



The community survey contained 15 questions designed to understand community attitudes on identity, economic development, growth and development, recreation, and natural resource protection. In addition, the survey included four demographic questions to understand the makeup of survey respondents. The following sections summarize survey response data and main themes.

Community Identity

Question 1. What is your favorite thing about living in McKenzie County?

The word cloud below illustrates key themes surrounding community identity, including community spirit, outdoor recreation and resource amenities, the rural/small-town feel, a rugged/western culture, and economic opportunities.

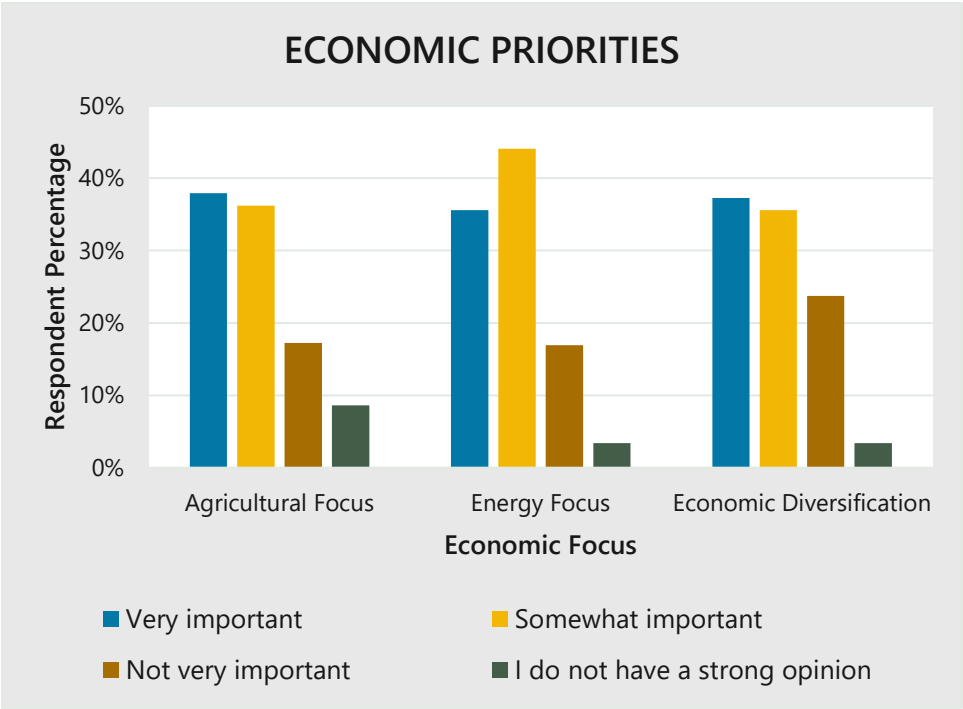


Economic Priorities

Questions 2-4. How important is it for the County to focus on...

- Agricultural-related development opportunities (e.g., fertilizer plant) (Question 2)
- Energy-related development opportunities (Question 3)
- Economic diversification beyond agriculture, energy, and tourism (Question 4)

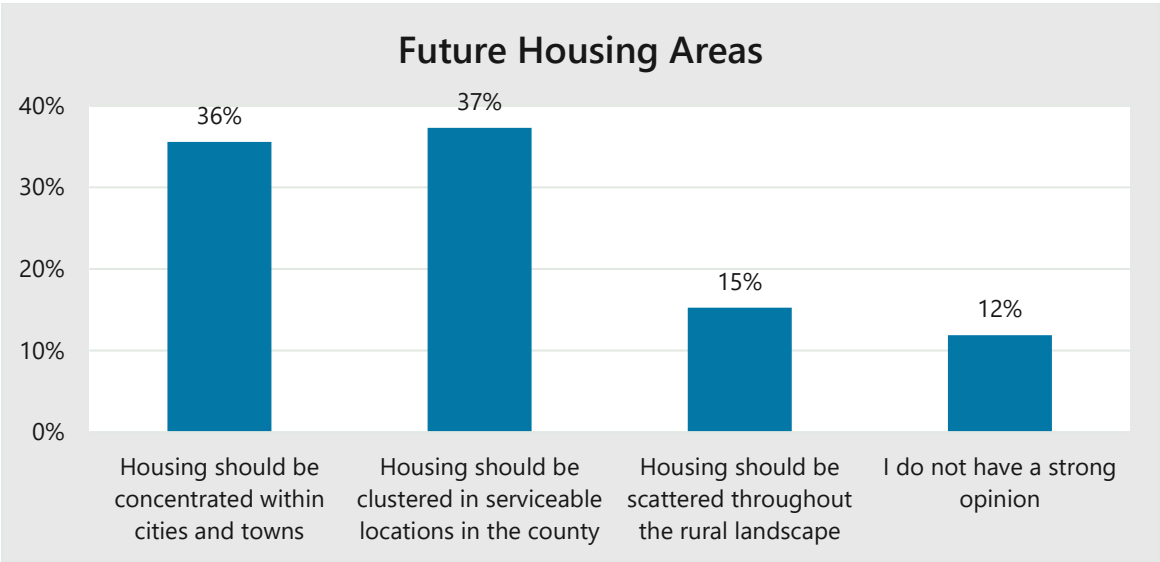
Respondents felt that each area deserves focus, reflecting a balanced approach to economic development. However, economic diversification was viewed as somewhat less important than continuing to focus on agriculture and energy, two longstanding pillars of the regional economy.



Growth and Development

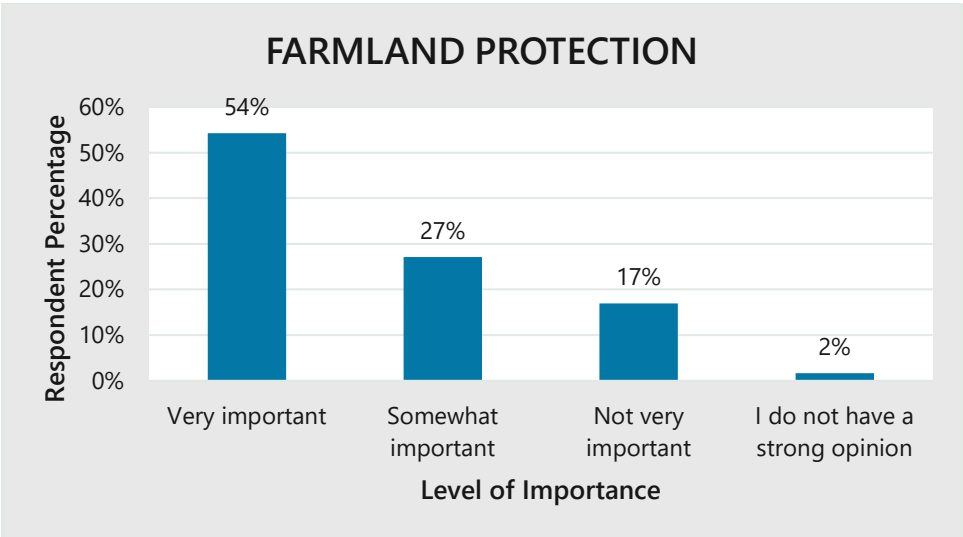
Question 5. Regarding the location of future housing, which statement best describes your opinion?

Nearly three in four respondents felt that future housing development should occur in focused areas, either within established communities (36 percent) or other locations with serviceable infrastructure. The Comprehensive Plan discourages scattered development. This goal is related to farmland protection (Q6).



Question 6. How important is it to protect agricultural land from non-agricultural development?

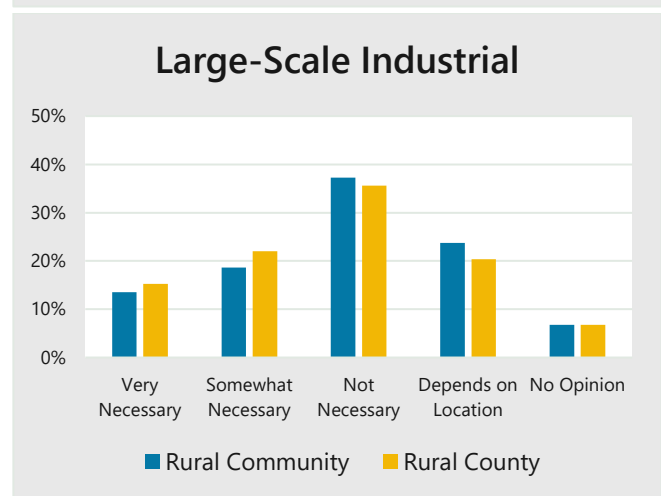
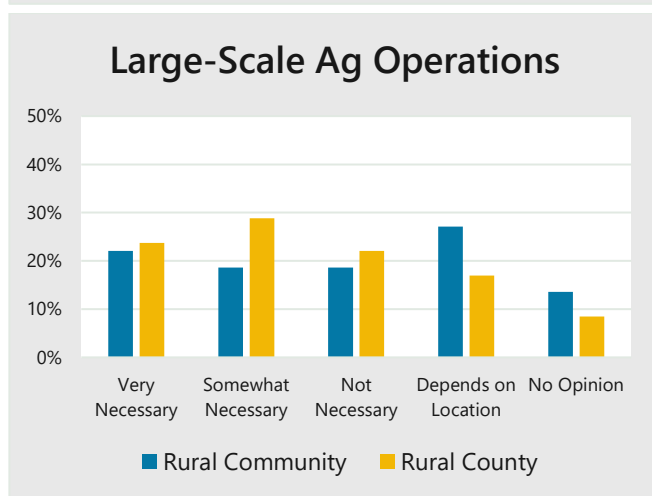
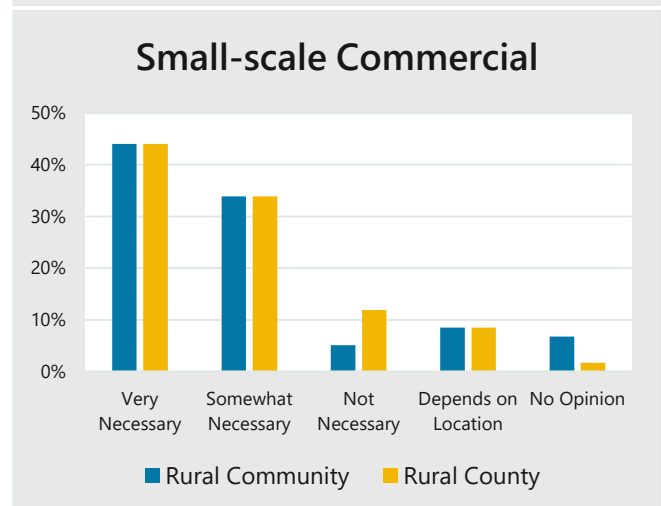
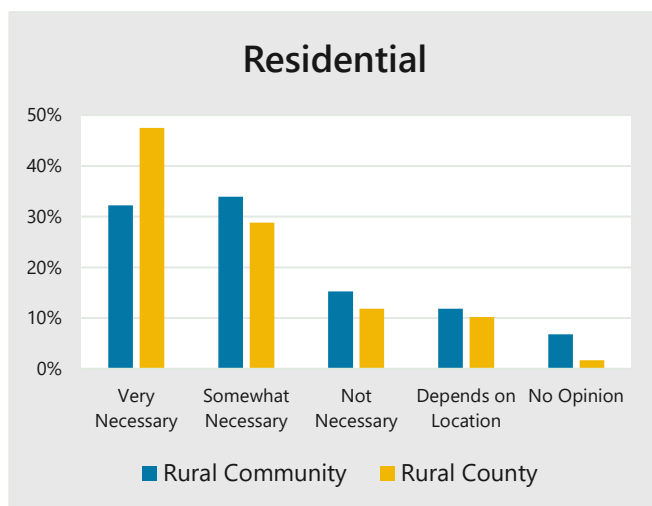
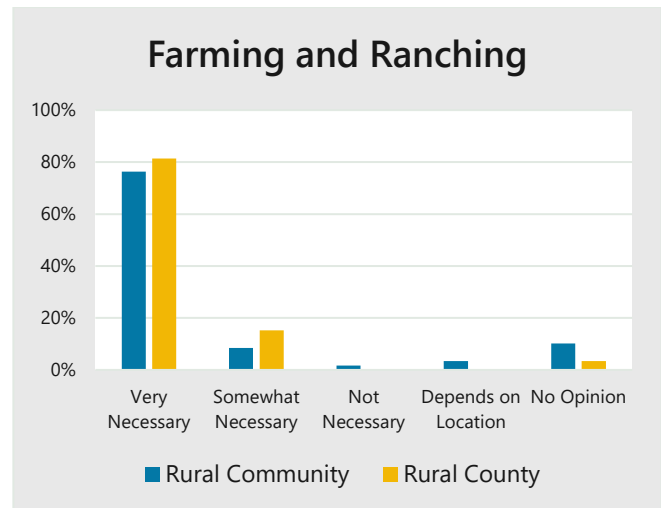
Over half of respondents felt that farmland protection is very important, and more than one-quarter felt that this is somewhat important. Protecting farmland is an explicit purpose of McKenzie County’s zoning and subdivision regulations.

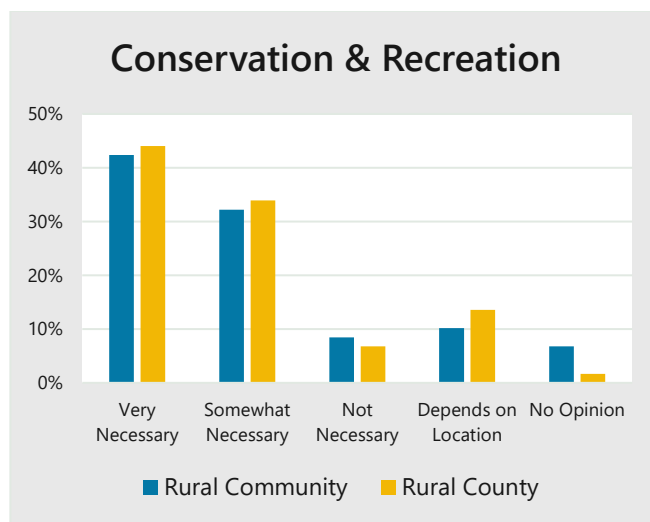
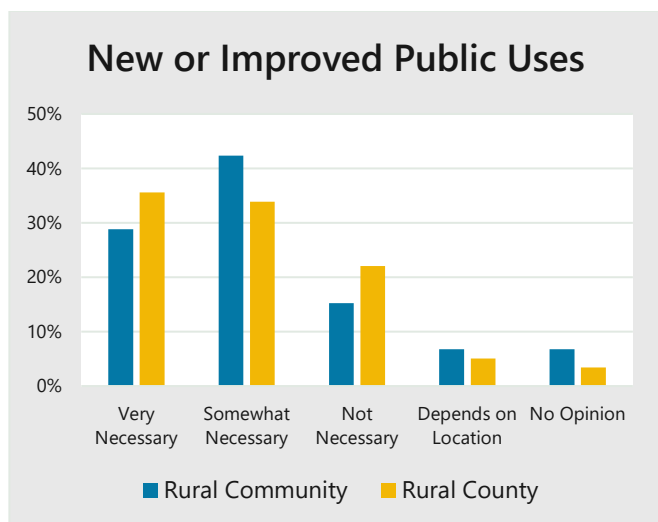


Questions 12-13. In your opinion, how necessary are the following land uses...

- Within or near rural communities (e.g., Cartwright or Keene) (Question 12)
- Within rural McKenzie County (Question 13)

Responses were largely similar for rural communities and the remaining rural, unincorporated areas of the county. Generally, respondents prioritized farming and ranching, housing, small-scale businesses, and public recreation / conservation areas. Respondents felt that there is less need for large, impactful uses, such as large-scale agricultural (e.g., feedlot) or industrial operations (e.g., data center). However, many respondents also recognized that these uses can be accommodated if sited appropriately.

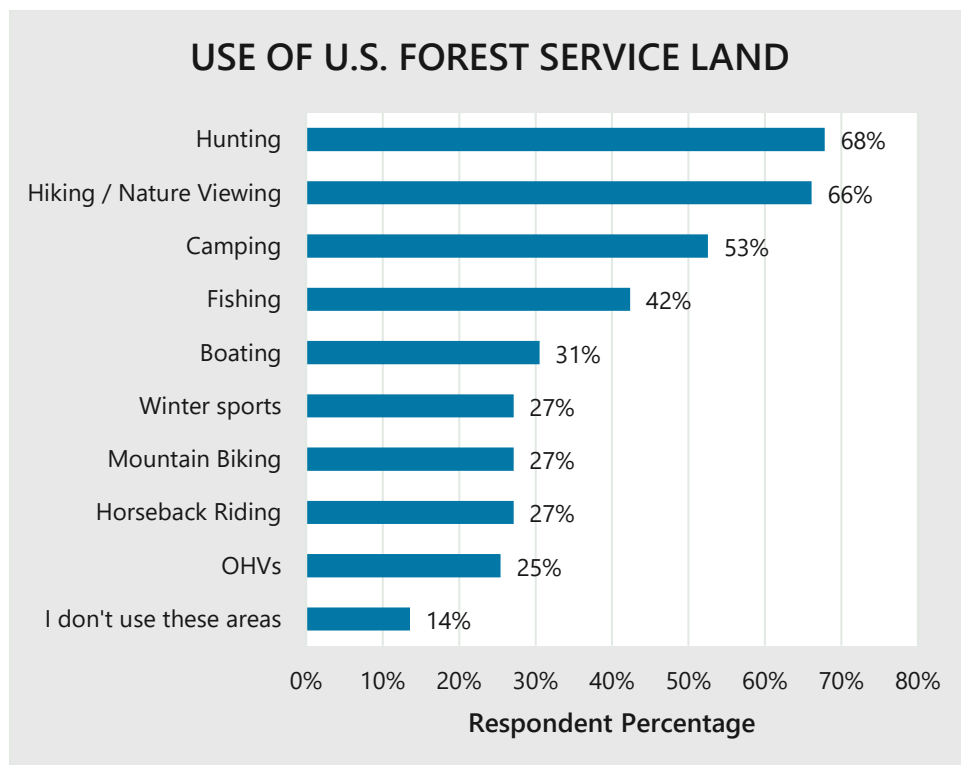




Recreation

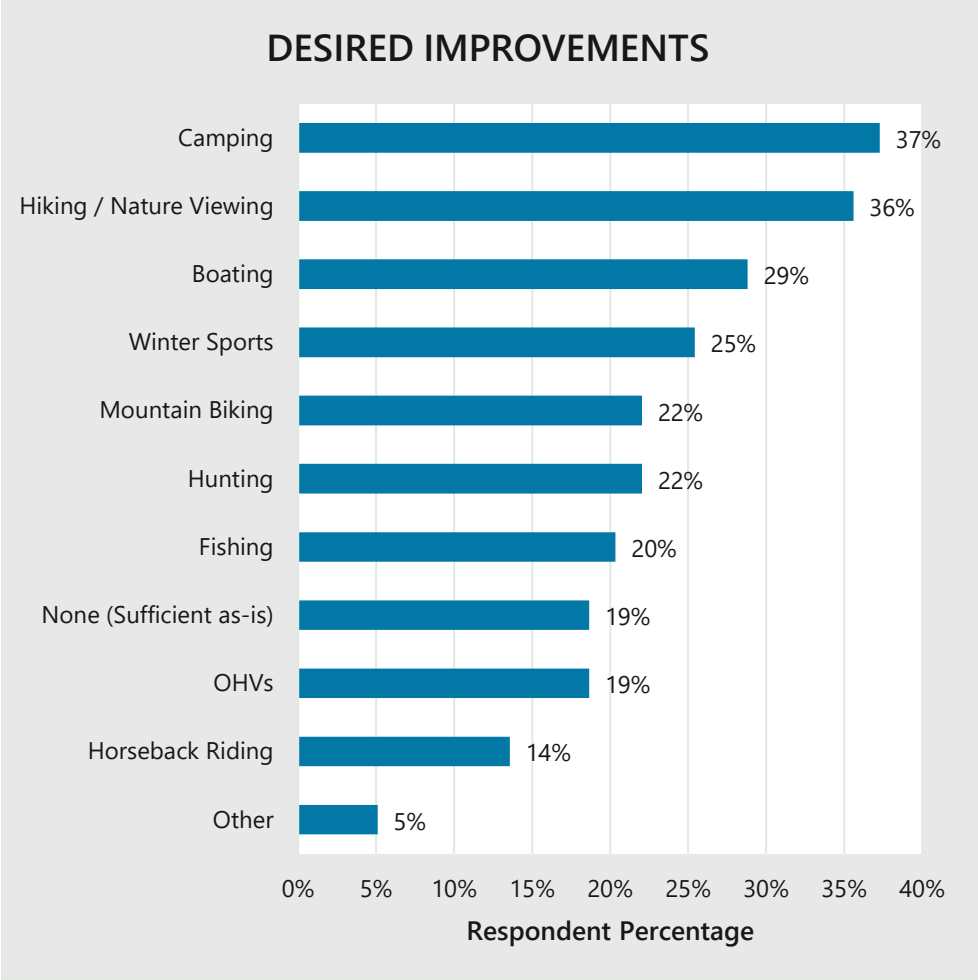
Question 7. Beyond grazing and oil/gas, how do you use U.S. Forest Service Land?

Respondents use U.S. Forest Service land for a variety of purposes, with hunting, hiking, camping, and fishing mentioned most frequently.



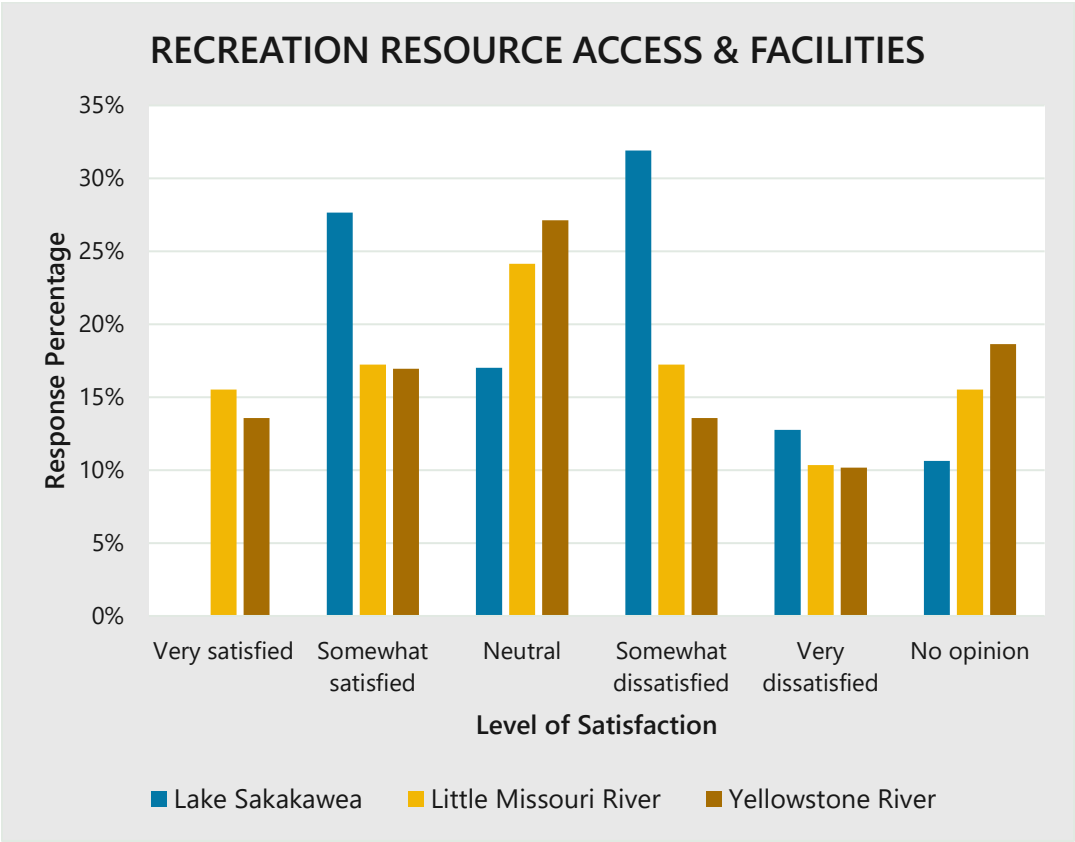
Question 8. Considering the following activities, where would you most like to see expanded access or improved facilities?

Survey respondents identified many activities that could benefit from expanded access or improved facilities, with camping, hiking, boating, and winter sports (e.g., snowmobiling) mentioned most frequently.



Question 9-11. How satisfied are you with current recreation facilities and access points around Lake Sakakawea, the Little Missouri River, and the Yellowstone River?

Respondents had mixed opinions about the level of access and quality of facilities around Lake Sakakawea, the Little Missouri River, and the Yellowstone River.



Resource Protection

Question 14. To what extent should the following resources be protected from development?

This question asked respondents to evaluate resource protection needs for forests, grasslands, water resources, etc. Most respondents felt that resources should be protected or highly protected. These responses speak to the value that residents place in natural and cultural resources.

Resource	Respondent Percentage			
	No protection is needed	Some protection is needed	High protection is needed	I do not have a strong opinion
Farmland	14%	37%	44%	5%
Badlands	7%	20%	71%	2%
Grasslands	8%	36%	51%	5%
Lakes	7%	34%	56%	3%
Rivers and streams	5%	36%	56%	3%
Wooded areas	10%	32%	49%	8%
Cultural / historic resources	7%	31%	58%	5%

Open-ended

Question 15. What other considerations are important for you as we plan for the next 10 years?

Main themes include:

- **Housing attainability** – strong concern about high housing costs and lack of attainable options. Demand for diverse housing types (mostly applies to Watford City).
- **Infrastructure and roads** – frequent mentions of roadway paving, maintenance, and all-season access. Need to maintain existing infrastructure, not just build new.
- **Economic development** – broad support for diversifying beyond oil and gas while still supporting energy development. Interest in value-added agriculture and energy and professional employment opportunities. Some opposition to data centers and renewable energy development.
- **Retail, services, and amenities** – Desire for more retail and shopping. Interest in continued revitalization of downtown Watford City and more local businesses.
- **Recreation and entertainment** – Strong demand for family-friendly activities, youth entertainment, and year-round activities (generally applies to Watford City).

The following table includes full response data for Question 15.

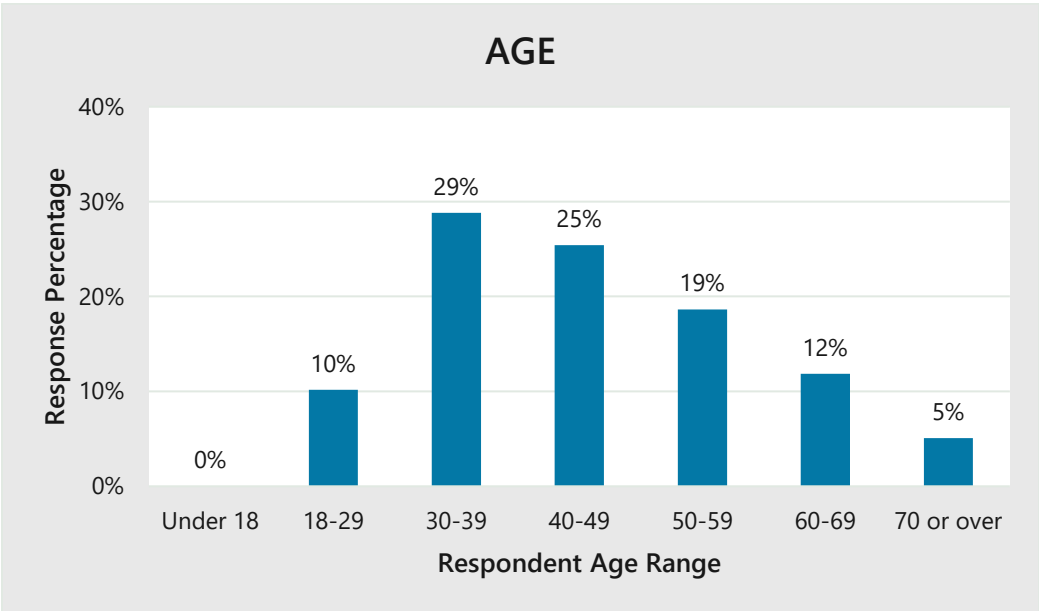
#	Comment
1	Big box stores shopping
2	Should try to get the train in town
3	Housing, Recreation, quality of life facilities and areas
4	More activities for locals to do year round
5	I would say more stores for everyday needs and maybe some more shopping around town. I also think having more workout class or studios would be beneficial. I also think continuing to have community events so watford can still have the small town feel.
6	Paved roads
7	Watford City desperately needs a noise ordinance specifically truck ENGINE BRAKING NEEDS TO BE BANNED. it echoes across the entire city!!!!!!!!
8	Family entertainment
9	Public access to public lands
10	Stop wasting money at the ag expo
11	Capitalize on high energy demand industries
12	The price of housing in mckenzie county is ridiculous. The oilfield alone shouldn't dictate housing prices. Half a million dollars for a 3 bedroom one bath house is not at all reasonable
13	Recycling
14	Continuing growth or sustaining population with high quality of life with an aging oilfield. Diversifying opportunity and growing amenities and jobs. Make McKenzie county a ideal place for investment.
15	Not complicating rules and regulations. All rules and regulations apply to everyone equally.
16	Promote more downtown retail.
17	Roadways need to continue to be paved, improved gravel or other access for all seasons and weather.
18	North unit needs updating it would be nice if there was off-road jeep roads that were available everywhere is getting shut down
19	NO DATA CENTERS
20	Economic diversification
21	Adding VALUE to agriculture and energy that we produce in McKenzie County, especially natural gas as power generation and vertically integrated ag production
22	We need a bigger library that offers a teen zone that is centrally located in Watford City. Offers a place for youth to gather safely together in person. Board games, video games, crafts, etc.
23	Road improvements
24	Keeping ALL locals in mind - we've seen this area change drastically and we should be considered in how everything affects the smaller land owners, not just the more 'powerful' names in our county
25	Retail

#	Comment
26	Planning and zoning decisions that are made based on law rather than "public opinion." Public opinion should be considered when creating the laws, not in how they are applied.
27	Incorporating new and existing business types while allowing rural density residential development in areas served by rural water and adequate roadways.
28	1. Housing both apartments and single family 2. Road Maintenance within the county
29	Ability to maintain existing infrastructure
30	We need to continue oil development
31	Diversity with types of industries, and a focus on stable jobs with large employers. Support more professional level careers to boost diversity in our economy
32	Keep your head on the bigger picture- preserving the land for future generations and do not let data companies, wind farms, etc. come in and ruin our county!
33	Do not overspend. Financial problems are caused by unpredictable industries. Base decisions on predictable outcomes.
34	The preservation of agricultural industry and the limiting of impact of tourism and related industries on agriculture. Tourism is not the future.
35	Fishing and hunting/hiking areas for future generations
36	No data centers
37	PAY THE HEALTHCARE WORKERS WHAT THEY DESERVE
38	Some entertainment in the county for younger generations
39	Community development, career-based environment
40	Rural staying rural, nature staying open. There is already so much energy production and broken landscape/grassland. Farm production has taken enough prairie out. Building more within town while keeping the country open on the edges.

Demographics

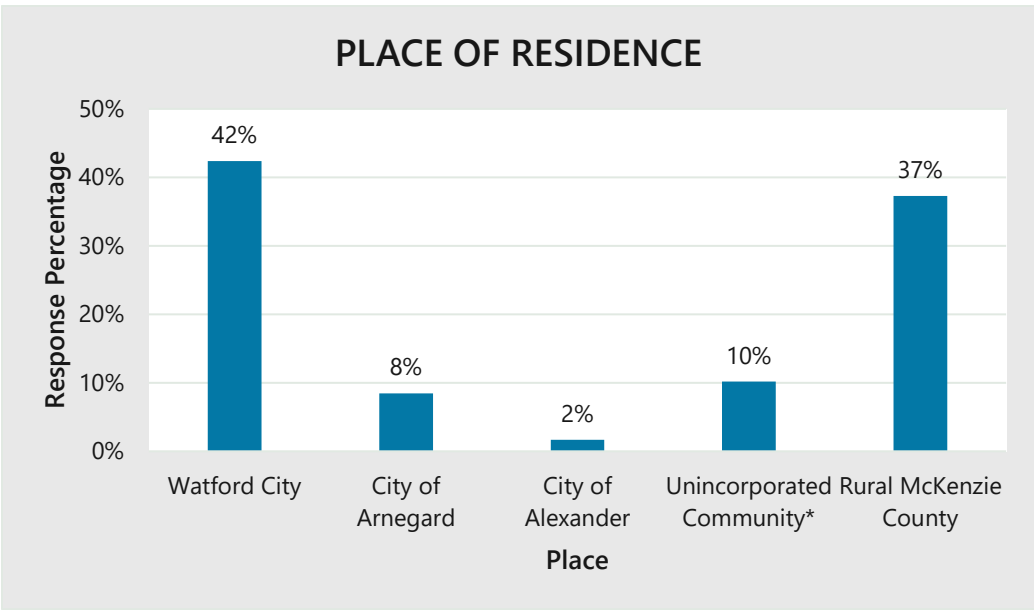
Question 16. What is your age?

Most respondents were between the ages of 30 and 59. All respondents were aged 18 or older.



Question 17. Where is your primary place of residence?

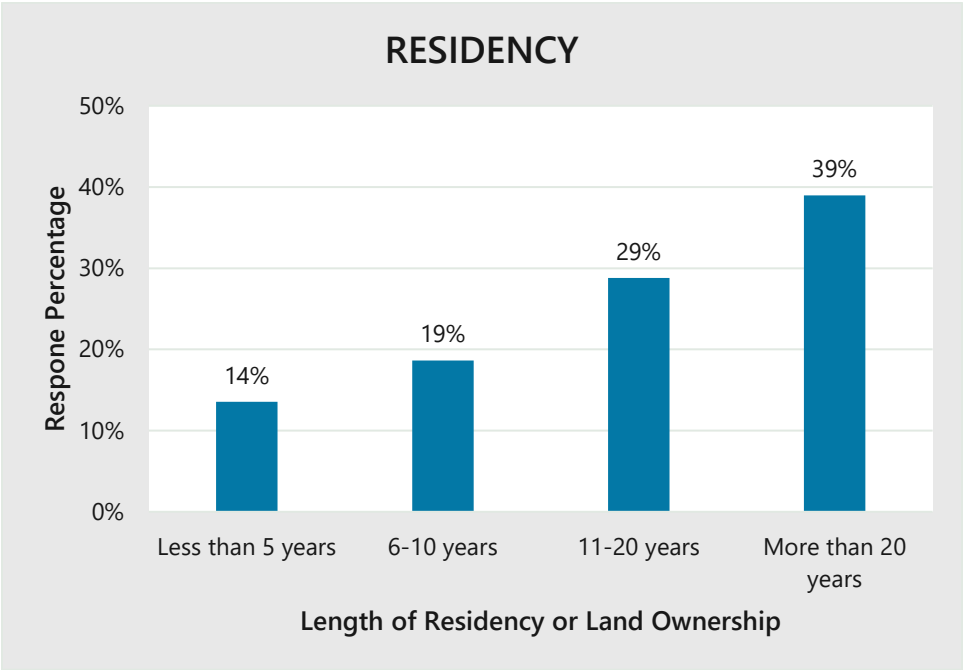
Most respondents live in Watford City or rural areas of McKenzie County (i.e., outside cities and unincorporated communities*).



*Unincorporated communities include Cartwright, Charbonneau, East Fairview, Grassy Butte, and Keene, etc.

Question 18. How long have you lived in and/or owned land in McKenzie County?

Respondents have strong roots in McKenzie County – more than two-thirds have lived in the county (or owned land in the county) for more than 10 years.



Question 19. Where do you work?

Almost half of respondents work in Watford City, while one-third work in greater McKenzie County.

