

Western Kansas
Community Foundation

2026 Community Benchmark Report

City of Hugoton, KS

Be The Movement!
Connect with local changemakers, local community projects, resources & grants, and much more.

www.wkcf.org

Innovation Economy Partners
OUR FOCUS: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Dr. Katie Reck | katie@wkcf.org

Innovation Economy Partners
OUR FOCUS: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Western Kansas Community Foundation

Community Benchmark Report
City of Cimarron, KS | 2026

What Makes Our Community Special?

Residents described Hugoton as **caring, friendly, clean, safe, and close-knit**. They value the way neighbors support one another during difficult times, along with the community's strong schools, local businesses, churches, parks, recreation opportunities, and public services. Many also expressed deep family roots and pride in calling Hugoton home.

"We are tight knit and support each other. We have great schools and local small businesses."

"[We live in a] very clean town. People join together for good and hard times."

"Many who were born here return and raise families here. I think this is because of Hugoton's long history of investing heavily in its young people."

Residents also recognize that **Hugoton is adapting to economic change.** As the oil and gas industry has declined, the community has faced a growing need to attract new businesses and industries, maintain important services and infrastructure, and create opportunities that encourage families to remain in Hugoton. Residents' pride, involvement, and willingness to embrace new opportunities provide a strong foundation for Hugoton's future.

"Hugoton has a diverse economic job base for its size."

"[There is a] willingness to bring in new businesses or opportunities along with community involvement."

"New industry, friendly people who care about their hometown."

'Community Leaders I Most Admire'

Paula Rowden

Tron Stegman

Shannon Crawford

Matt Rome

Nancy Bansemer

Debbie Nordling

Neal Gillespie

Sharon Concannon

Jack Rowden

Jennifer Featherston

Sonja Watkins

Annette Sosa

Yvonne Jackson

Holly Grubbs

Todd Hewitt

Joe Thompson

Tim Singer

Jan Leonard

Brad Neihues

Dan Corpening

Residents identified 20 community leaders they admire. Paula Rowden, Tron Stegman, and Shannon Crawford were mentioned most often. Several residents recognized more than one leader, while another observed that the list is "endless because lots of people help in lots of ways."

"[What I love about this community is] how we come together in need—and how we are like a big family!"

~Anonymous Hugoton Resident

Innovation Economy Partners
OUR FOCUS: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Western Kansas Community Foundation

Community Benchmark Report
City of Cimarron, KS | 2026

Executive Summary

The 2026 Hugoton Community Benchmark Report reflects feedback from 38 residents about the community's strengths, economic outlook, confidence, and priorities. Residents consistently described Hugoton as caring, close-knit, clean, safe, and supportive—particularly when neighbors are facing hardship.

- **Strong connection to Hugoton:** Residents expressed strong loyalty and belonging, along with confidence in Hugoton's ability to work together and overcome challenges.
- **Clearer direction and involvement:** Residents were less certain about Hugoton's plan for the future and how people can become involved in community leadership.
- **Employment concerns:** Employment opportunities received the most negative economic rating. Other economic views were mixed, while interest in investing locally leaned positive.
- **Consistent priorities:** Residents continued to prioritize new businesses, addressing blight, affordable housing, and development.

Important context: Participation varied by year, with many high school-aged residents participating in 2025 and fewer residents participating in 2026. However, when comparing adults separately, overall commitment, confidence in leadership, and confident were very similar.

pg **4-5**

Local Economy and Economic Perceptions
Examines how residents view Hugoton's current and future business, employment, and income opportunities. This section also highlights needed businesses and services and reviews local indicators such as jobs, unemployment, household income, population, and poverty.

pg **6 - 8**

Community Confidence
Explores residents' connection to Hugoton and their confidence in community leadership, cooperation, planning, direction, and opportunities to become involved.

pg **9-10**

Critical Community Priorities
Participating residents continued to prioritize attracting new businesses, addressing blight—vacant, deteriorated, or underused properties—expanding affordable housing, education and training, and student engagement.

pg **11**

Survey Respondent Profile
Describes the 38 participating residents by age, time in Hugoton, education, employment, race and ethnicity, and housing. This profile helps readers understand whose perspectives are most visible in the results.

The Community Benchmark report has been commissioned by 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 the Western County 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 the fellow residents are craving.



Confidence In Our Local Economy

Economic Summary:

Hugoton residents expressed a **cautious economic outlook** in 2026. **Employment opportunities remained the clearest concern**, while views of current business conditions, future jobs, and future income were closer to neutral. Interest in investing locally leaned positive.

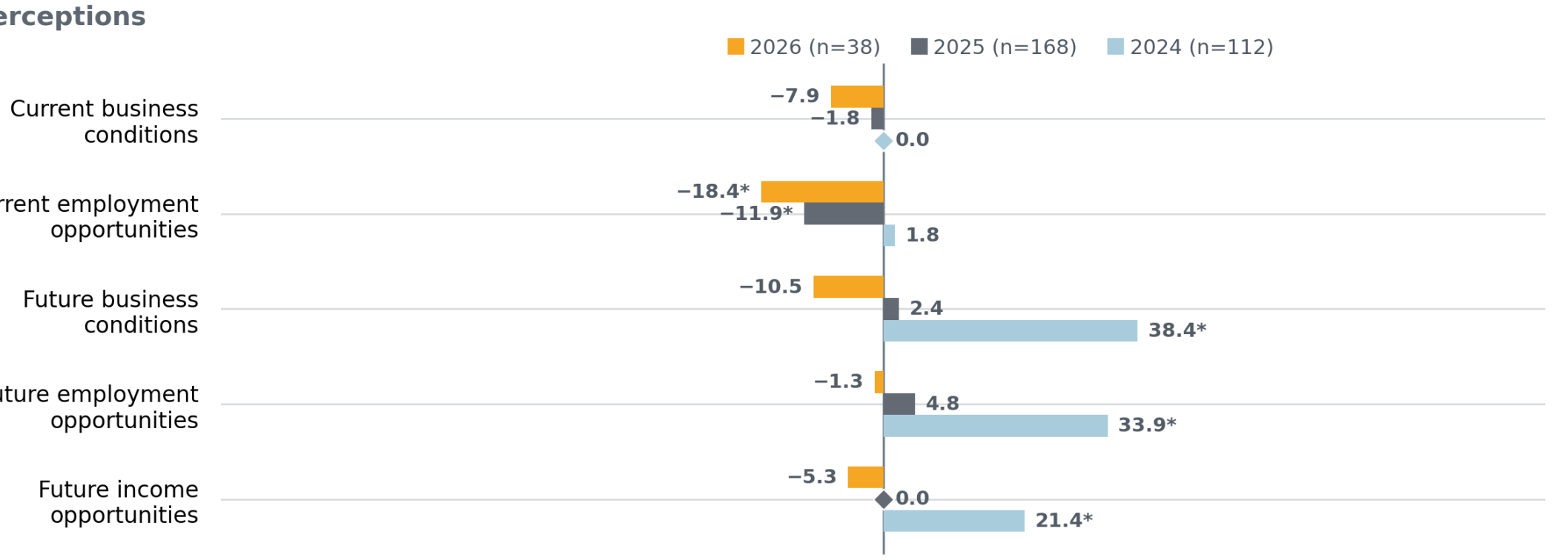
Residents continued to prioritize attracting new businesses, improving deteriorated properties, expanding affordable housing, and supporting local businesses and workforce development. Together, these findings point to **opportunities for focused business attraction, entrepreneurship, housing, and workforce efforts.**

What businesses does Hugoton need?	# times stated
Restaurants and family dining	12
Retail / Shopping	11
Healthcare specialists	11
Youth / Recreation	6
Transportation services	3
Childcare / Daycare	2
Home, lawn, pet, and repair services / Senior and assisted living spaces	2

Our Economic Perceptions | 2024-2026

With regard to your community, how would you assess current and future economic conditions?

2024–2026 Perceptions



2025–2026 Perceptions

Economic Perception Index: −100 = most unfavorable | 0 = neutral | +100 = most favorable

* clear difference from neutral ($p < .05$) ** notable difference from neutral ($p < .10$)

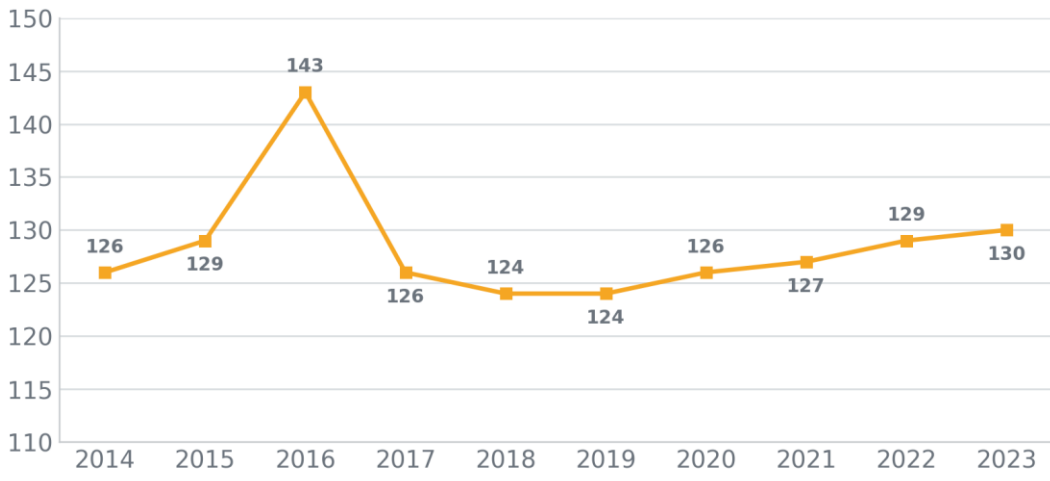
What this chart means

Scores above zero (middle line) reflect positive views, while scores below zero reflect negative views. In 2026, employment opportunities remained the clearest concern. Current income also leaned negative, while willingness to invest locally leaned positive. Other economic ratings were close enough to neutral that no firm positive or negative conclusion should be drawn.

Overall: Economic optimism declined considerably after 2024. Conditions remained generally similar from 2025 to 2026, although interest in investing locally improved. Because the number and ages of participating residents changed considerably each year, these trends should be viewed as general direction rather than exact change.

Local Economic Indicators

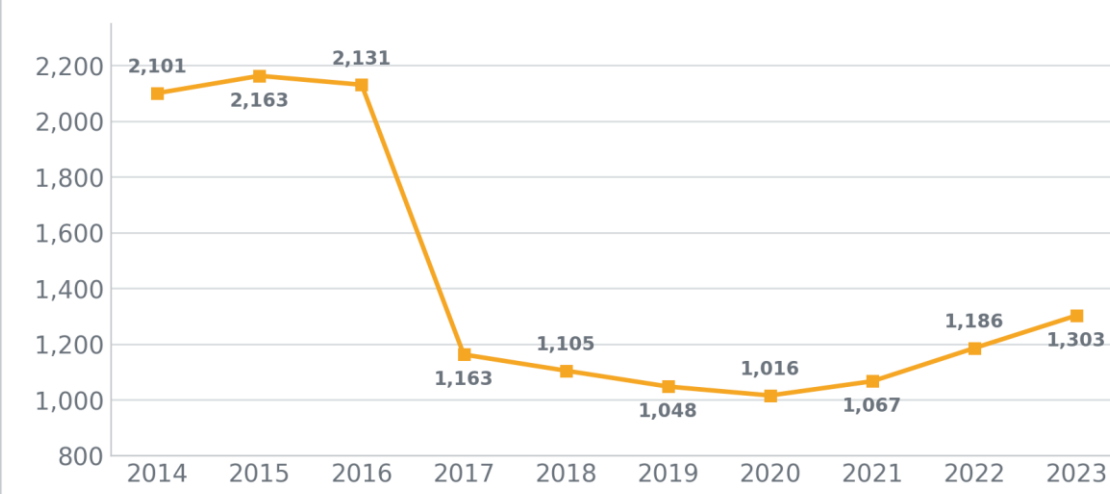
Businesses in Hugoton



Employer establishments remained relatively stable: 126 in 2014 and 130 in 2023.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ZIP Code Business Patterns, ZIP 67951 | Latest available year: 2023

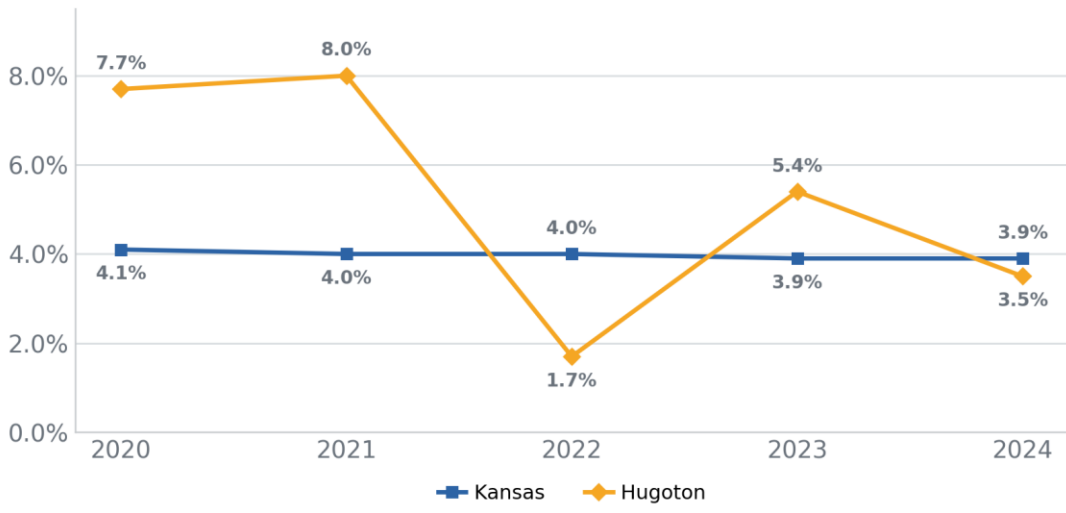
10-Year Shift in Local Jobs



Covered employment fell 38% over the decade, but recovered 28% from 2020 to 2023.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ZIP Code Business Patterns, ZIP 67951 | Latest available year: 2023

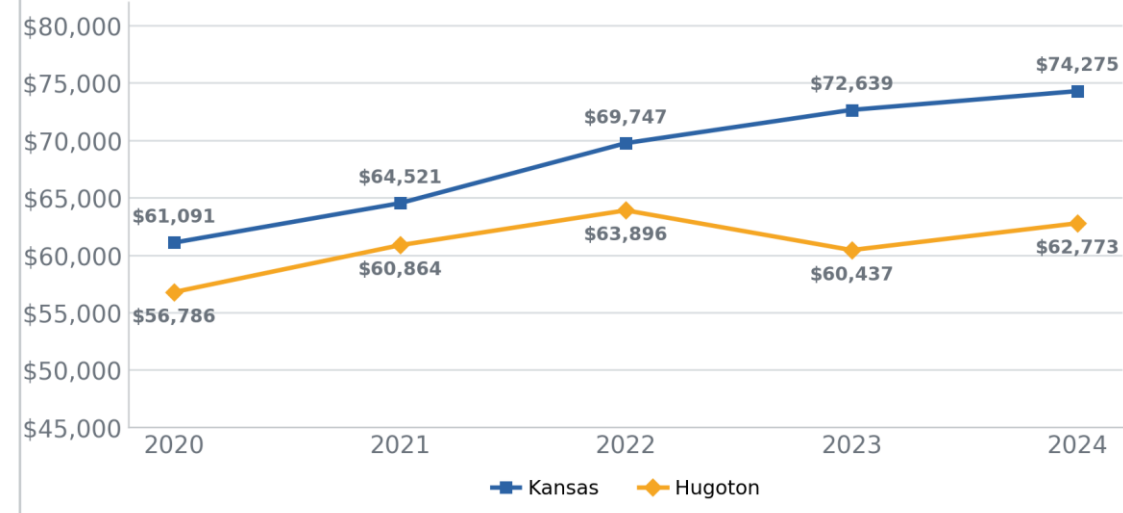
Local Unemployment Rate



Hugoton's estimated unemployment rate fell below the Kansas rate in 2024.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020–2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, B23025

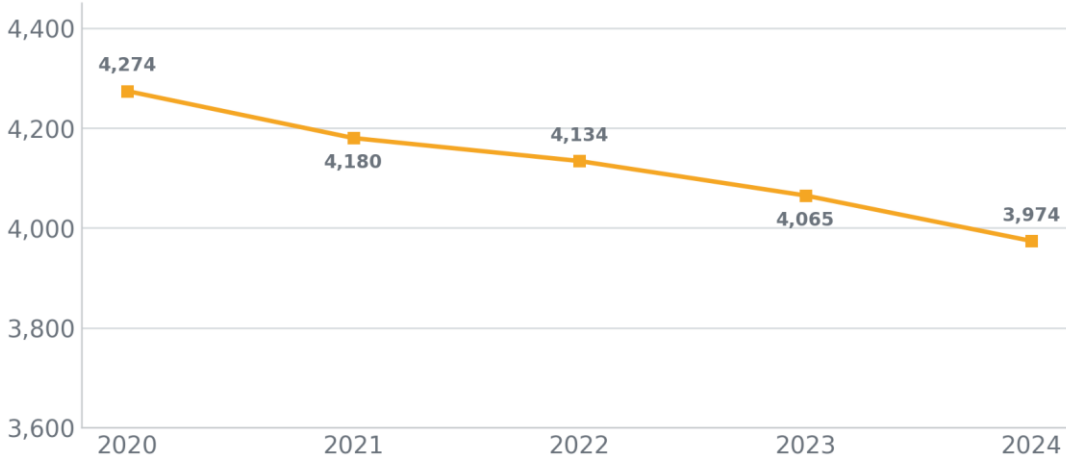
Median Household Income



Hugoton's 2024 median household income remained below the Kansas median.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020–2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, B19013

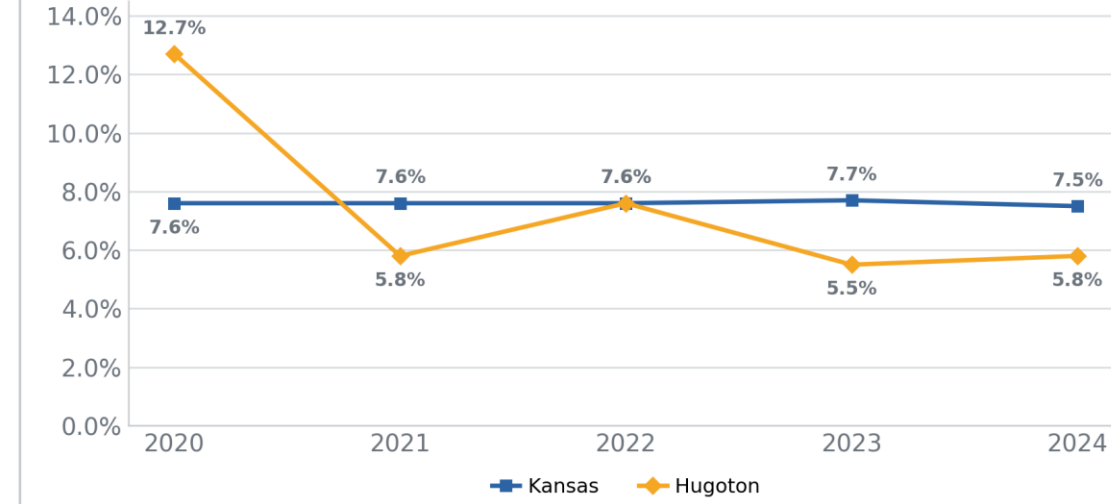
Population Trend



Hugoton's estimated population declined 7.0% from 2020 to 2024.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020–2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, B01003

Family Poverty Rate



Hugoton's estimated family poverty rate was below the Kansas rate in 2024.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020–2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, B17010 / DP03

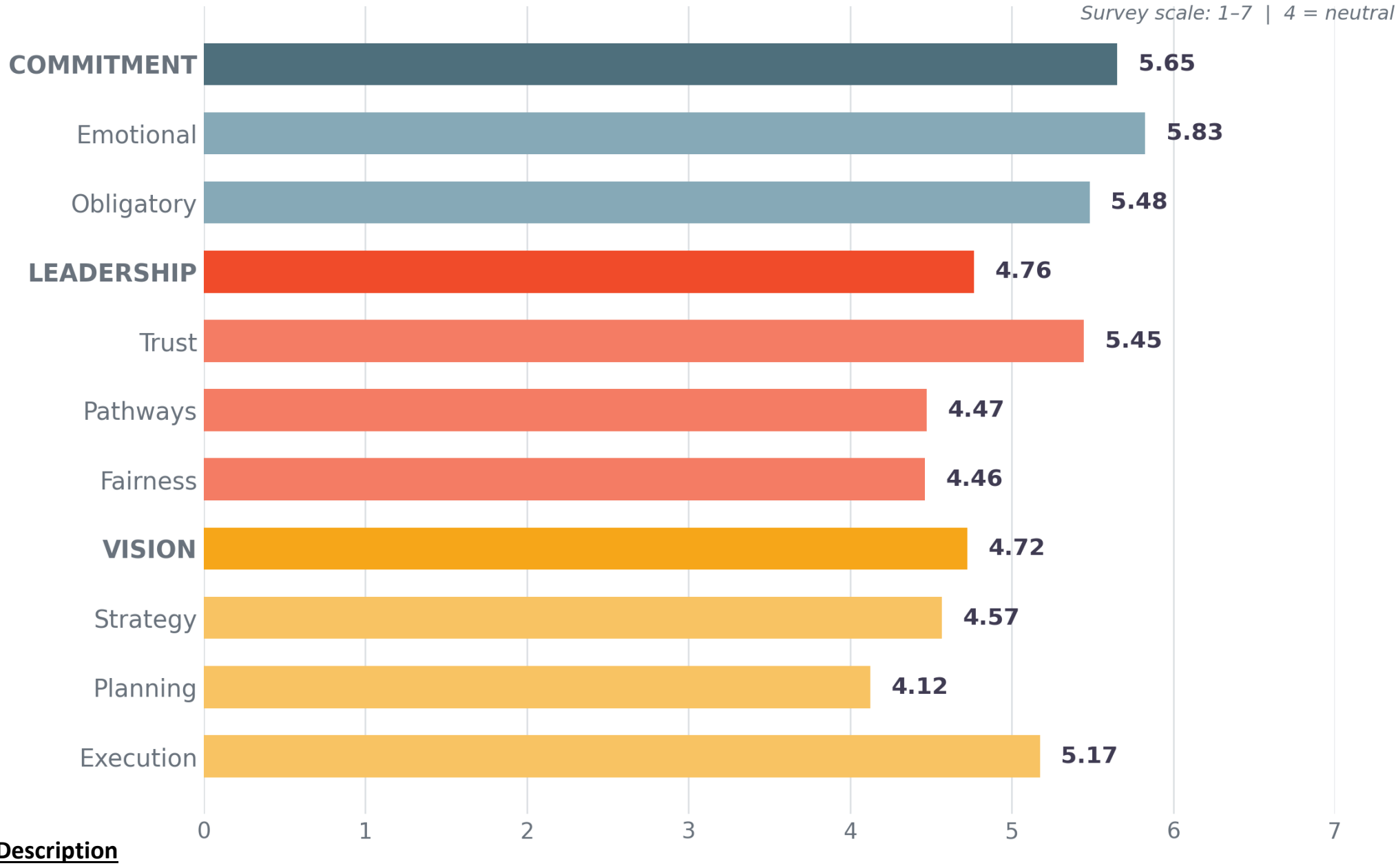
Note: ACS figures are five-year estimates based on overlapping periods and are subject to sampling error. Year-to-year changes should therefore be interpreted cautiously. Furthermore, ZIP Code Business Patterns counts jobs located at covered employers in ZIP Code 67951. It does not represent every job held by Hugoton residents and excludes most farms, self-employed workers, and some public employment.

Confidence In Our Local Community

Engagement Summary

Hugoton's strongest community asset is participating residents' personal commitment. In 2026, Emotional Commitment scored highest at 5.8, followed by overall Commitment at 5.7 and Obligatory Commitment at 5.5. Trust at 5.4 and Execution at 5.2 were also strengths. Planning scored lowest at 4.1, while Fairness and Pathways were both approximately 4.5.

Community Views



Variable Description

Commitment: How strongly residents feel personally connected and responsible to Hugoton.

- **Emotional Commitment:** Feelings of belonging, personal meaning, and a desire to remain in Hugoton.
- **Obligatory Commitment:** Feelings of loyalty, responsibility, and an obligation to help address community problems.

Leadership: How residents view trust, participation, and fairness in community decision-making.

- **Trust:** Confidence that community members and leaders work well together and can rely on one another.
- **Pathways:** Whether residents feel welcomed, comfortable speaking up, and able to become involved in leadership.
- **Fairness:** Whether community decisions reflect residents' needs and the broader community's interests.

Vision: How clearly residents understand Hugoton's direction and its ability to make progress.

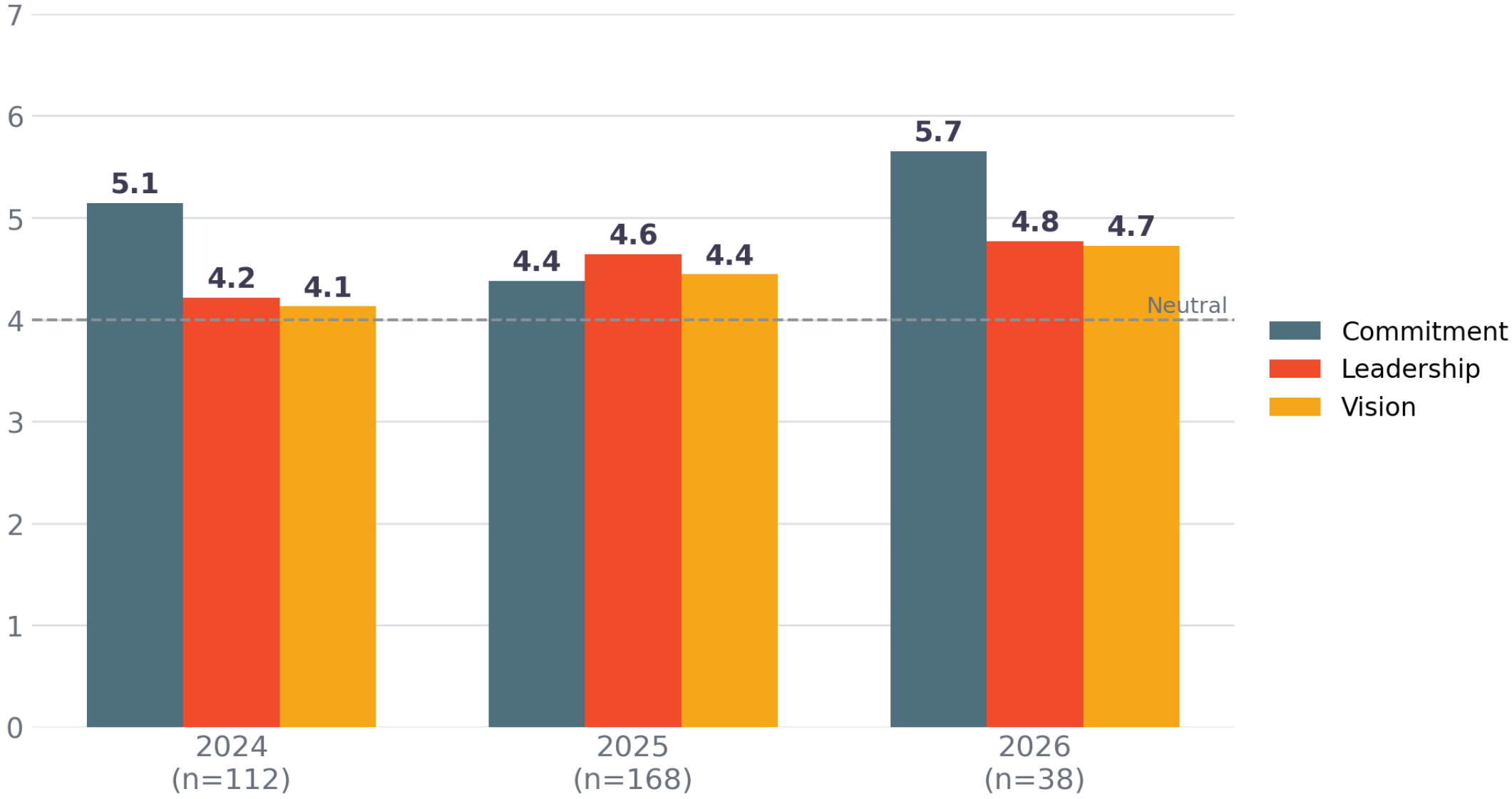
- **Strategy:** Whether residents understand and feel confident in the community's direction.
- **Planning:** Whether Cimarron has a documented plan and a clear path for reaching its goals.
- **Execution:** Whether the community can overcome challenges, accomplish goals, and recognize its achievements.

What This Means

Hugoton residents feel strongly connected to their community and confident in its ability to overcome challenges and accomplish goals. Loyalty, belonging, trust, and community support are clear strengths. Residents were less certain about Hugoton's documented plan, its path forward, and how people can become involved in leadership. This presents an opportunity to build on residents' strong commitment by communicating community goals more clearly and creating visible ways for more people to participate.

Confidence In Our Local Community

Three Year Results



Annual results reflect all participating residents; the age mix changed substantially by year.

What This Means

Hugoton residents bring strong loyalty, trust, and confidence in the community's ability to accomplish goals. The clearest opportunity is to turn that commitment into broader involvement and a more visible plan for the future.

Making community goals easier to understand, communicating progress, and creating clearer pathways into leadership could help more residents take an active role in Hugoton's future. Because participation changed considerably each year, the results should be viewed as evidence of continuing strengths and opportunities—not proof of a dramatic shift in community opinion.

Residents' Words Reflect the Data | Selected Quotes

2024 "Everyone knows everyone. Our kids are safe to walk places because someone you know is always watching. Our community comes together in any time of need."

"Don't work on too many big projects all at once. Finish one, then move on to another!"

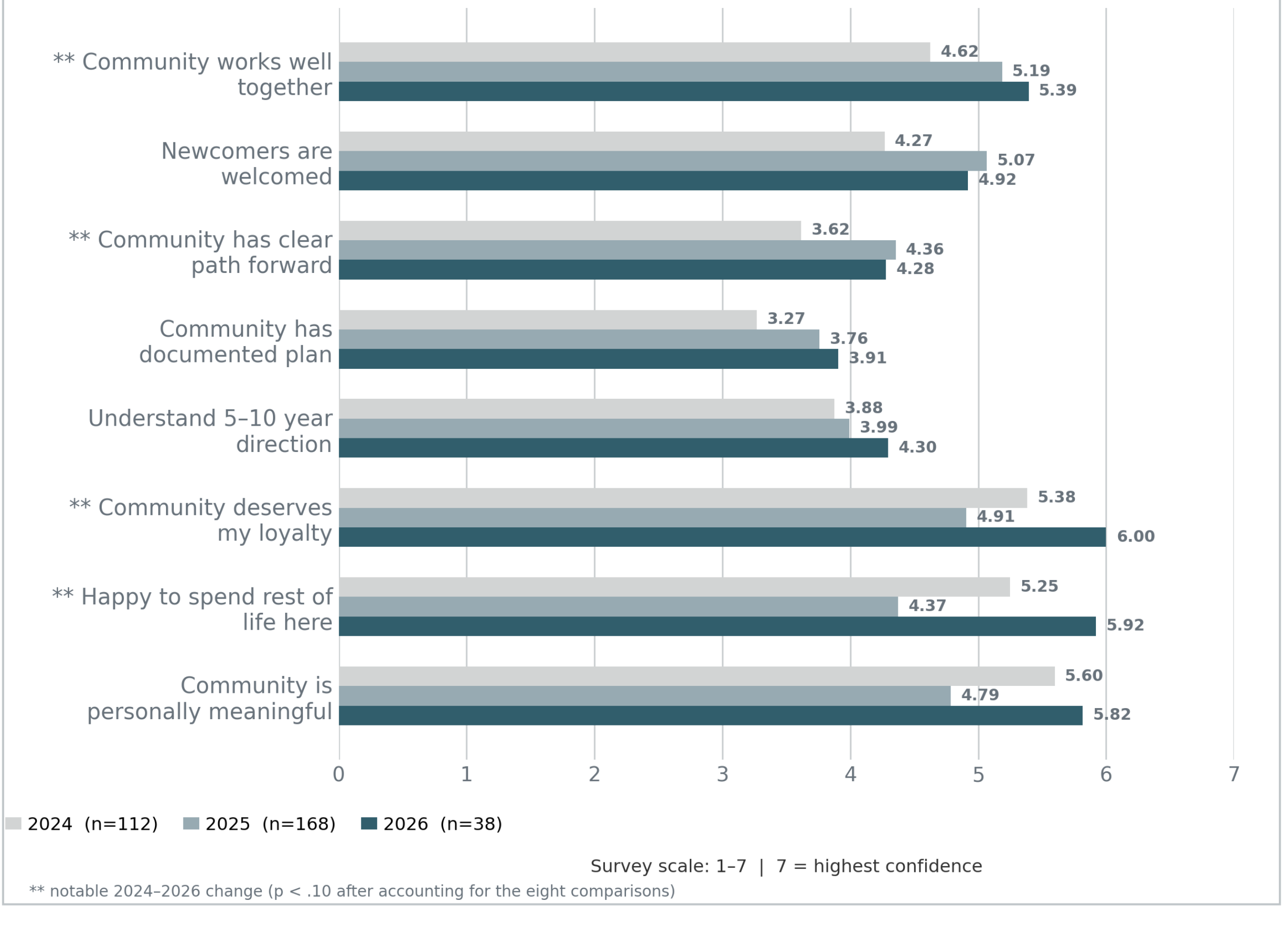
2025 "We are together and support each other. We have an unbreakable bond."

"Help youth create and lead their own community service projects, giving them ownership and leadership experience."

2026 "There are lots of people who care! It's great to see civic groups and individuals stepping up and making change happen!"

"I am in a couple of organizations, but getting others to help or people to participate is difficult."

What is Driving Community Confidence?



Survey scale: 1–7 | 7 = highest confidence

** notable 2024–2026 change ($p < .10$ after accounting for the eight comparisons)

Community Confidence: 2024-2026

Compared with 2024, participating residents in 2026 expressed greater confidence that Hugoton works well together and has a clear path forward. They also reported stronger loyalty to Hugoton and a greater desire to remain in the community. Other indicators remained generally stable.
The lower personal-connection scores in 2025 may partly reflect the large number of high-school-aged participants that year.

What does this mean?

Hugoton's strongest foundation is residents' personal connection to the community. Loyalty, a desire to remain in Hugoton, and confidence in working together were especially strong in 2026.

However, residents remain less certain about Hugoton's documented plan and long-term direction. The opportunity is to build on residents' strong commitment by clearly communicating community goals and creating more visible ways for people to participate in planning and leadership.

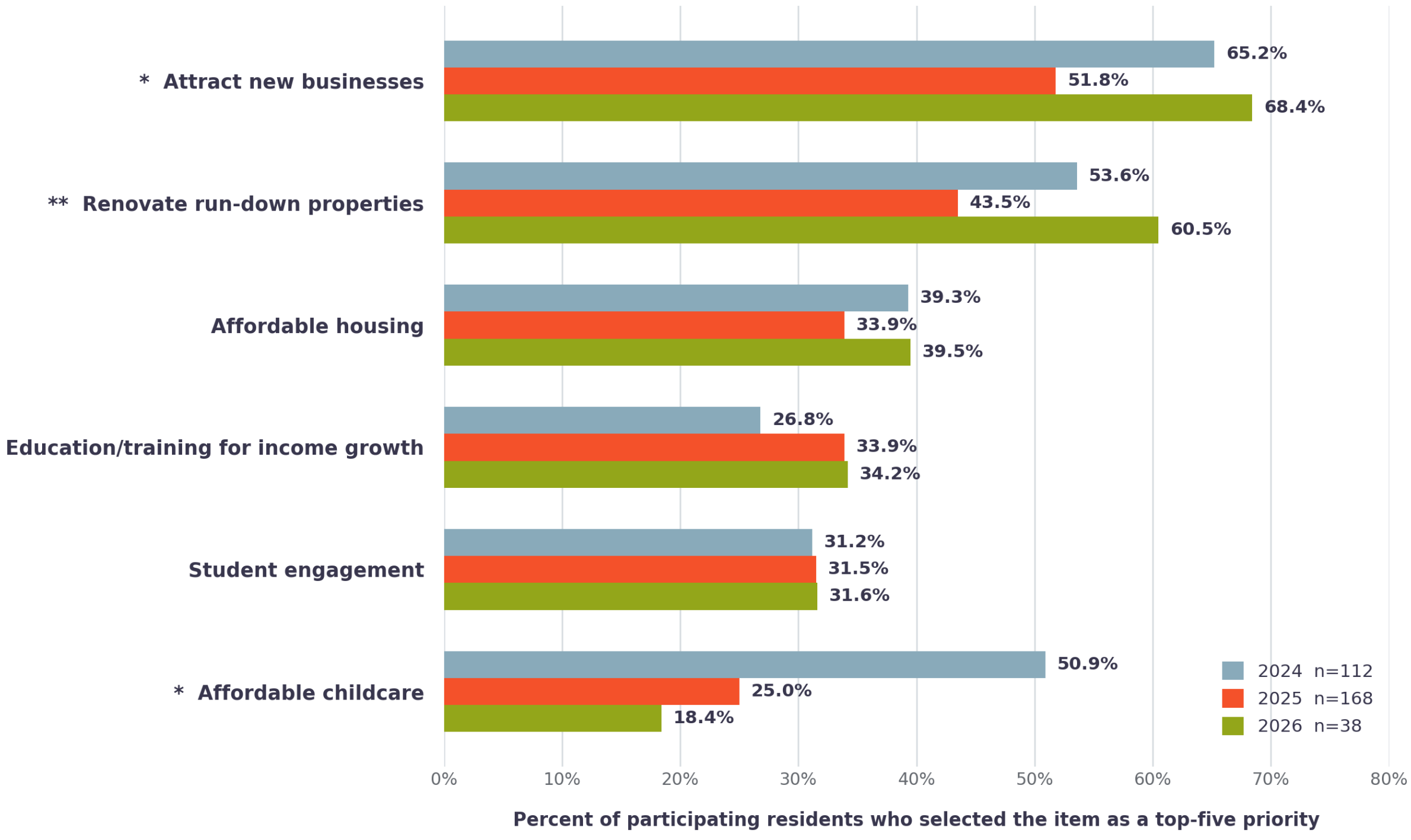
Community Program Priorities

Priorities Summary:

Hugoton's leading priorities remained centered on attracting new businesses, renovating run-down properties, and expanding affordable housing. Education and training also maintained steady support.

Student engagement was exceptionally consistent—selected by approximately 31% of participating residents every year. Affordable childcare declined as a top-five priority, although this does not necessarily mean the underlying need has been resolved.

Core priorities across three years



* p<.05 ** p<.10 | Marks indicate differences across the three years.

What This Means

Residents consistently prioritize economic growth, property revitalization, housing, workforce preparation, and opportunities for young people. The stability of student engagement—despite major differences in who participated each year—suggests it is a durable community priority.

The lower ranking of childcare should be monitored carefully and interpreted alongside the changing participant groups, rather than treated as evidence that childcare concerns have disappeared.

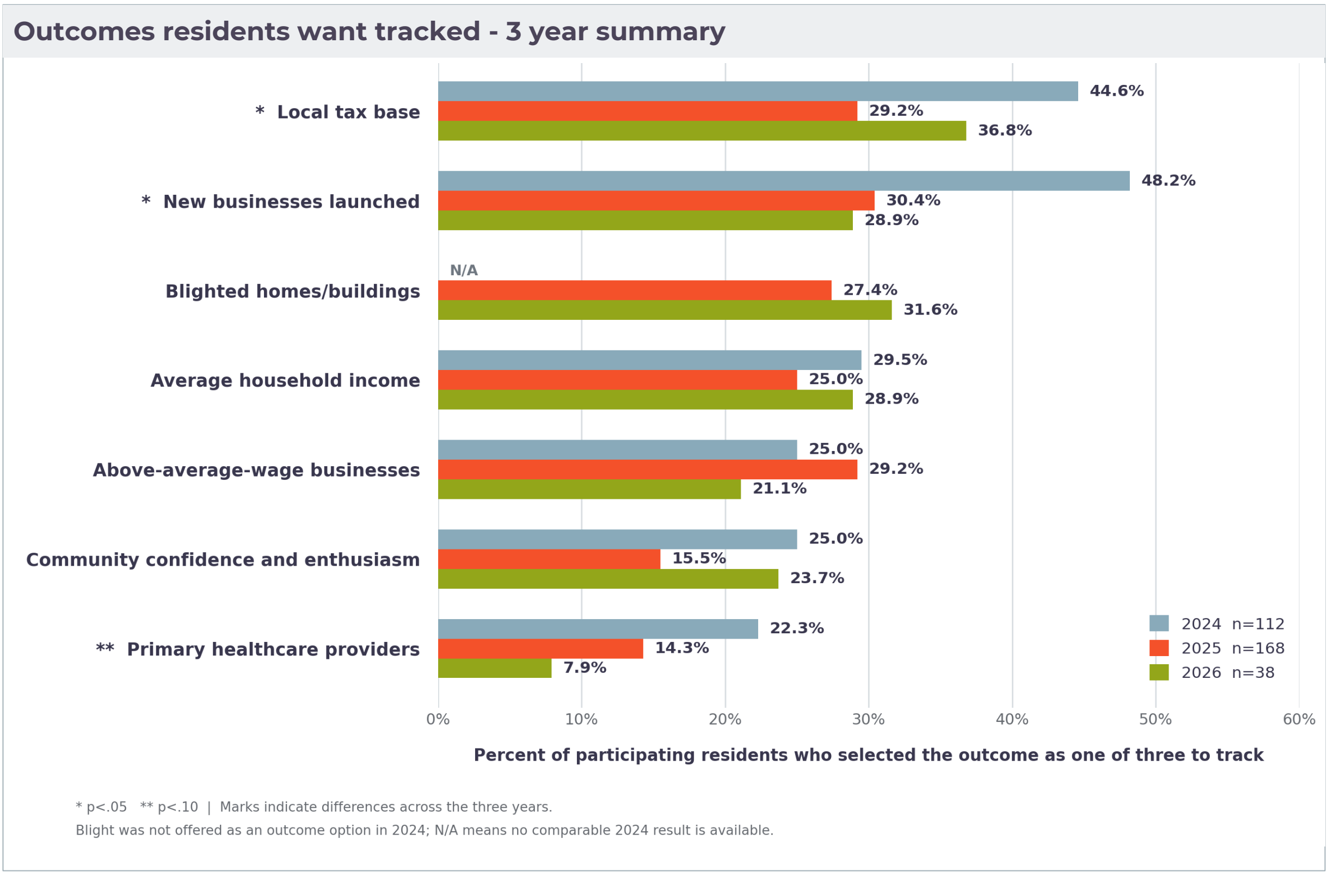
Community Program Priorities

Summary:

Across all three years, Hugoton residents most often favored tracking concrete measures of economic strength. The local tax base and new business launches received the greatest overall support, followed by household income and higher-wage businesses.

When blight was added in 2025, it immediately became a leading outcome—rising from 27.4% to 31.6% in 2026. Community confidence also remained important whereas healthcare declined over the three years.

Outcomes residents want tracked - 3 year summary



* p<.05 ** p<.10 | Marks indicate differences across the three years.

Blight was not offered as an outcome option in 2024; N/A means no comparable 2024 result is available.

What This Means

Residents want progress demonstrated through visible, measurable results: a stronger tax base, new businesses, fewer blighted properties, and better income opportunities. Community confidence also matters, suggesting that economic improvement should be accompanied by renewed optimism and involvement.

The lower selection of primary healthcare providers does not necessarily mean access concerns have been resolved; it only means fewer participating residents ranked it among their top three outcomes to track. Because participation varied considerably by year, these results should guide an annual community scorecard rather than be treated as definitive changes in community opinion.

Who participated in the 2026 Hugoton survey

The voluntary 2026 sample was small and leaned older, female, long-established, and homeowner. Results describe participating residents and may not represent all Hugoton residents. Differences across years may also reflect who participated rather than changes in the broader community.

38
RESIDENTS

76%
FEMALE

95%
HOMEOWNERS

Age

50% ages 60+
39% ages 40–59
11% ages 20–39

Time in Hugoton

58% born and raised
26% moved here 20+ years ago
11% lived here 5–20 years
5% lived here under 5 years

Education

21% graduate degree
21% some higher education
18% bachelor's degree
18% high school diploma/GED
16% associate or technical degree
6% other or did not finish high school

Employment

40% public sector
32% retired
13% private sector
11% local business owners
5% unemployed

Race and ethnicity

82% White, non-Hispanic
13% Hispanic or Latino
5% two or more races

Housing

95% own their home
5% rent

Sample context: Participation was limited and leaned older, female, long-established, and homeowner. Results describe participating residents and may not represent all of Hugoton.

Data source: 2026 Community Survey • Percentages rounded