



Western Kansas Community Foundation

2024 Community Benchmark Report

City of Liberal, KS

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What Makes Our Community Special?

Residents value the community's ability to meet essential needs, highlighting grocery stores and affordable housing as key assets. These resources ensure that basic necessities are easily accessible. Safety is another cherished aspect, with the low crime rate and robust city services contributing to a secure environment. The presence of police and social support services strengthens the sense of security and community cohesion.

In terms of social, esteem, and self-fulfillment, cultural and educational institutions like libraries, colleges, and arts centers play a significant role. These facilities provide opportunities for personal growth, creativity, and social interaction, helping residents feel connected and fulfilled. While some see room for improvement in enhancing social opportunities, the community's existing resources already contribute significantly to residents' well-being.

Overall, the community's strength lies in its ability to address a broad spectrum of needs, from basic essentials to personal development, making it a secure and nurturing environment.

The Leaders That Make Our Community Special



Executive Summary:

Residents express strong loyalty and a sense of belonging in the community. Key strengths include low crime, accessible grocery stores, and solid infrastructure. While confident in leadership, some seek more involvement opportunities. Economic priorities focus on job creation, business growth, and improving community services. Cultural and educational institutions are valued, yet residents suggest further enhancing social opportunities.

pg **4**

Local Assets Assessment

The community excels in providing basic needs through grocery stores and safety via low crime rates. Cultural institutions and educational facilities foster social connections and personal growth.

pg **5, 6**

Economic Confidence

Residents show cautious optimism about the future, with many expecting improved business conditions and employment opportunities. However, income levels remain a concern, with mixed expectations of either increase or stability.

pg **7, 8, 9**

Community Engagement Confidence

Residents express varying degrees of loyalty, belonging, and confidence in community leadership. While many feel connected and optimistic, others show lower engagement and concern over future direction.

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Critical Community Priorities

Top priorities include boosting the local economy, healthcare access, and education. Residents aim to see new businesses, better healthcare facilities, and improved community metrics within the next few years.

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Survey Respondent Profile

Respondents are diverse in age and length of residency, with a significant number being long-term residents. Most are employed or retired, with a mix of education levels, and homeownership is prevalent.

The Community Benchmarking report has been commissioned by the Western Kansas 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 Western Kansas 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.**



Our Local Assets

Asset Summary:

The community's assets are well-regarded for supporting residents' basic needs, safety, and social well-being. For physiological needs, the grocery store, water supply, and Project Hope are frequently mentioned as crucial resources ensuring that residents have access to food, water, and essential services. The presence of these resources reflects the community's commitment to caring for all its members, particularly those facing difficulties. Safety needs are addressed through reliable institutions such as the police and fire departments, as well as the hospital and EMS services. These entities contribute significantly to a sense of personal security and community order. In terms of social, esteem, and self-needs, residents value spaces like churches, schools, and the local movie theater, where they can connect with others and participate in community life. However, there is an expressed need for more opportunities for social interaction and community engagement, indicating room for growth in creating a more vibrant social environment. Overall, the community's assets effectively meet essential needs and provide a foundation of safety, while the enhancement of social and recreational opportunities could further strengthen community ties and individual well-being.

Community's Best Assets: PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS:

- Grocery stores
- Shelter
- Liberal Area Coalition for Families
- Food
- Water
- Access to vaccinations
- Household supply stores
- Homeless shelter
- City programs
- State programs
- Church assistance
- Safety (related to basic needs)
- Grocery delivery services
- Community health services
- Access to essential supplies

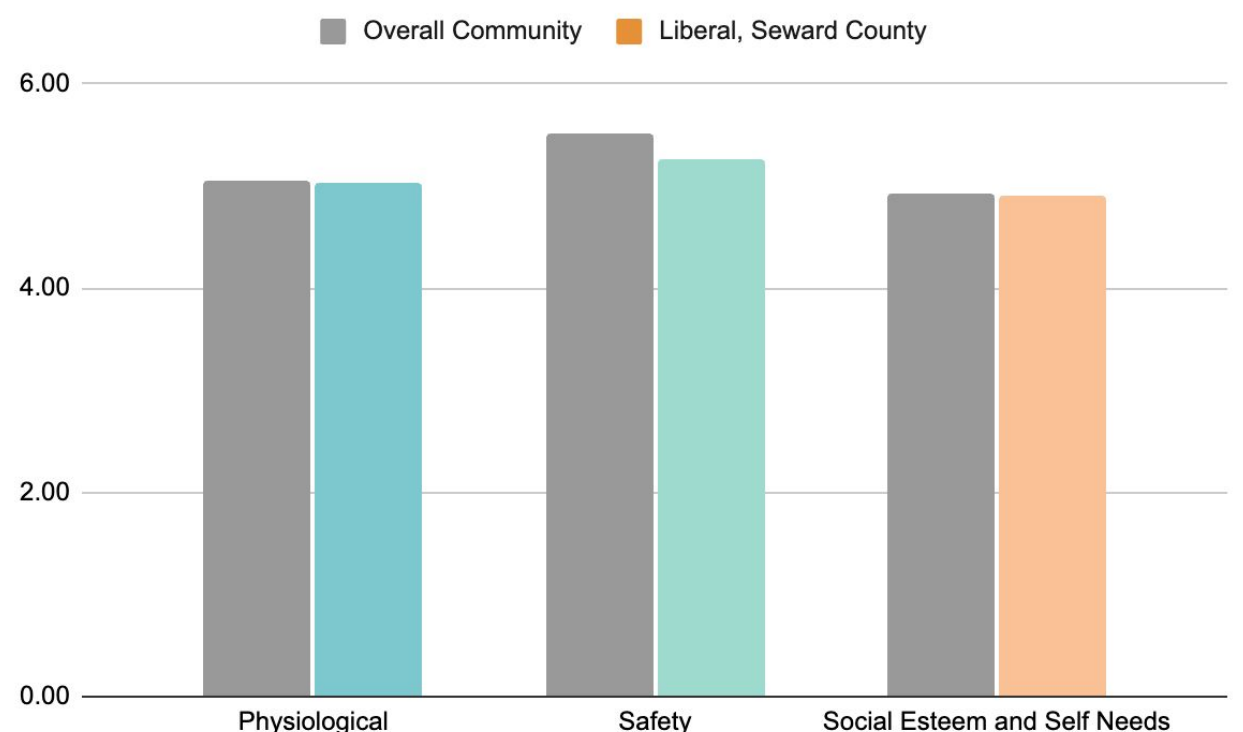
Community's Best Assets: SAFETY NEEDS:

- Police presence
- Low crime
- Surveillance cameras
- Personal security
- Police department
- City and county services
- Employment opportunities (related to safety)
- Strong county/city hospital
- Coalition families and organizations
- Sense of belonging
- Funded social services
- Community safety programs
- Emergency services
- Neighborhood watch programs
- Secure housing

Community's Best Assets: SOCIAL, SELF & ESTEEM NEEDS:

- Church
- Library
- LACF (Liberal Area Coalition for Families)
- College
- Baker Arts Center
- Parks
- Community involvement
- Arts programs
- Senior center
- Local news outlets (e.g., online news such as Mexicana)
- Restaurants and bars
- Support groups
- Social clubs
- Community events
- Educational programs

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



Confidence In Our Local Economy

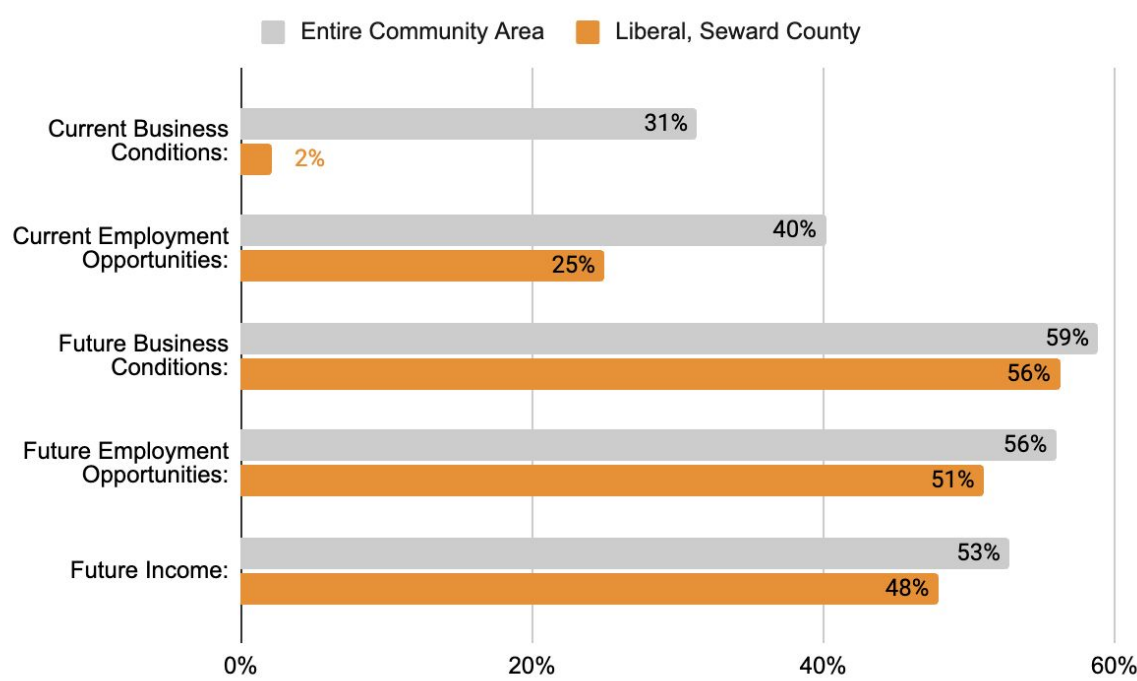
Economic Summary:

Residents express a mix of cautious optimism and concern regarding the community's economic conditions. While current business conditions are seen as normal by many, there is a strong expectation for improvement in the future. Employment opportunities are viewed similarly, with a hopeful outlook that jobs will become more plentiful, especially as the economy grows. However, there is a notable concern about income levels, with some expecting increases while others foresee stagnation or even decreases.

Given this economic landscape, it is crucial to focus on strategies that stimulate job creation and business development. Encouraging the establishment of new businesses and supporting existing ones could foster more robust economic growth and job opportunities. Additionally, addressing concerns about income stability through workforce development programs and education initiatives could help residents feel more secure in their financial future.

The community should also consider diversifying its economic base, particularly by attracting industries that are less susceptible to economic downturns. By focusing on sustainable growth and ensuring that all residents have access to quality jobs and rising incomes, the community can build a more resilient and prosperous economy.

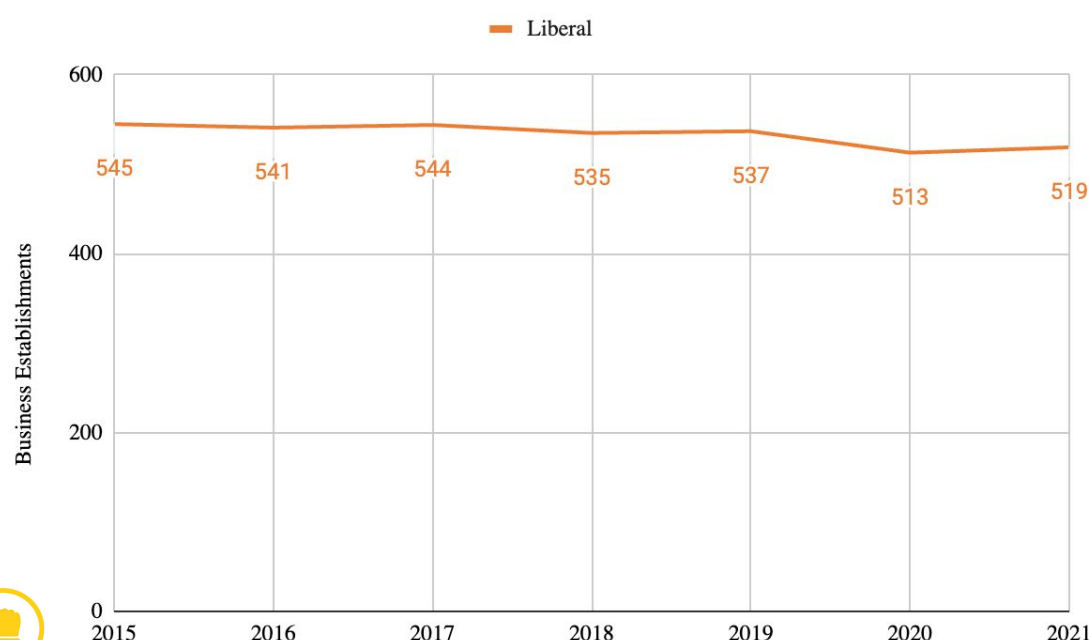
Our Economic Perceptions



Businesses Needed In Our Town:

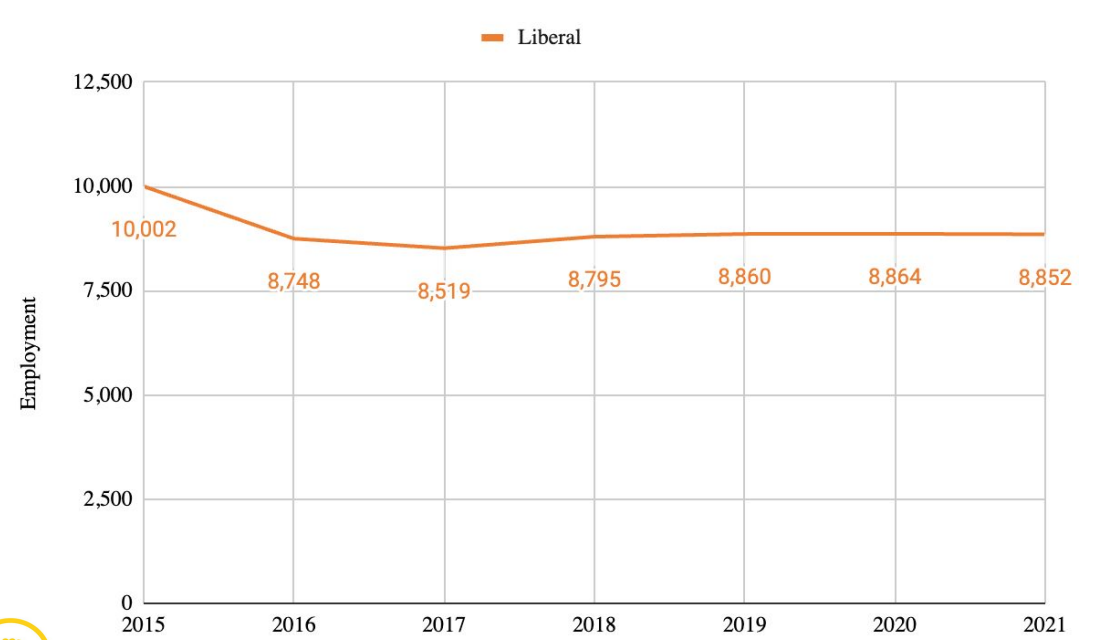
1. New energy (e.g., solar energy farm)
2. Shopping and downtown stores
3. Wildfire prevention, tornado safety, gun safety, and services for unsheltered
4. Large animal veterinarian and expanded health specialties
5. Affordable rental properties
6. Large factory or business to provide options and competition
7. Manufacturing or industrial businesses
8. Affordable food options (e.g., Aldi)
9. Family clothing stores
10. Large home improvement store

Businesses in Our Town



Data source:USCB, County Business Patterns

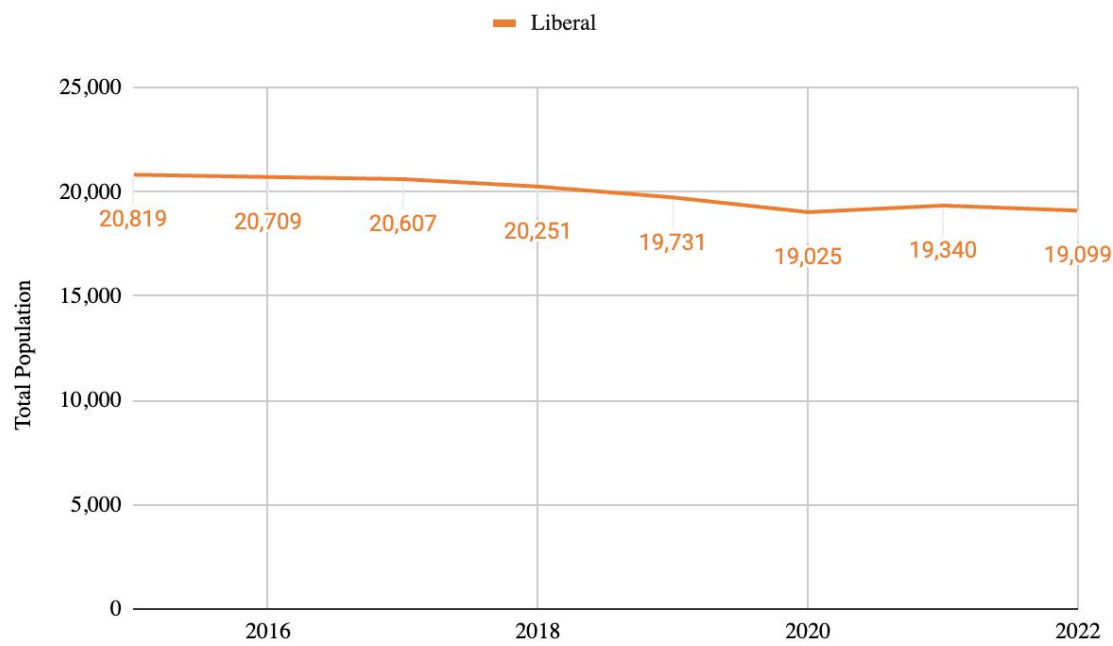
10 Year Shift in Local Jobs



Data source:USCB, County Business Patterns

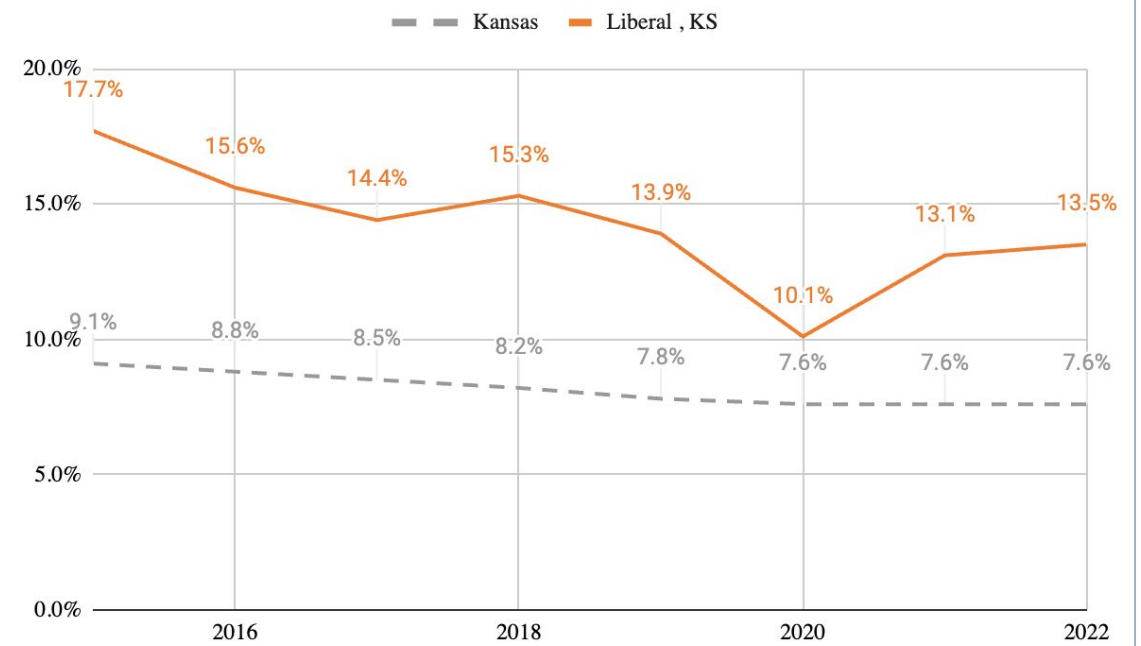
Local Economic Indicators


Overall Population Trend



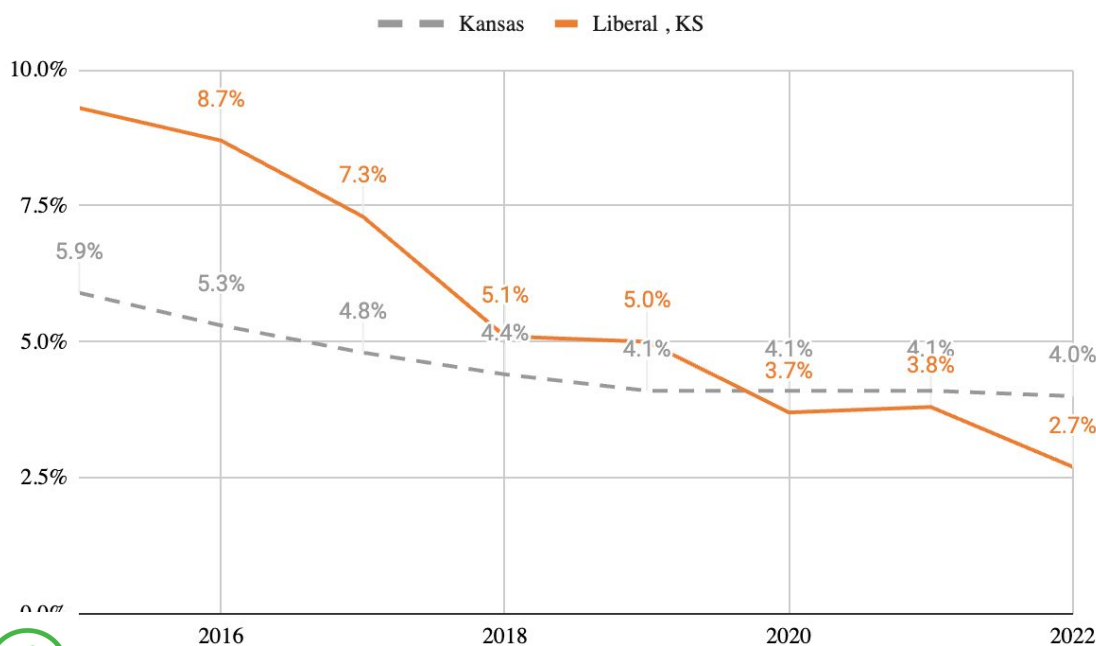
 Data source:USCB, ACS 5-Yr Avg

Local Poverty Rate



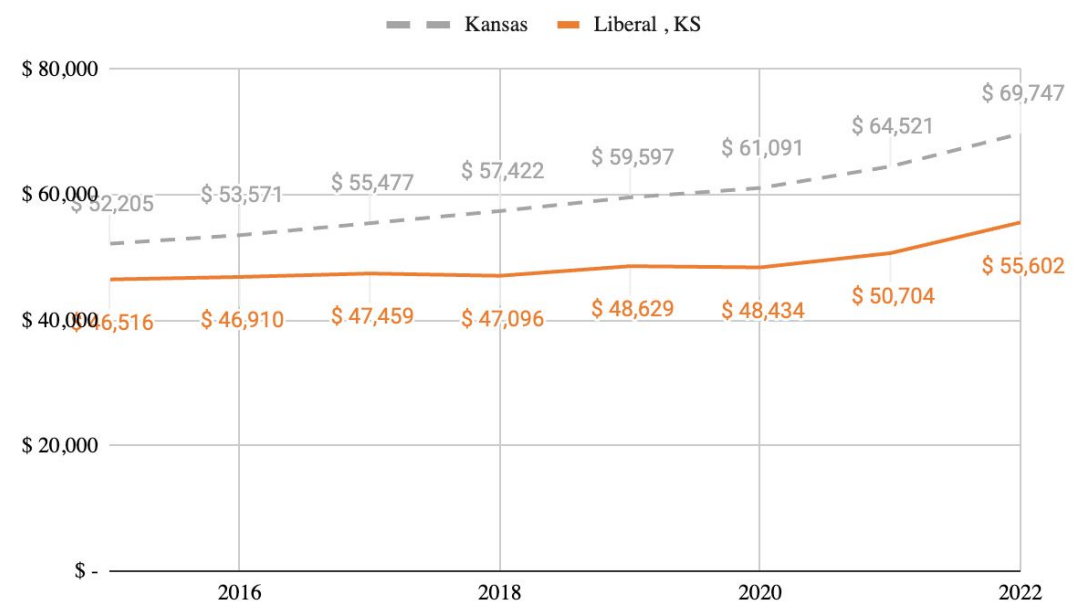
 Data source:USCB, American Community Survey, 5-Yr Avg, DP03

Local Unemployment Rate



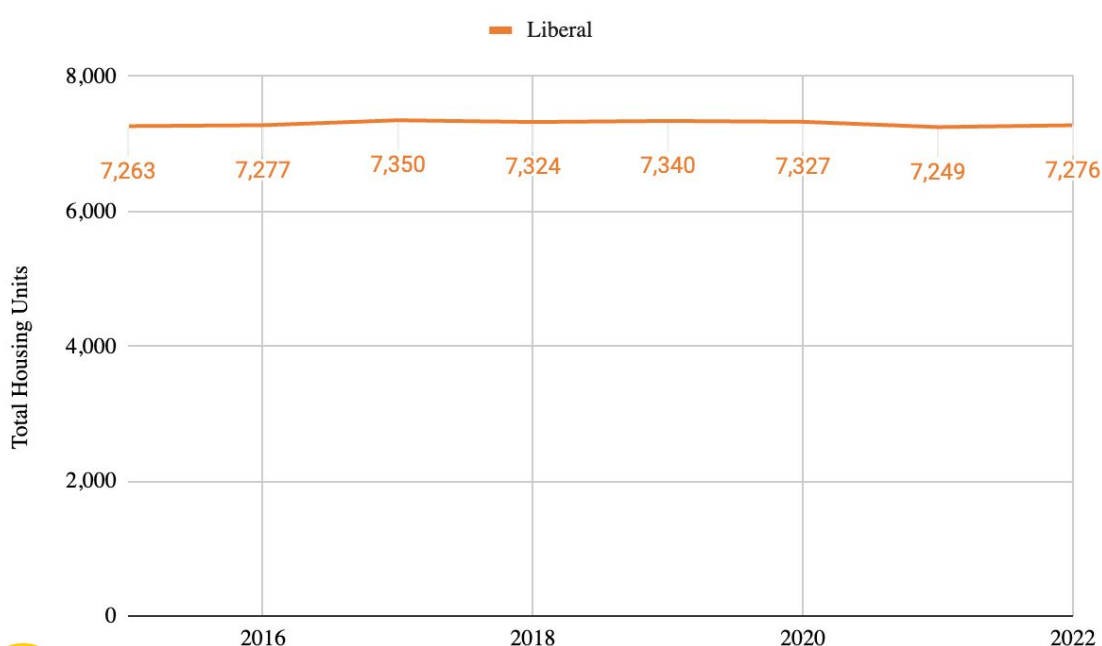
 Data source:USCB, American Community Survey, 5-Yr Avg, DP03

Median Household Income



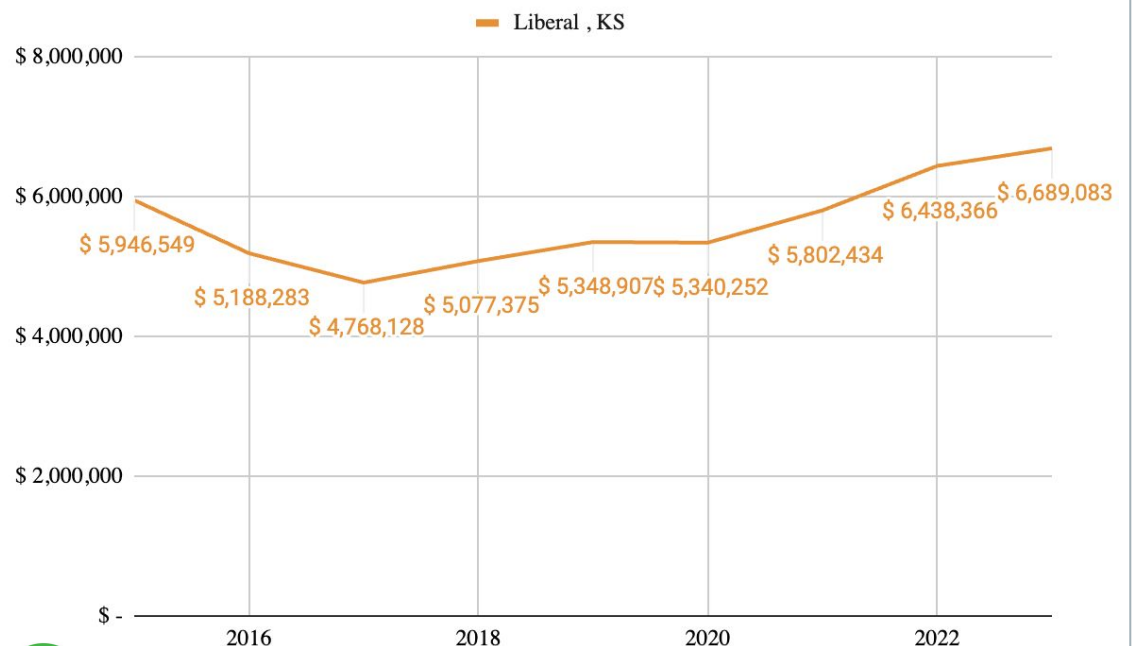
 Data source:USCB, American Community Survey, 5-Yr Avg, DP03

Total Housing Units



 Data source:USCB, ACS 5-Yr Avg

Annual Sales Tax Collection



 Data source:Kansas Dept of Revenue

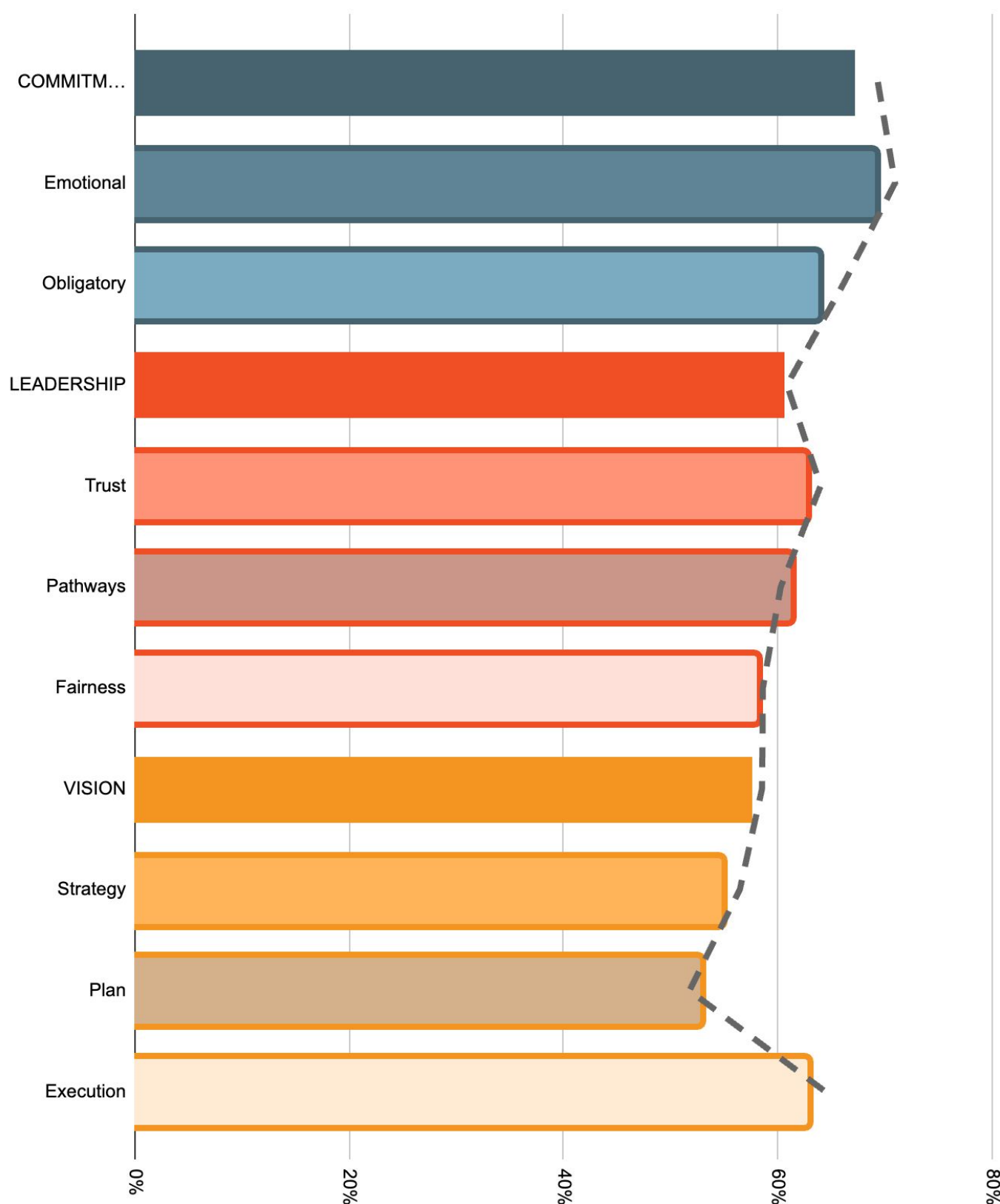
Confidence In Our Local Community

Engagement Summary:

Residents generally express moderate to strong feelings of loyalty and belonging in the community, with many feeling a sense of pride in what has been accomplished so far. Confidence in leadership and future direction, however, is more mixed, indicating room for improvement. While many residents are optimistic, some express concerns about community challenges, highlighting the need for greater clarity in leadership and stronger pathways for community involvement. Engagement is strong, but there's potential for deeper connections.

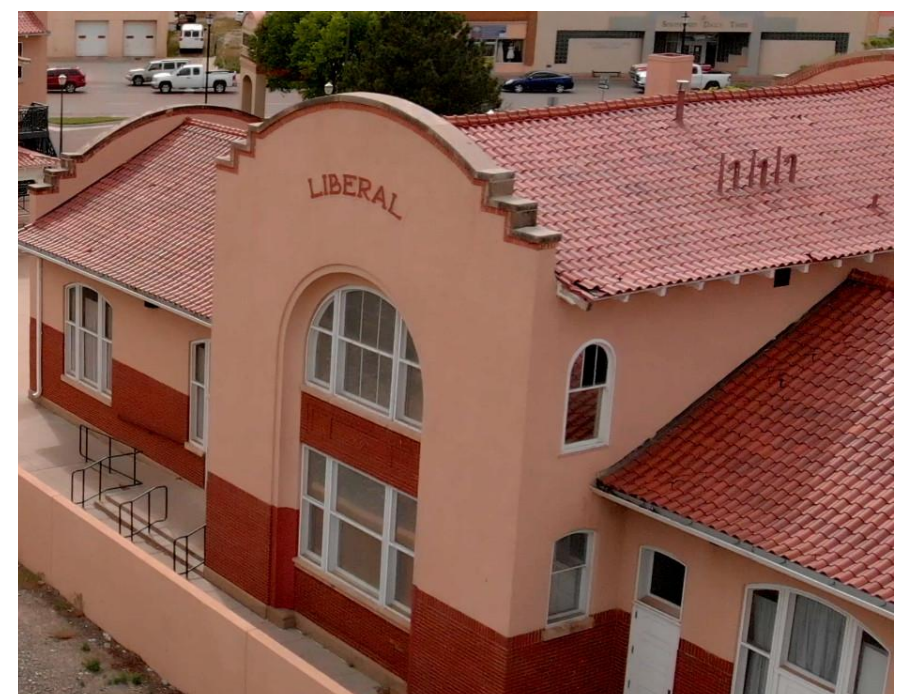


How do our residents view our community?



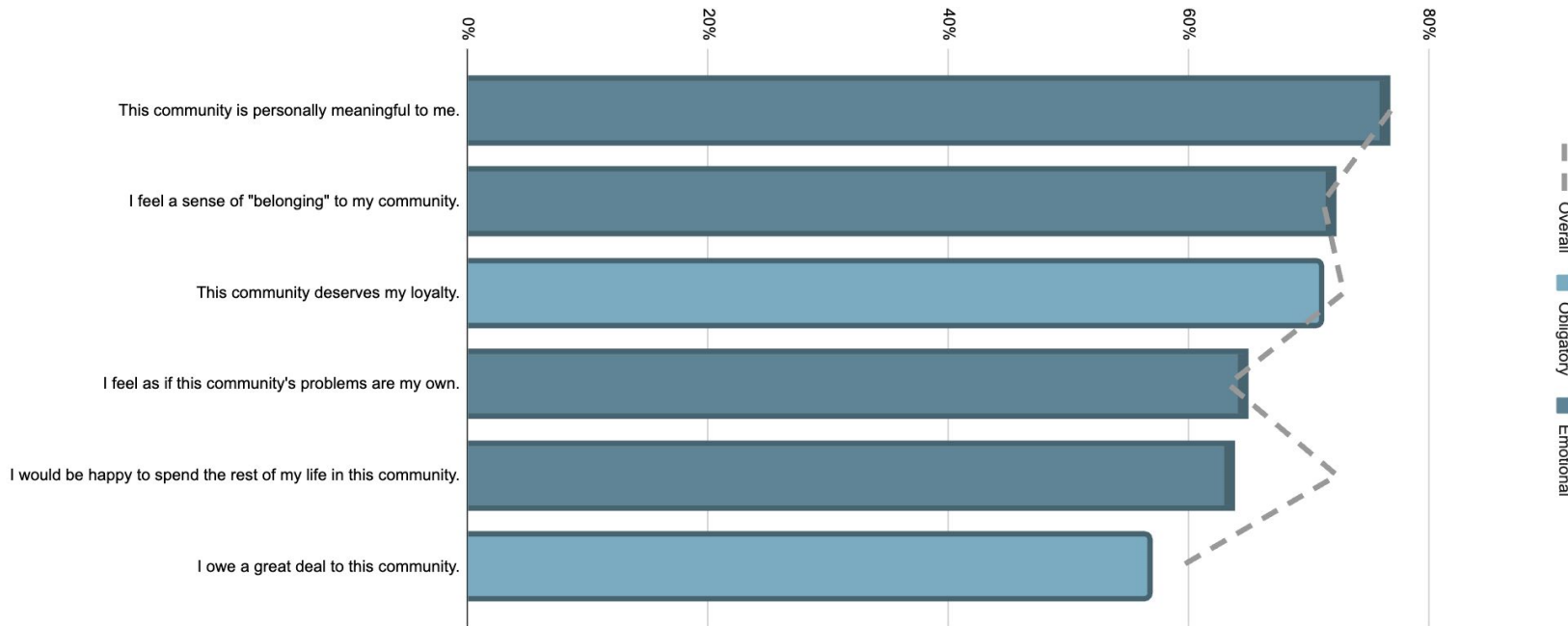
The biggest challenge facing the community is the varying levels of confidence in leadership and the community's future direction. While some residents feel proud of past achievements, others are less certain about where the community is headed. This mixed confidence poses a risk to sustained community engagement and growth. However, the biggest opportunity lies in leveraging the strong sense of belonging and loyalty that many residents already feel. By improving communication and leadership transparency, the community can build on this foundation to foster a more unified and forward-looking environment.

1. What specific steps can leadership take to improve transparency and trust within the community?
2. How can we better involve residents in decision-making processes to ensure their voices are heard?
3. What new initiatives could strengthen the sense of belonging and pride in our community, particularly among those who feel less connected?



Confidence In Our Local Community

Community Confidence: Personal Commitment

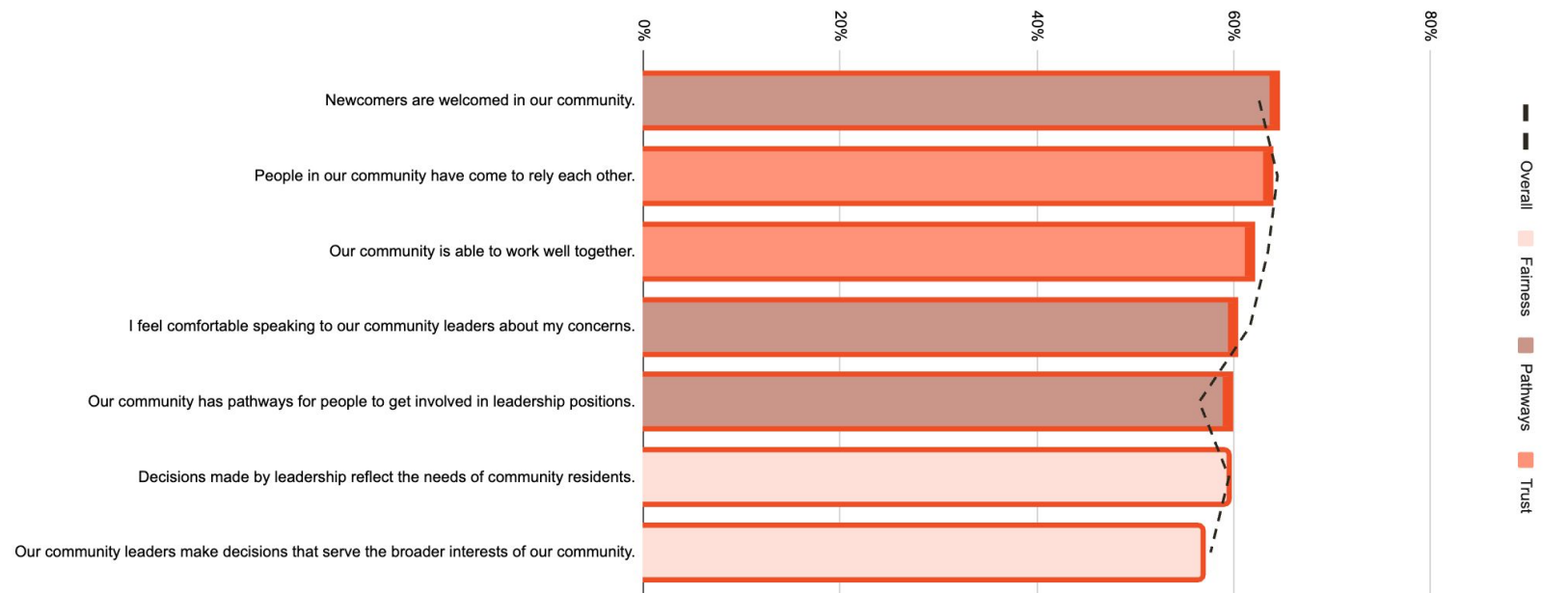


The biggest challenge in the personal commitment category is that many residents feel they do not owe much to the community. This indicates a potential lack of deep connection or investment in the community's well-being.

What initiatives can be introduced to enhance residents' sense of ownership and responsibility towards the community?

What types of community projects or events could help residents feel more valued and integral to the community's future?

Community Confidence: Local Leadership

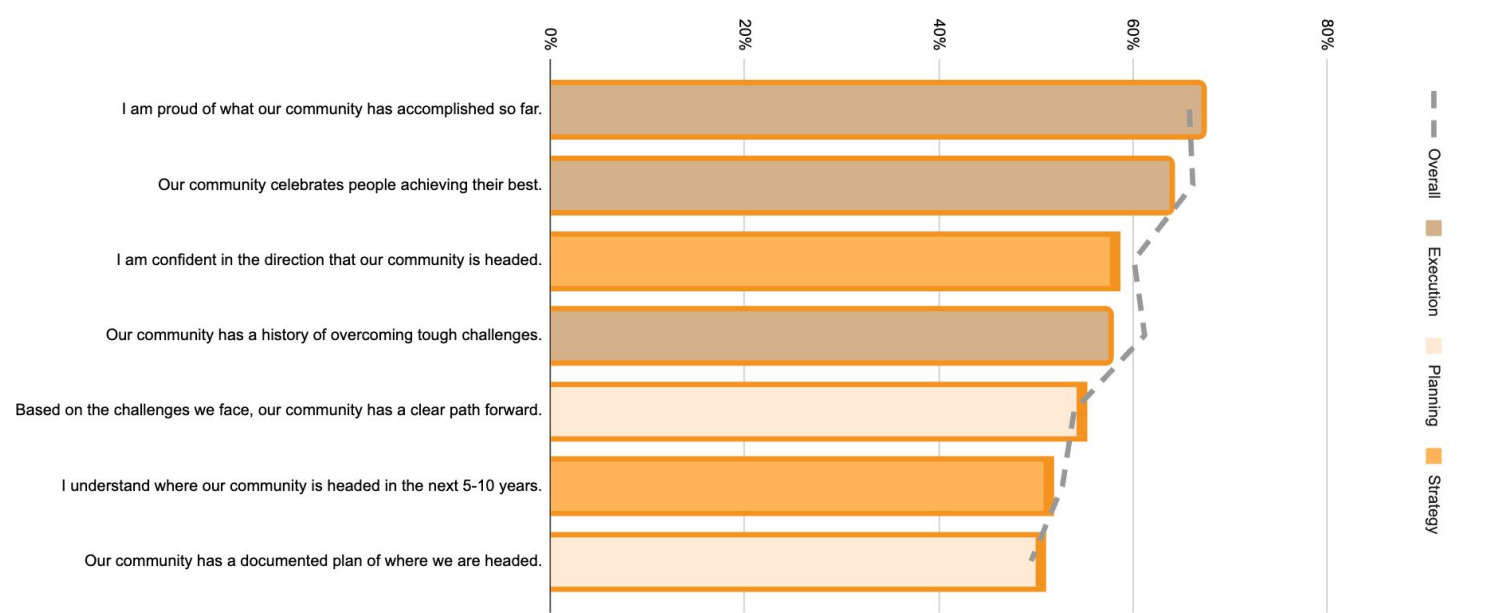


The biggest challenge is that residents feel the community lacks a clear path forward in addressing challenges. This uncertainty can lead to disengagement and a lack of confidence in leadership. Without a defined direction, it's difficult for the community to unite and work towards common goals.

How can community leaders better communicate their vision and strategies for the future?

How can we create more transparent and inclusive decision-making processes that build trust and clarity?

Community Confidence: Vision



The biggest challenge is the lack of a documented plan for where the community is headed. This absence of a clear roadmap creates uncertainty and hinders collective progress. Without a tangible plan, it's challenging for residents to align their efforts and support long-term goals.

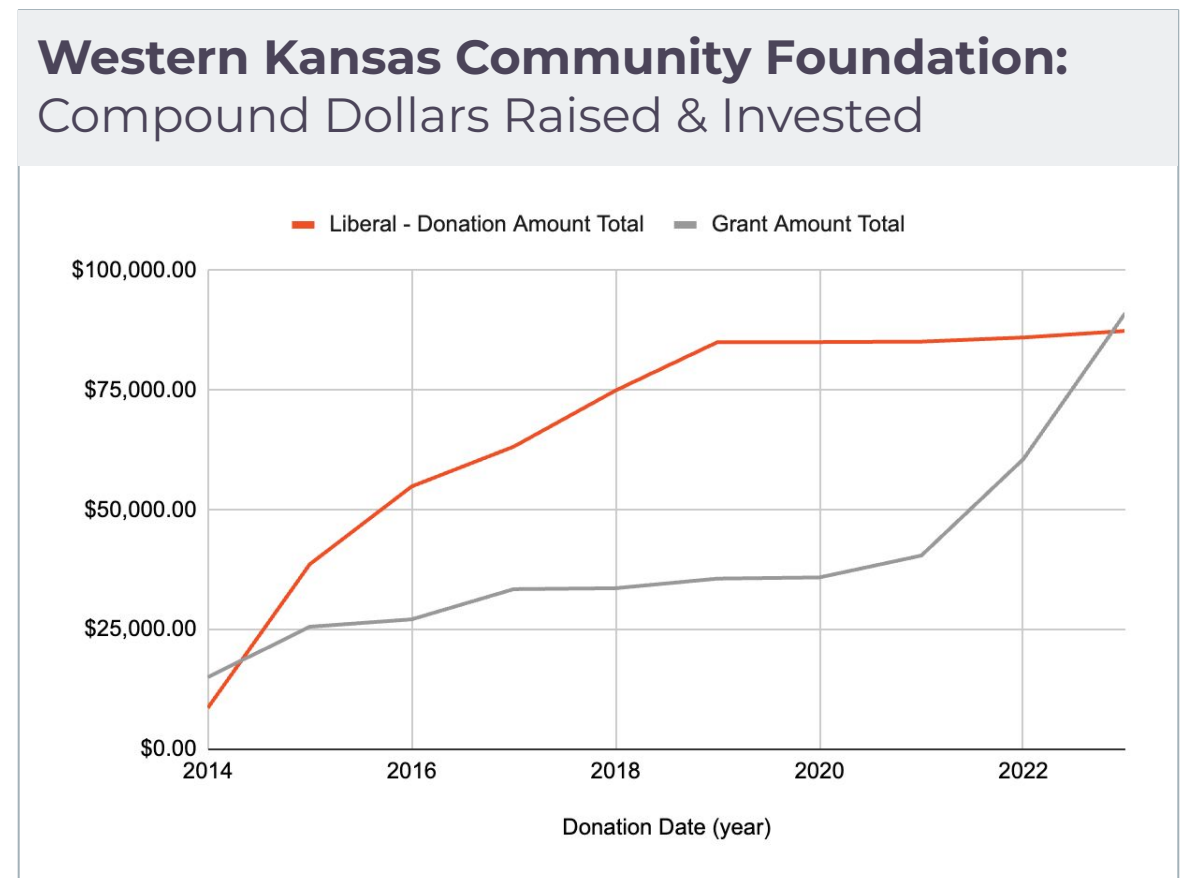
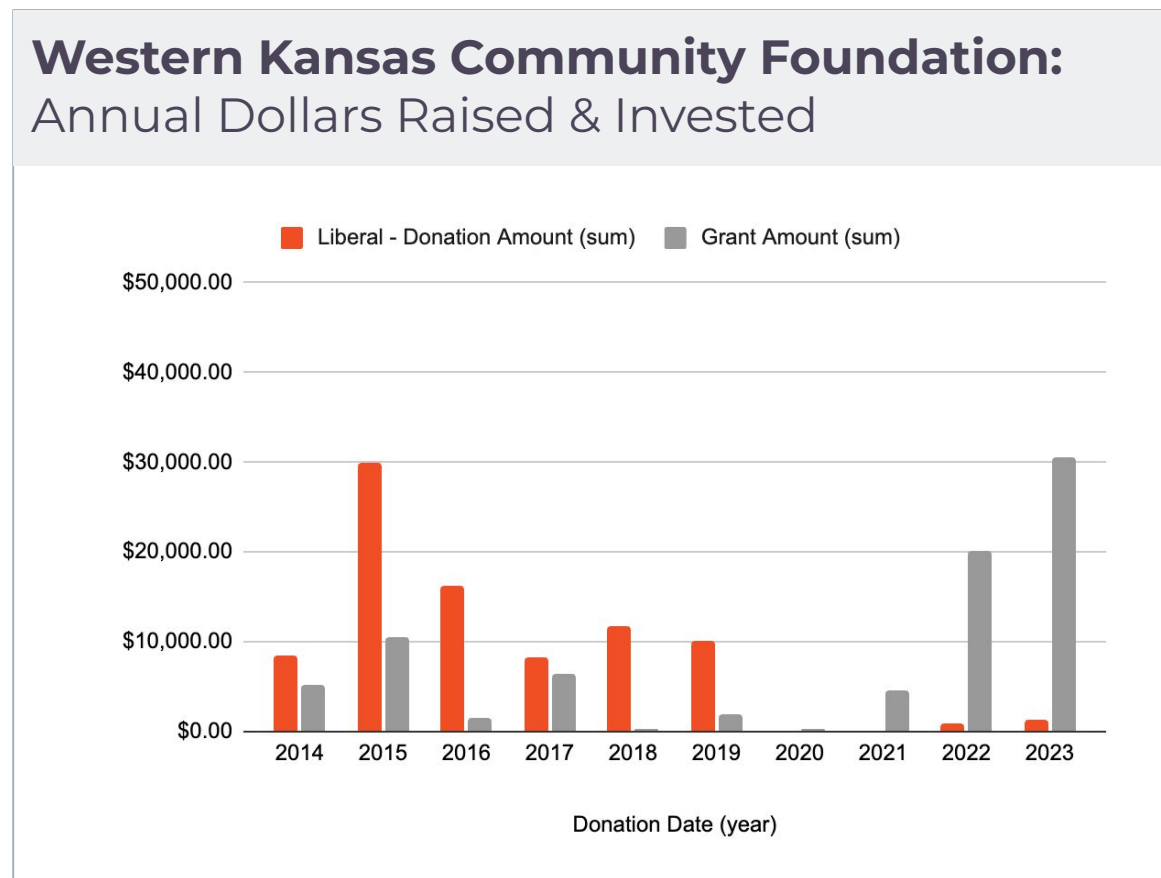
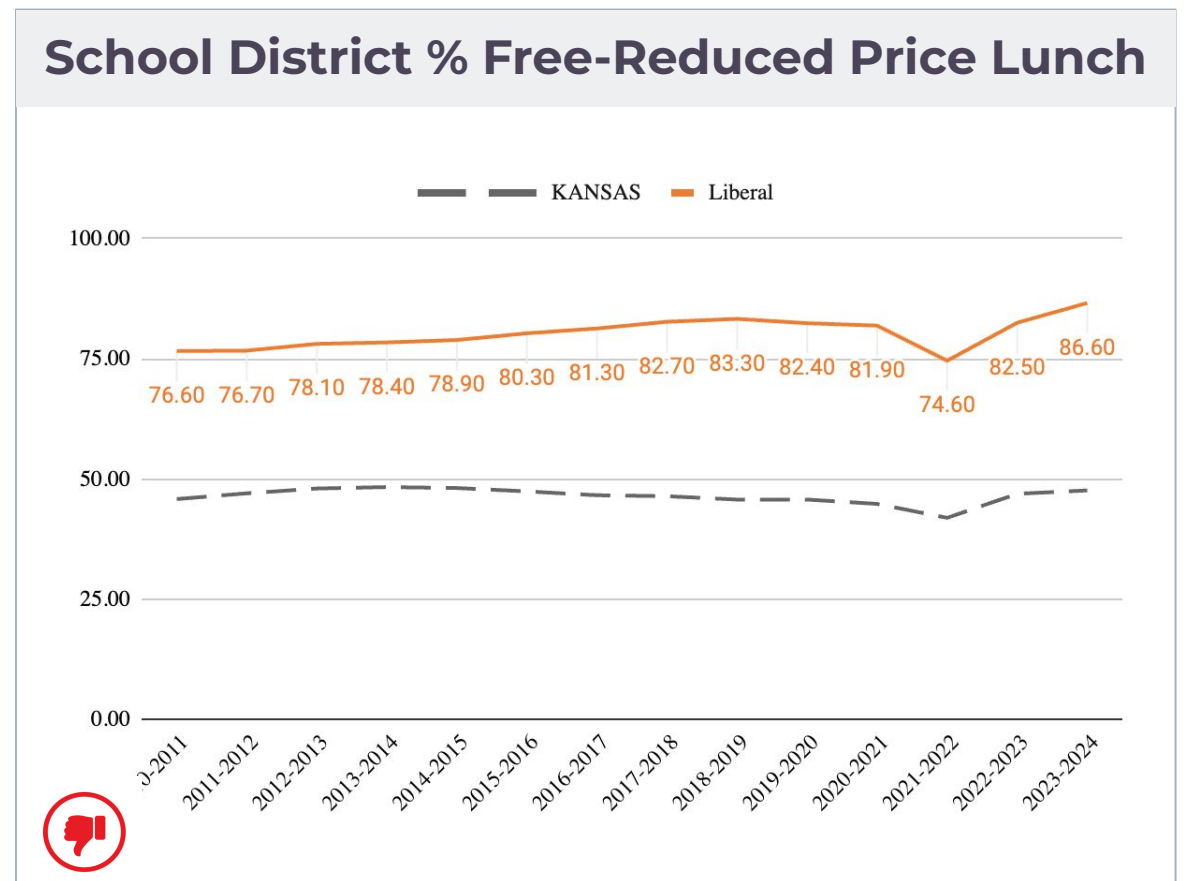
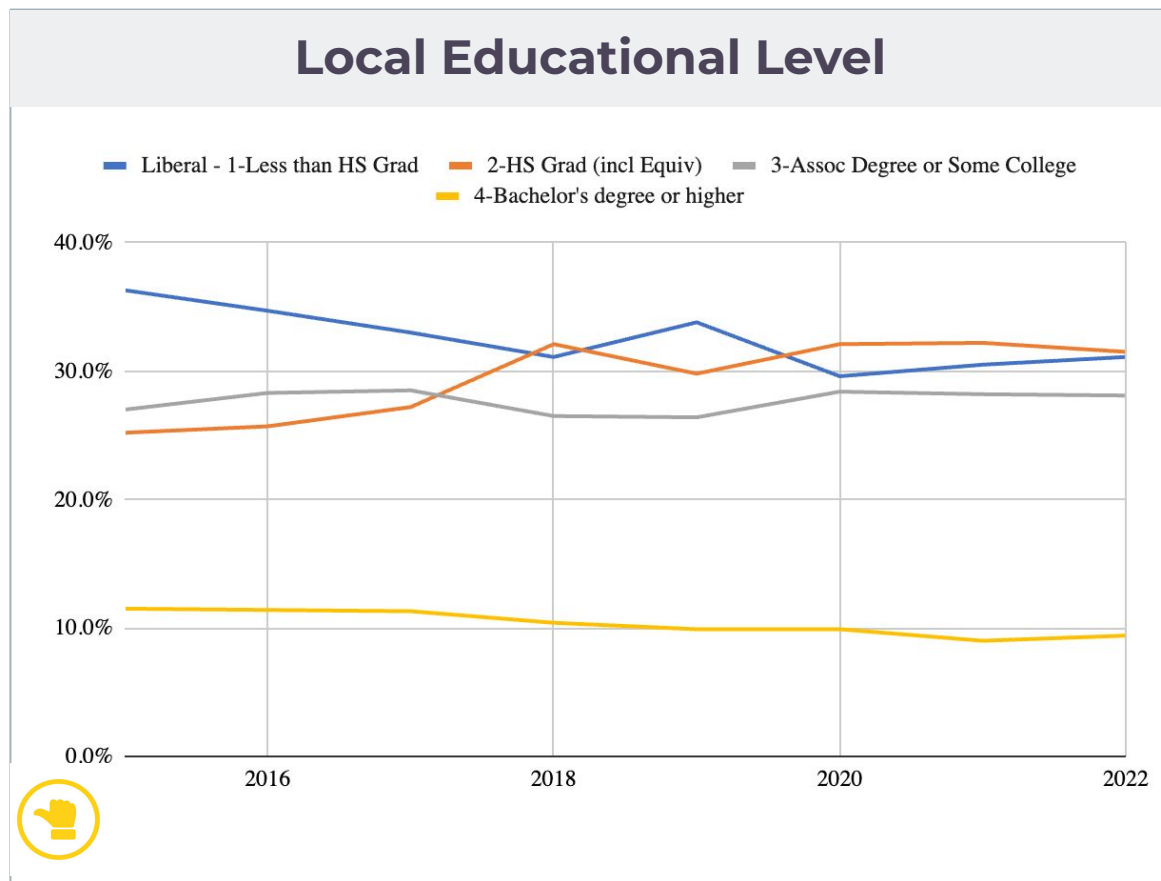
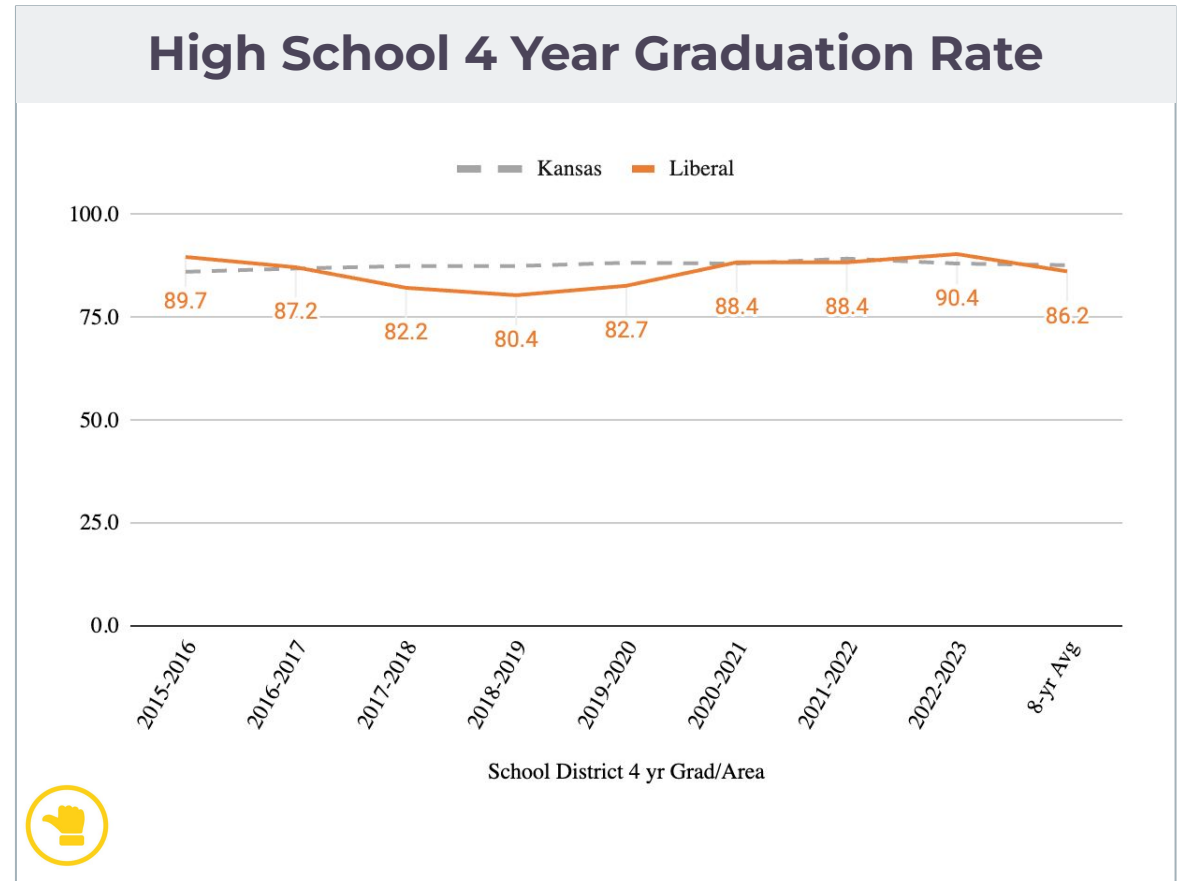
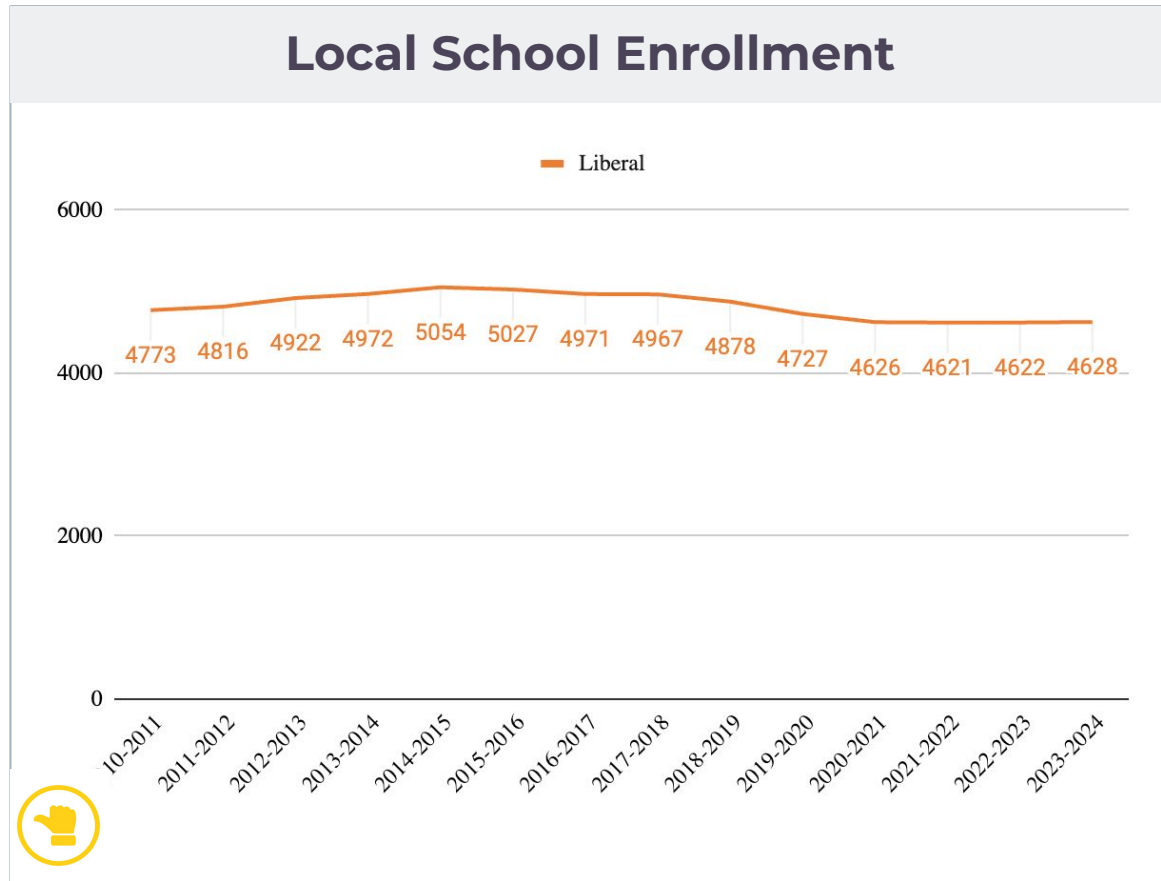
What steps can be taken to develop and share a comprehensive community plan?

How can residents contribute to the creation of this plan to ensure broad support?

What milestones can be set to track and celebrate progress?

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

Local Community Indicators



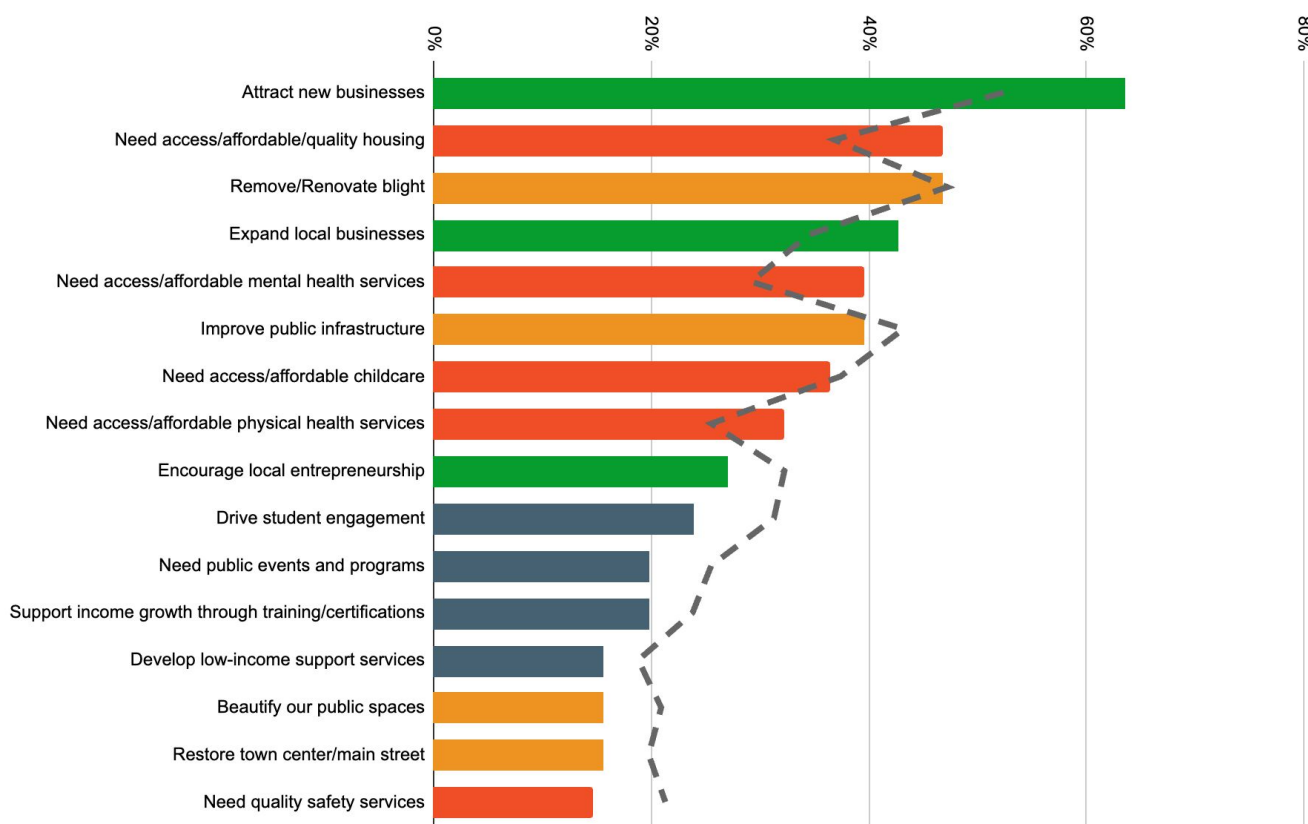
Community Priorities

Priorities Summary:

Residents prioritize fostering a resilient economy, with the majority focusing on economic development and job creation. Additionally, improving health services and overall community well-being are significant concerns. Vibrant place-making and citizen engagement are also noted, though less frequently. Metrics for economic growth and health improvements dominate the respondents' choices, reflecting a strong desire to build a robust and healthy community.

■ Health
 ■ Placemaking
 ■ Economy
 ■ People
 ■ Average Western Kansas Score

2024 Program Priorities



Vibrant Place:

Residents prioritize creating vibrant places, focusing on infrastructure, beautification, and improving public spaces. While less frequently mentioned than economic goals, the desire for a more attractive and lively community environment is clear.

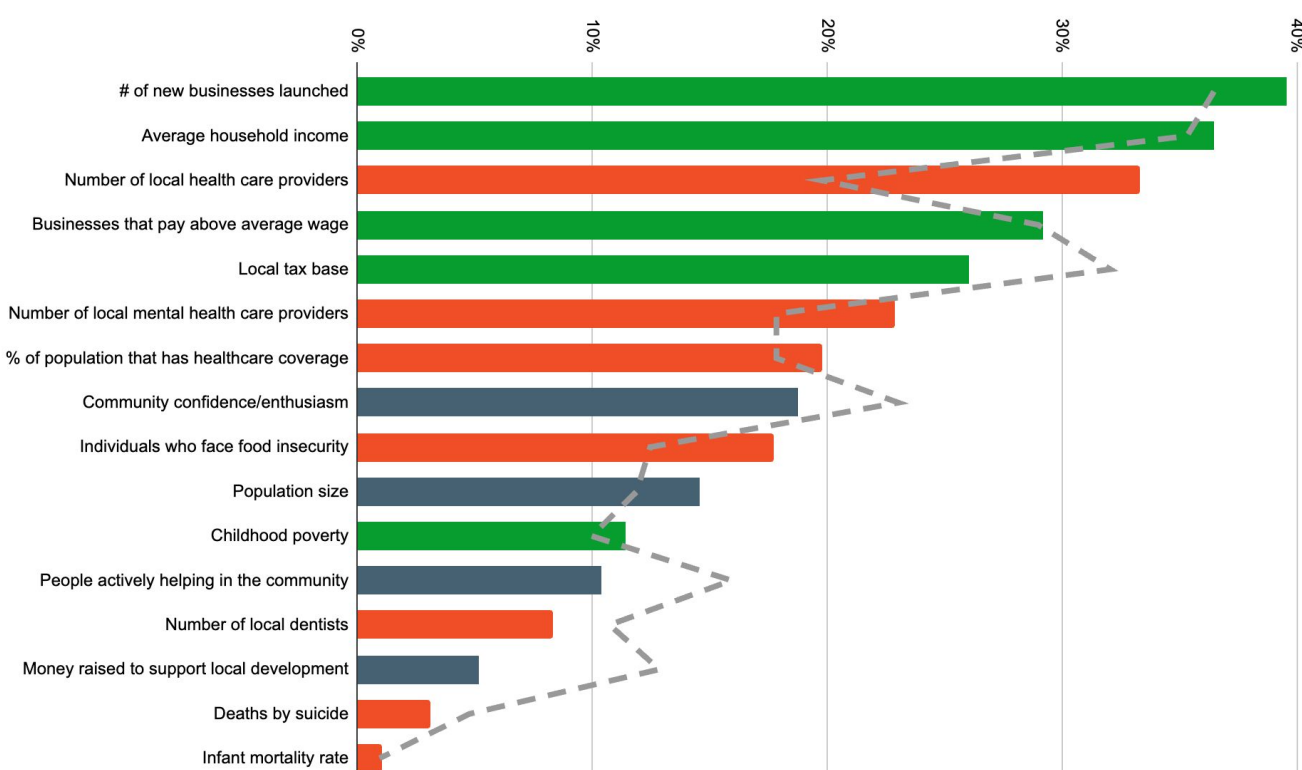
Resilient Economy:

The most pressing concern for residents is building a resilient economy. This includes job creation, supporting local businesses, and attracting new industries to ensure long-term economic stability and growth.

Engaged Citizens:

Citizen engagement is crucial but less frequently highlighted. Residents recognize the importance of community involvement in decision-making processes and initiatives that strengthen civic participation and collective action.

2024 Priority Metrics



Economy:

Economic growth is the top priority, with residents focusing on improving business conditions, increasing employment opportunities, and raising income levels. The community's primary goal is to create a sustainable, thriving economy that supports long-term prosperity.

Community Engagement:

While less frequently mentioned, community engagement is vital to residents. They seek greater involvement in decision-making and better communication between leaders and citizens. Strengthening these connections can enhance community cohesion and drive collaborative progress.

Health:

Improving health services is a key concern, with a focus on expanding access to healthcare, increasing the availability of mental health resources, and promoting overall well-being. Residents aim to ensure that health metrics reflect a community that prioritizes physical and mental health.

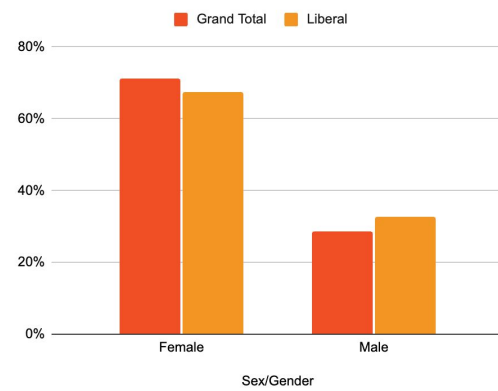
Survey Respondents

Number of Participants



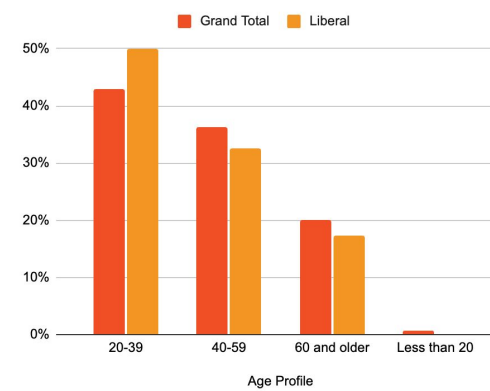
The biggest demographic captured in the survey consists of residents who have lived in the community for 5-20 years.

Gender



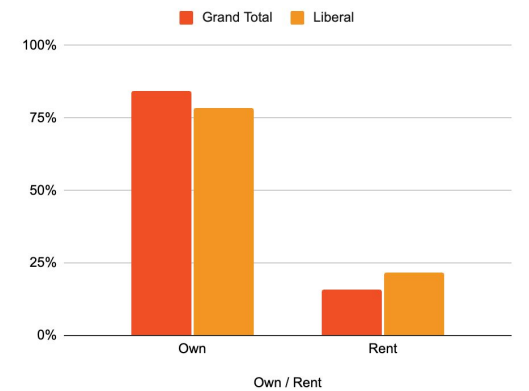
Female respondents are more prevalent than male respondents, highlighting potential insights into the community's gender-specific needs and priorities.

Age Profile



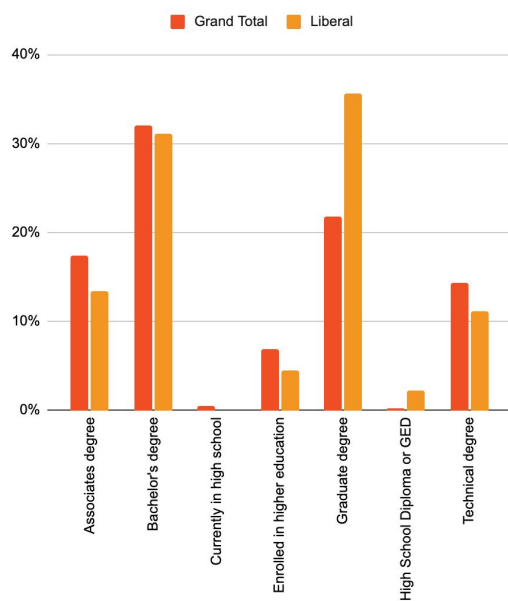
The majority of respondents are aged 20-39, indicating a younger, active population that may focus on long-term community development.

Residential Status



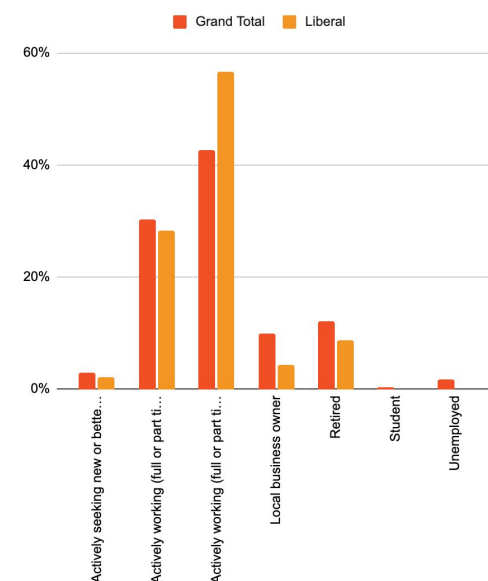
Most respondents own their homes, suggesting a stable, invested population with a long-term commitment to the community.

Education Level



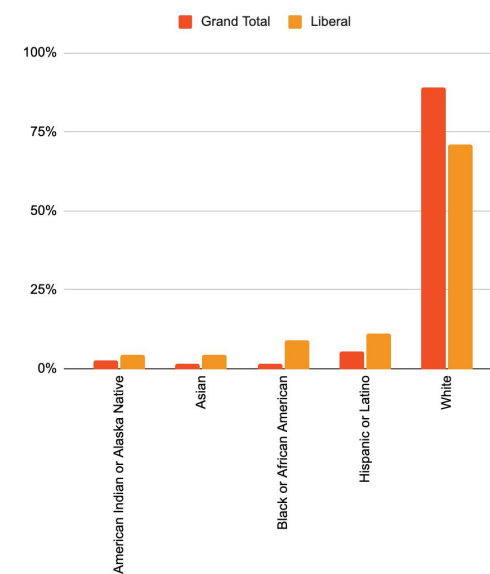
A significant number of respondents hold a Bachelor's degree, pointing to an educated community that may prioritize advanced economic and educational initiatives.

Employment Status



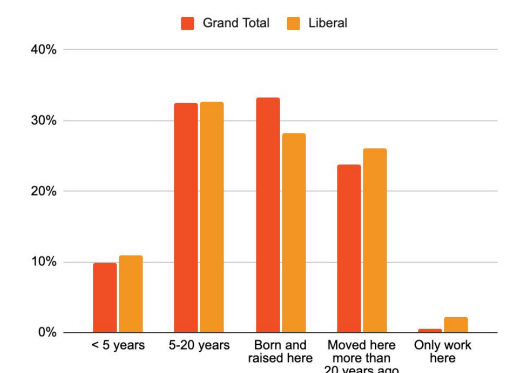
The largest group of respondents is actively working in the public sector, reflecting a community engaged in public service and governance.

Ethnicity



Not enough data to analyze.

Years lived in location



Most respondents have lived in the community for 5-20 years, reflecting a stable and experienced resident base that may be deeply invested in local issues and long-term planning.

Town Score
 Average Overall Score

34

Number of people who expressed an interest in volunteering to better the community
34 of 96 (36%)