

Addendum A - County Wide Survey Summary

Demographically, the survey results mirrored Park County's aging population profile, with most participants aged 65 or older, highlighting the county's aging demographic. Employment varied among respondents: 39.61% worked full-time, 32.08% were retired, and 15.92% were self-employed. Community engagement was strong, with residents actively participating in private gatherings, local dining, and events, and over 80% of respondents reported feeling a sense of safety. Homeownership was prevalent, with 34.2% owning their primary residence and 9.6% owning a second home. While 71% of homeowners found housing affordable, 60% of renters did not, and affordable housing emerged as a recurring concern in workshops, underscoring the need for more balanced options. With most respondents aged 65 or older, followed by individuals aged 54 and older, and then those 44 and older, and so on. Employment data showed that the largest group worked full-time, comprising 39.61% of respondents, with many of these individuals employed in government, education, or construction. Retirees formed a substantial 32.08% of respondents, with retirement income as a key source of livelihood. Additionally, 15.92% were self-employed, a notable segment that reflects Park County's entrepreneurial side. In terms of commuting, 31.96% of respondents indicated that they did not commute, while significant numbers work from home (18.35%) or commute over 20 miles (17.74%).

Aging in place is an important focus in Park County, where a significant portion of the population over 65 (currently representing 19% of residents) will require greater service levels, including transportation and supportive housing, within the next decade. When asked about future living expectations, 49.82% indicated they would try to stay in Park County as long as possible, living independently. Meanwhile, 26.73% anticipated moving closer to urban centers, healthcare facilities, or family as their needs change. Preferences for aging in place varied, with 7.17% interested in assisted living services, 4.62% considering building an additional housing unit for support, and smaller percentages looking to relocate within Park County to areas with accessible services or to downsize to more manageable homes. Only 3.52% planned to rely on local neighbors and county services, indicating that while there is a strong desire to remain in the community, additional support options will be essential to address the changing needs of Park County's older residents.

The survey also revealed priorities for community improvement. Roadway safety topped the list, with 70.84% identifying it as a key concern, followed by affordable groceries (55.16%) and healthcare services (53.71%). Other important areas included law enforcement (40.95%), economic opportunities (38.88%), recreational facilities (33.05%), environmental sustainability (30.50%), and education (27.70%). Services for seniors,

public transportation, and community water/sewer systems were also noted as areas in need of attention, reflecting residents' desire for broader support services.

Family structures in Park County households varied, with the largest group being couples without children, comprising 47.9% of respondents (394 individuals). This was followed by those living alone, who made up 13.9% of respondents (114 individuals). Families with children represented a smaller portion, only 1.6% of survey participants (13 individuals), although among these, school-aged children attended a mix of public schools and homeschooling. Homeownership emerged as a dominant trend, with 34.2% of respondents (281 individuals) owning their homes, while renting was notably rare, reported by just 0.9% (7 individuals). Additionally, 9.6% (79 respondents) reported owning a second home in Park County. Perceptions of housing affordability revealed distinct divides: 71% of homeowners felt that housing in the area was affordable, while 60% of renters disagreed. Interestingly, second-home owners had the highest affordability satisfaction, with 81% finding Park County extremely affordable. Despite these responses, affordable housing surfaced repeatedly as a significant issue during workshops, indicating a broader community concern that may not be fully captured by current homeowners' sentiments. This insight points to a need for balanced housing solutions that accommodate a range of affordability levels. In spite of many people wanting no oversight for building codes and zoning, overwhelmingly Insurance emerged as another pressing issue, as most respondents, whether homeowners or renters, expressed the importance of insuring their homes. A majority had encountered difficulties in obtaining insurance, likely reflecting challenges unique to the area and underscoring that few residents live fully off-grid, which would impact insurability.

When it came to building community connections, most respondents relied on friends' houses or private gatherings, with 55.53% selecting this option as a main source of social engagement. Local restaurants, bars, or coffee shops also served as key community hubs, drawing 52.25% of respondents, followed closely by community events, which attracted 36.94%. Family gatherings were also important for 35.84% of participants, and school, church, or nonprofit groups engaged nearly 20%. Notably, 7.53% expressed a preference for solitude, indicating a segment of the population that values independence and privacy. The majority of respondents reported feeling safe in their community, with 49.70% feeling very safe and 31.35% feeling somewhat safe. Only a small proportion felt neutral (9.11%) or somewhat unsafe (4.62%), and very few reported feeling unsafe (1.94%). In other demographic insights, females made up a slightly larger share of respondents at 52.25%, compared to 39.25% male representation. Fourteen percent of respondents were veterans, and 13.37% reported having a disability, signaling a need for consideration of accessibility and support services within the community.

Park County residents demonstrate a strong connection to preserving the county's natural character, with a focus on habitat protection, scenic views, and maintaining open range. Although only a portion of residents actively engage in agriculture—41.12% have no connection to agriculture, 25.55% grow food, and 23.11% hunt or fish—there is widespread interest in safeguarding the natural environment. The majority prioritize wildlife corridors and advocate for measures like conservation easements, wildlife overpasses, and restrictions on development in high-priority habitats. Additionally, residents value rural mountain character and community isolation, favor locally-owned businesses over chains, and support efforts to mitigate light pollution and protect dark skies, recognizing these as assets for both residents and ecotourism.

Park County residents have diverse views on land use rights in residential zones. A significant portion (31.71%) supports the right to add a secondary housing unit, like a guest house, on residential property. However, 19.68% of respondents favor this only if it's not used for short-term rentals, while 13.97% prefer residential zones remain single-family only. Another 13.12% think such additions should be approved on a case-by-case basis through public hearings, and 9.6% believe only larger properties (5+ acres) should permit additional units. For home-based businesses, many residents (50%) believe they should operate freely if noise is controlled, with 38.2% supporting businesses with 2-3 employees on-site. Nearly one-third (33.33%) feel expanding businesses should relocate to commercial spaces, though smaller-scale operations and limited customer visits (3-5 per day) are generally acceptable. Regarding specific uses in residential zones, residents show strong support for activities like raising chickens (53.83%) and establishing daycare services (52.73%). Conversely, only 9.84% want to restrict residential zones exclusively to housing. Activities seen as disruptive, like music venues or large commercial ventures, face strong opposition, with many preferring residential areas to remain quiet, low-impact spaces focused on resident welfare.

Park County residents prioritize creating a welcoming and sustainable environment for tourism and economic development by focusing on natural and cultural preservation and enhancing visitor experiences. Key priorities include expanding and linking hiking and biking trails, improving signage, and developing both summer and winter activities to encourage year-round visits. Many residents see potential in promoting local heritage through events, festivals, and markets for local food producers, as well as supporting the arts and small businesses to diversify the economy. Beautifying town centers and enhancing public spaces are also popular ideas to make Park County's communities more attractive to visitors, with hopes that more travelers will stop to explore rather than just pass through. Additionally, there is interest in establishing Park County as an international dark skies community to attract stargazing and nature-focused tourism.

In terms of infrastructure, residents emphasize the need for road improvements, clean water access, and travel safety, especially in frequently visited areas. Suggestions for more restaurants, lodging options, affordable employee housing, and family-friendly activities, such as recreation centers and youth programs, highlight the desire to make Park County an appealing place for both tourists and residents. Many believe that a balanced approach can help Park County's economy flourish while preserving its natural beauty and unique character, although some caution against overexposing local treasures to prevent overcrowding and maintain the community's integrity.

An extremely surprising result from Park County's recent survey was the priority placed on road maintenance by respondents, despite the area's traditionally tax-averse stance. Park County is a low-tax, pass-through county with limited commercial development, a very low mill levy, and modest property taxes. Funding for road maintenance primarily relies on the Highway User Tax Fund (HUTF), which is supported by fuel taxes, alongside occasional state and federal grants. Unfortunately, the county's Pavement Condition Index (PCI) scores indicate that many roads are failing, underscoring the need for urgent maintenance across the county. In response to the county's funding limitations, residents were asked about potential funding solutions for road improvements. Some of the most supported options included a hospitality tax (43.5%), a water tax on resources removed from the county (36.94%), and a voter-approved 1% tax increase dedicated to roads (29.77%). Interestingly, 27.34% of respondents expressed a desire for improved roads but expected the funding to come from external sources such as state or federal grants, rather than local taxes or fees. Other suggestions, such as a local sales tax, de-TABORing (to allow greater funding flexibility for roads and emergency services), and bonds, were also considered, although with less consensus. Lower support was shown for options like turning some county roads over to HOAs for private maintenance (12.76%) and toll roads (8.87%). When asked about additional services they would support through slight increases in property or sales tax, road maintenance emerged as a top priority with 63.9% of respondents in favor. This community feedback is a strong indicator that road maintenance, despite the typical tax opposition, is an urgent concern for residents who recognize its importance in supporting safe and reliable infrastructure within Park County.

Park County is exploring options for industrial zoning to accommodate necessary but potentially disruptive activities, such as asphalt plants, mining, and processing facilities. These activities generate truck traffic, noise, odors, and dust, which are generally unwelcome near population centers but benefit from proximity to major transportation routes and workforce availability. The ideal industrial zones would be located on larger parcels, at least half a mile away from neighborhoods, and within 1-3 miles of a town center, balancing the need for minimal residential impact with practical access to

resources and labor. Community opinions vary, with 37.4% agreeing that industry locations should be limited to one or two areas in the county. Other considerations include requiring minimal noise impact during the day, visual separation from residences, and distance requirements from both existing and potential future residences. While a minority believes industry should not be allowed anywhere in the county, others accept that reasonable mitigation of impacts is sufficient.

Future for the community from Survey respondents

Survey respondents envision a future for Park County that maintains its rural character alongside essential improvements to enhance daily life and support sustainable growth for future generations. Immediate priorities include roadway safety, affordable groceries, accessible healthcare, law enforcement, and economic opportunities, which reflect a need for stronger infrastructure and basic services. Additional improvements in recreational facilities, environmental sustainability, senior services, and education demonstrate a community focus on resilience, physical well-being, and youth engagement. Residents also see the importance of affordable housing and call for support systems such as public transportation and community water and sewer services. Long-term aspirations echo these immediate needs but underscore a community-oriented and sustainable approach that includes preserving open spaces, wildlife habitats, and the county's scenic agricultural heritage. Furthermore, there is a call for responsive governance, with some advocating for new leadership, tax relief, and streamlined regulations to keep living costs manageable and protect community values. In summary, residents desire a thriving Park County where enhanced infrastructure, economic opportunities, and accessible services create a resilient, self-sustaining community that future generations can enjoy, all while respecting the county's unique natural and rural identity.

