer of hope.

pg **6 - 9**

Community Engagement Confidence

Residents feel proud but unclear on the community’s path forward. Trust exists, but fairness and leadership access lag.

pg **10 - 12**

Critical Community Priorities

Infrastructure and business are top concerns. Health, housing, and the economy are consistent needs over the years.

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Survey Respondent Profile

Students and new workers see more opportunity than long-term residents. Housing and income gaps remain significant.

The Community Benchmarking report has been commissioned by McPherson Community Foundation to help local residents gain a better understanding of the most pressing opportunities that the local towns face. The annual reports that are generated will help leaders determine the extent to which the efforts are having an impact on the local residents. The reports are also a way for the the various towns in McPherson County 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 the fellow residents are craving.**



Confidence In Our Local Economy

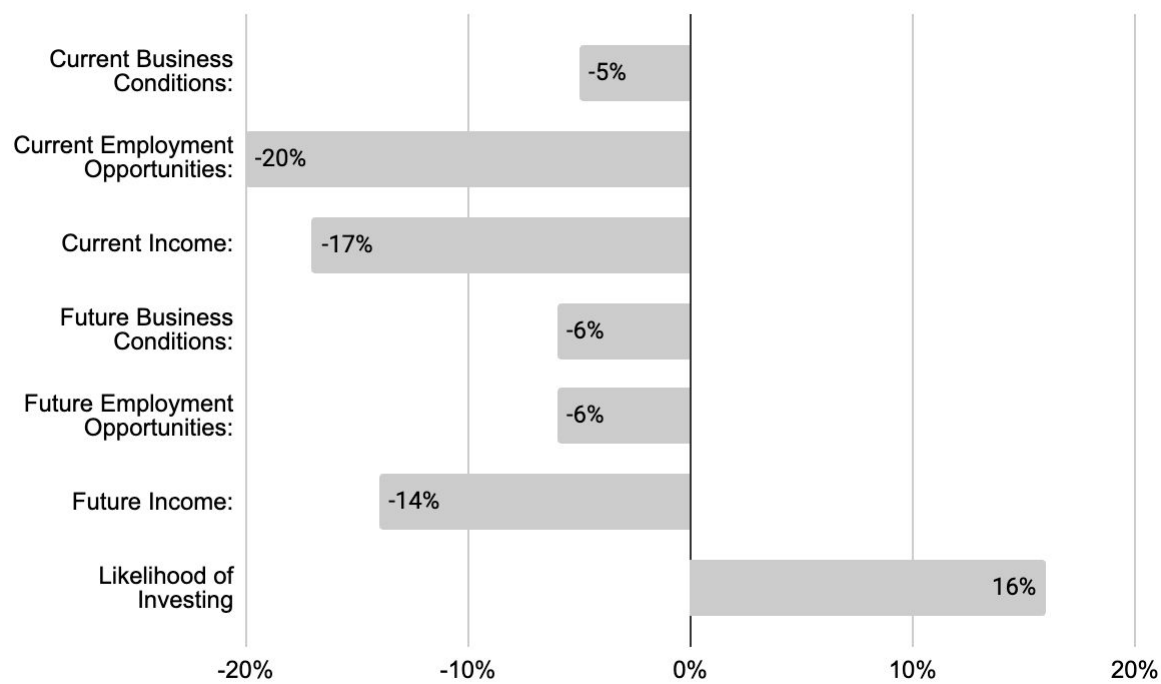
Economic Summary:

Across McPherson County, there has been a notable decline in economic confidence. Every metric related to business, income, and employment was in the negative. The steepest drop was seen in perceptions of current employment opportunities, signaling an urgent call for action. Despite these challenges, there is one beacon of optimism—residents expressed a positive outlook on future investment. This spark suggests that while the community is struggling now, there is belief in its potential to rebound. The largest shift in attitude from present to future was in employment opportunities.

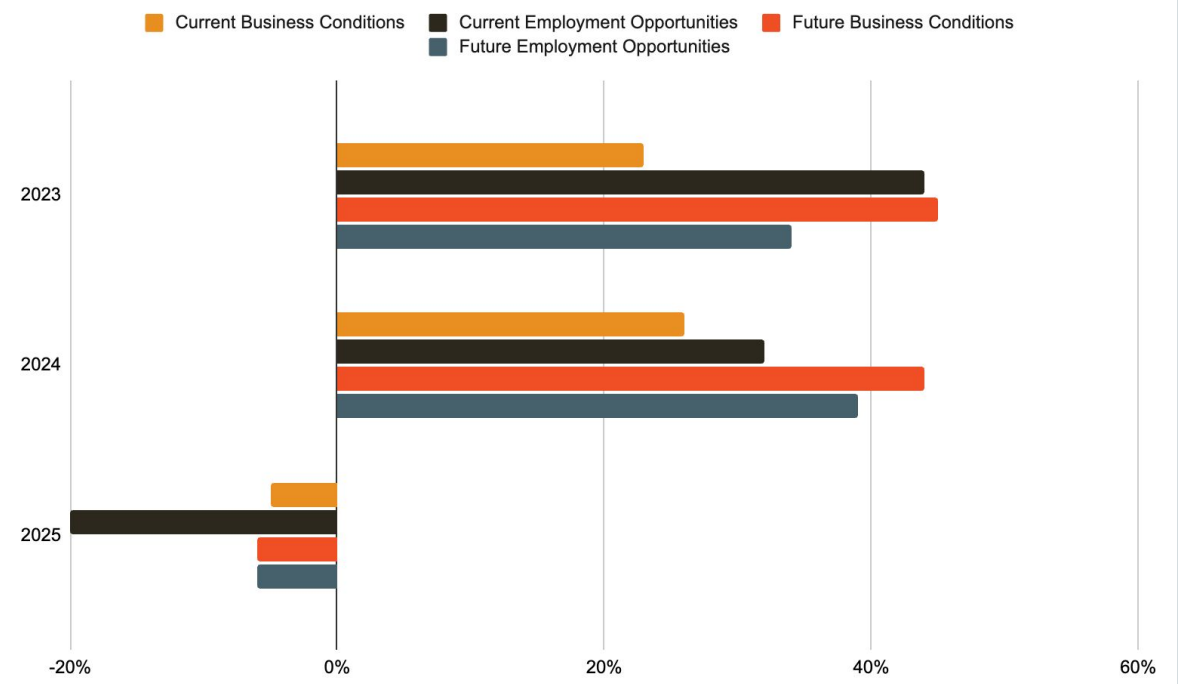
Businesses Needed In Our Town:

- Grocery Store** – Needed for fresh food access
- Hardware Store** – Lacking basic home and maintenance supplies
- Restaurants** – Desire for variety and sit-down options beyond fast food
- Childcare** – Major shortage across all income levels and schedules
- Entertainment** – Few activities for families, teens, or after-hours fun
- Affordable Housing** – Barrier to attracting and retaining residents
- Medical/Dental Services** – Especially mental health and specialty care
- Car Wash** – Noted as missing basic auto maintenance options
- Retail** – Need for diverse shopping options and clothing stores
- Community Center** – Lacking centralized places for gatherings and programs

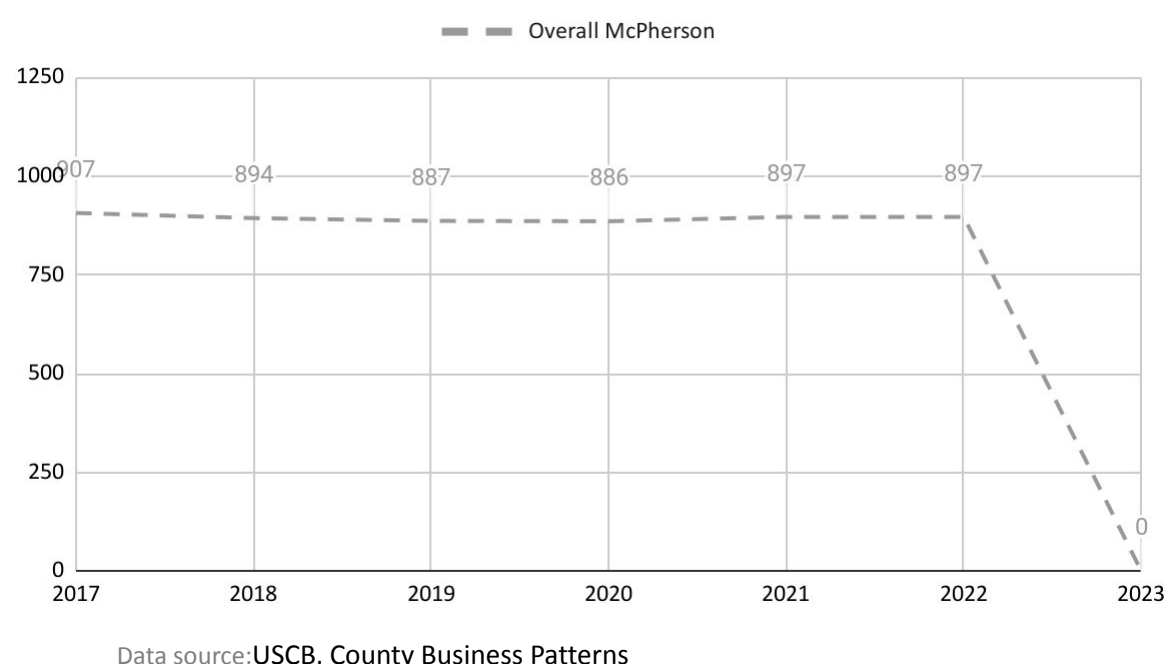
Our Economic Perceptions



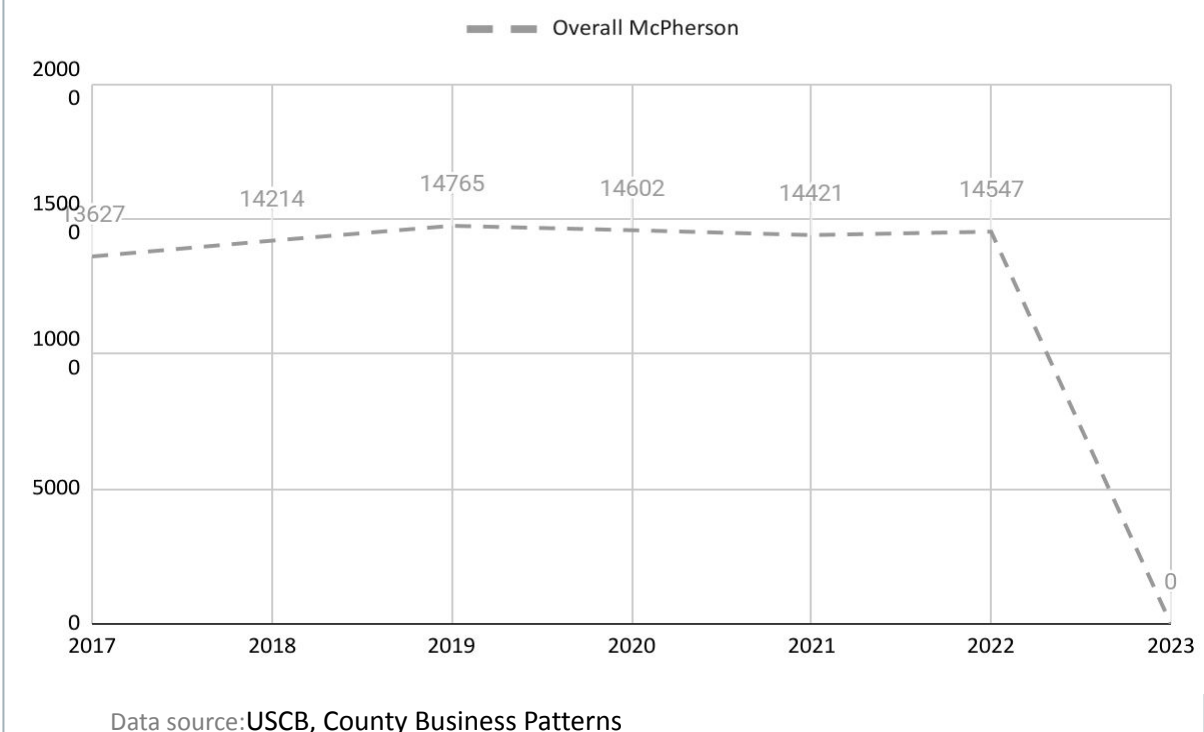
Year Over Year Change (2023 vs 2025)



Businesses in Our Town



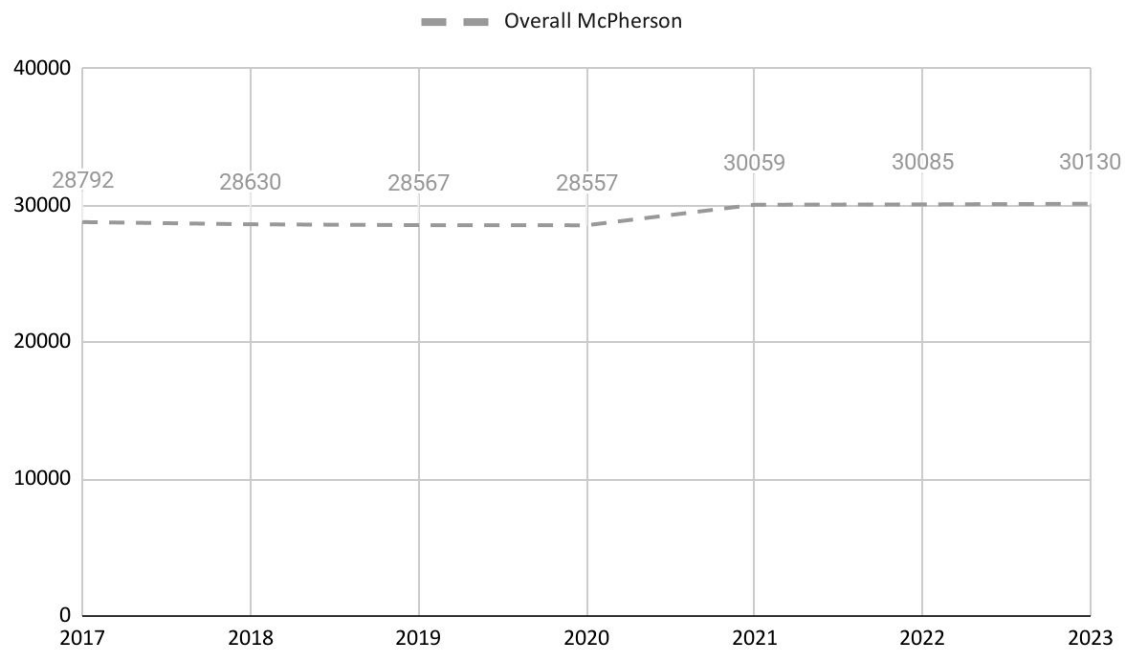
10 Year Shift in Local Jobs



Local Economic Indicators



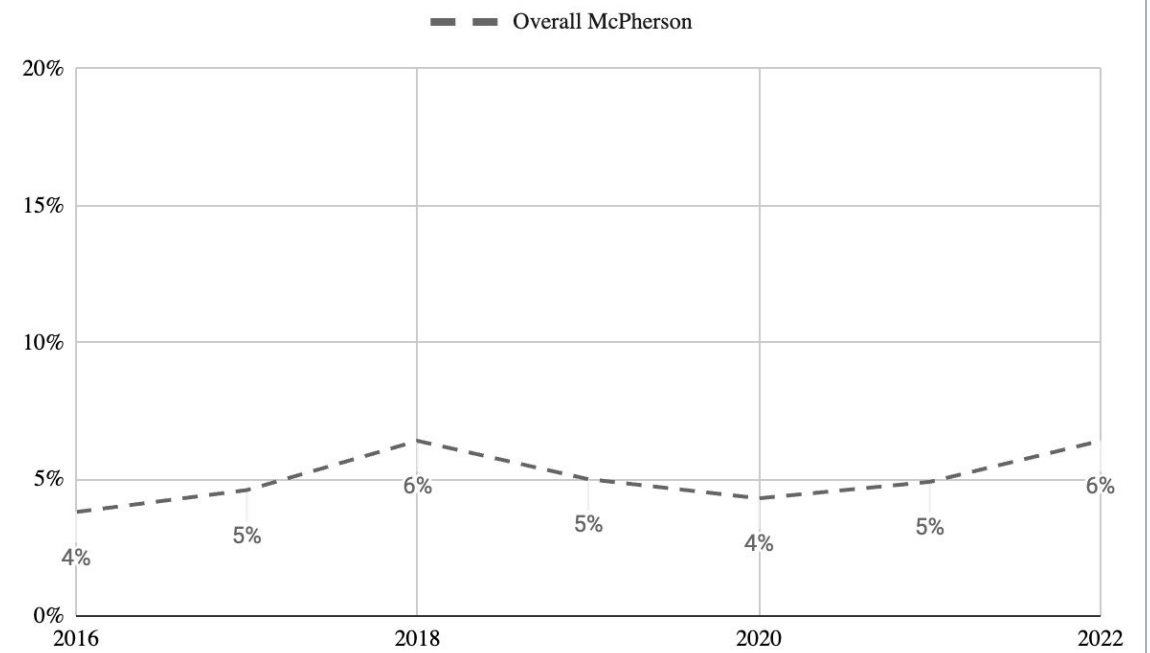
Overall Population Trend



Data source:USCB, ACS 5-Yr Avg



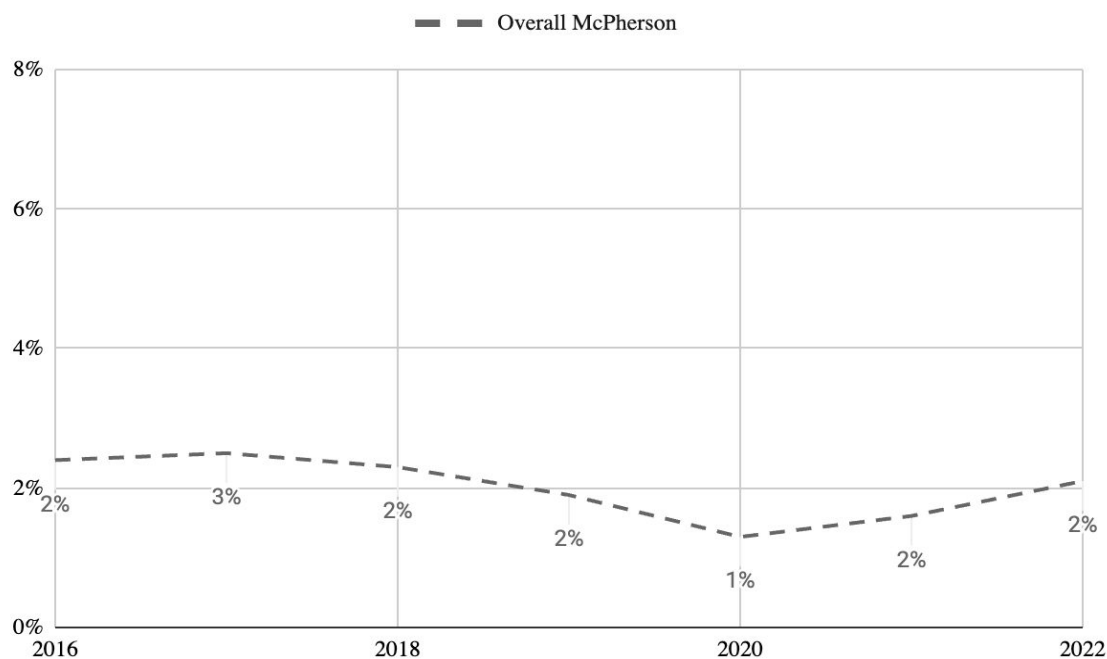
Local Poverty Rate



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



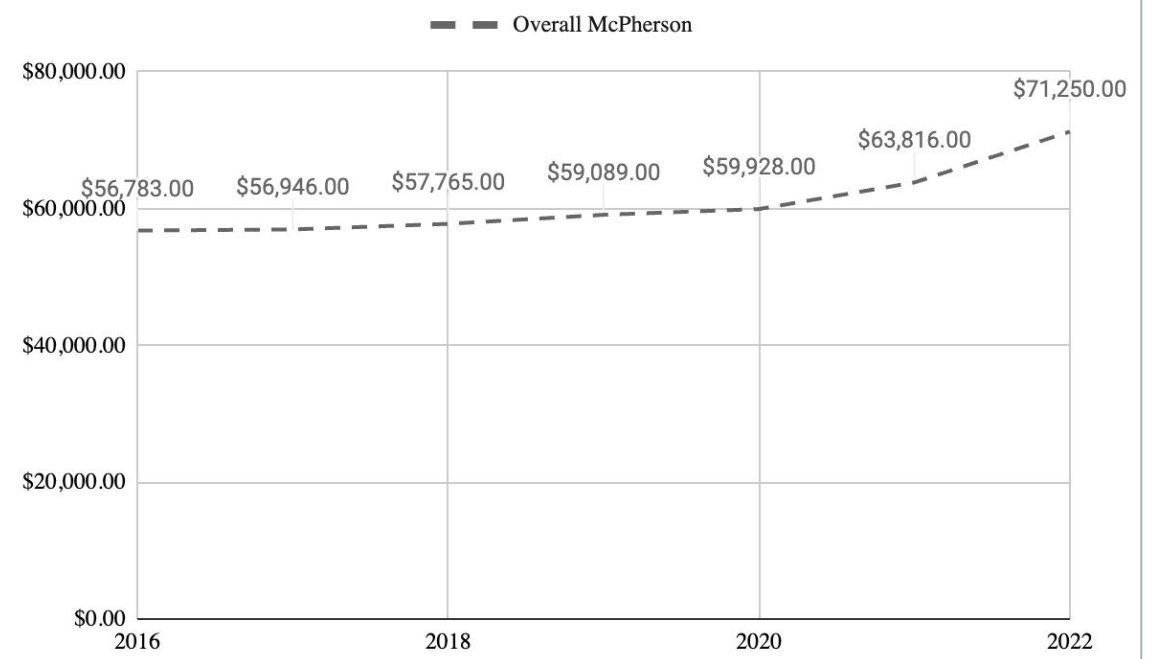
Local Unemployment Rate



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



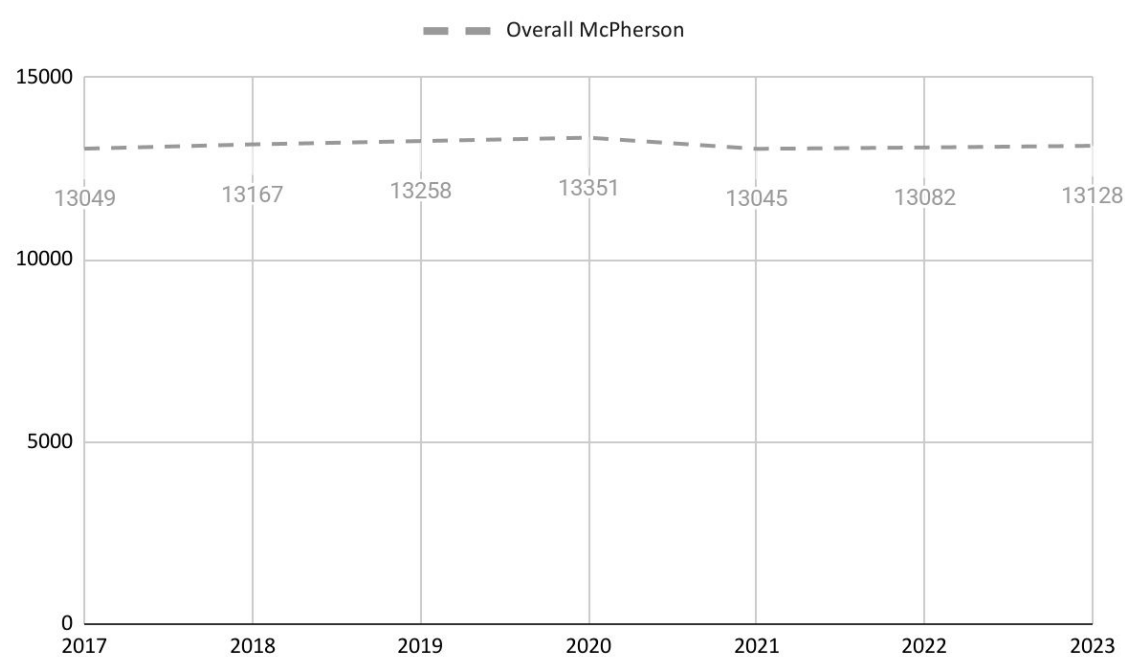
Median Household Income



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



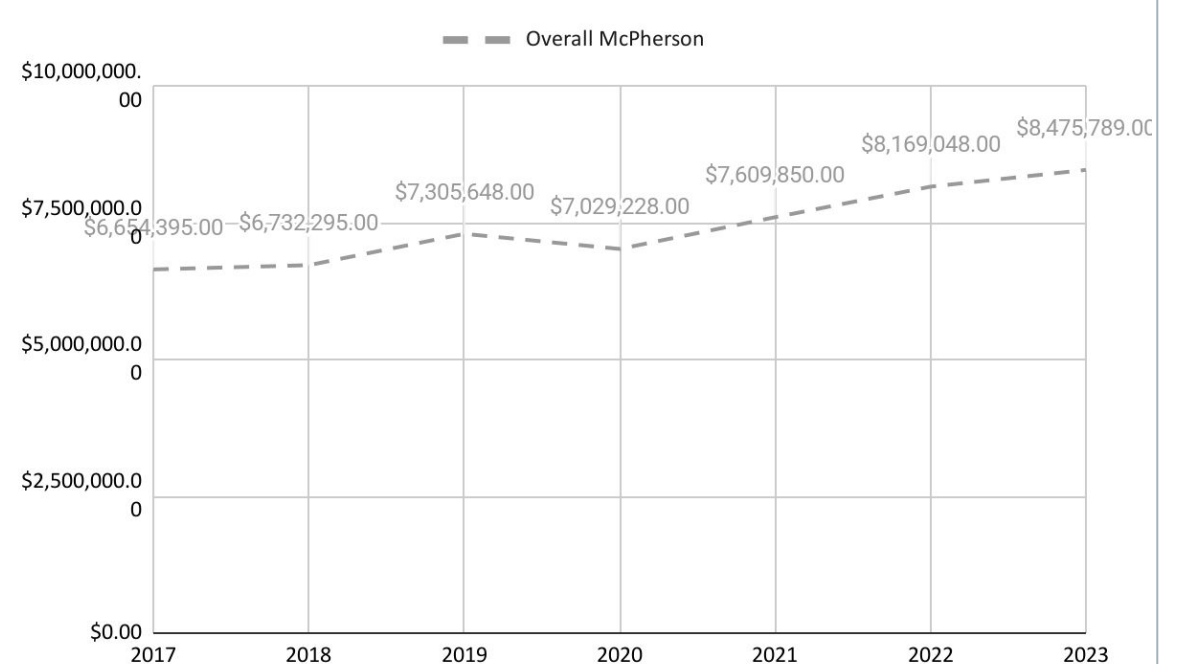
Total Housing Units



Data source:USCB, ACS 5-Yr Avg



Annual Sales Tax Collection



Data source:Kansas Dept of Revenue

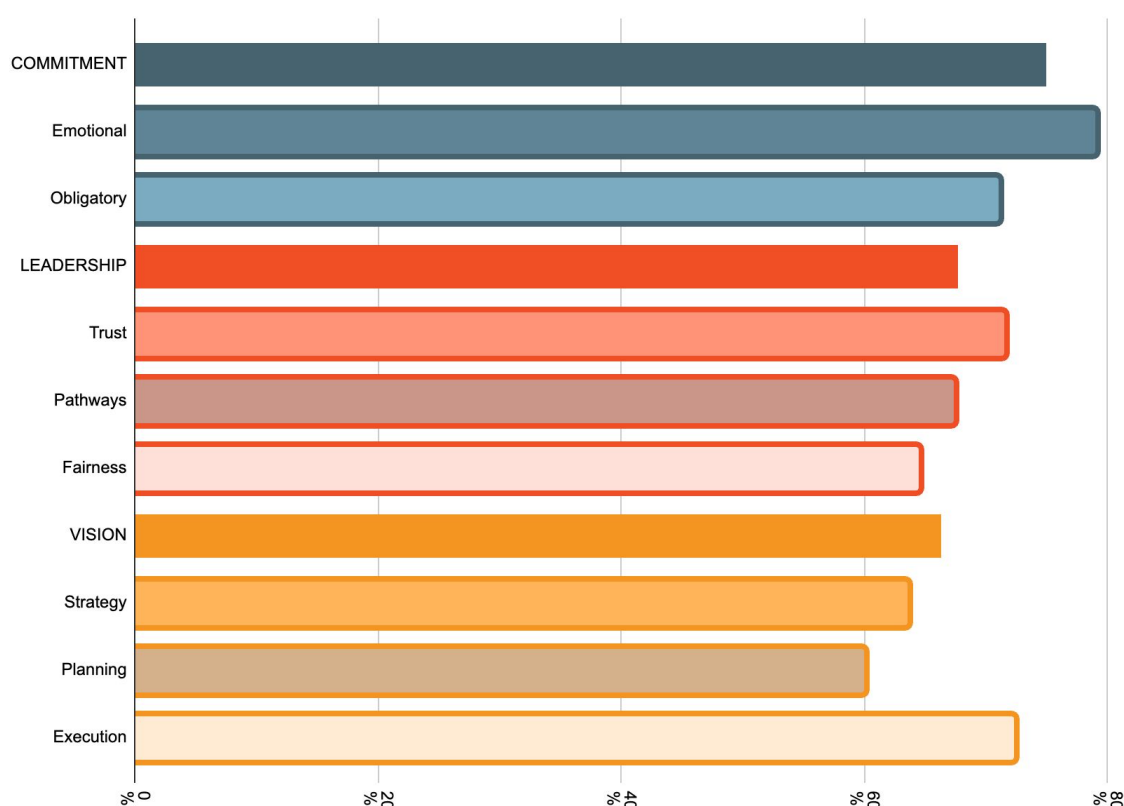
Confidence In Our Local Community

Engagement Summary:

Community members are emotionally committed to their towns, showing strong personal connections and belonging. The top-rated statements centered on emotional loyalty—people feel proud to live where they do. However, a deeper look reveals a softer core when it comes to shared responsibility and obligation; the belief that “this community’s problems are my own” was among the lowest-rated commitment perceptions. In the vision category, community pride and resilience scored well, but people clearly lack confidence in the presence of long-term plans. Residents want to believe in a shared vision, but they don’t yet see a documented path forward.



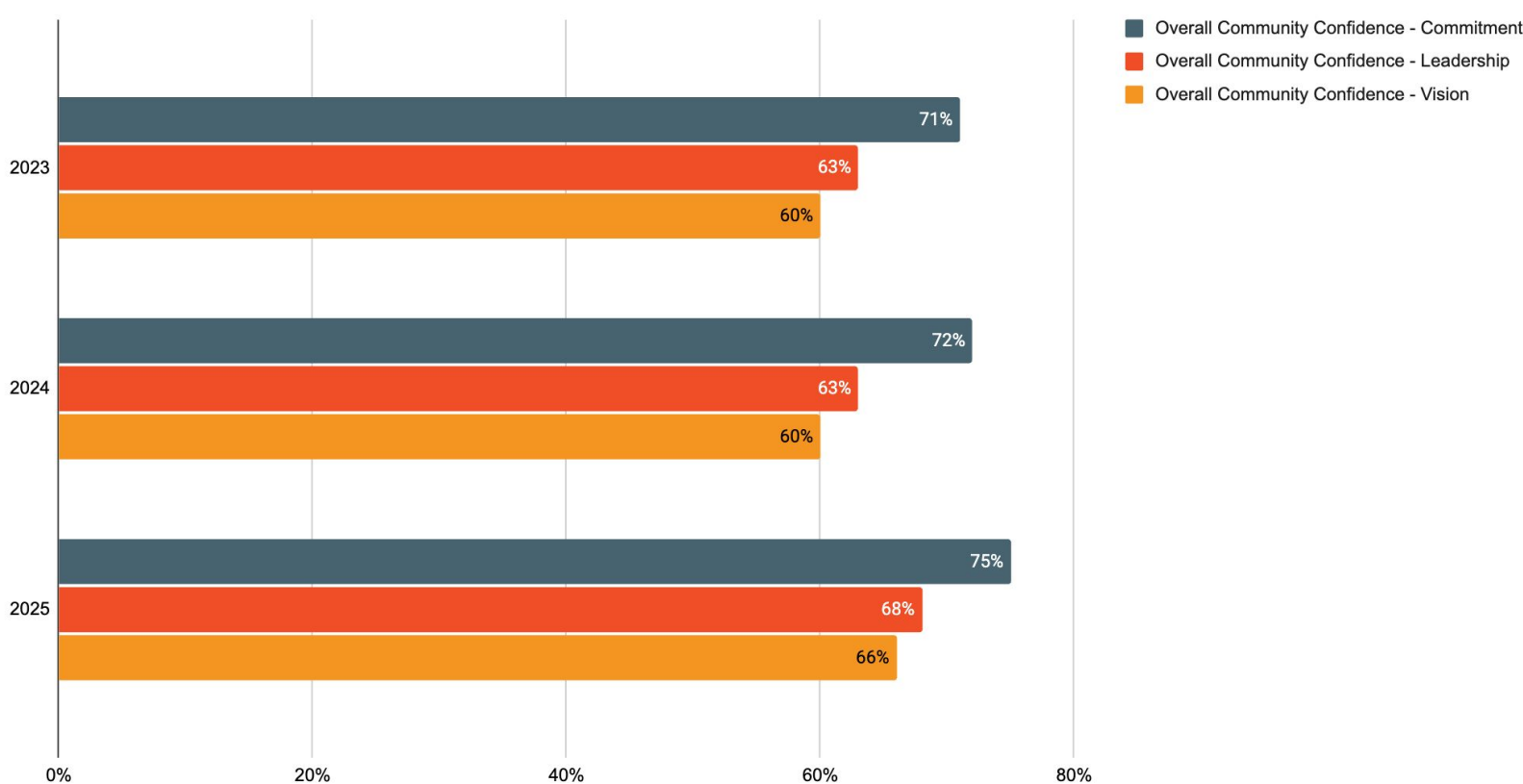
How do our residents view our community?



Questions:

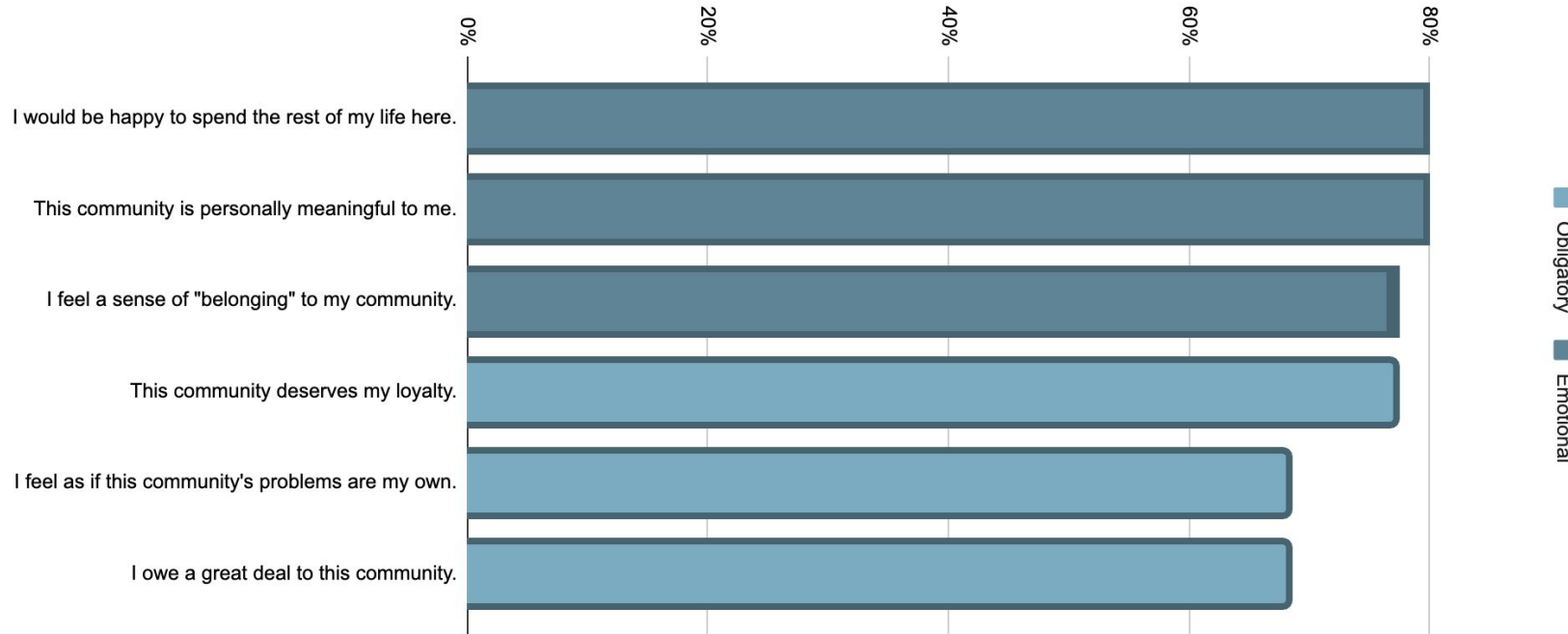
- Why are emotional commitments stronger than obligatory commitments in the community?
- What factors contribute to low perceptions of fairness in leadership?
- How can the community develop a more documented and visible plan for the future?
- Why do people feel confident in community execution but unsure of long-term vision?
- What might help residents feel a deeper sense of responsibility for the community’s challenges?
- How can the trust felt in leadership be expanded to include fairness and inclusivity?
- What specific actions would make people feel their concerns are being heard by leaders?
- What barriers exist to leadership pathways and how can they be addressed?

Year Over Year Change



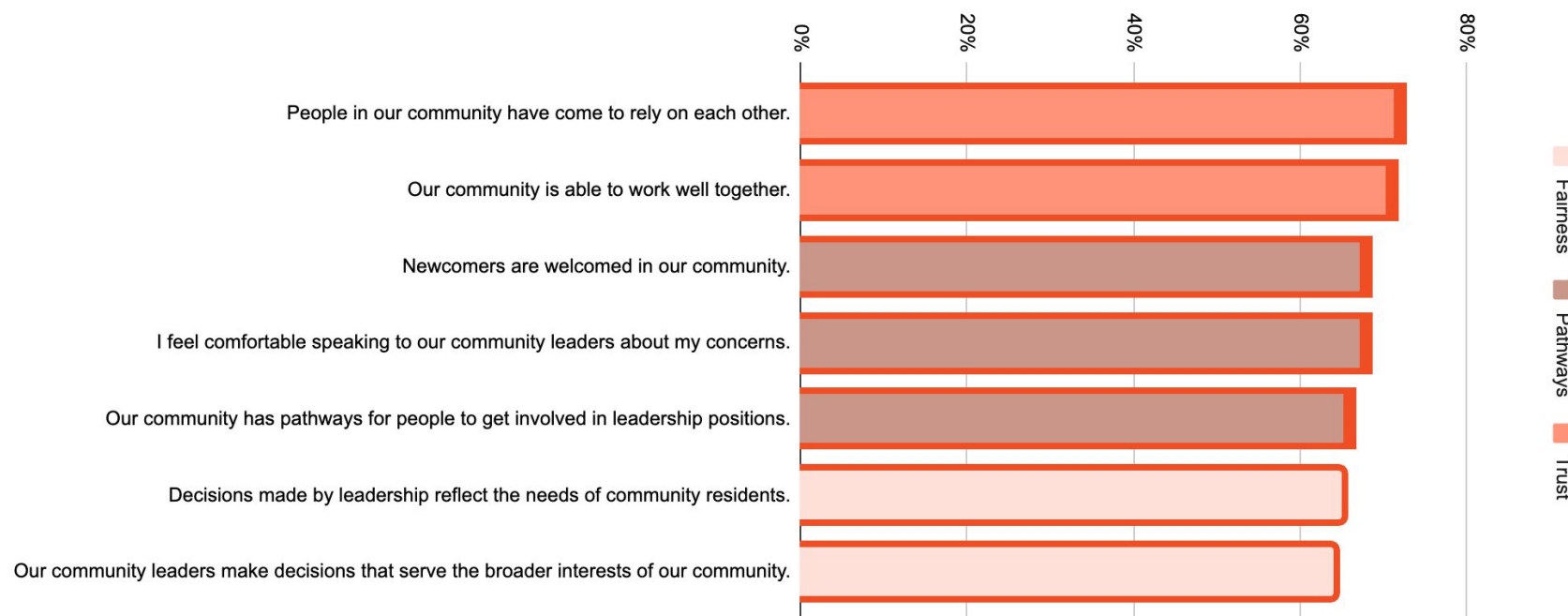
Confidence In Our Local Community

Community Confidence: Personal Commitment



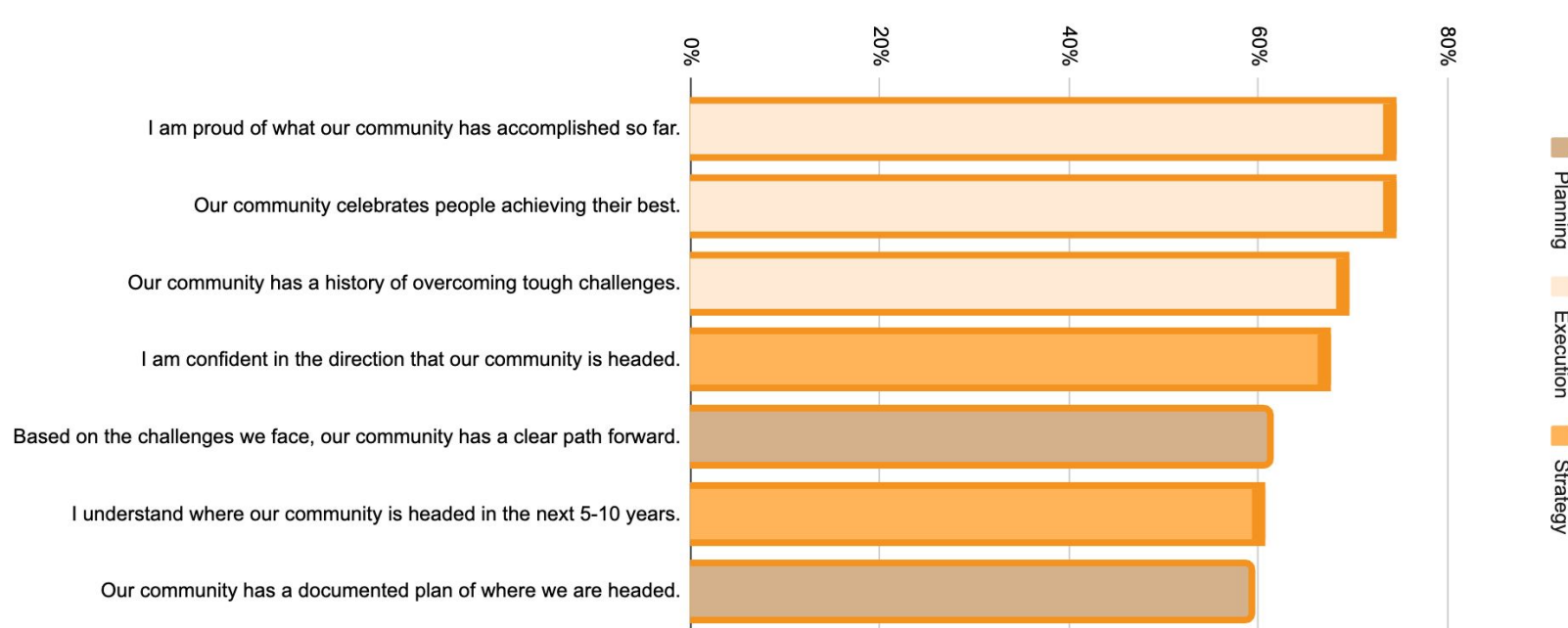
- What might encourage more residents to feel more loyalty?
- How can the community inspire a stronger sense of owing to the whole community?
- Why do people feel such pride and meaning in the community?
- What can be done to make more people tackle the problems as their own?

Community Confidence: Local Leadership



- What contributes to strong trust in leadership but lower feelings of fairness?
- How can leadership ensure decisions reflect the broader interests of all?
- Why do some people still feel uncomfortable voicing concerns to leaders?
- What would help residents feel leadership roles are truly accessible to them?

Community Confidence: Vision

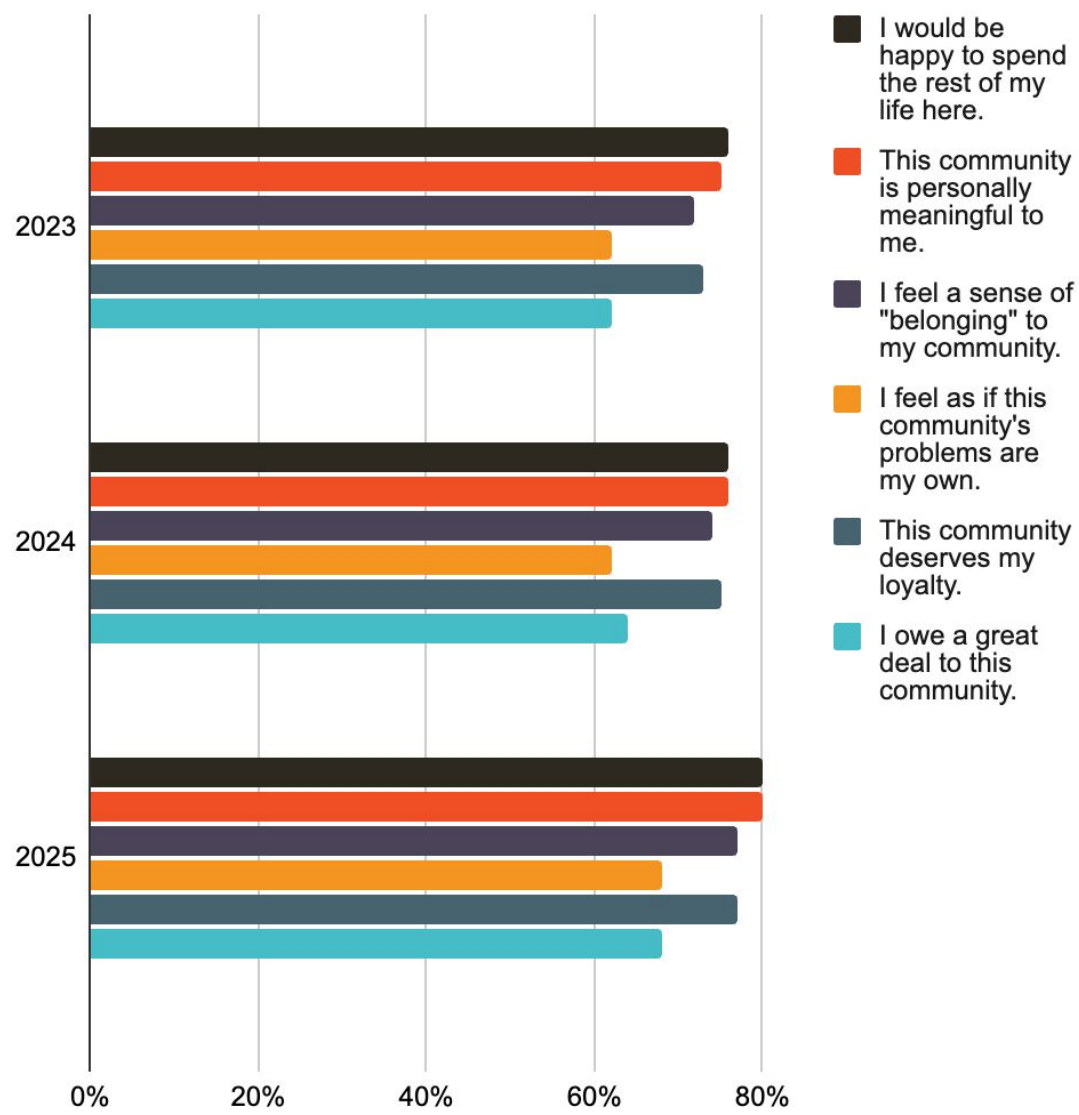


- Why are perceptions of execution so much higher than perceptions of planning?
- How can the community better communicate its vision and path forward?
- What would help people believe more in the documented plans that exist?
- What explains the gap between community pride and confidence in future planning?

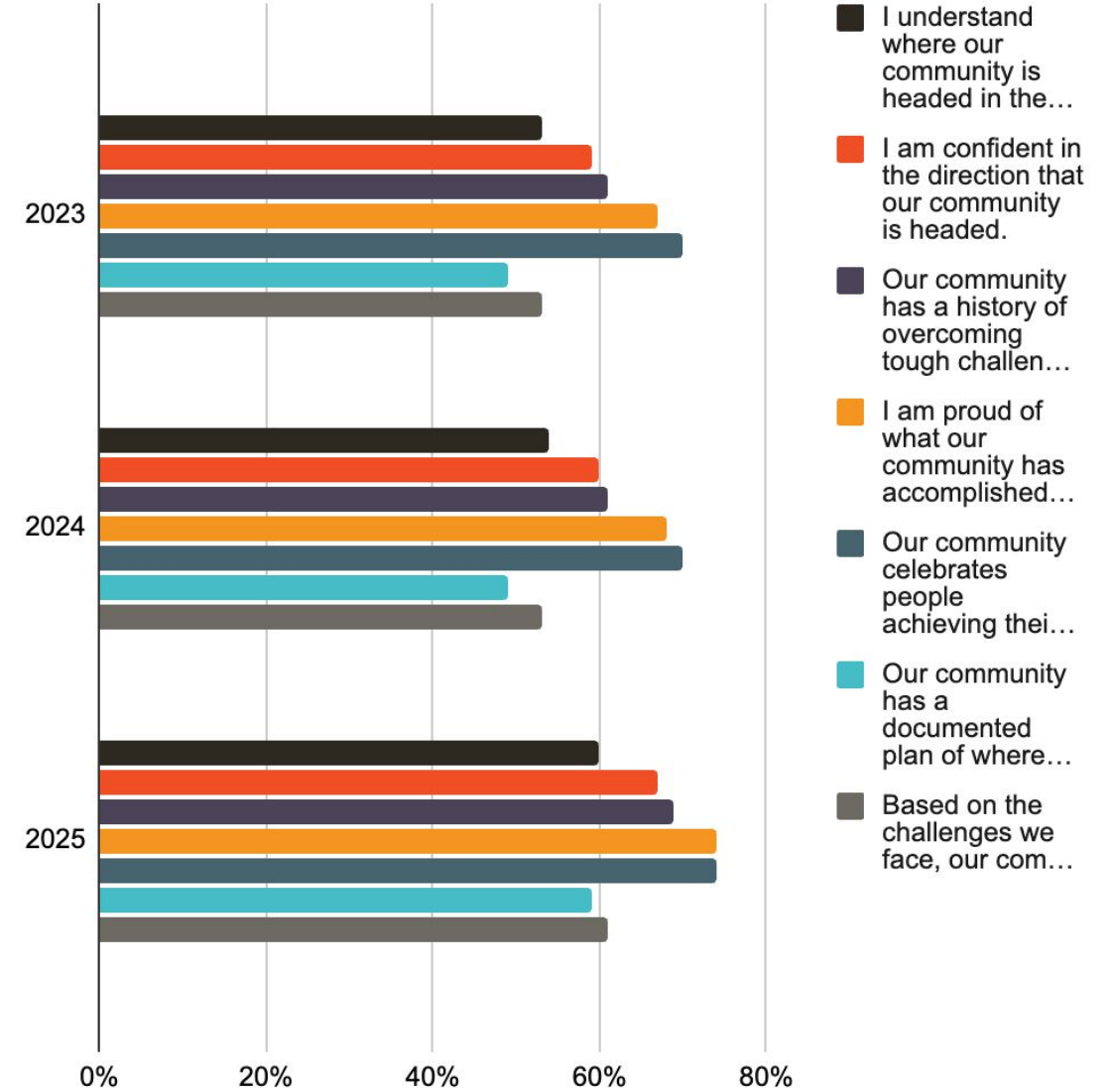
Portion of the community that is highly confident on the listed community dimensions (Rating range: 0-7)

Confidence In Our Local Community

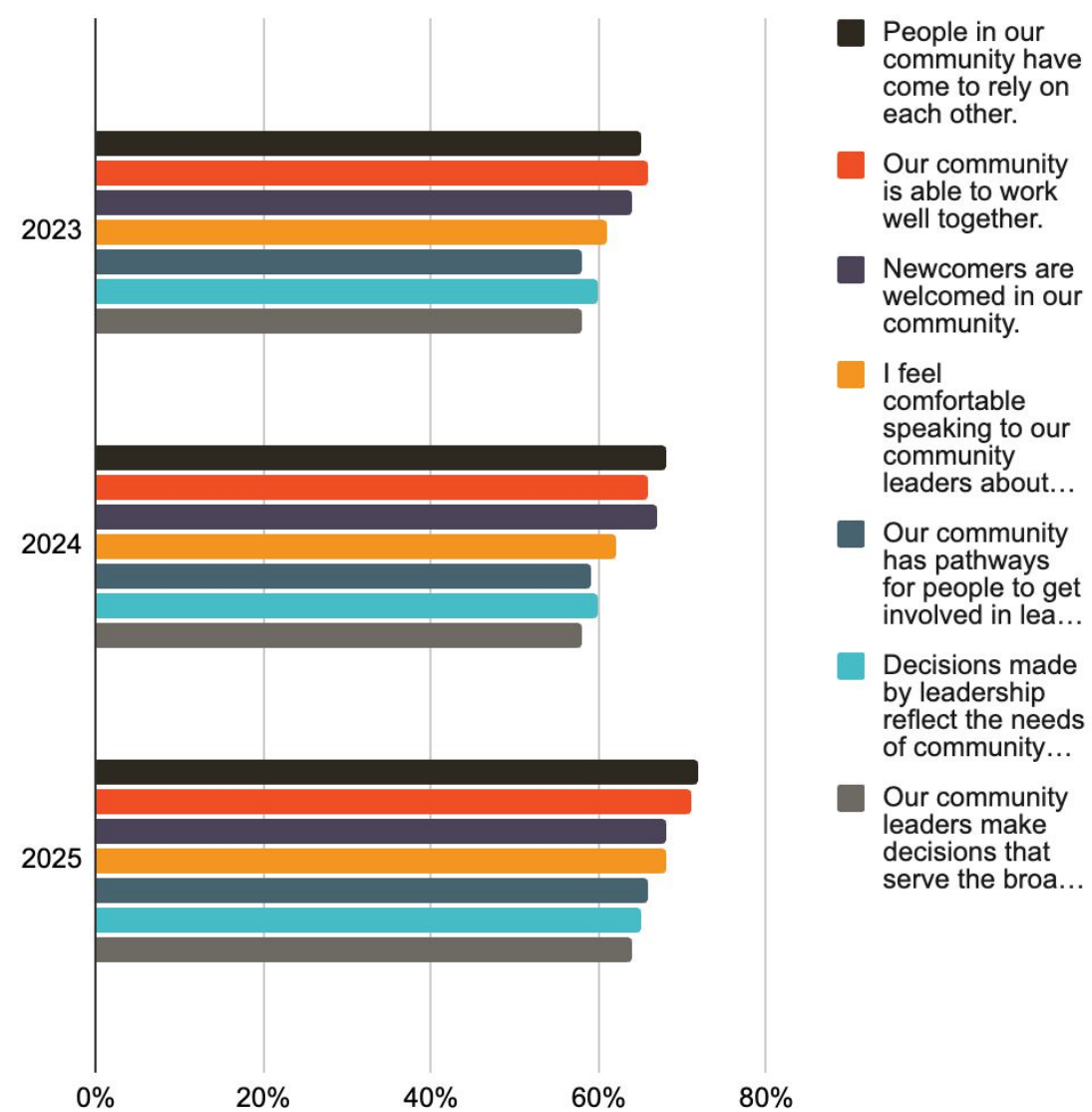
Commitment



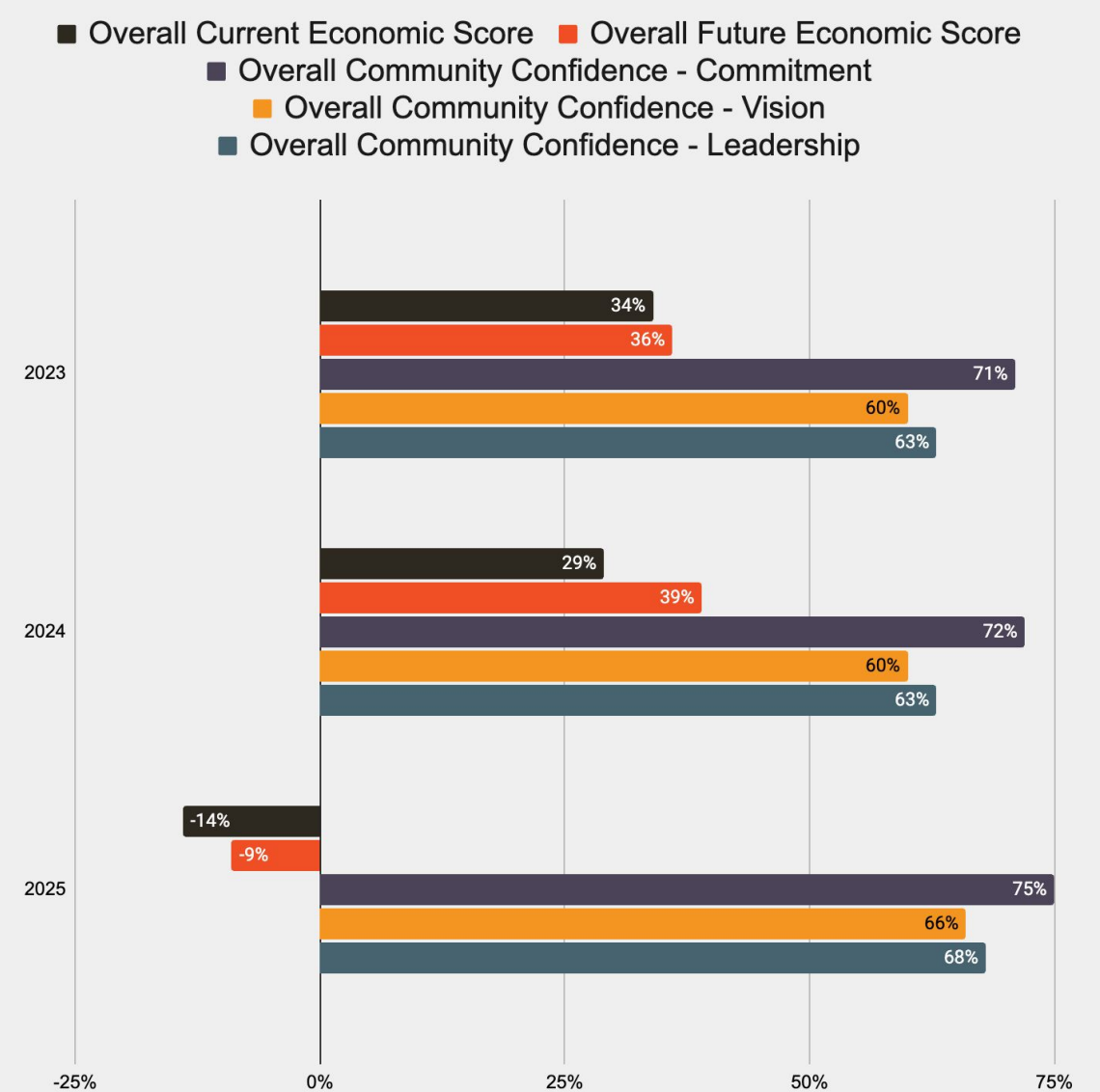
Vision



Leadership



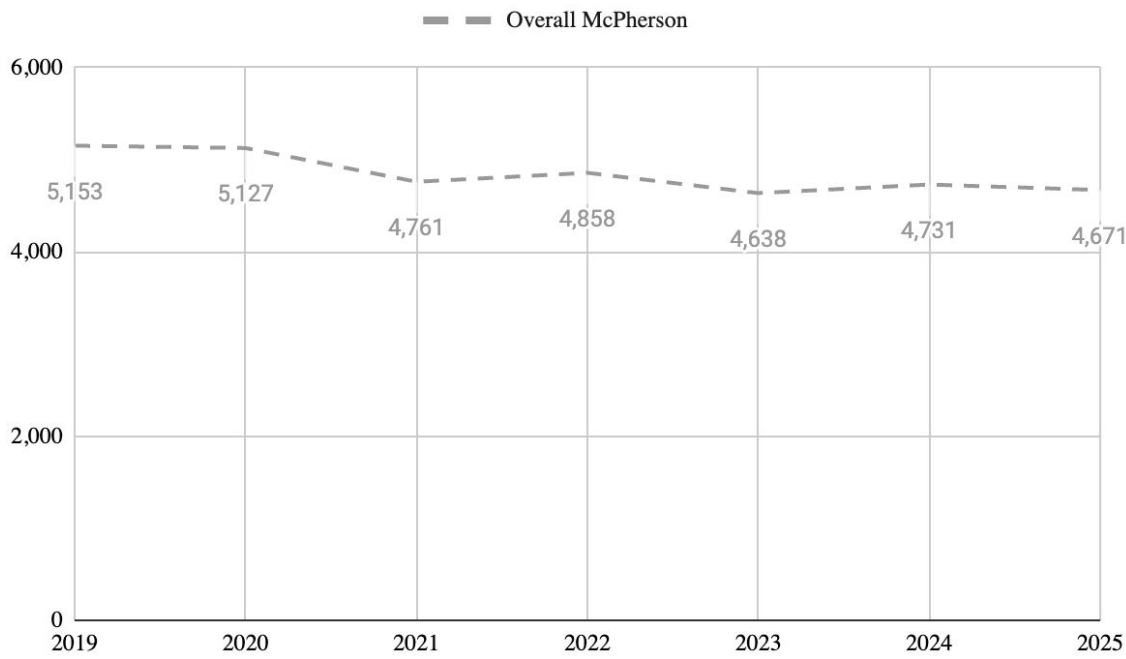
Economic vs. Community Confidence



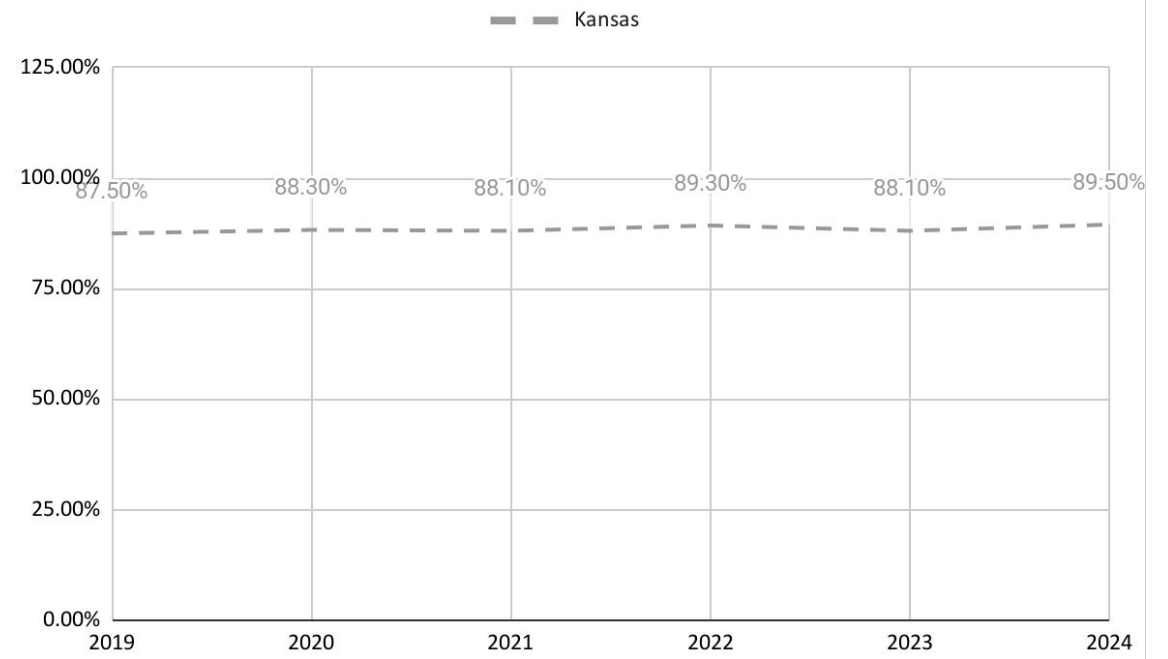
Portion of the community that is highly confident on the listed community dimensions (Rating range: 0-7)

Local Community Indicators

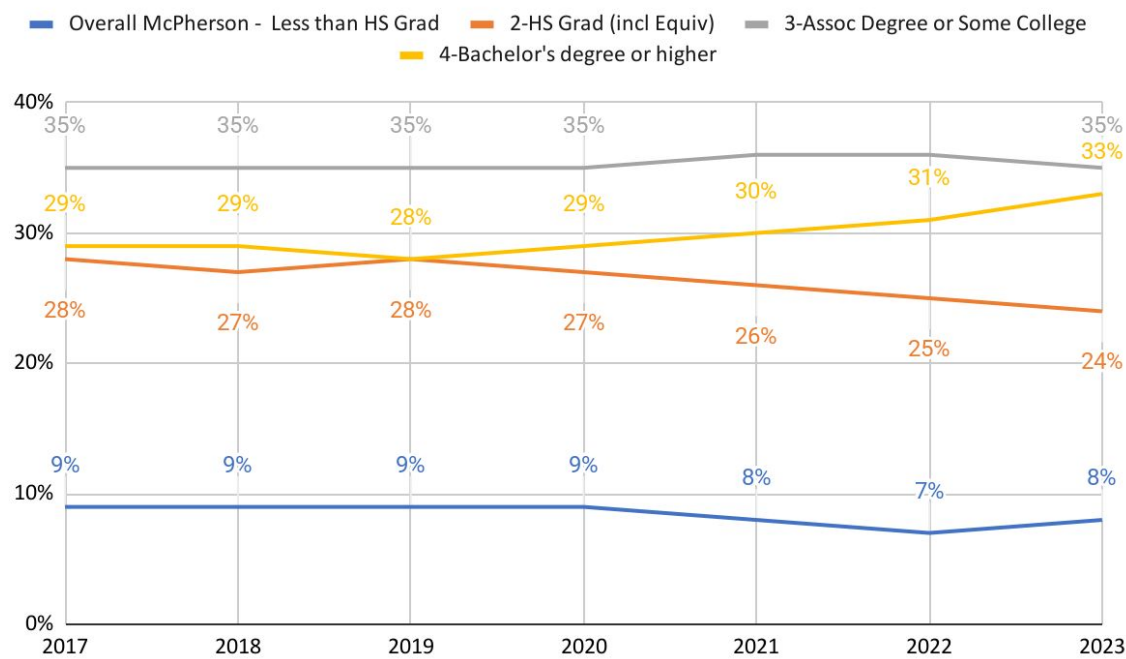
Local School Enrollment



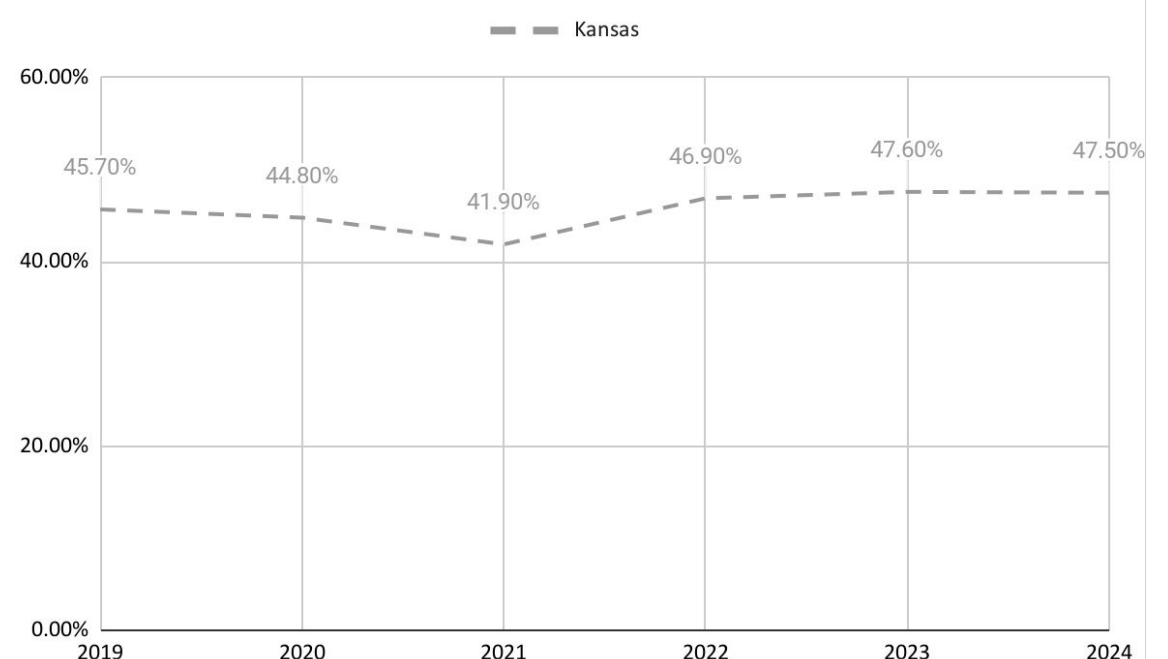
High School 4 Year Graduation Rate



Local Educational Level

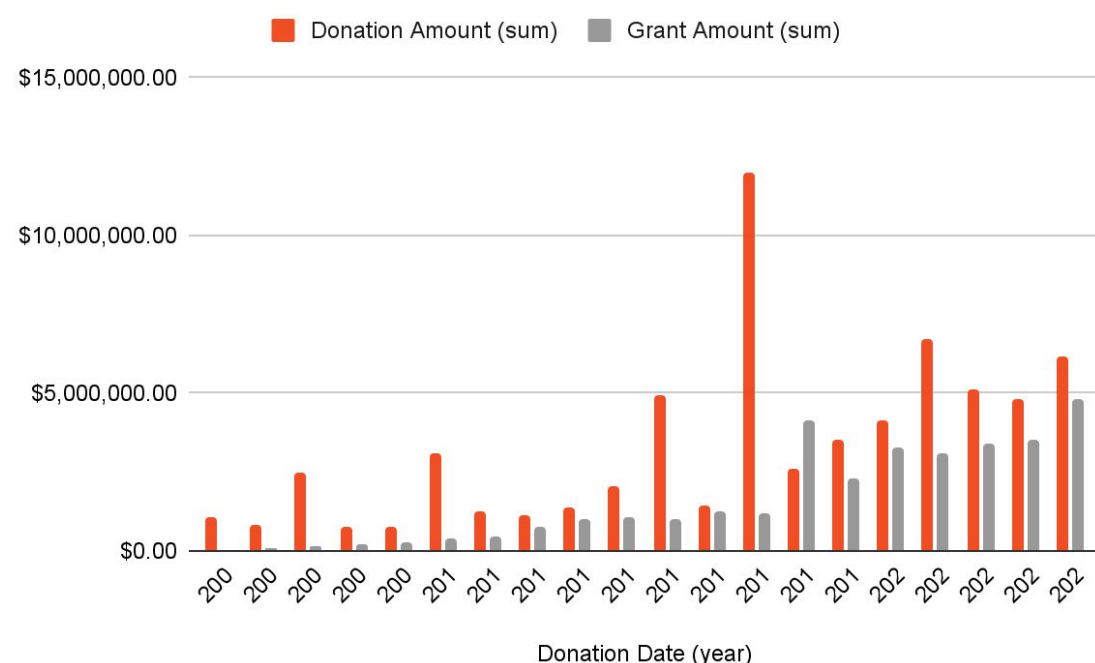


School % Free/Reduced Price Lunch

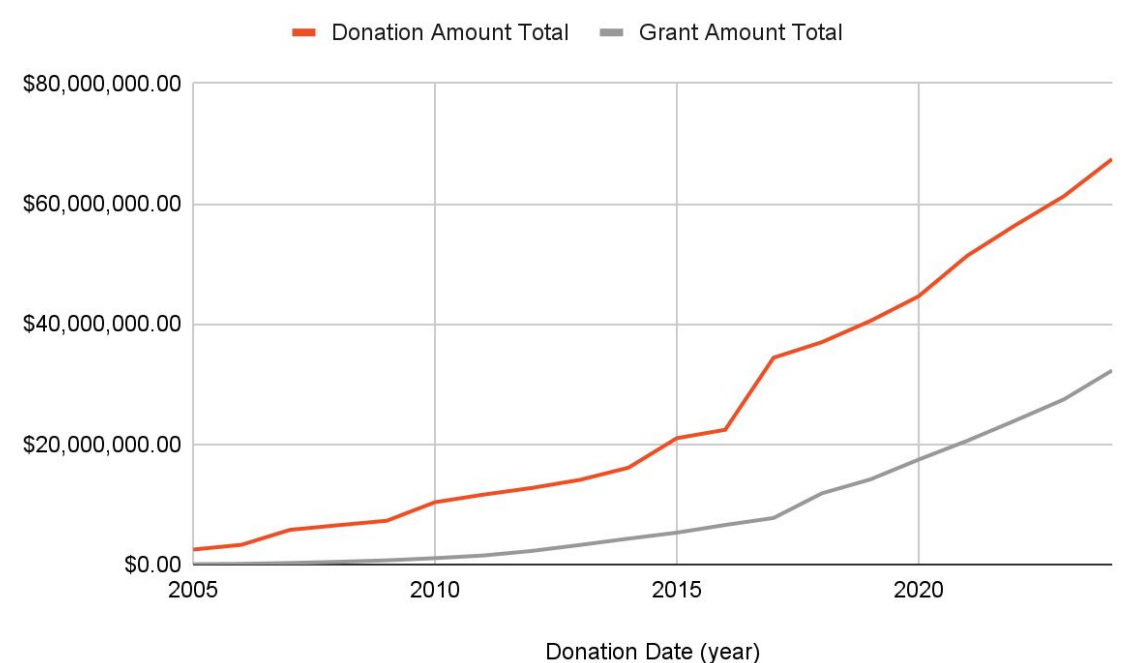


Source for all education graphs: Kansas State Dept of Education, Data Central

McPherson Community Foundation: Annual Dollars Raised & Invested



McPherson Community Foundation: Compound Dollars Raised & Invested

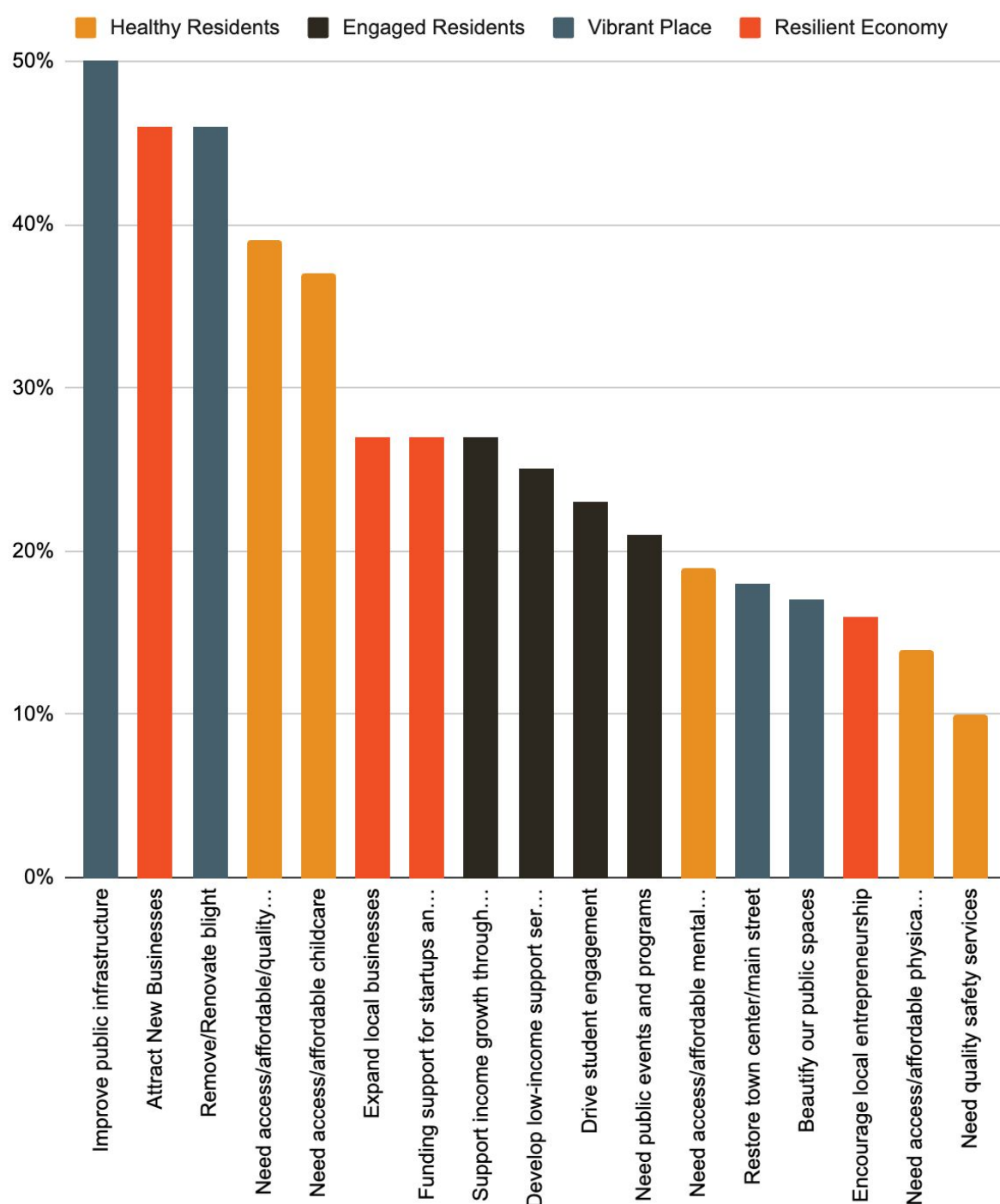


Community Program Priorities

Priorities Summary:

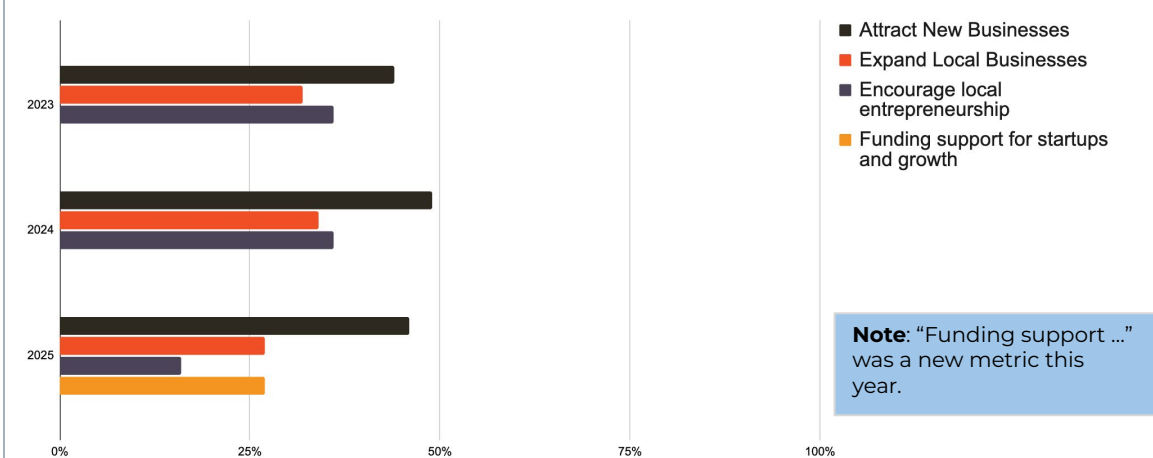
The data makes one thing clear: people want visible, tangible progress. Over the past three years, residents have consistently prioritized attracting new businesses, improving public infrastructure, and addressing the need for affordable childcare. These aren't abstract desires—they're calls for foundational changes that will affect every aspect of life in the county. Metric priorities back this up: all five measures in the resilient economy category ranked in the top eight overall, showing a community laser-focused on income, wages, business growth, and local tax health. In contrast, all five metrics in the healthy residents category fell to the bottom. To move forward holistically, the county must bridge the divide between structural progress and human well-being.

Program Priorities

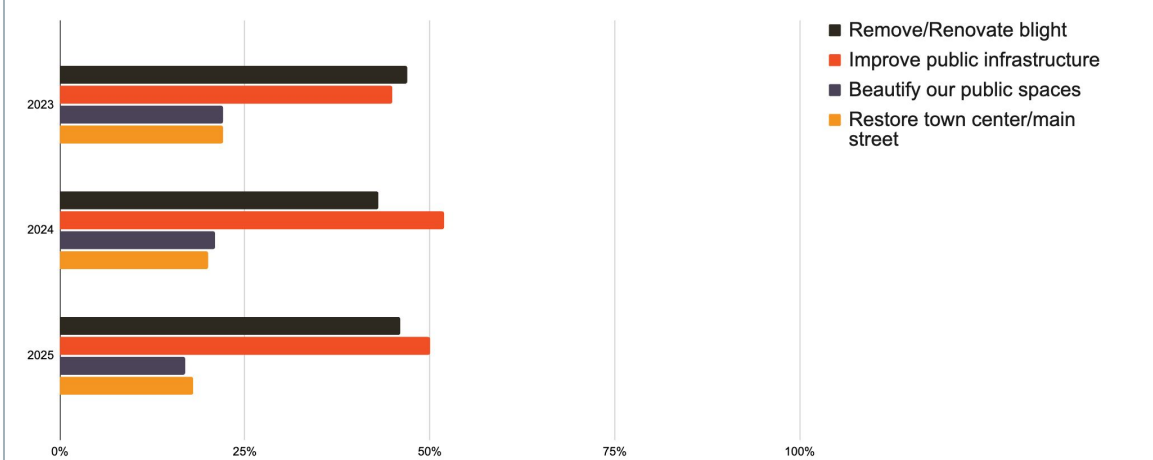


- Why have infrastructure and business attraction remained top priorities for 3 years?
- What are the long-term impacts if housing needs remain unmet?
- How can engagement programs catch up to economic and place-based priorities?
- What would increase support for public events and resident engagement efforts?

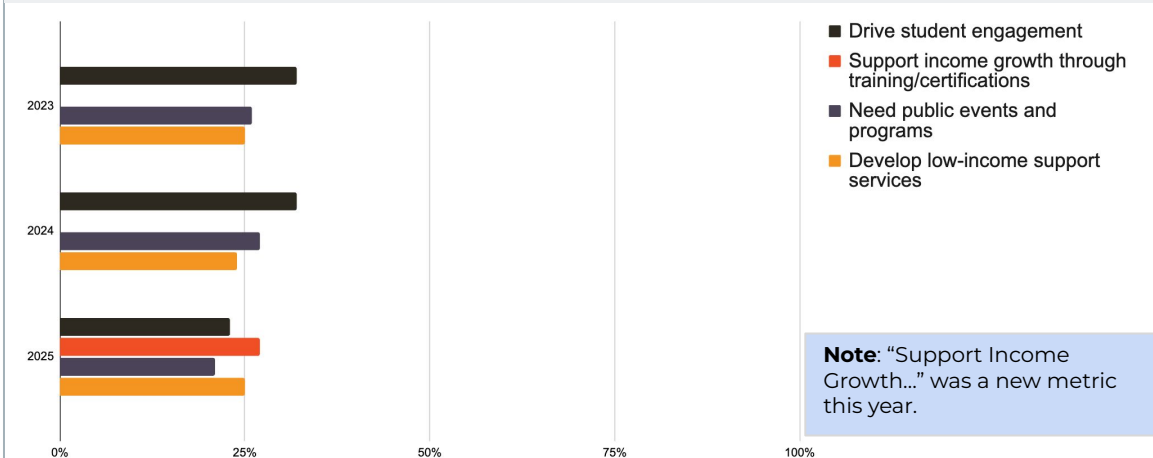
Resilient Economy



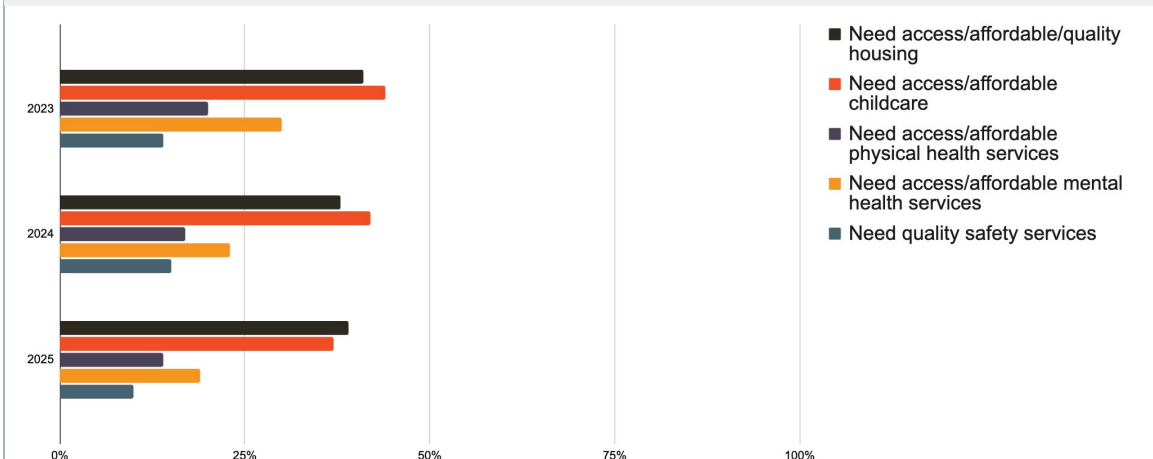
Vibrant Place



Engaged Residents

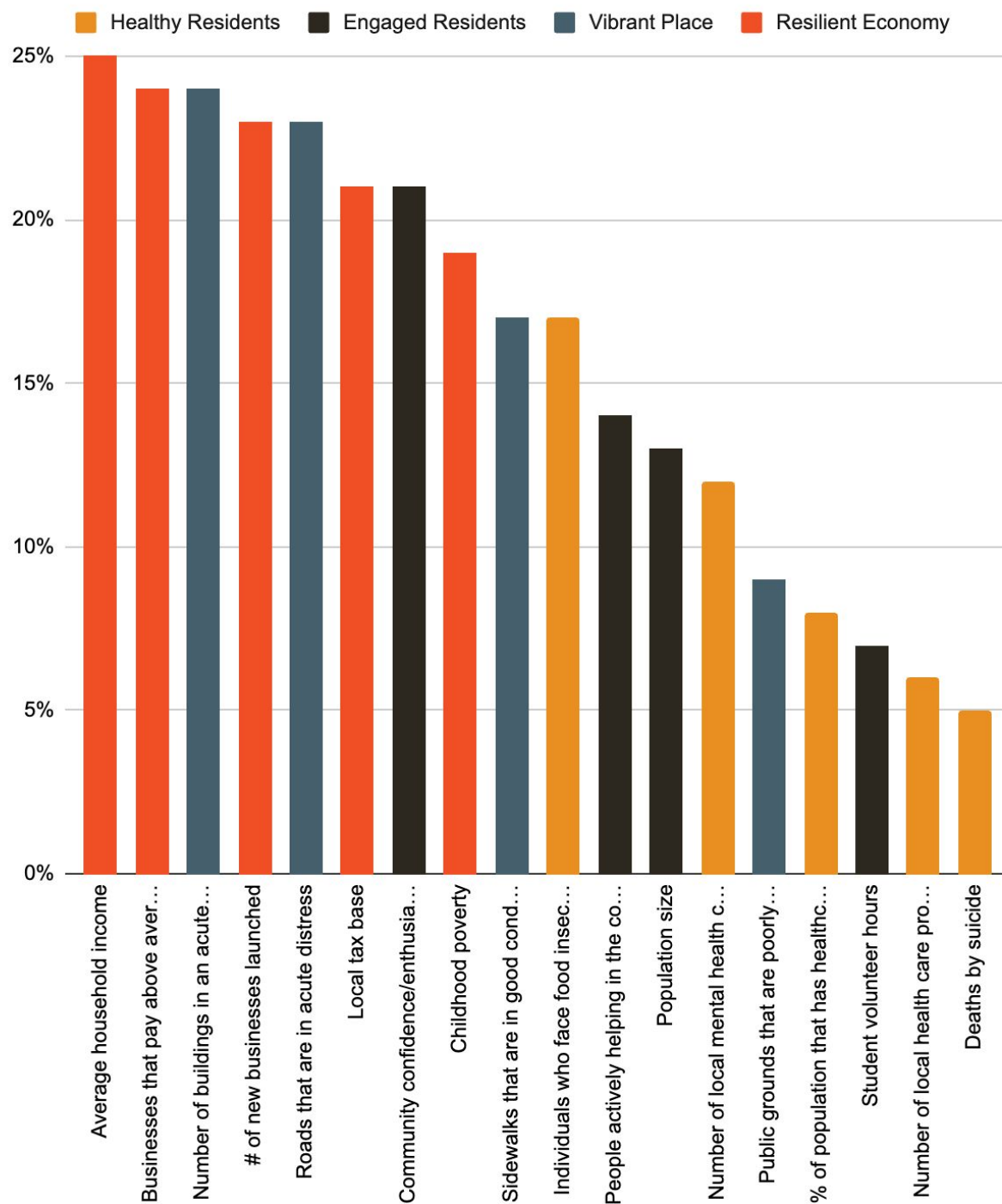


Healthy Residents



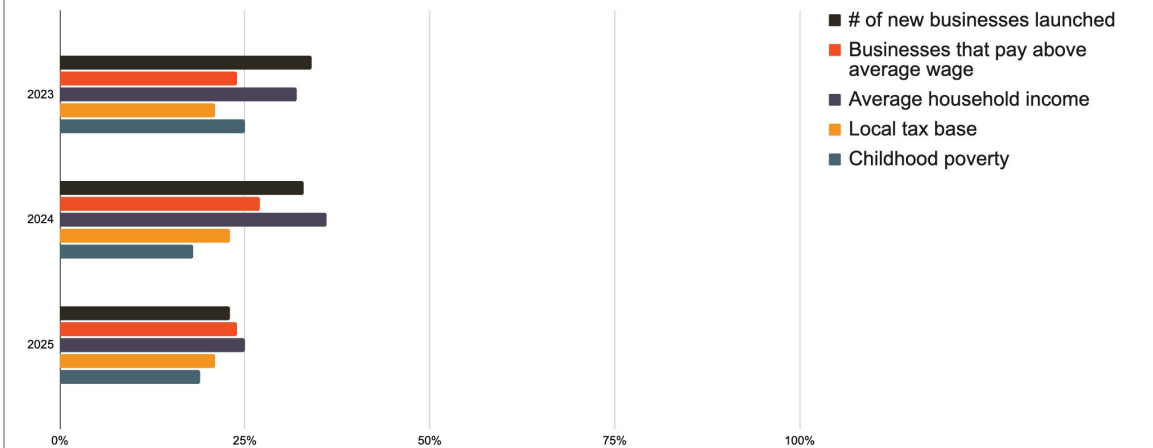
Community Priority Metrics

Priority Metrics

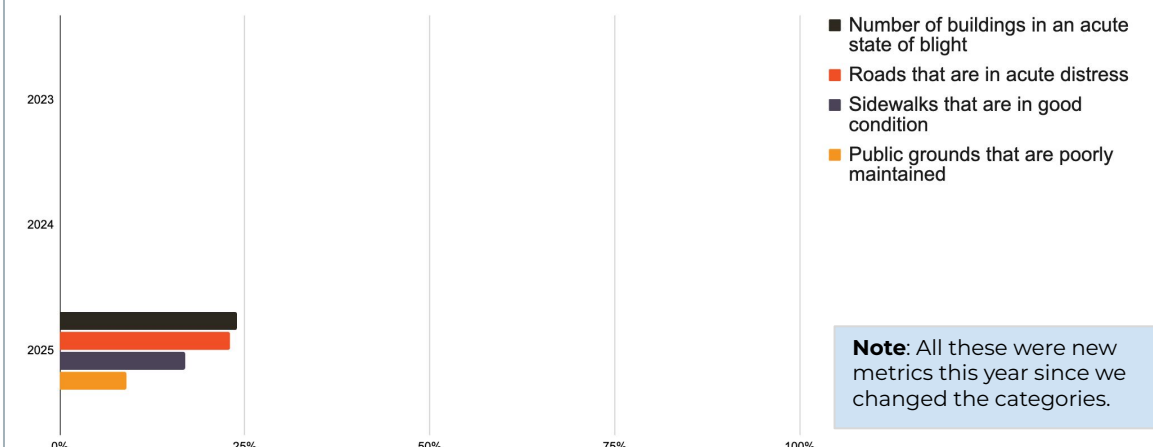


- Why are all Resilient Economy metrics consistently prioritized by respondents?
- What does the lower ranking of Healthy Residents metrics suggest about awareness or accessibility?
- Why is student volunteerism significantly lower than general community enthusiasm?
- How can the data on food insecurity future planning?
- What role does the condition of sidewalks and public grounds play in community perceptions?

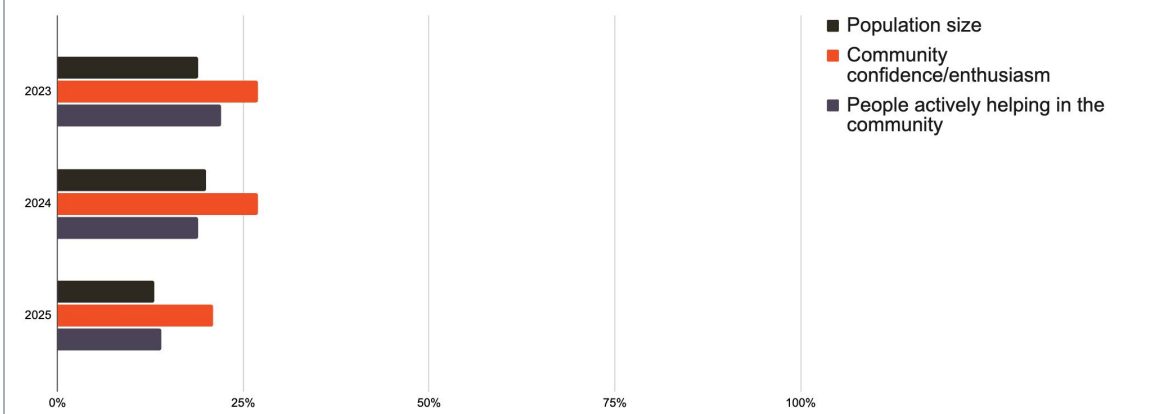
Resilient Economy



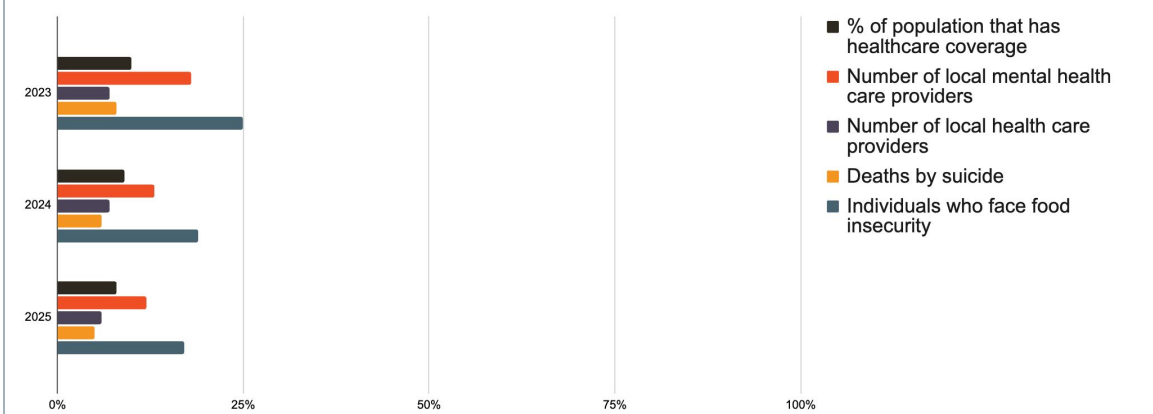
Vibrant Place



Engaged Residents



Healthy Residents



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?

- Indoor Recreation & Aquatics Center – A place for year-round family activities, fitness, and community health
- Affordable Housing Development – To attract new residents, support workforce needs, and improve living standards
- Downtown Revitalization – Enhance tourism, business, and pride through vibrant storefronts and events
- Community Center/Hub – Space for youth, seniors, events, and services, strengthening social cohesion
- Public School Improvements – Secure educational quality to retain families and future-proof the community

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?

- Sidewalks & Streets Revitalization – Improve safety, accessibility, and appeal, especially around schools and downtown
- Childcare Expansion – Affordable options to support working families and workforce stability
- Downtown Beautification – Boost curb appeal, business traffic, and civic pride
- Community Events & Youth Engagement – Increase unity, reduce vandalism, and foster civic responsibility
- Housing Improvements – Enhance livability, attract new residents, and restore neighborhood morale

Serving your community!

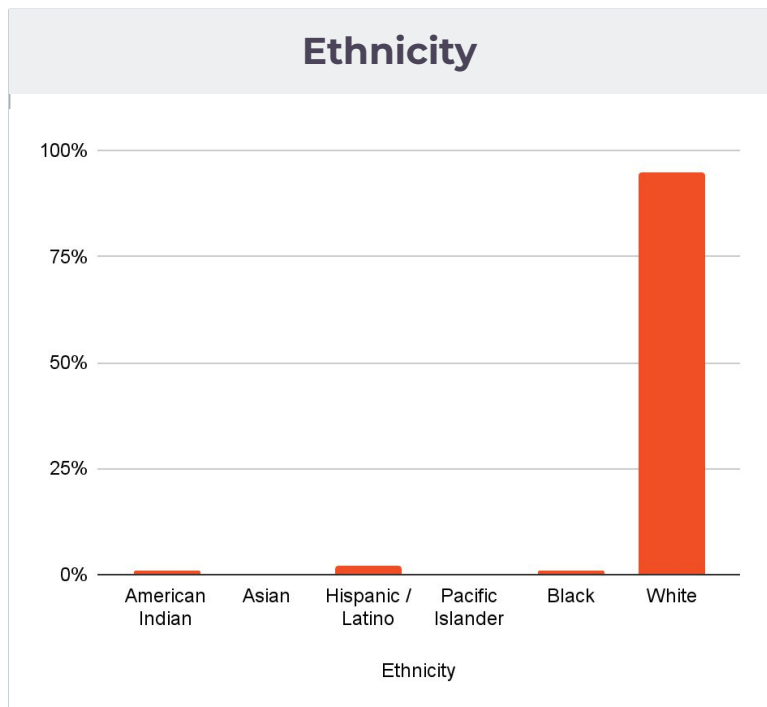
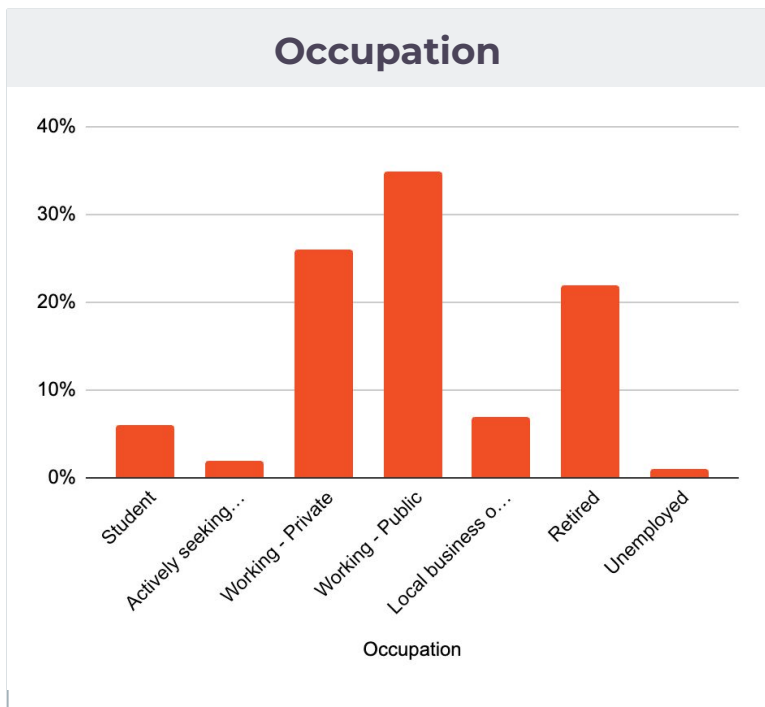
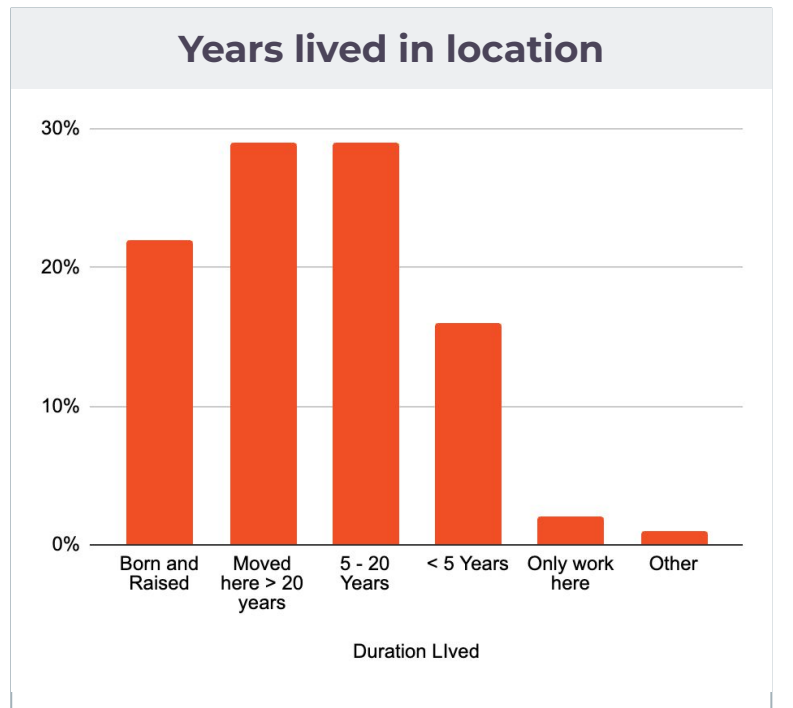
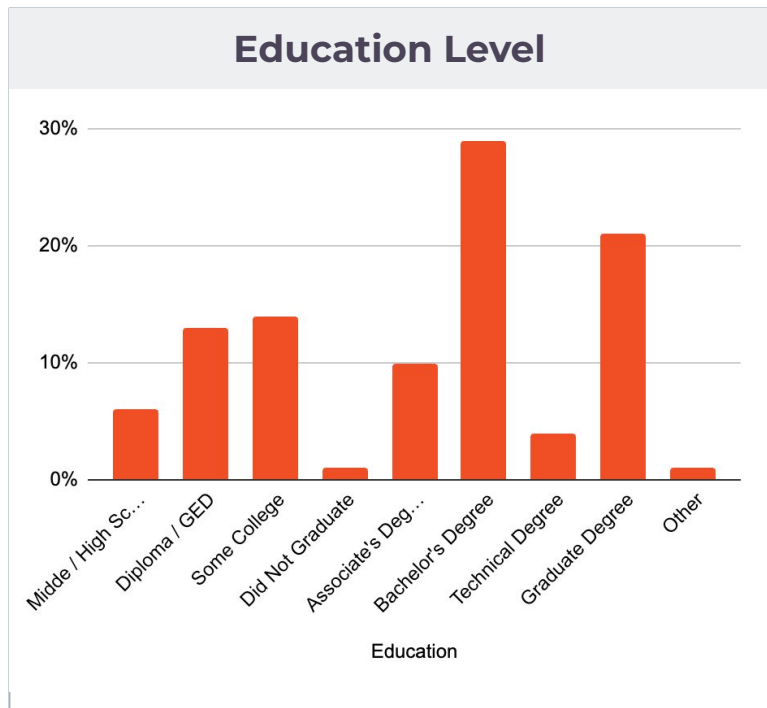
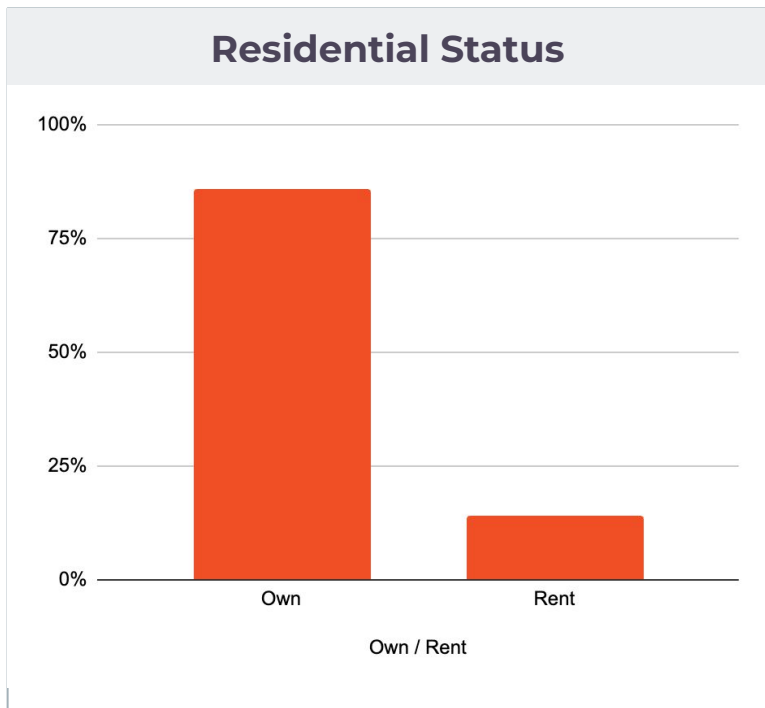
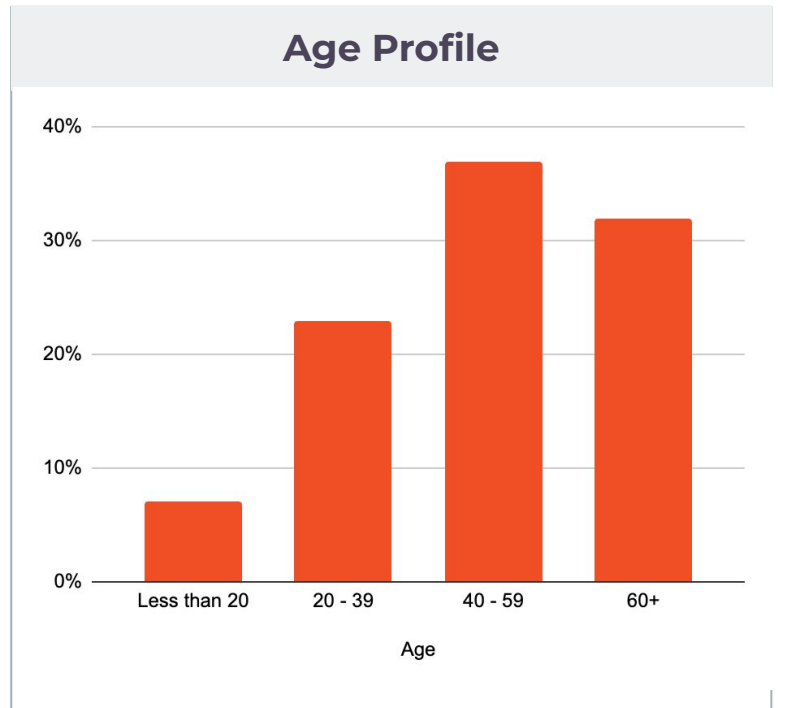
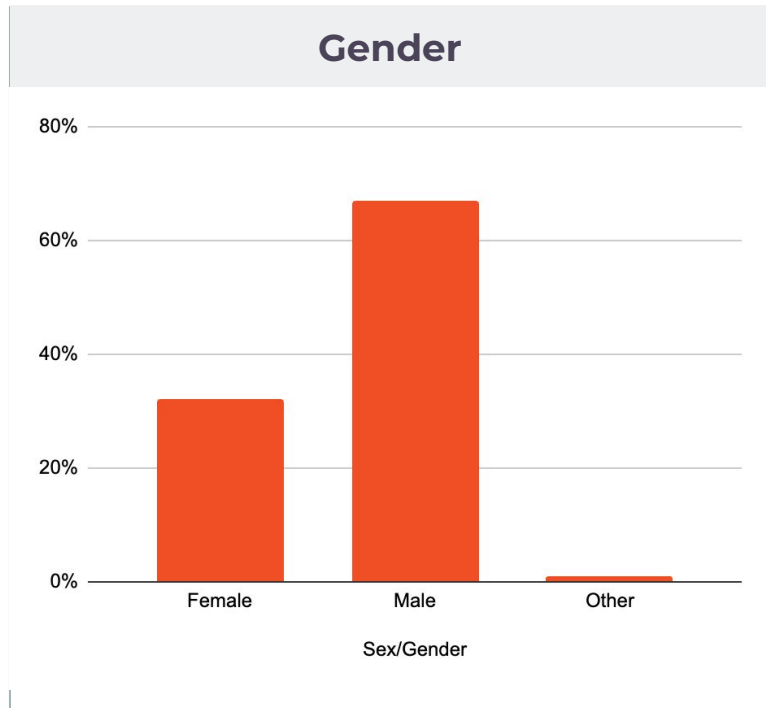
How do you serve your community today?

- Church and Faith-Based Volunteering – Includes youth groups, meal programs, church leadership, and outreach services
- Local Boards and Committees – Involvement in school, city, senior center, library, and arts organizations
- STEP MC and Social Support Programs – Coaching, facilitation, community service, and support for those in poverty
- Youth and Education Engagement – Includes coaching, mentoring, school boards, PTOs, and educational events
- Cultural and Community Events – Participation in Hyllningsfest, museum volunteering, beautification, and festivals

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

- Volunteer Support and Outreach – Many want to help in food banks, shelters, schools, or wherever needed,
- Board and Civic Leadership – Several expressed interest in serving on boards or city councils, or continuing their current public service roles
- Youth and Education Engagement – Many want to mentor/support school programs, or launch youth-centered initiatives
- Beautification and Public Projects – Includes interest in community gardens, cleanup efforts, and housing rehabilitation
- Cultural and Economic Development – Aspiration to grow local businesses, organize festivals, or improve downtown vitality

Survey Respondents



- Those currently in high school or middle school are far more optimistic about future employment opportunities than those with a technical degree.
- High school and middle school students rate the community's ability to work together significantly higher than HS graduates.
- People actively seeking work identify a greater need for affordable housing than students.
- Individuals who only work in the area report much higher concern with average household income than those who have lived in the area over 20 years.

 **Town Score**

 **Average Community Score**

308 Number of people who expressed an interest in volunteering to better the community
308 of 743 (41%)