

Chapter 3. Public Participation



YOUR IDEAS
are Important

SHAPE THE FUTURE OF JACKSON COUNTY

- QUALITY OF LIFE**
How do you rate your quality of life? How can it be improved?
- LIVE, WORK, PLAY**
How do you rate the places where you live, work, play? How can they be improved?
- WHAT'S YOUR VISION?**
Vision is not just seeing what's here, it's seeing what can be in the future.

TAKE THE SURVEY!



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3DVXLLV>

The flyer features a background image of rolling green hills with a farm. Three polaroid-style photos are overlaid: a town by a lake, a cave entrance, and a sunset over a field.

Marketing Flyer for Community Survey

Source: ECIA



Jackson County Comprehensive Plan

Do You Share this Future Vision?

Jackson County is an engaging community, enthusiastically creating opportunity, supporting growth, and enhancing quality of life for all who live, work, and visit.



Let us know!

https://eciatrans.org/jackson_county_comprehensive_plan.php

The flyer features a background image of rolling green hills with a farm. Three polaroid-style photos are overlaid: children in a field, people at a table, and a cave entrance.

Shared Vision Flyer for Community Outreach

Source: ECIA

OVERVIEW

One of the primary objectives of the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan is to bring people together to build a community consensus around a vision for the future. To achieve this objective, a

transparent and inclusive planning process was developed to provide diverse interests with the opportunity to create a shared vision for Jackson County and identify broad goals and future priorities.

This chapter outlines the comprehensive planning process, describes community outreach efforts, and analyzes community input collected through this process. Table 3.1 shows the planning process and project schedule.

| TASKS | FREQUENCY | TIMEFRAME |
|---|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Project Management | | |
| a. County Zoning and ECIA Team Meetings: project planning | Monthly | July 2023 – June 2024 |
| b. Zoning Commission public meetings: updates | Monthly | July 2023 – June 2024 |
| c. Board of Supervisors public meetings: updates and direction | Monthly | July 2023 – June 2024 |
| 2. Community Data Analysis | | |
| a. Review of existing county plans & policies | Ongoing | July 2023 – January 2024 |
| b. ECIA Team: Analysis of Federal, state, regional, and county data | Ongoing | July 2023 – January 2024 |
| 3. Draft Plan Chapters and Maps | | |
| a. County Zoning and ECIA Team: Develop draft chapters and maps | Ongoing | August 2023 – February 2024 |
| b. Zoning Commission public meetings to review drafts | Monthly | July 2023 – January 2024 |
| 4. Public Engagement | | |
| a. Project Website | Ongoing | July 2023 – December 2024 |
| b. Community Survey: develop, distribute, analyze input | Ongoing | July 2023 – January 2024 |
| c. Steering Committee public meetings | Three | October 2023, January and March 2024 |
| d. Community Outreach | Ongoing | July 2023 – June 2024 |
| 5. Finalize Draft Plan | | |
| a. Publish and post draft plan | 30-60 days | February – March 2024 |
| b. Public comment period (minimum 30 days) | 30-60 days | February – March 2024 |
| c. Zoning Commission public meeting: Finalize draft plan | 30 days | April 2024 |
| 6. Plan Adoption | | |
| a. Zoning Commission: Public Hearing and Recommendation | 30 days | May 2024 |
| b. Board of Supervisors: Public Hearing & Plan Adoption | 30-60 days | May – June 2024 |

PLANNING PROCESS: KEY PLAYERS

Below is a summary of the roles of the key players in the planning process.

Jackson County Zoning Department

The Zoning Department served as the county’s Project Manager and primary point of contact with East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA). ECIA staff met with the Zoning Department throughout the planning process to plan and prepare for meetings, workshops, and public input; to review draft documents and survey results; and to provide direct input on the contents of the comprehensive plan.

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

The Board of Supervisors appointed a 17-member Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee representing a wide spectrum of stakeholder groups with a variety of skill sets and perspectives. The Steering Committee met three times with the Zoning Department and ECIA staff to identify the county’s strengths, challenges, issues, and opportunities; draft a vision for the future of Jackson county; and identify broad goals and future priorities to realize that vision.

Jackson County Zoning Commission

The Zoning Commission met with the Zoning Department and ECIA staff throughout the planning process to give direction on public participation efforts; to review draft documents, Steering Committee input, and survey results; and to provide direct input on the contents of the comprehensive plan. Under Iowa Code, the Zoning Commission’s role is to hold a public hearing on the final draft of the comprehensive plan, and then recommend the plan’s adoption to the Board of Supervisors.

Jackson County Board of Supervisors

The Board of Supervisors contracted with ECIA to prepare the comprehensive plan. During the planning process, the Zoning Department provided project updates and sought direction from the Board of Supervisors. Under Iowa Code, after receiving the Zoning Commission’s recommendation, the role of the Board of Supervisors is to hold a public hearing, and then adopt a final version of the comprehensive plan.



Zoning Department and ECIA staff working with Steering Committee members

Photo Credit: Jackson County Zoning Department

East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA)

ECIA is a regional council of governments that serves five counties in Northeast Iowa in six broad categories: Community Development, Economic Development, Housing Assistance, Special Programs, Transit, and Transportation and Planning.

PLANNING PROCESS: PUBLIC OUTREACH

The process of listening to the community is critical to identifying important issues and building consensus around plans for the future. Below are descriptions of the key outreach components of the planning process.

Communitywide Outreach

The planning process emphasized meeting people where they are, such as community events, and encouraging stakeholders, such as City Councils, Steering Committee members, and community groups, to help get the public engaged in the planning process, returning surveys, sharing ideas, etc.

The County Zoning Department made approximately 1,000 direct contacts and numerous indirect contacts through extensive community outreach from July-November 2023 in a variety of settings and formats:

- Shared information with Jackson County employees, cities, and local groups to post on their Facebook pages and websites.

- Shared information with service agencies, food banks, childcare centers, local businesses, high school students, non-profits, and community groups (300+/- contacts).
- Shared information at the Jackson County Fair’s parade, booths, and talent show (200+ contacts).
- Set up community survey stations at the County Courthouse and the Hurstville Interpretive Center.
- Attended City Council meetings in Andrew, Bellevue, LaMotte, Maquoketa, Miles, Preston, Sabula, Spragueville, and Springbrook (86 contacts).
- Shared information at local events, including Music on the Green in Maquoketa (200+/- contacts) and "Unwrap the Magic" vendor show in Bellevue (100+/- contacts).
- Shared information during KMAQ Radio’s “Just Talk” program in July, August, and October 2023.

- Shared media releases and project flyers in July and October 2023, and in March 2024.

Public Meetings

The Zoning Commission held work sessions on the comprehensive plan during their monthly meetings from July 2023 to May 2024 at the County Courthouse. Notices of these public meetings were posted on the Jackson County website and at the Courthouse. The meetings also were available via Zoom, offering video and audio connections for the general public.

Updates on the comprehensive planning process were provided by the Zoning Administrator to the Board of Supervisors at their public meetings at the County Courthouse. Board meetings have similar posting requirements, and also are available via Zoom.

Meetings of the Steering Committee were held as public meetings at the Courthouse, with the same posting of notices as for the Zoning Commission meetings. Committee meetings also were available via Zoom.

ECIA Project Website

In July 2023, ECIA began hosting a project website for transparent information sharing and to collect public input at https://eciatrans.org/jackson_county_comprehensive_plan.php.

The project website describes what is a comprehensive plan, why everyone’s ideas are important, how to share ideas, and where to find out more. The project website has a **Your Ideas** page and a **Community Survey** link where people can share what they want the future of Jackson County to be. Figure 3.1 shows the project website’s home page.

By January 26, 2024, the project website had 385 views by 226 users with an average of 1.70 views per user and an average engagement time of 39 seconds. The project website will remain for six months after adoption of the plan.

ECIA Facebook Page

ECIA maintains a Facebook page to share information about regional events, plans, and programs. Information about the comprehensive plan was posted in December 2023 and March 2024.

Public Open House

A public open house was held on October 23, 2023 at the County Courthouse to share information about the comprehensive plan and survey; to gather input about Jackson County’s strengths, challenges, issues, and opportunities; and to gather ideas for a shared vision, broad goals, and future priorities. Only three county residents attended the public open house.

Public Hearings

Under Iowa Code, a public hearing must be held by the Zoning Commission to recommend a comprehensive plan to the Board of Supervisors. Upon receiving the Commission’s recommendation, the Board of Supervisors then holds a public hearing to consider adoption of the plan. Legal notices for both public hearings must be published in the local newspapers serving Jackson County.



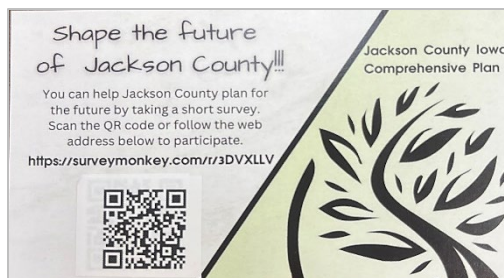
Figure 3.1 ECIA Project Website for Jackson County Comprehensive Plan

Community Survey

ECIA worked with the County Zoning staff to develop a community survey, create promotional items, generate weekly reports, provide monthly highlights, and prepare an analysis. The survey was available in July 2023 in hard copy and at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3DVXLLV>. By January 30, 2024, 443 surveys were submitted with an 81% completion rate. Figure 3.2 shows the survey responses by week (beginning on Sundays). A Community Survey Analysis is found later in this chapter.

Community Survey Business Card

In July 2023, the County Zoning staff created a business card to promote the community survey. By January 2024, they had distributed 840 cards.



Community Survey Business Card
Source: Jackson County Zoning Department

Community Survey Highlights: Top Fives

Top 5 Qualities of Jackson County:

1. Convenient location – highway access – 79%
2. Recreation – state and county parks, trails, rivers, forests – 74%
3. Rural agricultural character – 73%
4. Safe place to live – 71%
5. Locally owned and operated shops and restaurants – 67%

Top 5 Concerns for Jackson County:

1. Employment opportunities – 40%
2. Housing is not affordable, safe, and decent – 29%
3. Properties are not attractive, clean, and well maintained – 28%
4. Healthy, affordable food is not easy to get everywhere – 26%
5. Does not welcome residents with racial and ethnic diversity – 24%

Top 5 Growth & Development Priorities:

1. Improve the quality of life for current and future residents
2. Promote economic development within and around cities
3. Retain and expand local businesses and jobs
4. Encourage healthy, active living for all residents
5. Preserve and protect viable land for agriculture

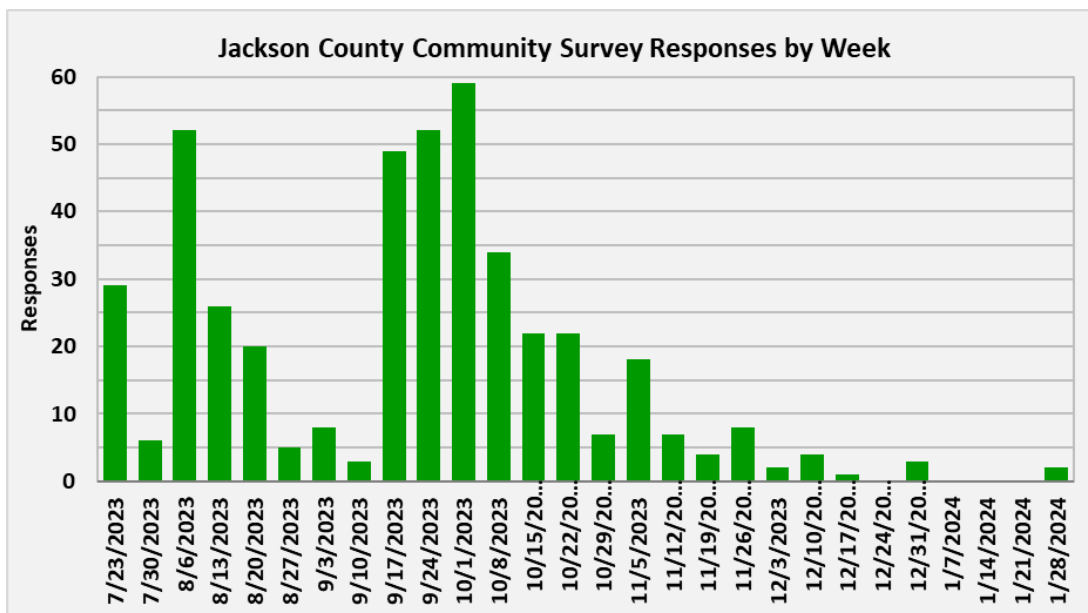


Figure 3.2 Community Survey Responses by Week

Source: ECIA

VISION, BROAD GOALS, AND PRIORITIES

A comprehensive plan presents a shared vision for the future, with long-range community goals. With a shared vision everyone has a common destination and common goals. People then can work together as a team, supporting and encouraging each other to reach community goals.

The role of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was to focus on a shared vision with broad goals and priorities for the future of Jackson County.

The Steering Committee’s first public meeting was on October 10, 2023. After reviewing Jackson County data and early community survey results, Committee members identified Jackson County’s strengths, challenges, issues, and opportunities. Then, Committee members placed dots next to their top 3 to 5 items in each of the four categories.

Committee members who were not able to attend the meeting, and participants at the public open house, also voted with dots for their top 3 to 5 items in the four categories. The dots represented “votes” and helped identify the initial priorities.

At their second public meeting on January 30, 2024, Steering Committee members reviewed an analysis of the most important strengths, challenges, issues, and opportunities. Votes for the most important items in each category ranged from 15 to 0. The votes were divided into three levels: High (11-15), Medium (6-10), and Low (0-5).

In analyzing these votes in High, Medium, and Low levels, three major themes emerged: Business, Workforce; Housing; and Recreation, Resources, Amenities. Based on these themes, the Steering Committee recommended a shared vision with broad goals and priorities.



ECIA staff working with Steering Committee to identify County’s strengths, challenges, issues, and opportunities Photo Credit: Jackson County

Shared Vision: Jackson County is an engaging community, enthusiastically creating opportunity, supporting growth, and enhancing quality of life for all who live, work, and visit.

Broad Goals and Priorities:

- ✓ Rural quality of life and safe communities that compete well with larger cities
- ✓ Recreational opportunities, historic sites, natural resources, unique amenities, and river access points
- ✓ Business retention, expansion, and recruitment
- ✓ Available, trained workforce of professionals, skilled trades, and labor in general
- ✓ Locally owned and operated shops and restaurants engaged in their communities
- ✓ Quality, affordable, and accessible housing options and pathways, especially for underserved populations
- ✓ Affordable childcare available countywide
- ✓ Strong volunteerism

Figure 3.2 shows the analysis of the most important strengths, challenges, issues and opportunities, and the three major themes.

Votes for the items in each category ranged from 15 to 0. The votes were divided into three levels: High (11-15), Medium (6-10), and Low (0-5). The top-rated themes are as follows.

1. Business, Workforce (purple text) rated four High and four Low items, with 59 total votes.
2. Housing (red text) – rated two High, two Medium, and two Low items, with 45 total votes.

3. Recreation, Resources, Amenities (green text) – rated two High items and 1 Medium item, with 36 total votes.

The Steering Committee’s third public meeting was held on March 11, 2024. At

Table 3.2 Analysis of Most Important Strengths, Challenges, Issues, and Opportunities

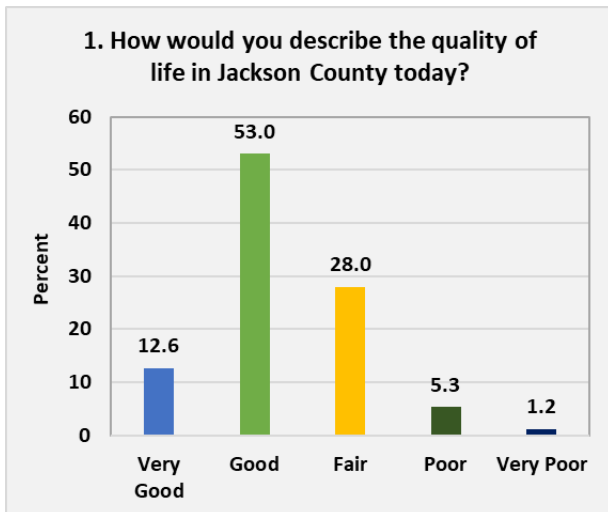
| VOTES | STRENGTHS | CHALLENGES | ISSUES | OPPORTUNITIES |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| HIGH 11-15 | Quality of life - 15 | Harder to find professionals, skilled trades, and labor in general - 14 | Lack of available, trained workforce - 14 | Business retention, expansion, and recruitment - 13 |
| | Recreation – Natural Resources - Unique Amenities – River Access - 15 | Affordable childcare (county wide) - 13 | Lack of affordable, quality housing for renters and young professionals (including buyers) - 14 | Preservation of historic and natural resources - 12 |
| | Safe place to live - 12 | Quality affordable housing for all (Bellevue landlocked) - 11 | Competition from larger cities (Dubuque, Quad Cities) - 11 | |
| | Strong volunteerism - 11 | | | |
| | Locally owned and operated shops and restaurants (community engagement) – 11 | | | |
| MEDIUM 6-10 | Strong school districts/education system – 7 | Lack of development space to build - 9 | Aging and decreasing population – 10 | Marketing/growing recreational opportunities - 9 |
| | Rural agricultural character – 6 | Conditions of properties - 6 | Operation and maintenance of roads and bridges - 8 | Aggressive housing strategies – 8 |
| | | | Public health and mental health issues – 8 | Community cooperation - 7 |
| | | | Awareness of/addressing low-income population – 6 | Program to transition renters to buyers - 6 |
| LOW 0-5 | Low cost of living (competitive) – 3 | Conditions of roads, streets, and bridges - 5 | Business and Family Farm succession – 4 | Public/private partnership – 5 |
| | Convenient location – highway access – 2 | Economic conditions – 4 | Funding market-rate housing – 4 | Non-profit organizations - 4 [Community Foundation] |
| | Low taxes (compared to metros) – 2 | Growing class sizes/school consolidation – 2 | Lack of programs created to keep/train workforce locally – 1 | Federal, state, regional partnerships - 3 |
| | Cooperation – 1 | Lack of infrastructure capacity – 1 | Lack of younger generations getting involved – 1 | More senior housing – 2 |
| | Smaller class sizes – 1 | Quality of school buildings - 1 | Focus on the arts as a destination - 1 | Building improvement assistance (Bellevue businesses) – 1 |
| | New healthcare facility with growing services - 1 | Quality of schools - 1 | | Entrepreneurial opportunities with Innovate 120 - 1 |
| | Open access to government - 0 | Rising development costs – 0 | | Welcoming new residents – 1 |
| | | | | Growing the next generation of businesses/small business supports - 1 |
| Business, Workforce: 4 High, 4 Low (59) Housing: 2 High, 2 Medium, 2 Low (45) Recreation, Resources, Amenities: 2 High, 1 Medium (36) | | | | |

this meeting, the Steering Committee finalized their recommendations for an Implementation Strategy for the Comprehensive Plan. This strategy is in Chapter 14. Implementation of this plan.

COMMUNITY SURVEY ANALYSIS

The community survey was 33 questions divided into nine major sections. There were eight open-ended questions for comments. The following charts reflect the question number. A total of 443 community surveys were submitted from July 24, 2023 to January 30, 2024. A total of 1,502 comments were received for the open-ended questions.

(Where Jackson County demographic data is available to compare with the survey responses, it is shown in italics. Sources include: 2020 U.S. Census, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, and 2023 Jackson County Economic Alliance (JCEA) estimates.)



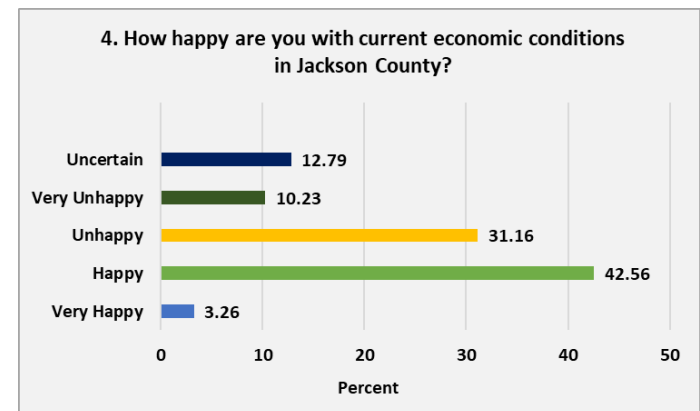
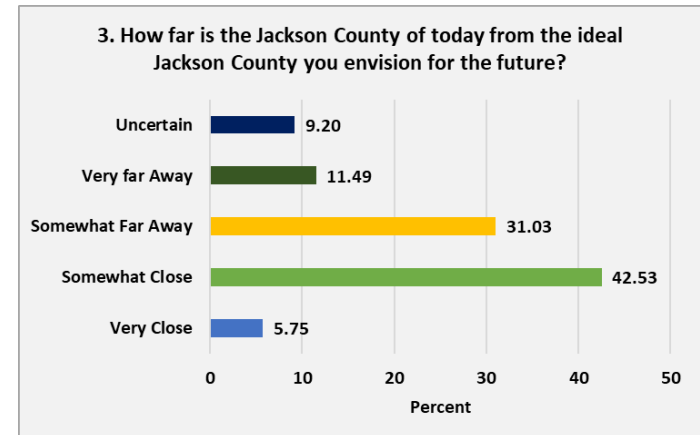
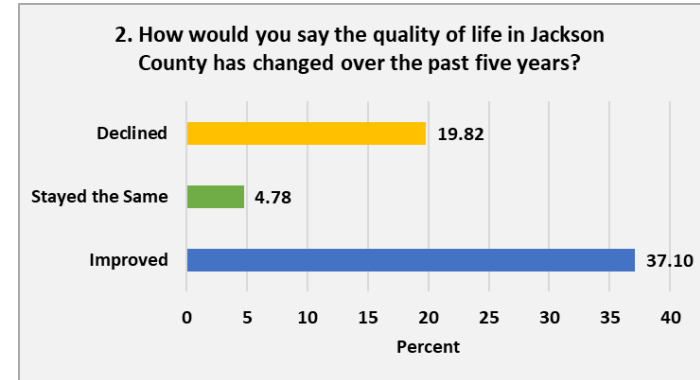
Quality of Life

Question 1. About two-thirds of respondents rated the quality of life in Jackson County as Very Good or Good.

Question 2. While nearly 20% of respondents felt the quality of life in Jackson County has declined over the past five years, twice as many (42%) felt it has improved or stayed the same.

Question 3. When asked how far Jackson County is from what respondents envision for the future: 48% felt it was Very Close or Somewhat Close, and 43% felt it was Somewhat Far Away or Very Far Away.

Question 4. When asked about current economic conditions in Jackson County, 46% of respondents were Very Happy or Happy, and 41% of respondents were Unhappy or Very Unhappy.



Jackson County at Present

Question 7 asked people to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following series of statements.

| |
|--|
| 7. Jackson County stands out when compared to other Iowa counties because..... |
| properties are attractive, clean, and well maintained |
| it is a safe place to live |
| of its rural agricultural character |
| of its convenient location – highway access |
| of its recreation – state and county parks, trails, rivers, forests |
| it has good schools |
| it has access to community colleges and higher education |
| of its locally owned and operated shops and restaurants |
| it welcomes residents with racial and ethnic diversity |
| it has family/kid friendly activities |
| it has good health care and facilities |
| it is culturally vibrant—interpretive centers, museums, historic sites, art and music venues |
| of its employment opportunities |
| housing is affordable, safe, and decent |
| healthy, affordable food is easy to get everywhere |

Respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Jackson County’s **top five qualities** were:

1. Convenient location – highway access (79%)
2. Recreation – state and county parks, trails, rivers, forests (73%)
3. Rural agricultural character (73%)
4. Safe place to live (71%)
5. Locally owned and operated shops and restaurants (66%)

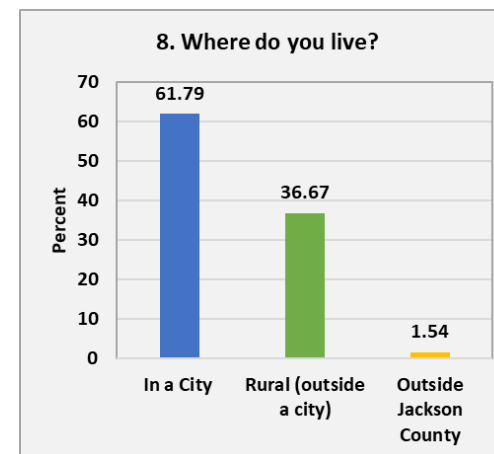
Respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with some statements. Based on the percentages, **top five concerns** for Jackson County were:

1. Employment opportunities (40%)
2. Housing is not affordable, safe, and decent (29%)
3. Properties are not attractive, clean, and well maintained (28%)
4. Healthy, affordable food is not easy to get everywhere (26%)
5. Does not welcome residents with racial and ethnic diversity (24%)

Residential Development

Question 8. About 62% of respondents live in a city, and 37% live in a rural area outside of a city. *(In 2020, 59.7% of county residents lived in a city.)*

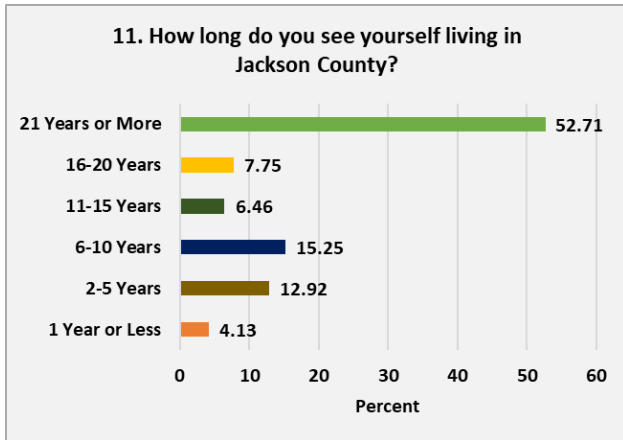
Question 9 asked people which city they call home. Surveys were received from residents of all 13 cities. Almost 42% of



respondents live in Maquoketa, nearly 17% live in Bellevue, and about 25% live in a rural area outside a city. *(In 2020, about 31% of residents lived in Maquoketa and 12% in Bellevue.)*

Question 10 asked how long people had lived in Jackson County. Nearly 79% had for 10 years or more, and nearly 18% had for 3 to 9 years.

Question 11. When asked how long people planned to live in Jackson County, over half indicated “21 years or more”.

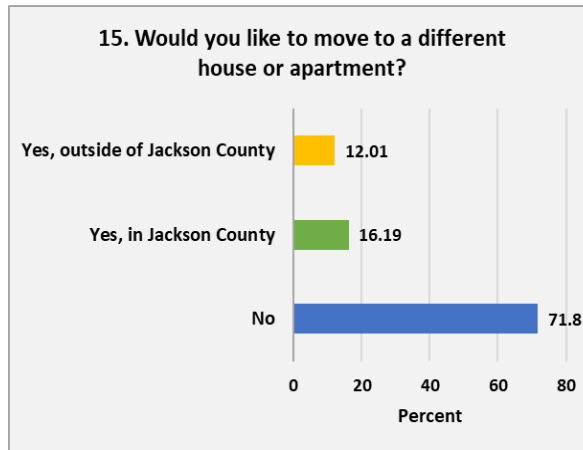


Question 12. Most respondents (92%) live in a single-family home.

Question 13. Most respondents (92%) own their current place of residence. *(In 2023, about 72% of residents were owner-occupants.)*

Question 14. Most respondents (87%) are satisfied with their current housing.

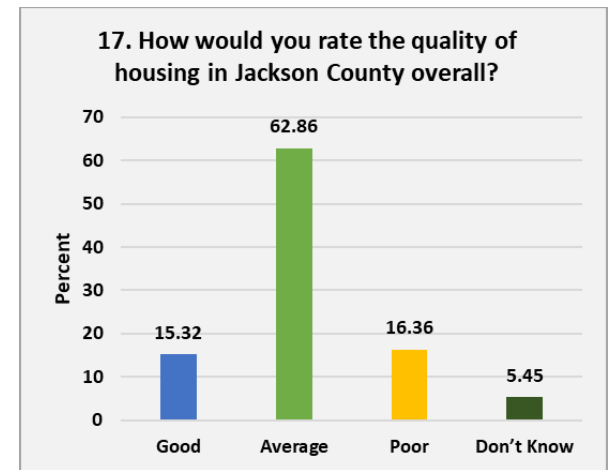
Question 15. Most respondents (72%) do not want to move to different housing, while 16% would move within Jackson County, and 12% would move outside of Jackson County.



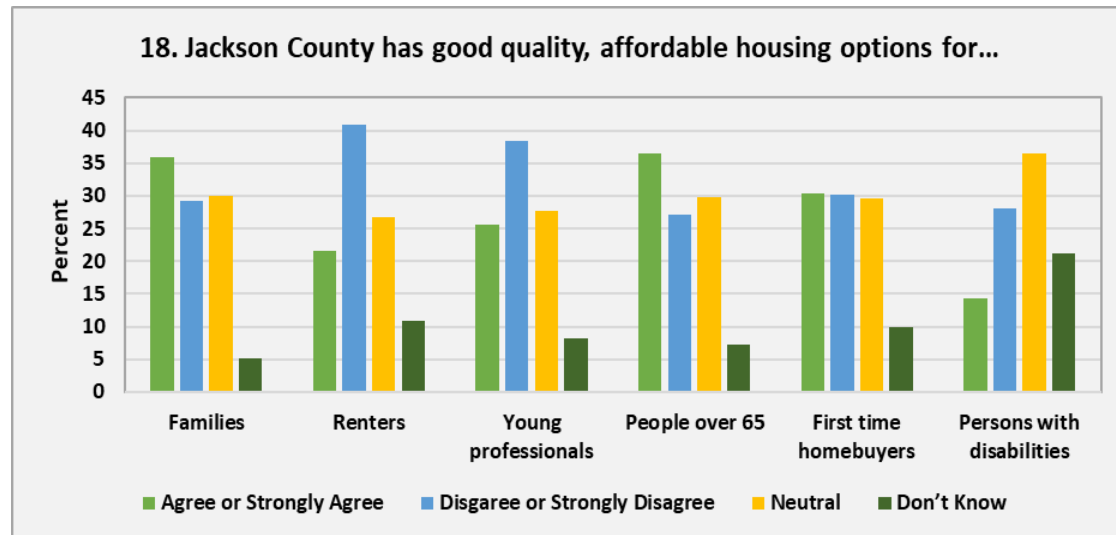
Question 16 asked for comments on why people wanting to move, had not moved.

Question 17. Most people rated overall housing quality as Good or Average.

Question 18 asked people how much they agreed or disagreed with the

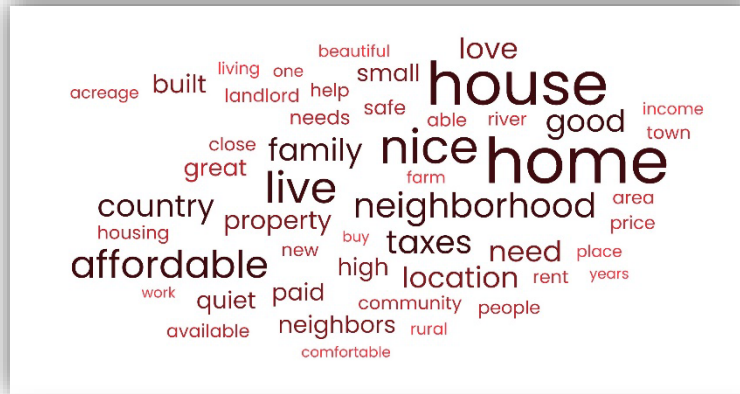


following statement: “Jackson County has good quality, affordable housing options for...”. Respondents rated housing options for renters, young professionals, and persons with disabilities slightly lower than for families, people over age 65, and first-time homebuyers.

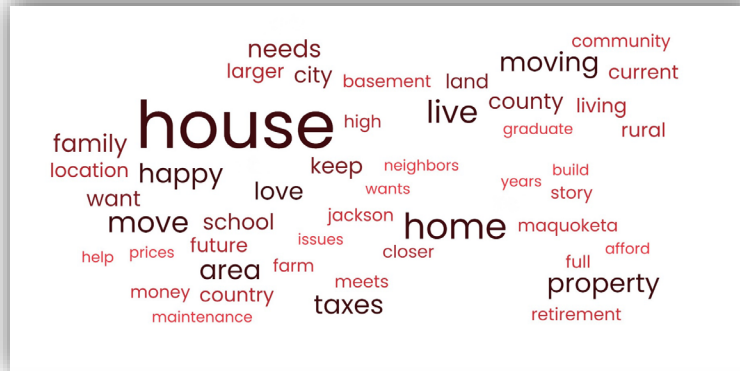


Additional comments in response to Questions 14, 15, and 16 are shown in the word clouds for each question.

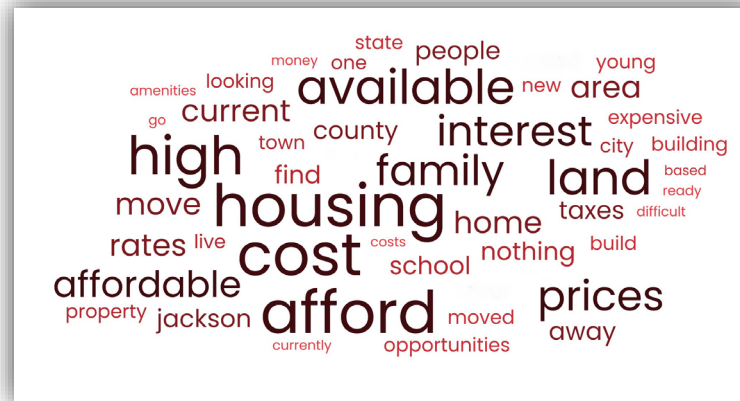
14. Are you satisfied with your current housing situation? Please tell us why. (201 comments)



15. Would you like to move to a different house or apartment? Please tell us why. (139 comments)



16. If you would like to move, but have not, please tell us why. (115 comments)

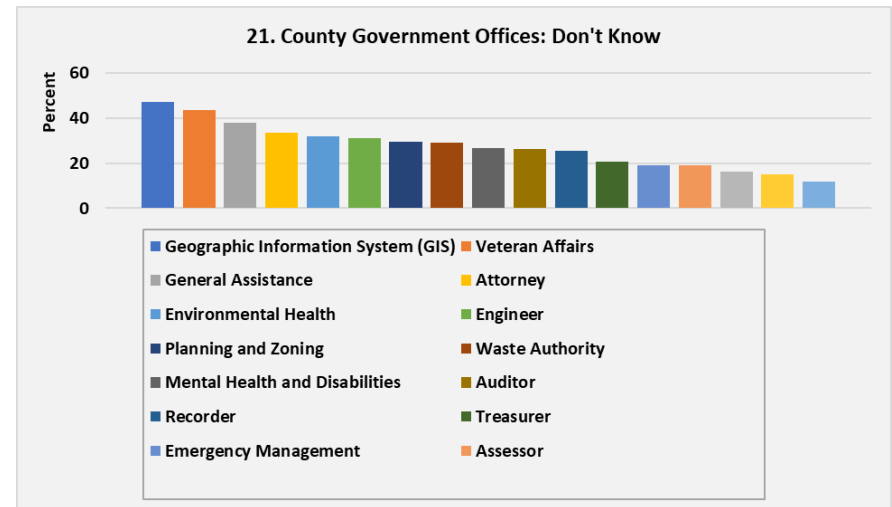


Jackson County Government Offices

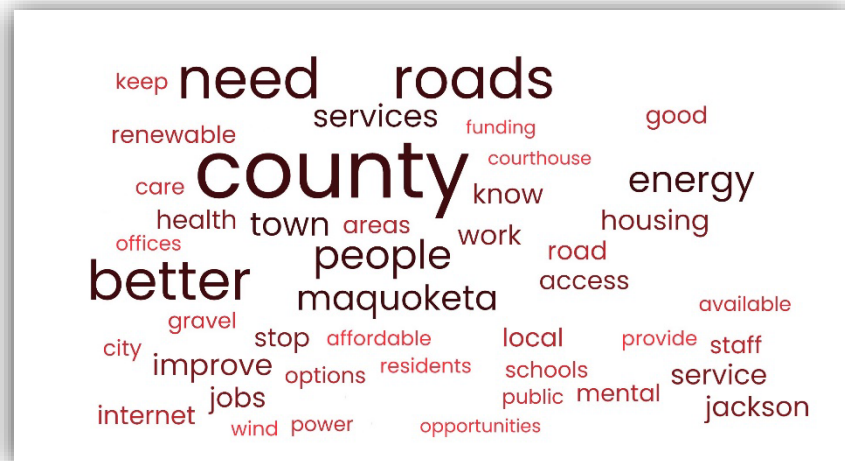
Question 21 asked people to indicate their level of satisfaction with the Jackson County government offices. At least 50% of respondents were satisfied with most county offices as shown here. The top five offices had a 70% or higher level of satisfaction as shown here.

| 21. County Government Offices | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Conservation | 77 |
| Sheriff | 76 |
| Treasurer | 75 |
| Emergency Management | 71 |
| Recorder | 70 |
| Auditor | 66 |
| Board of Supervisors | 62 |
| Waste Authority | 61 |
| Assessor | 60 |
| Environmental Health | 59 |
| Engineer | 57 |
| Planning and Zoning | 53 |
| General Assistance | 50 |
| Veteran Affairs | 49 |
| Attorney | 48 |
| Geographic Information System (GIS) | 44 |
| Mental Health and Disabilities | 38 |

County offices with a higher percentage of respondents chose “Don’t Know” (see chart) tended to have lower satisfaction ratings. This data suggests that there are opportunities for Jackson County government to inform residents about the services that their offices provide.



Question 24 asked people to share two or three ways to improve Jackson County government offices, countywide conditions, and the quality of services and utilities available in Jackson County. Their top responses are shown in the word cloud here. (140 comments)



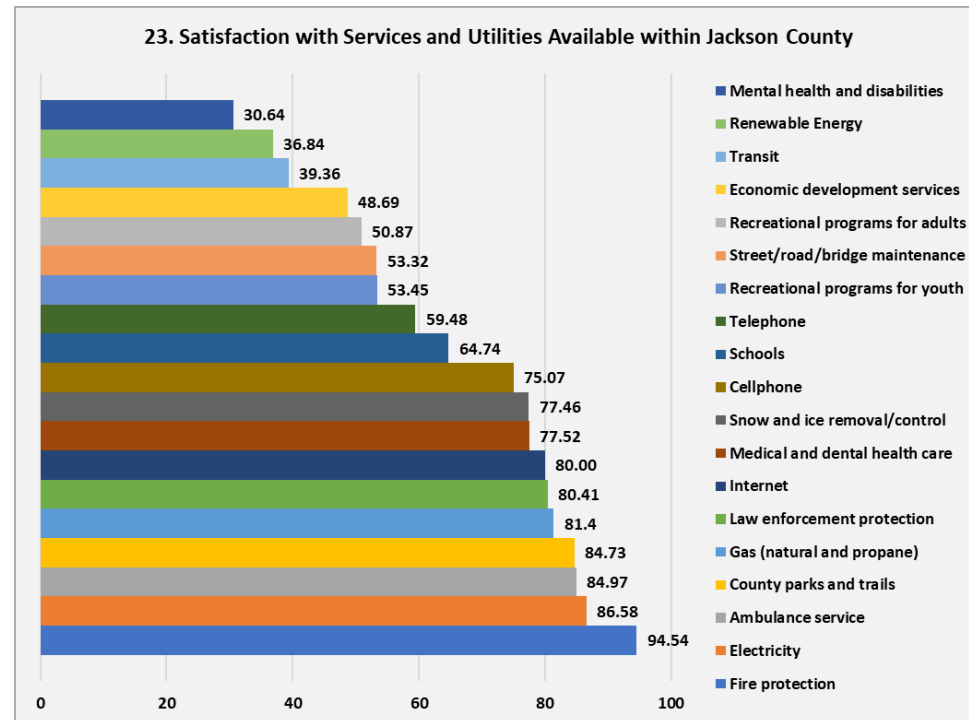
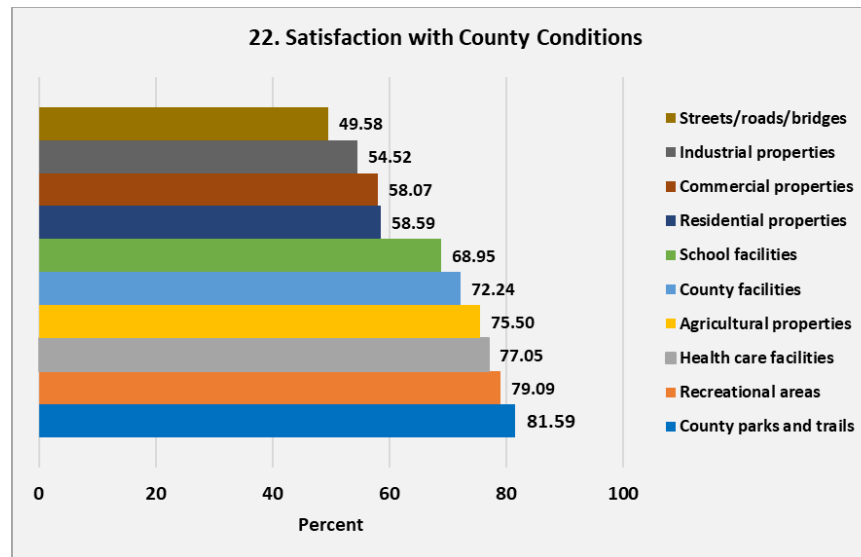
Countywide Conditions

Question 22 asked people to indicate their level of satisfaction with the conditions of public and private properties in Jackson County (see chart here).

County parks and trails, recreational areas, health care facilities, and agricultural properties rated a 75% or higher level of satisfaction. About half the respondents (50-60%) were satisfied with the conditions of streets, roads, bridges, and non-agricultural properties.

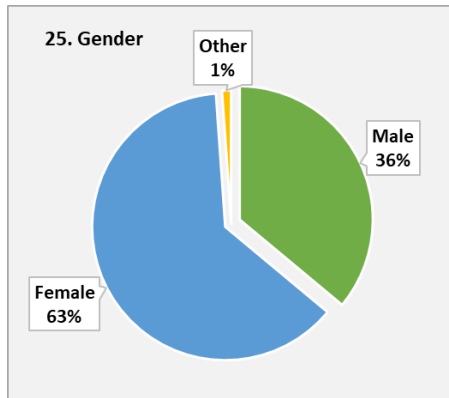
Question 23 asked people to indicate their level of satisfaction with the quality of services and utilities available within Jackson County (see chart here).

Fire protection rated nearly a 95% level of satisfaction. Many services and utilities rated 80% or higher satisfaction levels: electricity, ambulance service, county parks and trails, gas (natural and propane), law enforcement protection, and internet. Services and utilities receiving less than 50% level of satisfaction were: economic development services, transit, renewable energy, and mental health and disabilities.

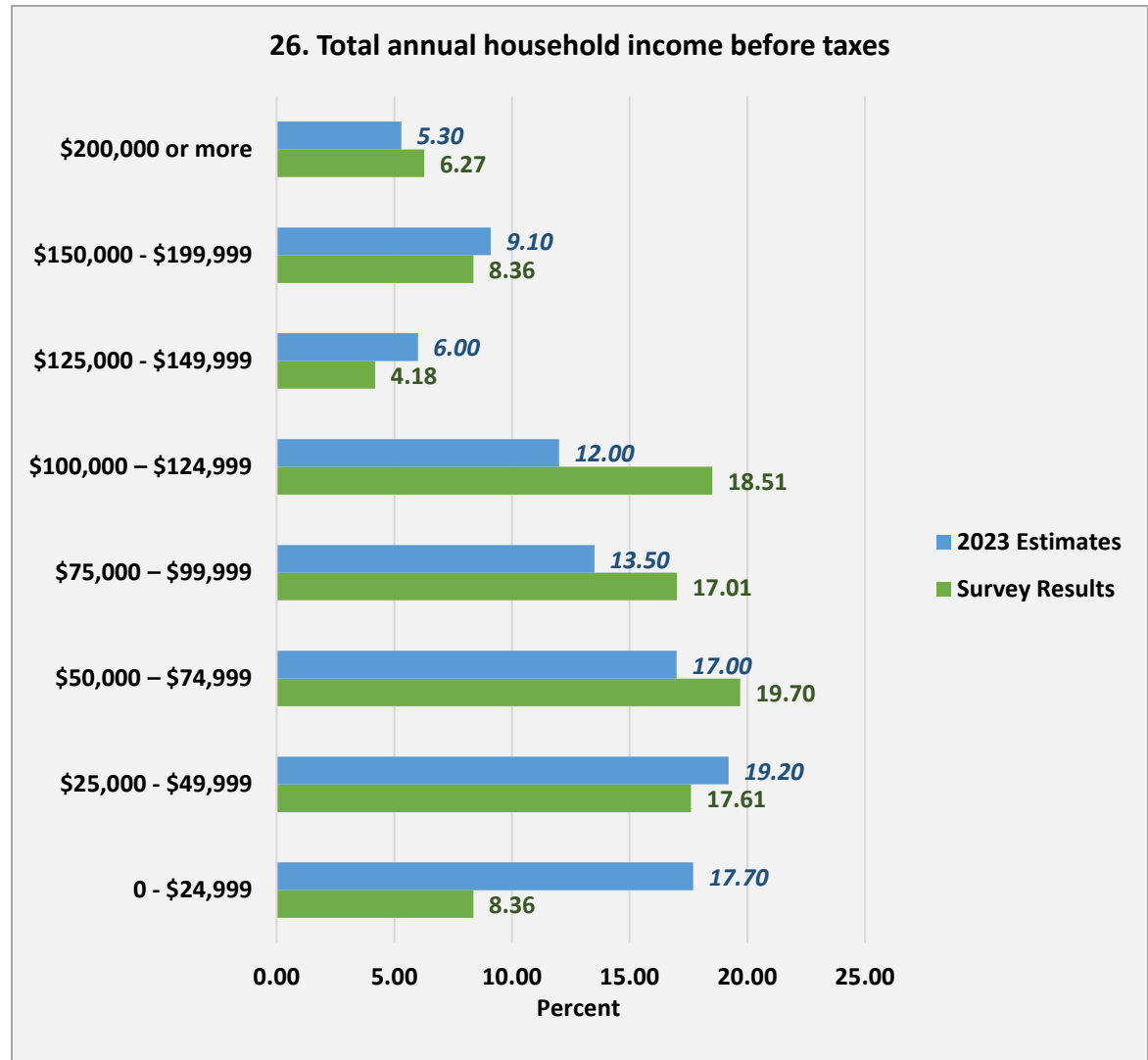


Demographic Information

Question 25. About 63% of respondents identified their gender as female, 36% as male, and 1% as other as shown here. *(In 2022, Jackson County’s population was 49.3% female and 50.7% male.)*



Question 26. There was a good range of total annual household levels among the survey respondents, with most between \$25,000 and \$125,000 as shown here with the green bars. *(The 2023 County estimates for household base income are shown here with the blue bars and values in italics. The percentages are fairly consistent between the two data bases.)*



Question 27. With respect to highest level of formal education completed by survey respondents, 6% haven't completed high school, 16% have a high school diploma or a GED (General Educational Development) certificate, and about 60% have an associate degree or higher as shown here with the green bars.

(The 2023 County estimates for educational attainment are for residents age 25 years or older. The 2023 estimates are shown here with the blue bars and values in italics. About 4% haven't completed high school, nearly 52% have completed high school, and 44% have an associate degree or higher. The largest gap between the two databases is for residents with high school diploma or GED certificate as their highest level of completed education.)

Question 28. Most respondents (81%) do not own a business in Jackson County as shown here.

