



This Voice Of Our Community Study has been developed to help local community leaders and citizens identify major local patterns. The data captured here can be broadly classified into two categories: (1) The perceptions of the citizens of the community and (2) The metrics that measure the economic facts. The report helps identify the opportunities and the challenges, so that the community can build on what is working well.

**Major observations:** Ash Grove citizens take pride in their community. However, the perceptions do vary across various local groups. Those that are most favorable about Ash Grove’s future are those with higher education and those that hold a job. The biggest opportunity for Ash Grove is around engaging the youth and help them more deeply connect into the vision and future for the community.

**What you said about Ash Grove:**

Welcoming and wholesome.  
I like the safety of our community.  
The pride residents share is across generations.  
If something happens there is always someone willing to help.  
It feels like Mayberry when you walk down Prairie Lane or Main.  
Nothing brings this community together like a good Friday night game.  
There are passionate people who are willing to give their time, talents, and money to others.  
The small town fosters being neighborly, kind, and generous towards others.  
There are lots of different types of people who all love living here.  
I feel that community members support our local businesses.  
That so many people offer help in times of need.  
We are a very tight knit community.  
There are no strangers here.

**Our Most Admired Leaders**



*“The people in this community DO. They do not sit back and wait for someone else to volunteer. They step up and take care of things themselves. I feel that smaller communities operate this way. In larger towns, people have the mentality of "I don't need to take care of this because there are many others that will step up and do it.”*  
– A passionate Ash Grove citizen

**GRO PROGRAMMING APPROACH**





## Our Economy

### What opportunity do you see here?

#### Our Economic Perceptions



#### Key Economic Observations

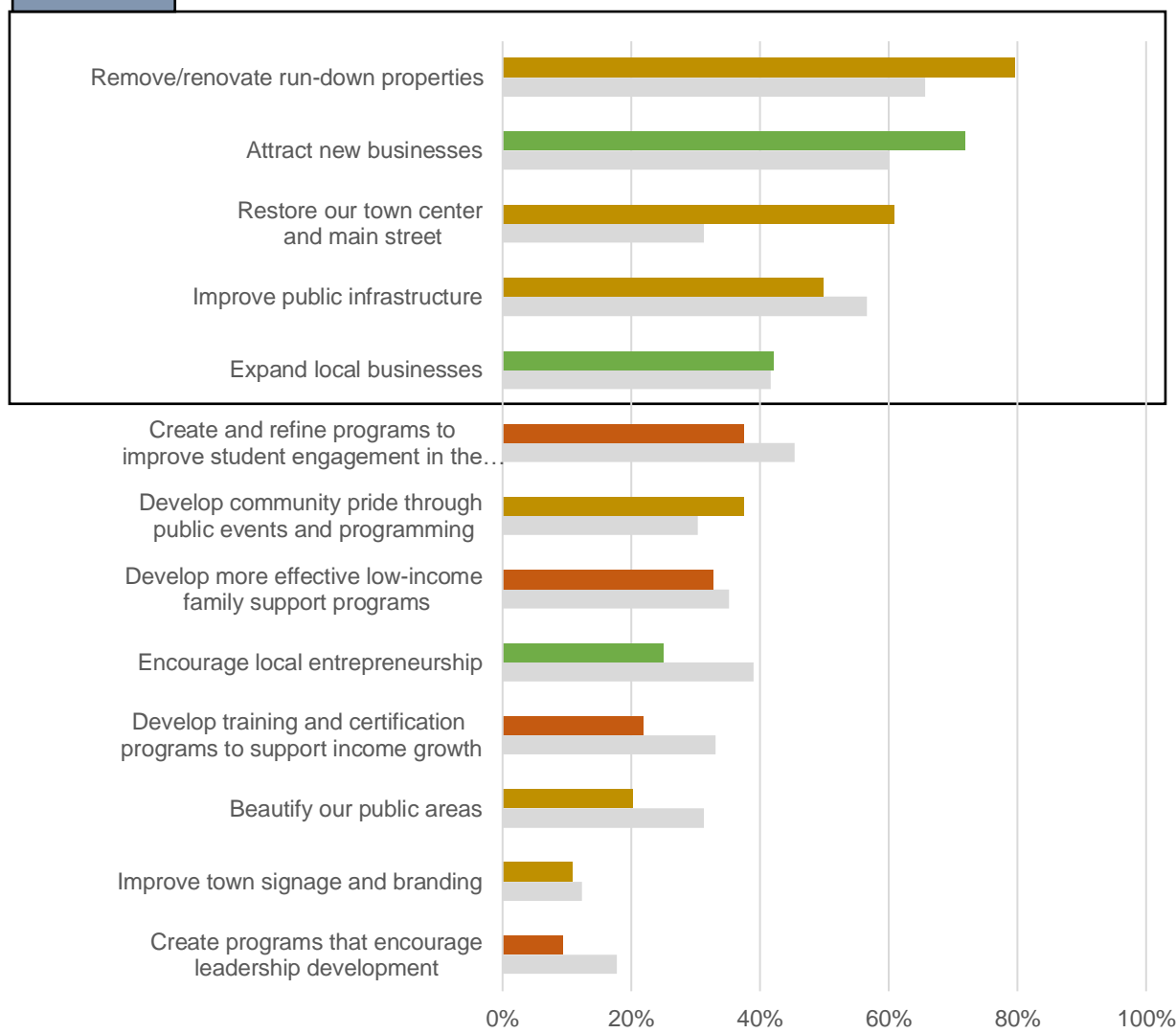
The citizens of Ash Grove have a more positive view of the future of the community than of the current. And generally, the future confidence is lower than that of other GRO communities.

#### The opportunity:

Ash Grove can get a big shot in the arm, by helping either expand or attract a business into the community. The GRO Rural Innovation Program (GRIP) can also be a great way to engage the youth in the community and help them pursue entrepreneurship pathways.

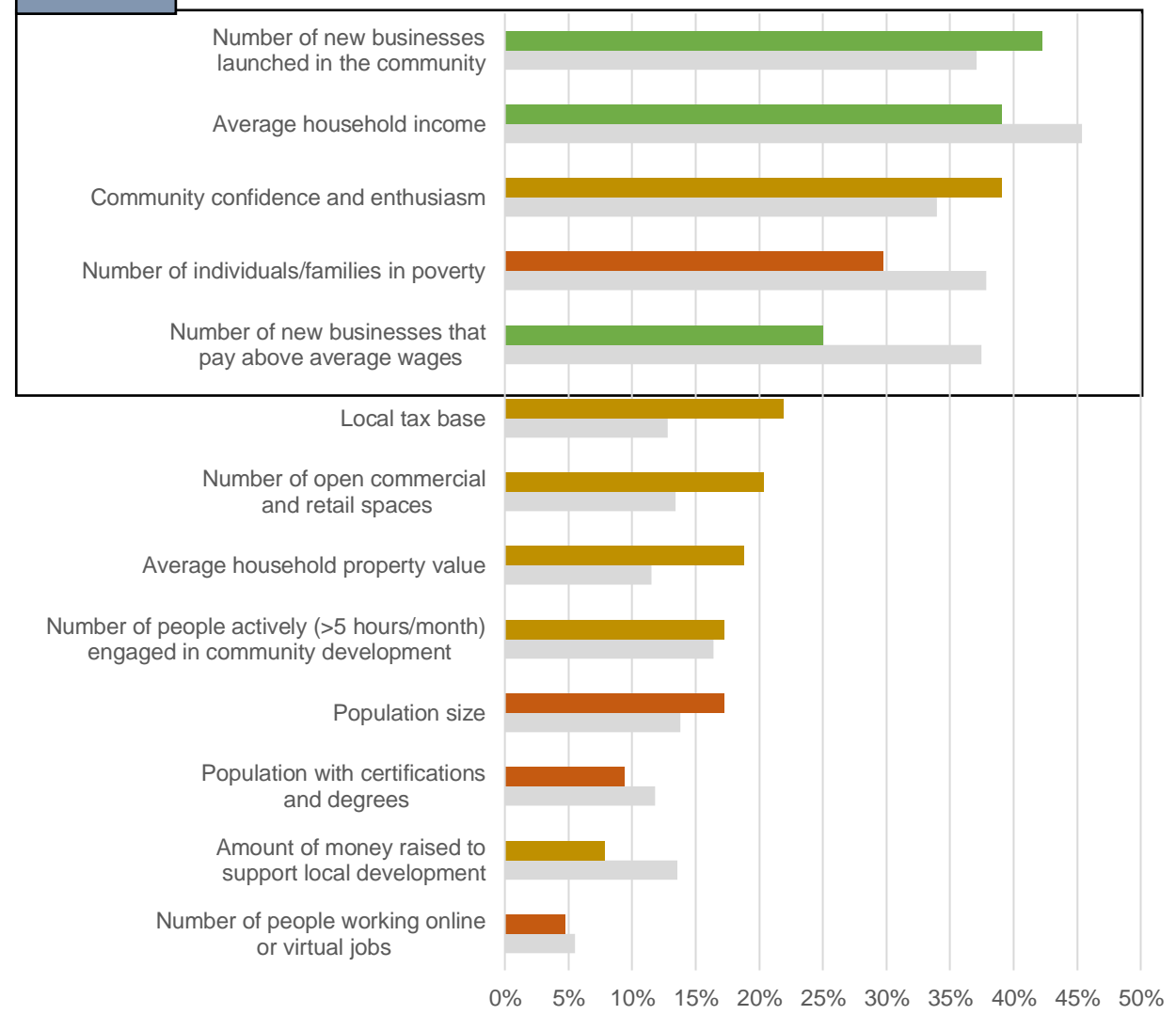
#### Top 5

#### Our Priority Programs



#### Top 5

#### Our Priority Metrics



■ Placemaking 
 ■ Economy 
 ■ People 
 ■ Average GRO Community Score

#### Key Economic Observations

Ash Grove has several positive trends that are working in its favor. For example: An expanded tax base and while the overall population is declining the local school enrollment has seen a slight uptick. The biggest opportunity for smaller communities like Ash Grove is to find a way to build more community support through expanded citizen, public and private partnerships. With this support the community would be able to pursue more infrastructure, economic and community development projects.

How this can be accomplished: **(1) PLAN:** Make sure that the city, school, and GRO efforts are developing and working from a common plan. **(2) COMMUNICATE:** Create an open mechanism for citizens to learn about local efforts underway. **(3) INVOLVE:** Ash Grove citizens already care a lot about their community, let us better inform them about our efforts and invite them to support/lead additional efforts.

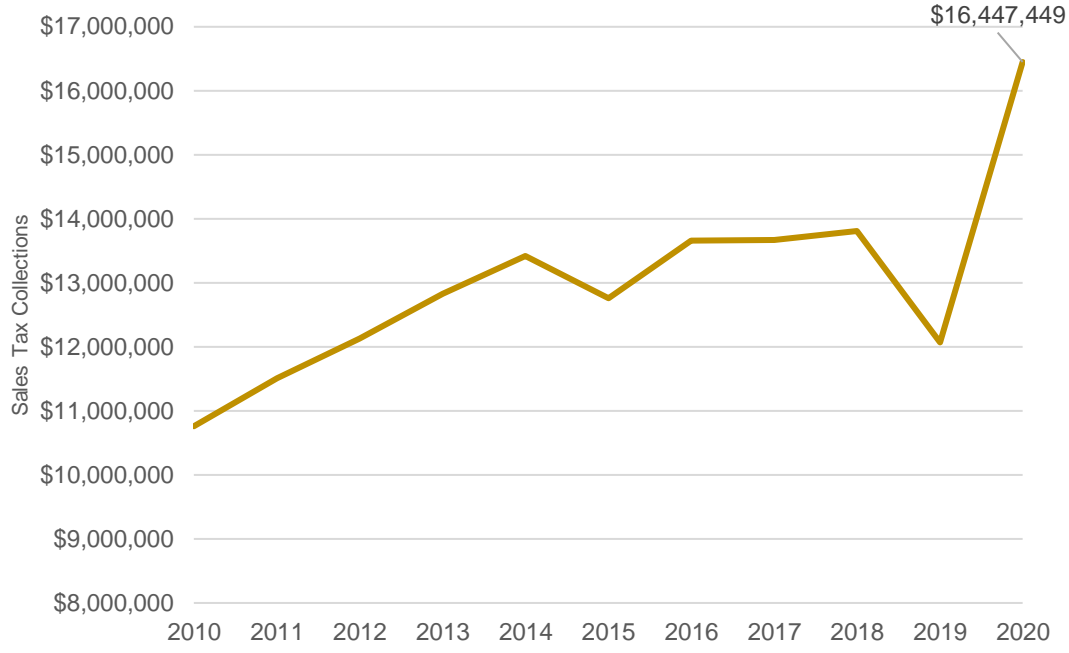
#### The Businesses We Would Like To See In Our Town:

**Resident Services:** Therapist, A new grocery store, A dry cleaner, A clothing store, An Indoor Recreation Center, An art store, Another gas station (Casey's);  
**Restaurants:** McDonald's, BBQ, Taco Bell;  
**Industry:** A meat processing plant;  
**Other:** Habitat for Humanity, An animal shelter, A tourist attraction, A greenhouse.



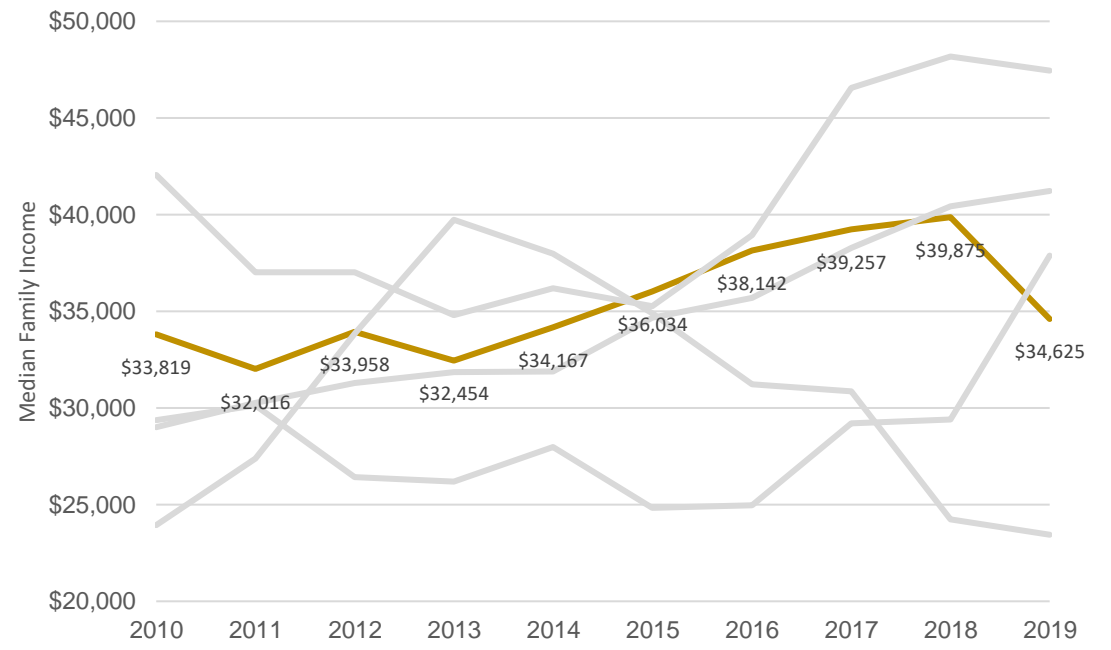
**Additional Important Economic Data**  
What opportunity do you see here?

**Annual Sales Tax Collections**



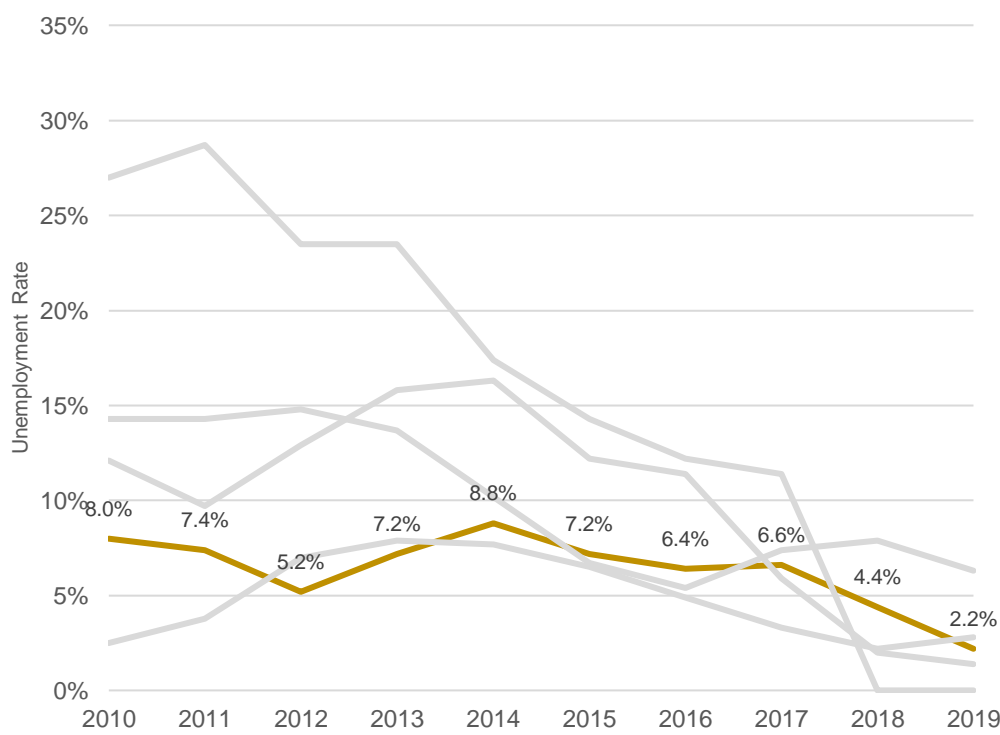
Source: Missouri Dept of Revenue, Public Taxable Sales Reports

**Median Household Income**



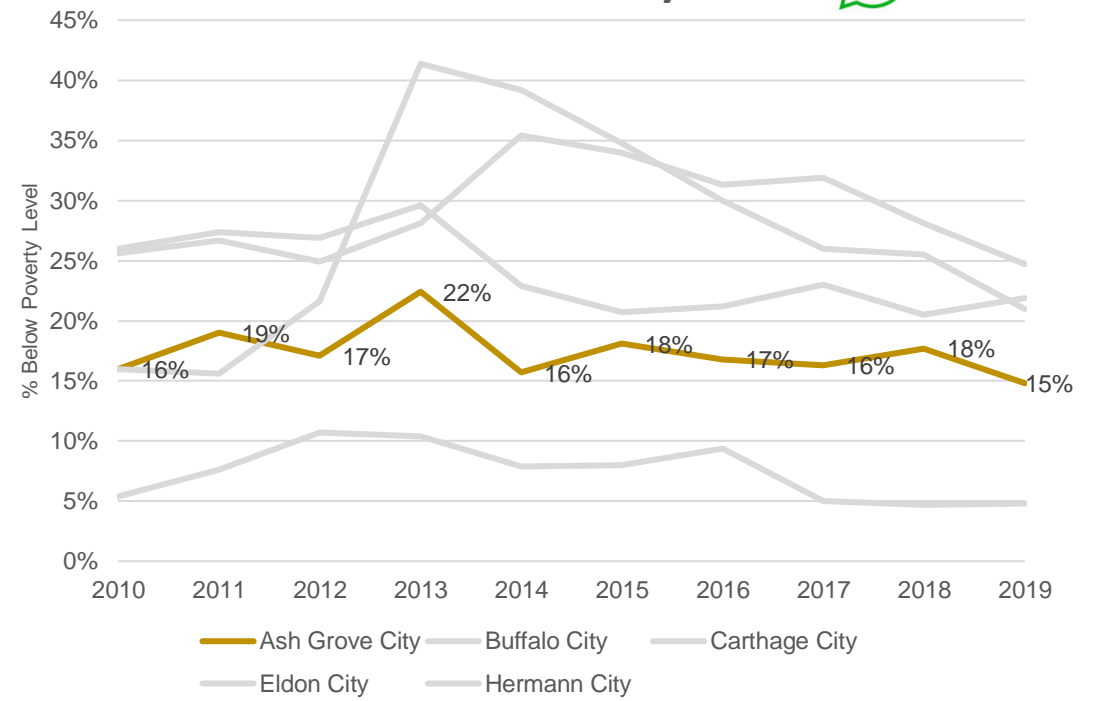
Source: USCB, American Community Survey. 5-yr average.

**Local Unemployment Rate**



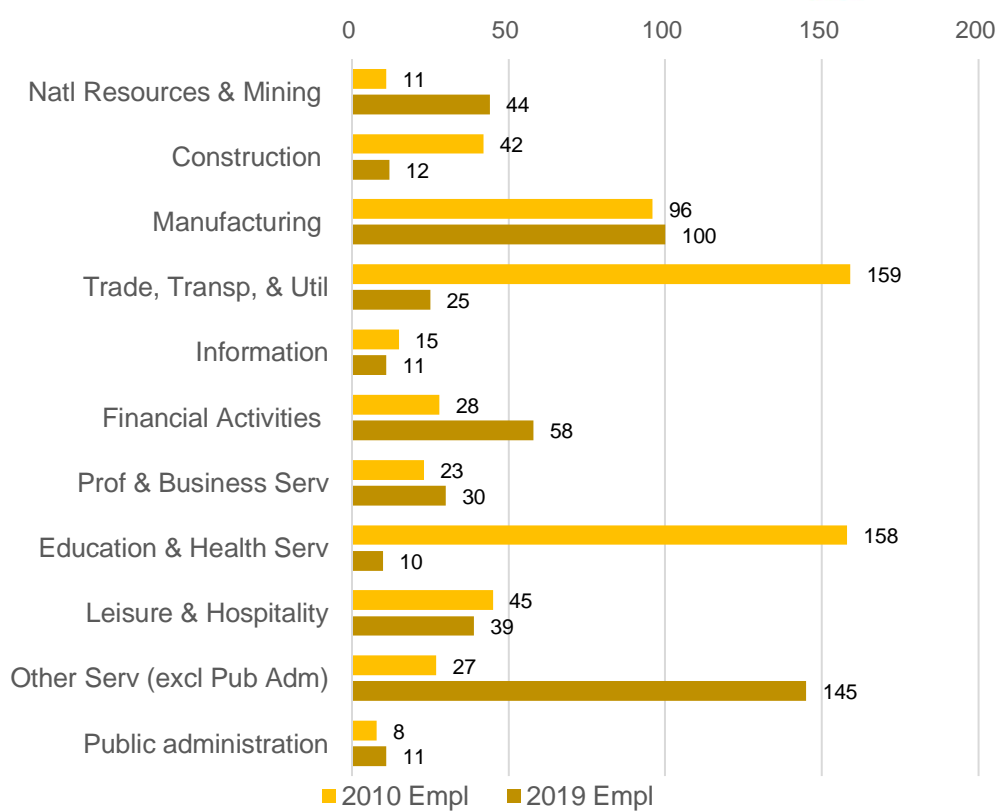
Source: USCB, American Community Survey. 5-yr average.

**Local Poverty Rate**



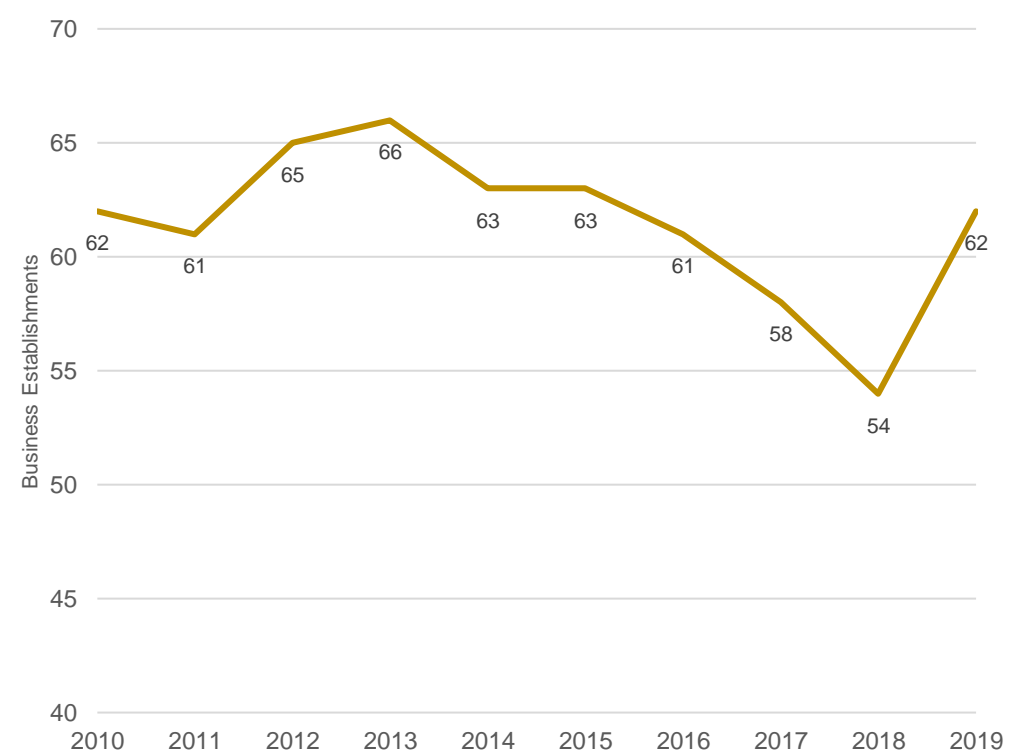
Source: USCB, American Community Survey. 5-yr average.

**10 Year Shift in Local Jobs**



Source: USCB, American Community Survey. 5-yr average.

**Businesses in Our Town**

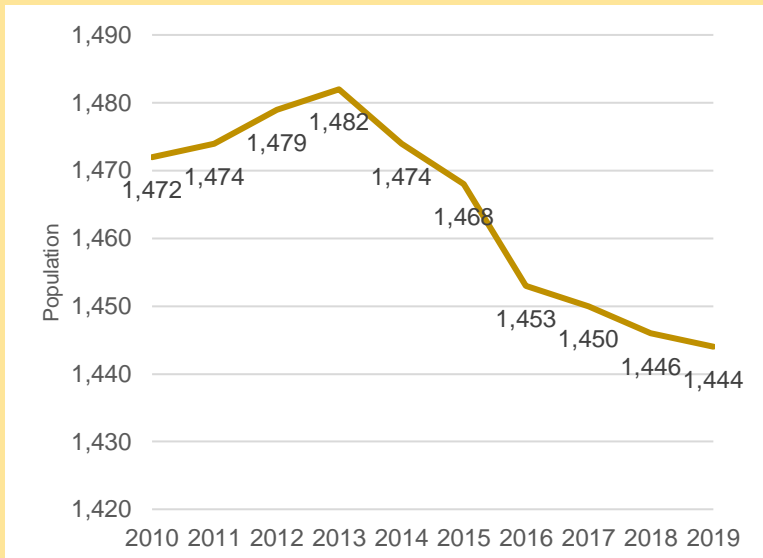


Source: USCB, County Business Patterns By Zip. Data is on zip code basis.



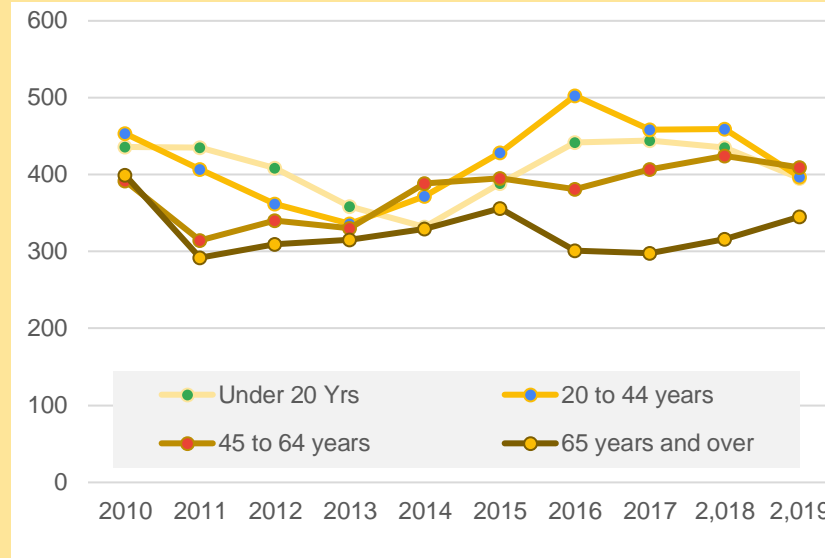
**Our People, Our Pride**  
What opportunity do you see here?

**Overall Population Trend**



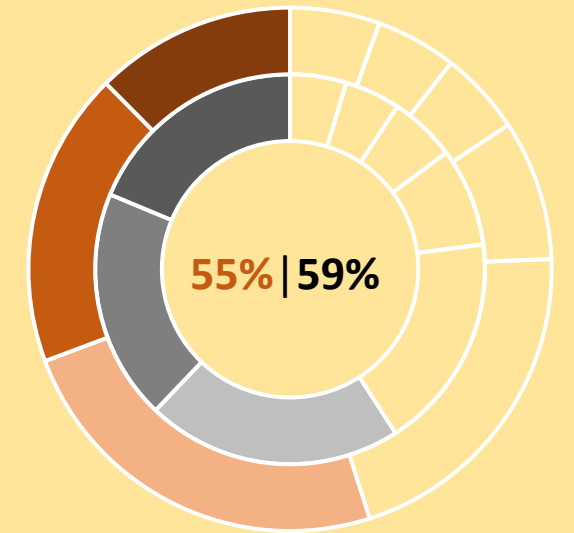
Data source: US Census

**Population Trend by Age**



Source: USCB, American Community Survey. 5-yr average.

**Overall Community Confidence**

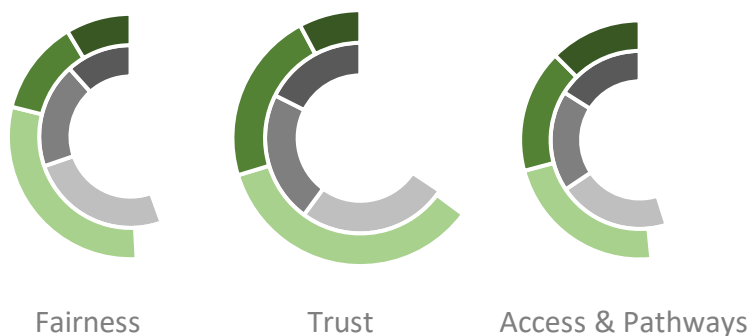
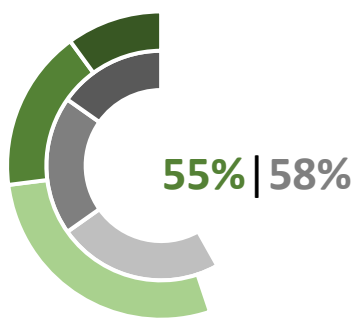


Data source: 2022 GRO Community Survey

**Portion of the community that is highly confident on the listed community dimensions (Rating range: 0-7; Scored >5)**

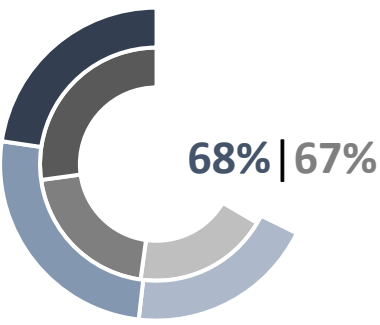
Legend: Town Scores (various colors), Average GRO Community Score (grey)

**Collaborative Leadership**



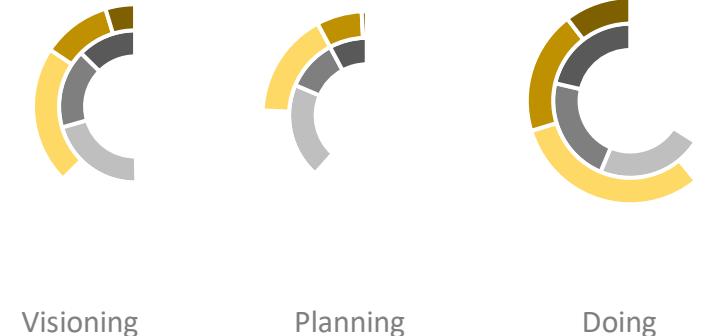
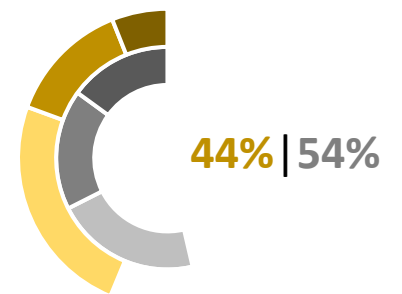
Ash Grove's citizens have a high degree of trust in their leaders. But would like to see more access to the community efforts.

**Citizen Commitment**



Ash Grove's citizens generally have a very high sense of commitment to the community. This commitment can help fuel program community programs.

**Community Vision**



While low on the visioning and planning scores, the citizens see the town **DOING** many positive things.

The local citizen perceptions of Ash Grove is slightly lower than the average GRO scores.

- Across the three areas, Citizen Commitments are the highest and Community Visioning efforts scored the lowest.
- Ash Grove' citizens are more committed to their community than the GRO average.
- Ash Grove already has a strong visioning and planning process. Now we need to do a better job of communicating these developments into the community and invited community members to help support local development efforts.

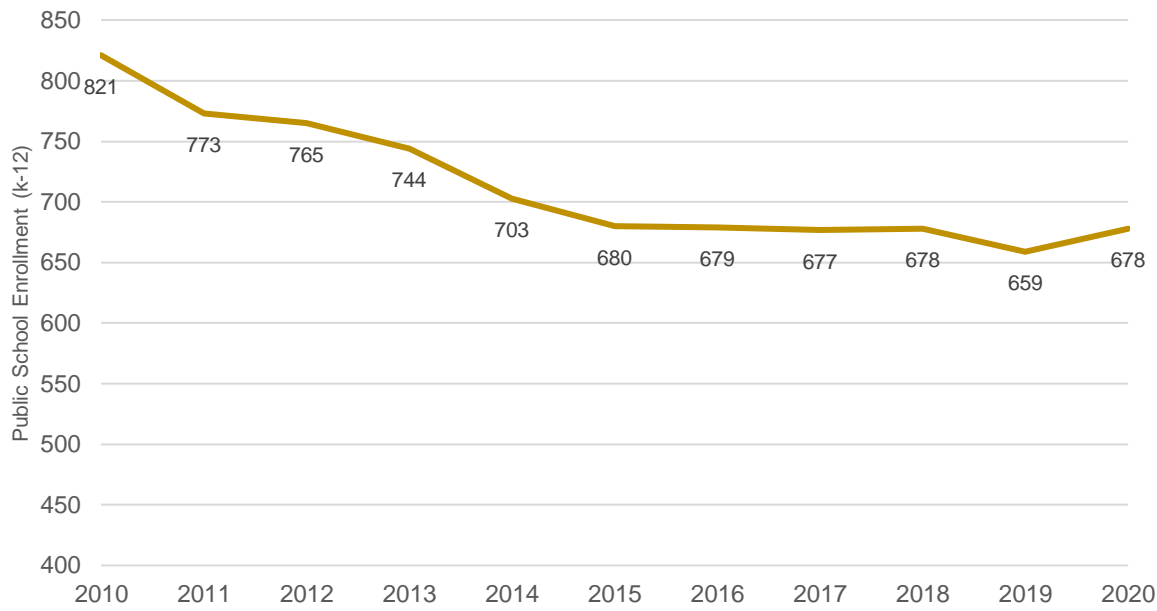
**Challenges identified by local citizens:**

**Places and things for young people to do. Businesses that can provide students with constructive after-school activities.** Tear down properties/file charges for damages done to those families. Bring in safe, new, and affordable homes for low-income families. Update and beautify the town, increase police presence. **Expanded businesses, local co-op owned/producers and shareholders.** More commercial businesses that could create higher paying wages for residents and could utilize local resources. **Businesses that entice students and families to come back.** More service industries.



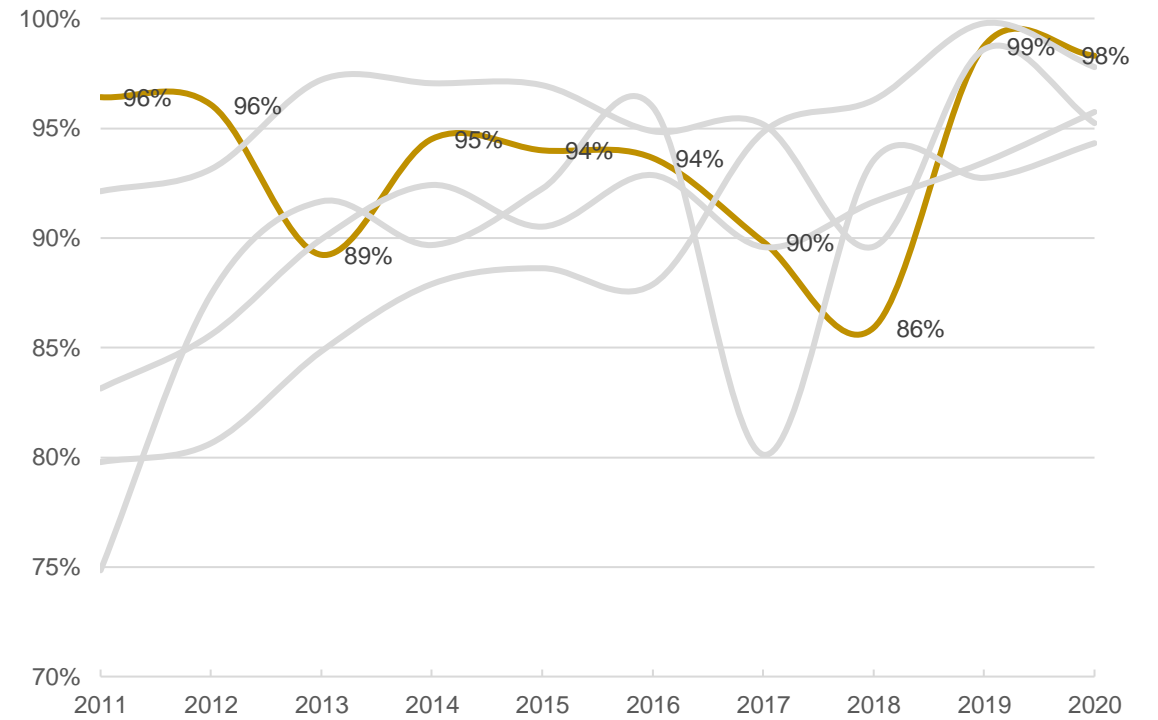
**Key Community Metrics**  
What opportunity do you see here?

**Local School Enrollment**



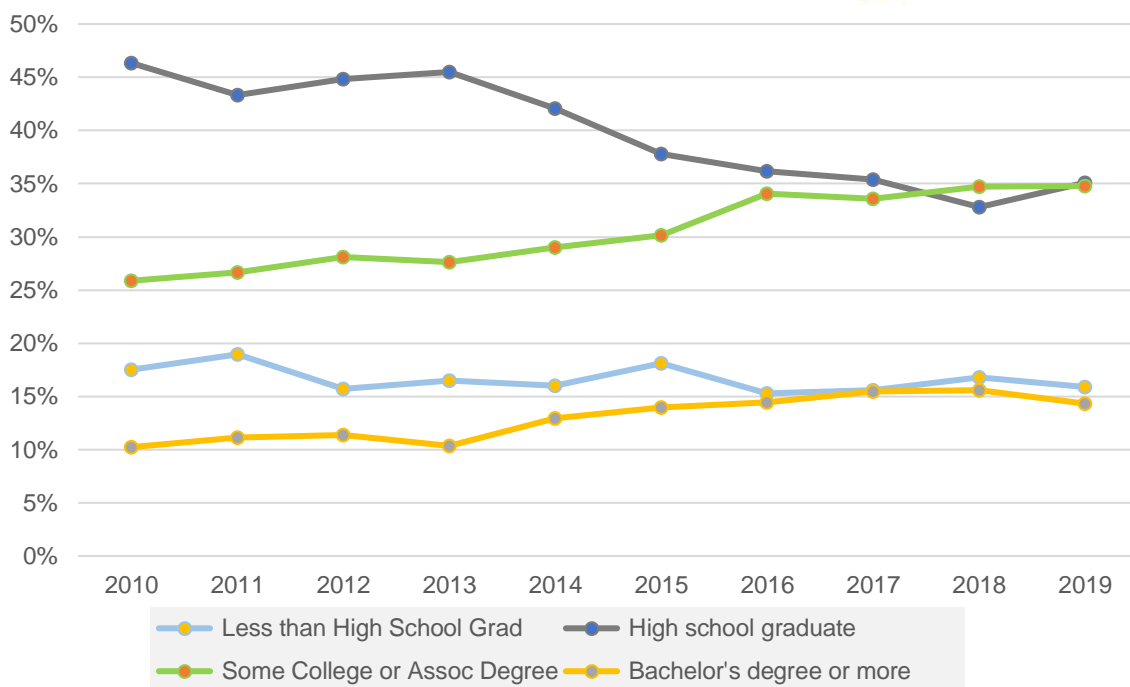
Source: MO Dept of Elem. & Secondary Education, MO Comprehensive Data System, School Finance Report

**High School Graduation Rate**



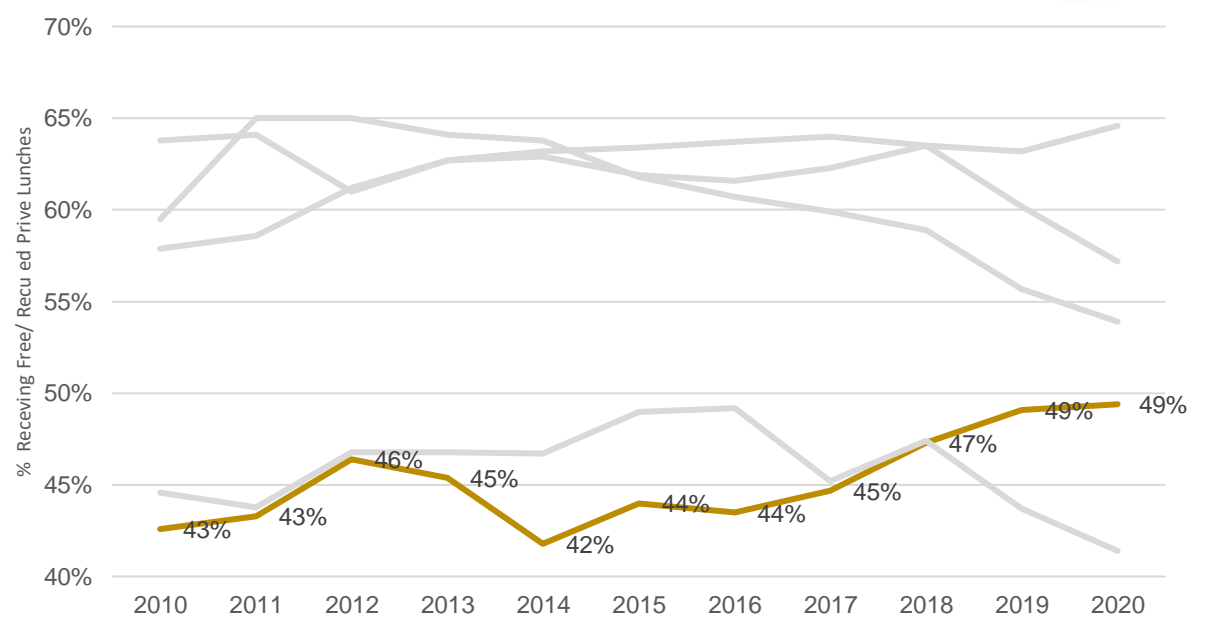
Source: MO Dept of Elem. & Secondary Education, MO Comprehensive Data System, School Finance Report

**Local Educational Level**



Source: USCB, American Community Survey. 5-yr average.

**Percent of Students on Free or Reduced Lunch**



Source: MO Dept of Elem. & Scnd. Edu., MO Comprehensive Data System, Free & Reduced Lunch Report

**Community Foundation**

**Dollars Raised**

**Dollars Invested**

*The local Community Foundation was started in 2019.  
The community raised a total of \$11,415 in this first year.  
No grants have been gifted in the first year.*

Source: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, 2020

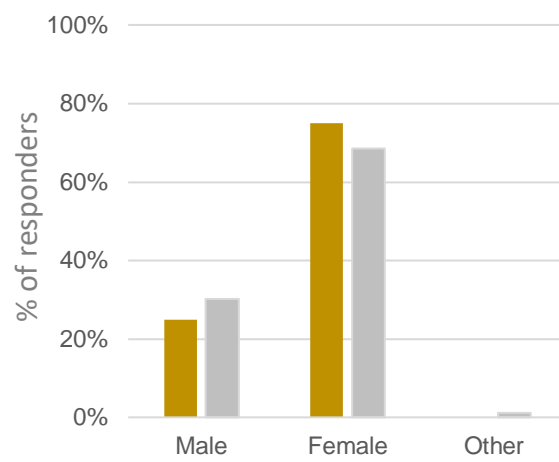
**Who Responded to the Survey**  
What opportunity do you see here?

Number of people:



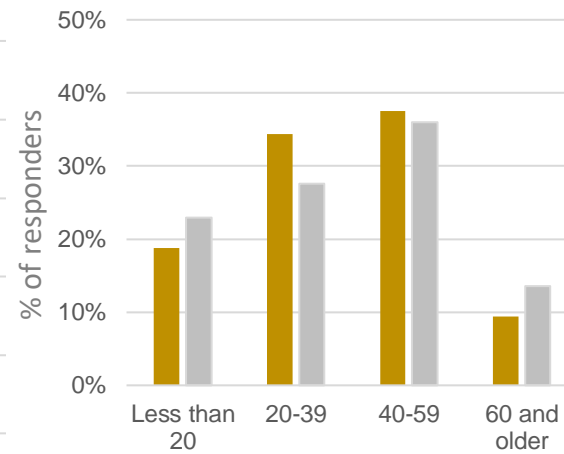
We received a total of 64 responses to the community survey conducted.

Gender:



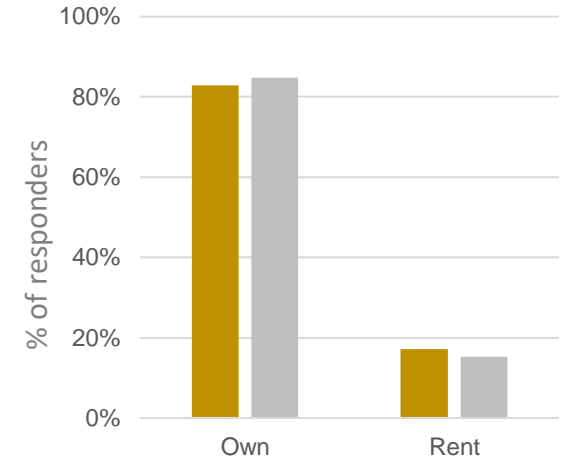
Women have a **stronger perception** of the future of the community. Both groups would like to see a focus on getting more businesses and on improving town renovation.

Age Profile:



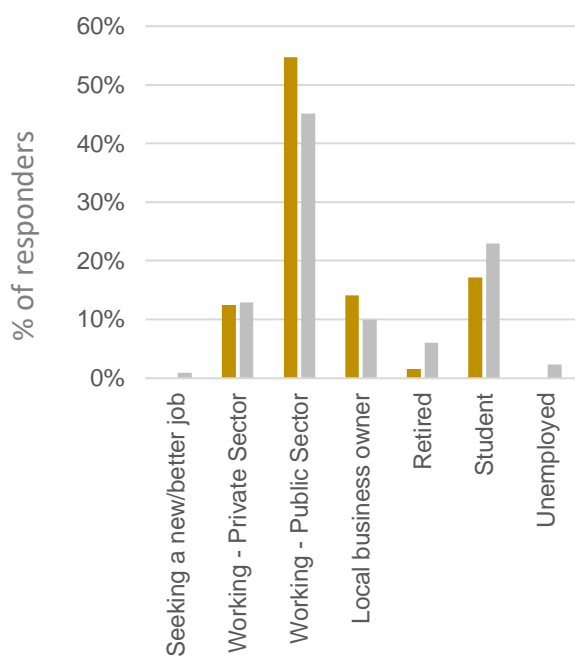
Older residents are more engaged and have a more positive view of the future economy than the young. **20-40 age group** holds the strongest view of AG's future.

Residential Status:



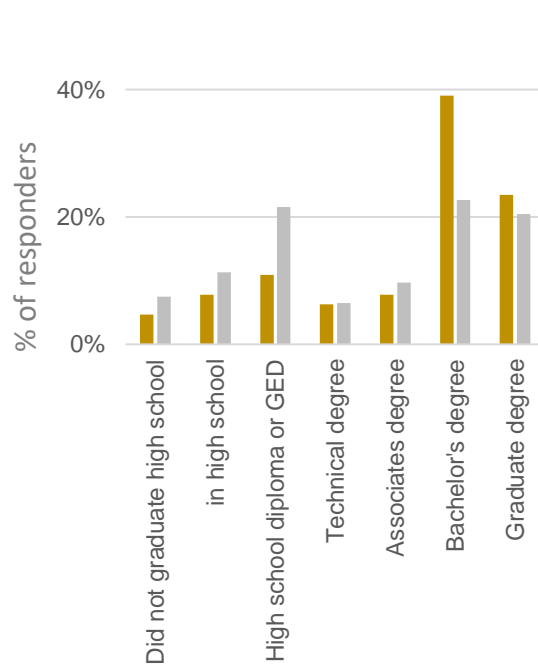
The two groups have **similar** view of the community. Owners have a slightly more higher engagement level than the renters.

Occupation:



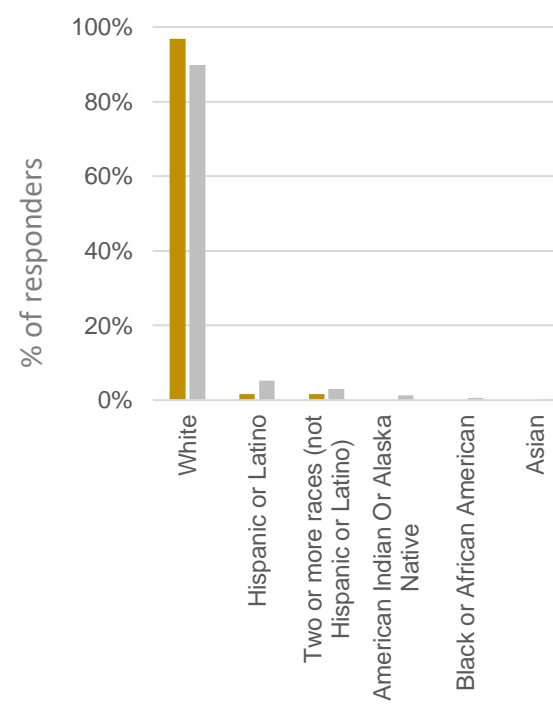
People actively working and **business owners** have a far more positive view of the city's economic future. **Students** have an extremely poor view of AG's economic future.

Education Status:



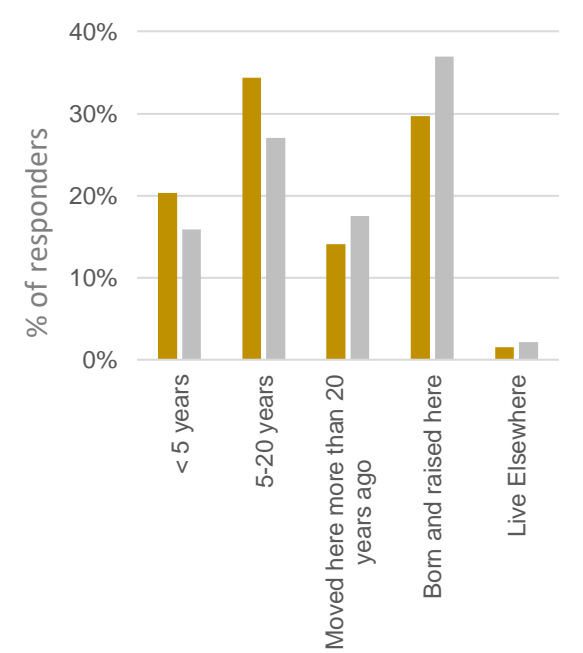
Those with **higher education levels** are more engaged and have a more positive view of the future of AG's economy. **Everyone** wants to see the town renovated.

Ethnicity:



*Not enough data to analyze.*

Duration of Residence:



Those **born and raised** have the strongest commitment to the town. Those who moved less than **5 years** ago hold the strongest view of AG's future.