



Johnson County, IA Strategic Planning



April 7, 2026

Strategic Plan: What and Why?

What is a strategic plan and why does Johnson County need one



Strategic plans help local government:

- Develop a clear direction for the future.
- Set clear goals and priorities to effectively allocate resources toward achievement of future vision.
- Maintain focus to make progress on issues of most importance to the needs of community members and the County.

What is a Strategic Plan?

STRATEGIC PLAN



WHAT the County will prioritize and focus on



A **LIVING DOCUMENT** that guides decision making



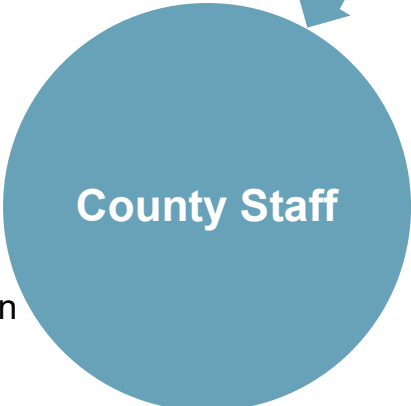
A **TOOL** for government transparency and accountability

HOW the County carries out its strategy to reach the vision, priorities, and goals is defined in the **Implementation Plan**

Plan Development



- Develop mission, vision, and values.
- Identify strategic priorities and outcomes.
- Adopt the Strategic Plan.



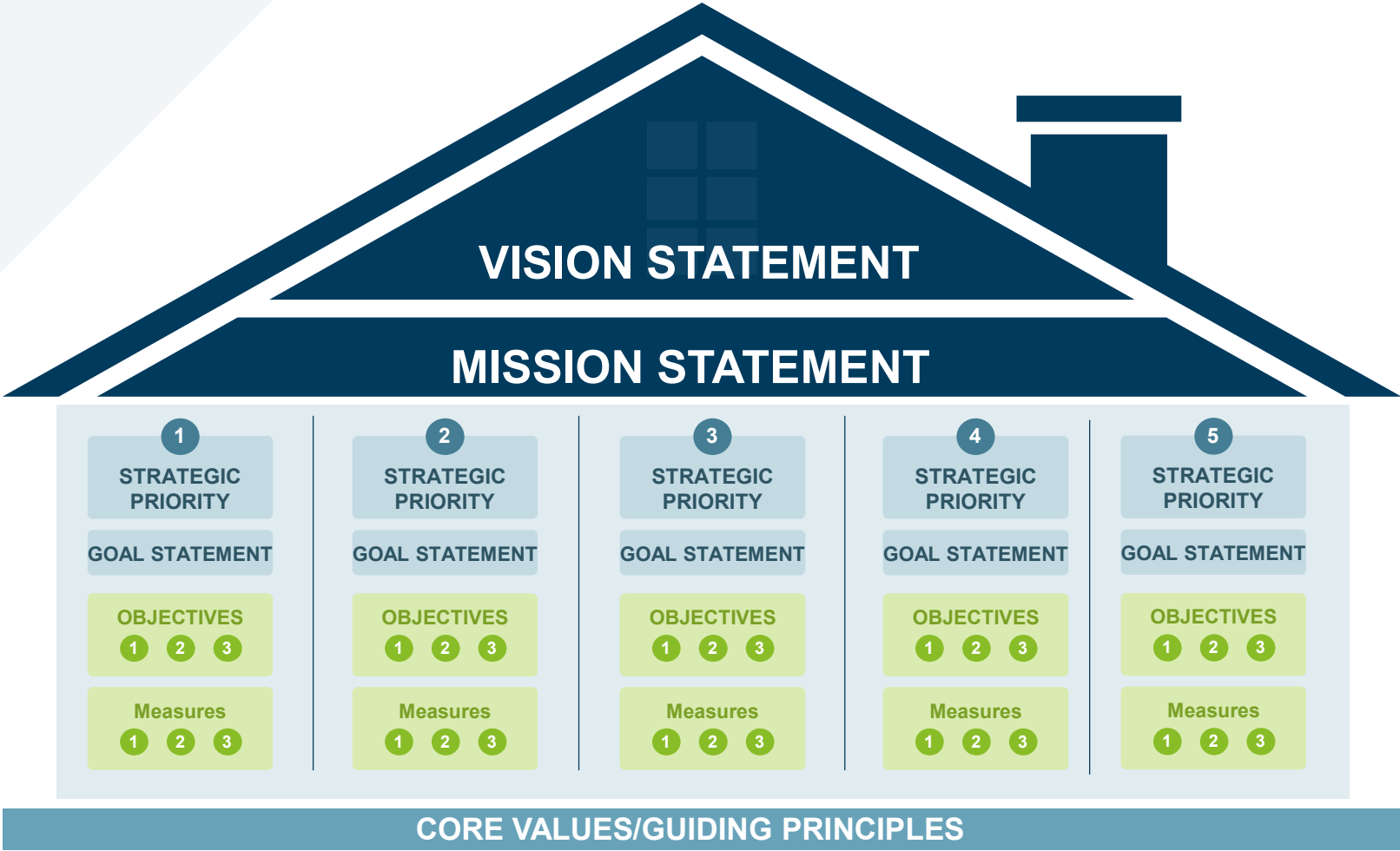
- Develop goal statements and objectives.
- Define outcomes and performance measures.
- Develop an implementation plan.



- Give information for County Board and staff to consider in the development of the Strategic Plan.
- Provide feedback on the draft Strategic Plan.



Elements of the Strategic Plan

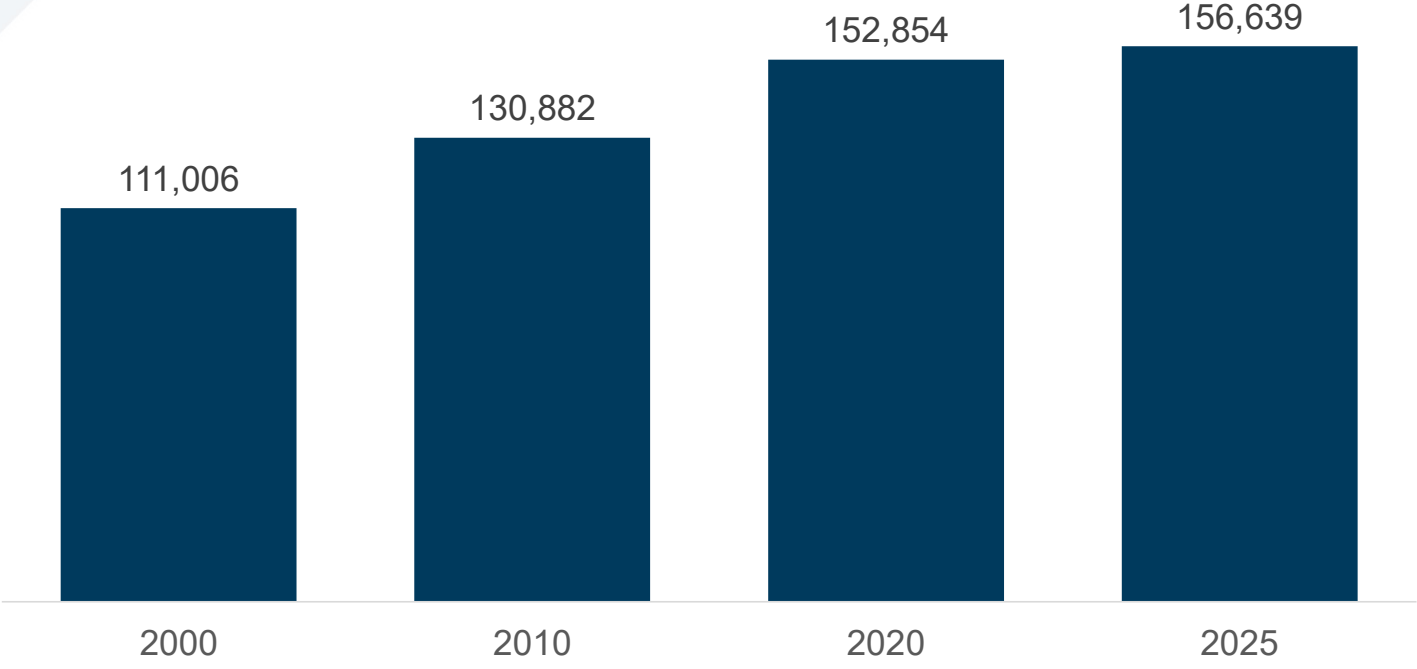




Community Profile

Demographics: Population

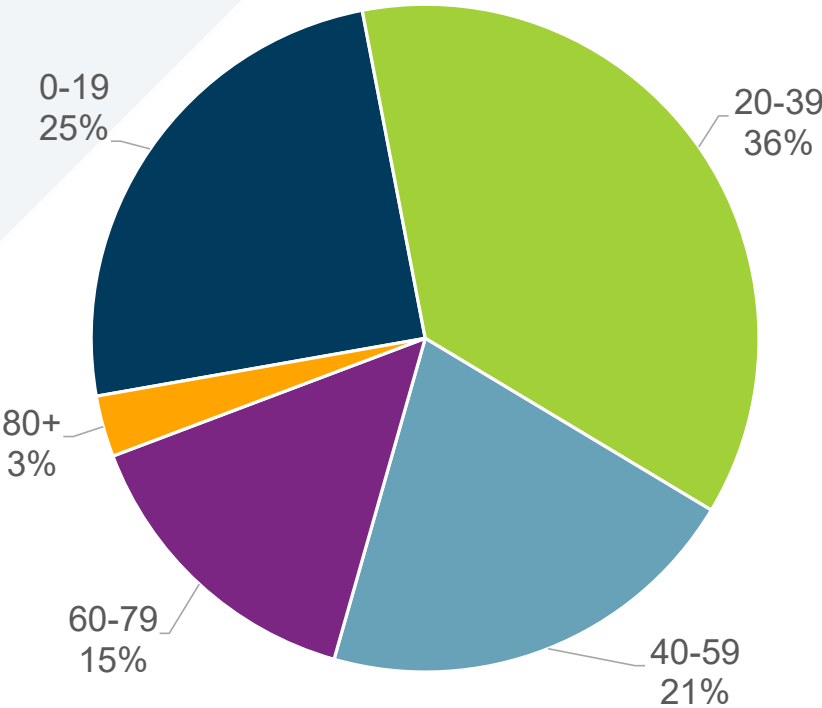
Population Change (2000 - 2025)



Source: American Community Survey 2023 and Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) 2025

Demographics: Age

Age Distribution

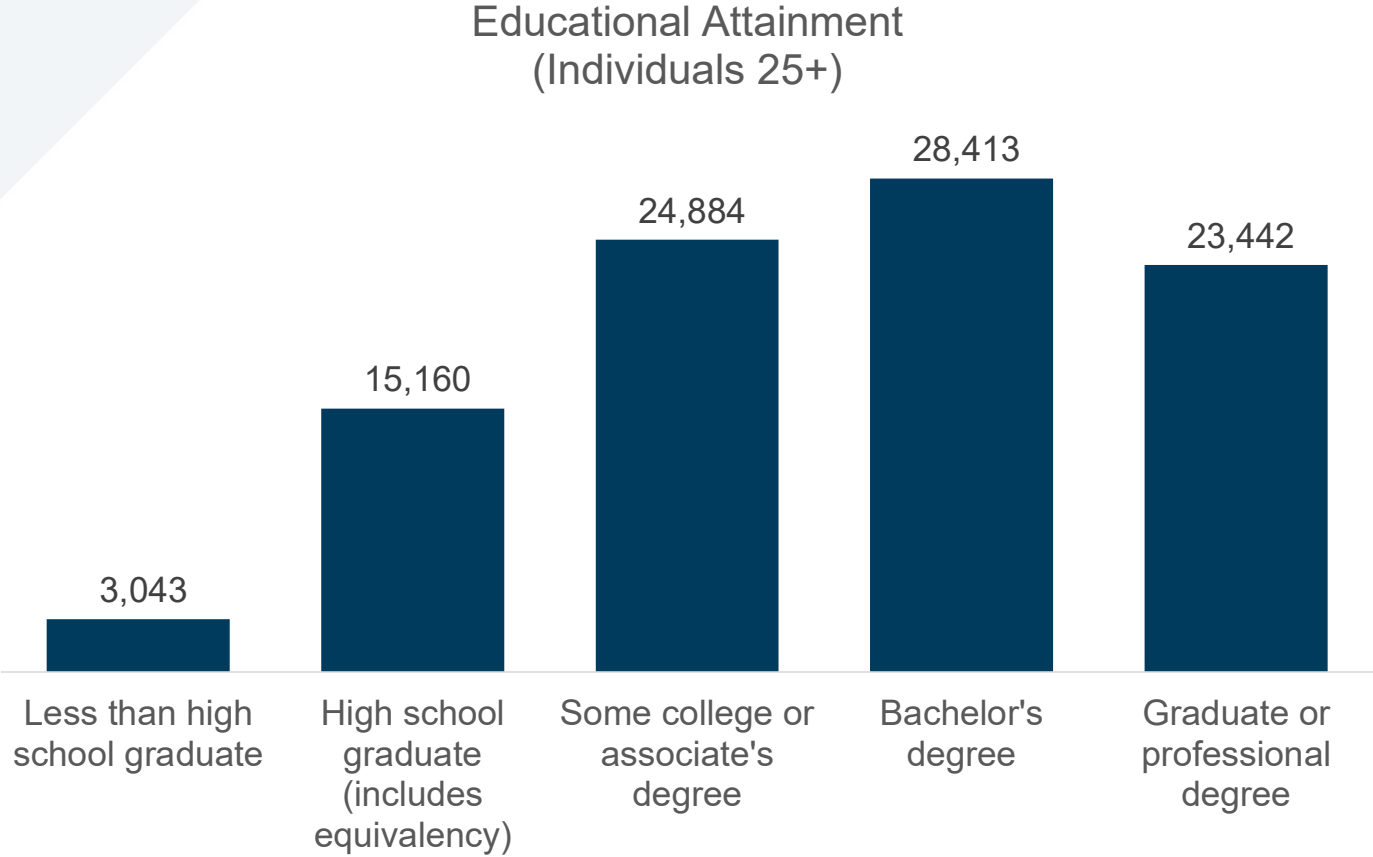


32.2
Age median age

Source: American Community Survey 2023

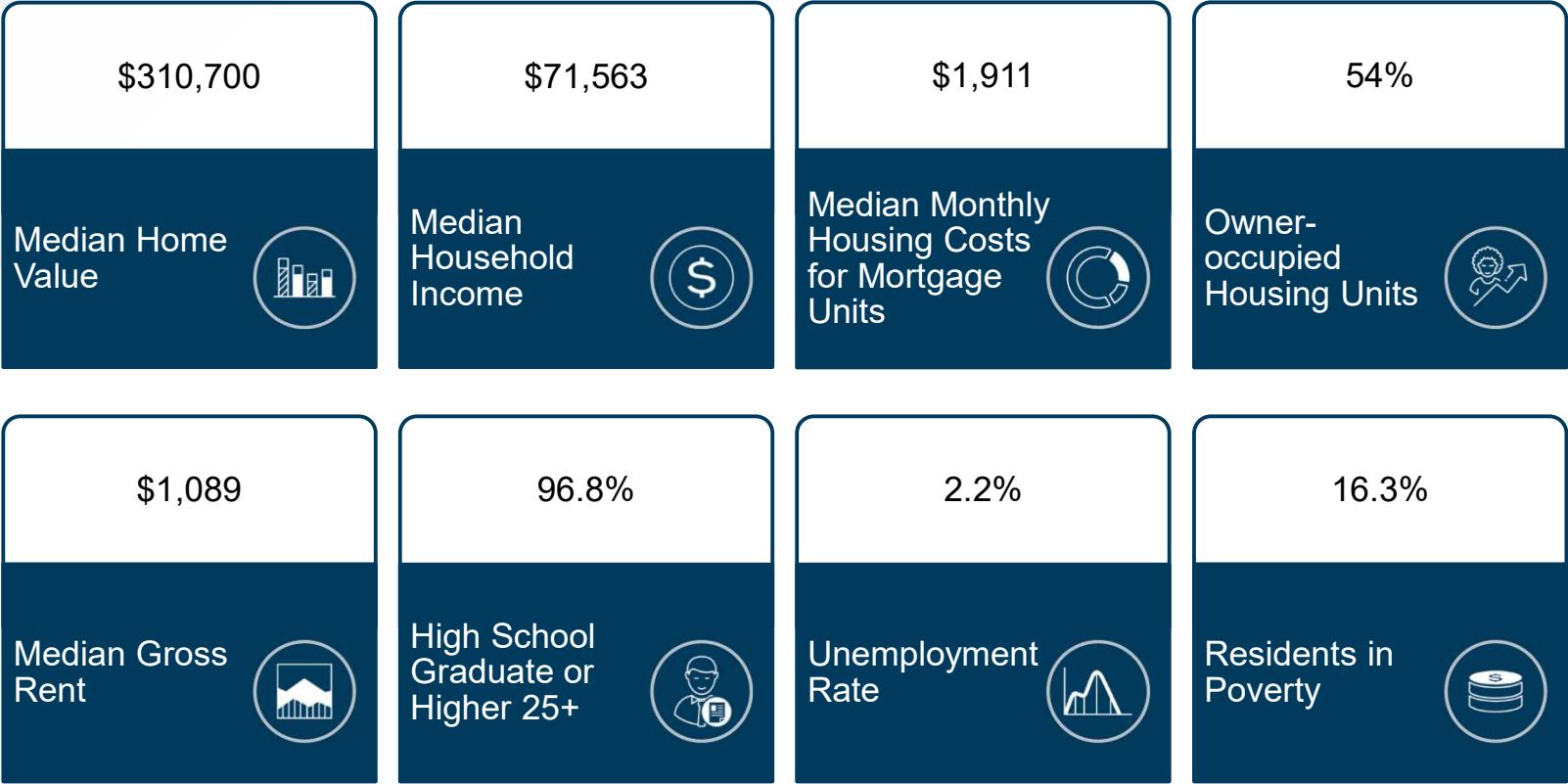


Demographics: Education



Source: American Community Survey 2023

Cost of Living Indicators



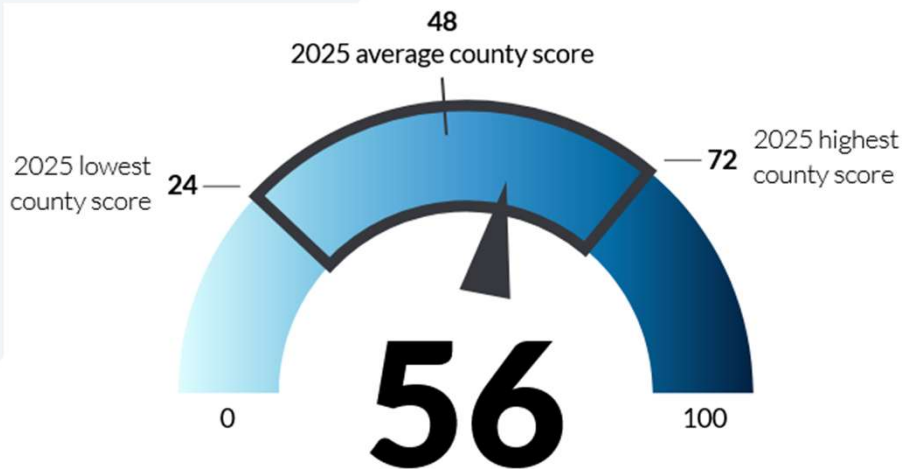
Source: American Community Survey 2023

Employment by Industry

Number of Workers	Industry
36,643	Educational services, health care, social assistance
9,907	Retail trade
8,080	Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food services
7,148	Professional, scientific, management, administrative, waste management services
6,525	Manufacturing
4,329	Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, leasing
3,485	Construction
3,042	Public administration
2,934	Other services, except public administration
2,916	Transportation, warehousing, utilities
1,180	Information
1,028	Wholesale
821	Agriculture



Livability Index



Overall Livability Score for Johnson County

▲ The factors that determine this score include

- Housing – affordability and access (61)
- Neighborhood – proximity and security (53)
- Transportation – safety and convenience (65)
- Environment – clean air and water (58)
- Health – prevention, access and quality (53)
- Engagement – civic and social involvement (52)
- Opportunity – inclusion and possibilities (48)



Source: AARP.org 2025 Livability Index

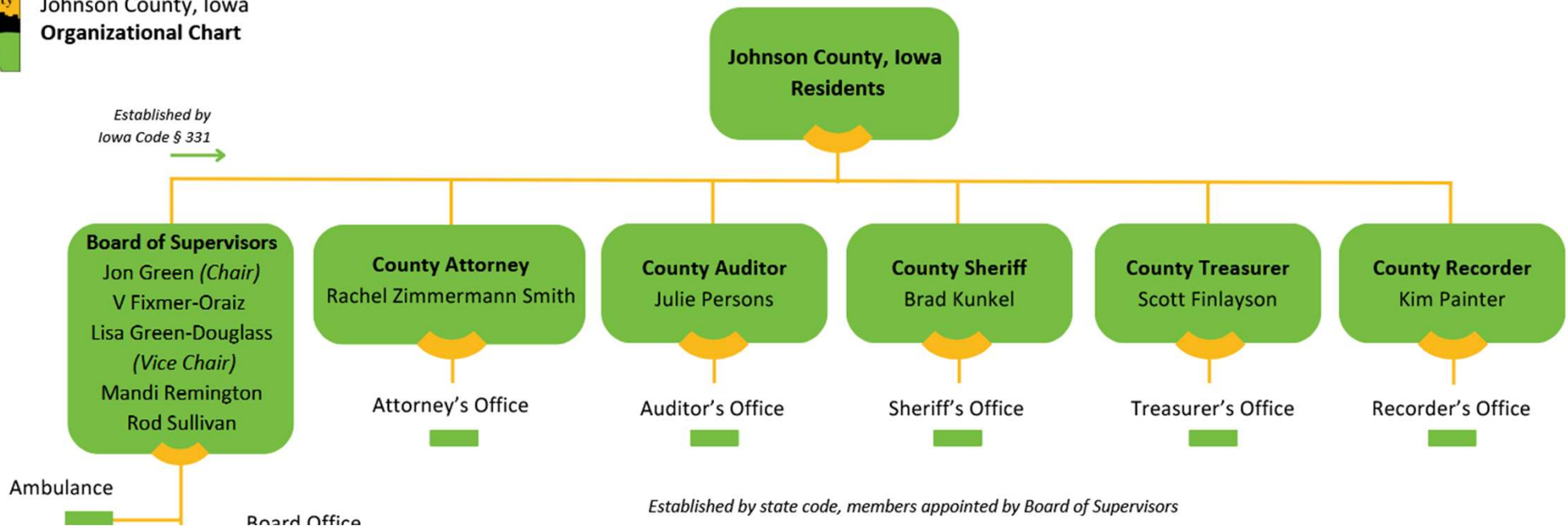


County Government



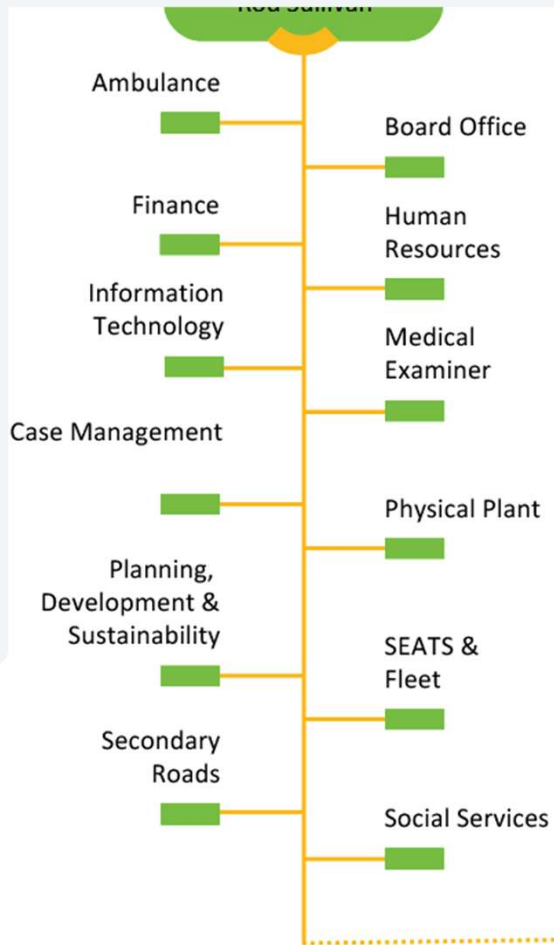


Johnson County, Iowa Organizational Chart



- The County has a Board form of government.
- The five members of the County Board of Supervisors are currently elected at large, but starting in 2026 will be elected by district and serve four-year staggered terms starting in January 2027.
- Five other county departments are led and managed by elected officials





Established by state code, members appointed by Board of Supervisors



Public Health



Veterans Affairs



Conservation

Established by state code, membership determined by state code



Emergency Management



Johnson County Assessor

Johnson County Assessor's Office



Iowa City Assessor

Iowa City Assessor's Office

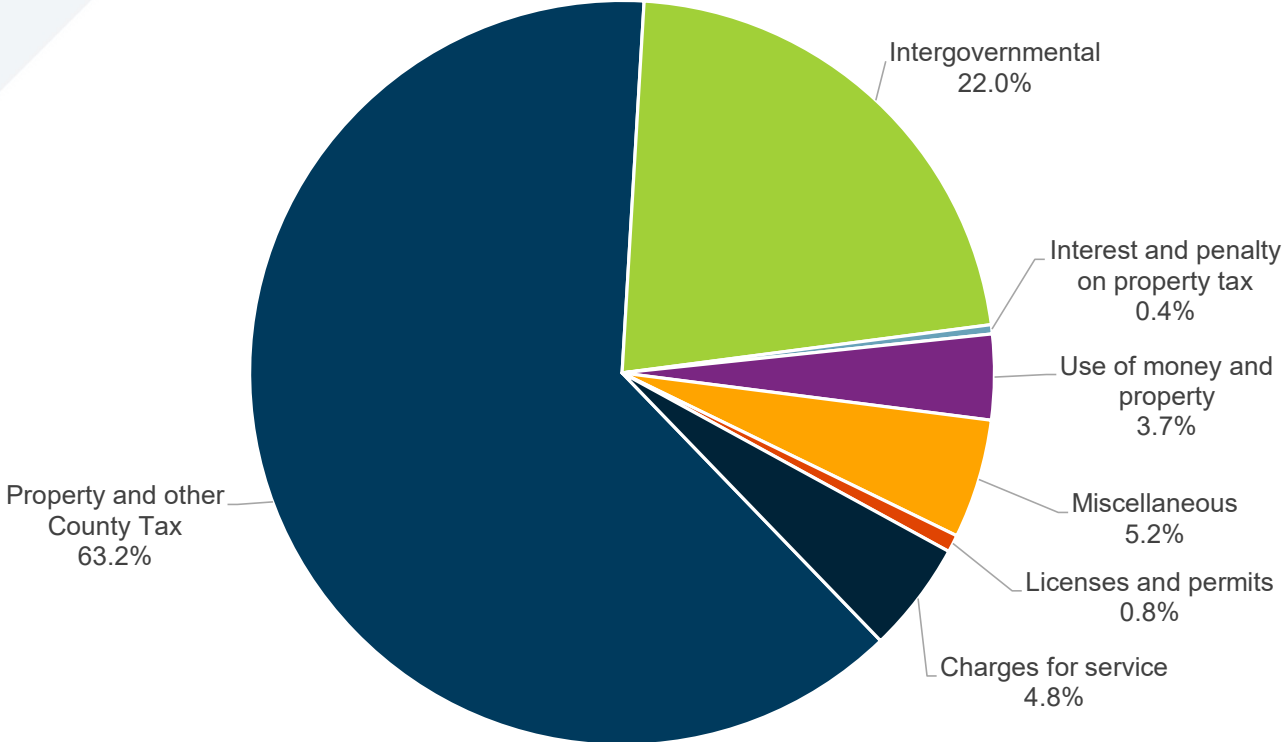
per 28E agreement



Joint Emergency Communications Center (JECC)



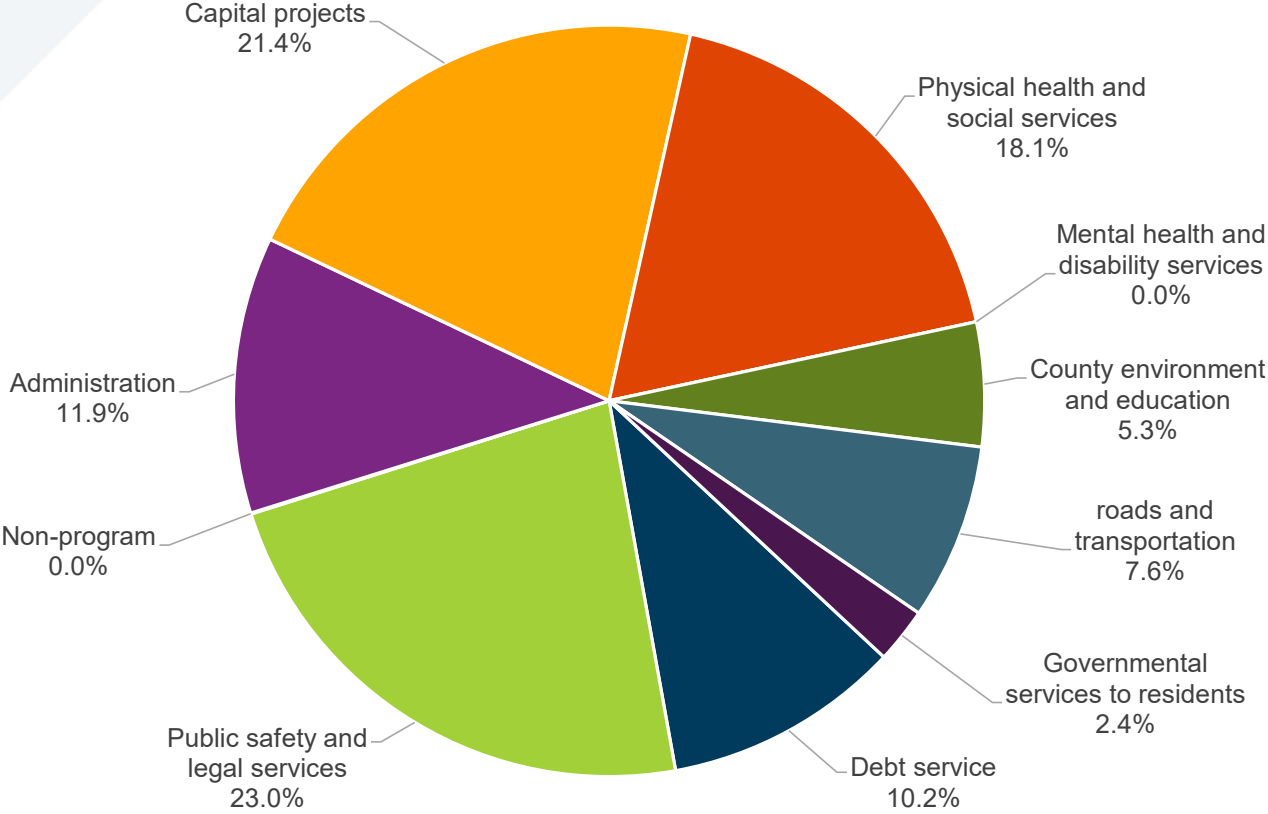
Revenue by Source (Budgeted) – FY 2025



Source: Johnson County Budget FY 2025



Expenditure by Source (Budgeted) – FY 2025



Source: Johnson County Budget FY 2025



Environmental Scan



An **environmental scan** presents current and anticipated events and their relationships within an organization's internal and external environments.

The scan serves as a basis of determining the future direction of the organization.

What's an Environmental Scan and Why Does It Matter?



Identify potential opportunities, challenges, and trends that can drive the County's focus and effectiveness.



Provide everyone involved in strategic planning with a shared understanding of the County's current environment.



Help the County leaders successfully navigate the forces and obstacles that can hinder the achievement of a shared vision.

What Sources Inform the Strategic Planning Process?



Community and employee input including individual interviews, group interviews, written responses, and community forums



Social Pinpoint Strategic Planning website including a survey, ideas wall, and discussion forum



County and regional demographic and economic data



County Board and staff development sessions



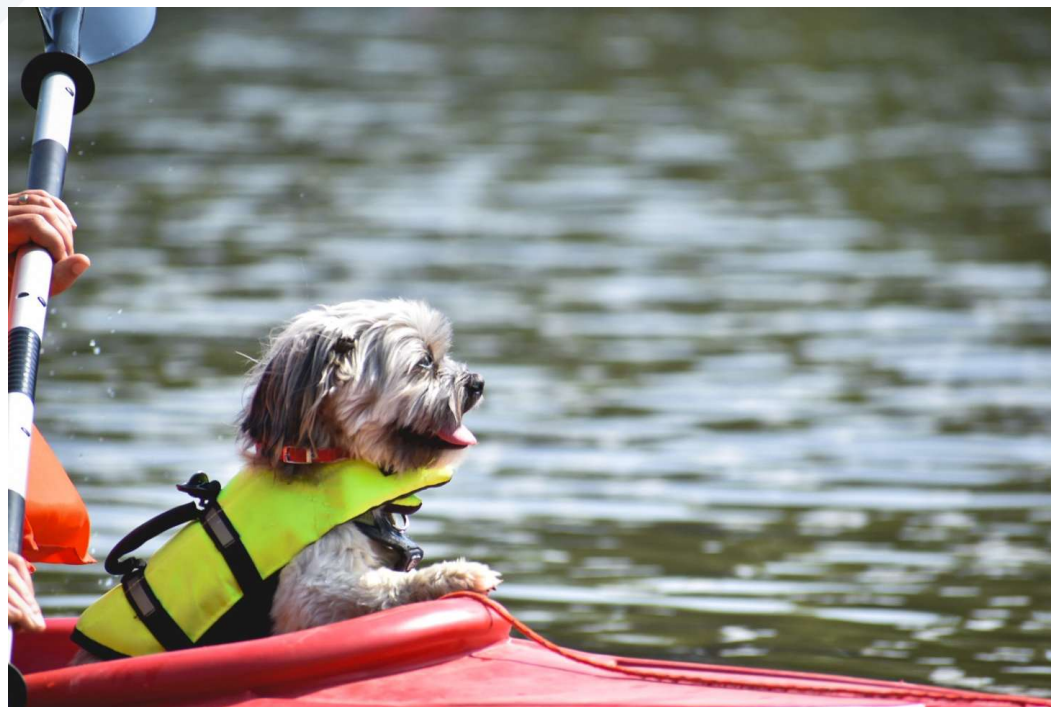
Previously existing documents and data

Who Did We Send Information to for Participation?

- ▲ County Board, leadership, and staff
- ▲ All County social media and website, with hundreds of views and responses
- ▲ County advisory boards and commissions
- ▲ Leadership from other taxing bodies
- ▲ Non-profit and community organizations



Community Perspectives



Analysis of Stakeholder Input

- ▲ All individual stakeholder input and survey responses were compiled, analyzed, and coded by theme.
 - A response, idea, or comment had to be mentioned multiple times in order to be listed as a theme.
 - Themes are identified as possible strategic priorities for Board consideration.
 - All specific ideas for improvements have been captured for consideration and will be presented to the Board and County staff as strategies and actions to support the vision and strategic goals developing in the planning process.



Social Pinpoint Site

Johnson County, IA Strategic Plan Project
 To create a Strategic Plan for the future that provides a clear roadmap outlining goals and objectives and the steps needed to achieve them.

Johnson County Strategic Plan

Johnson County Strategic Plan
 Johnson County Iowa

We want to hear from you!

- Attend community forums

- Share ideas via Social Pinpoint

Watch on YouTube

Timeline

- ★ Phase 1: Project Initiation and Management
- ★ Phase 2: Community Visioning
- ☆ Phase 3: Strategic Plan Development
- ☆ Phase 4: Implementation Recommendations and Project Closeout

[See less](#)

Contact Us

Have questions or want to learn more about a project, contact us below:

Erin Shane
 319-356-6000



6,230
Views

4,879
Visits

3,375
Visitors

909
Contributions

756
Contributors

0
Followers

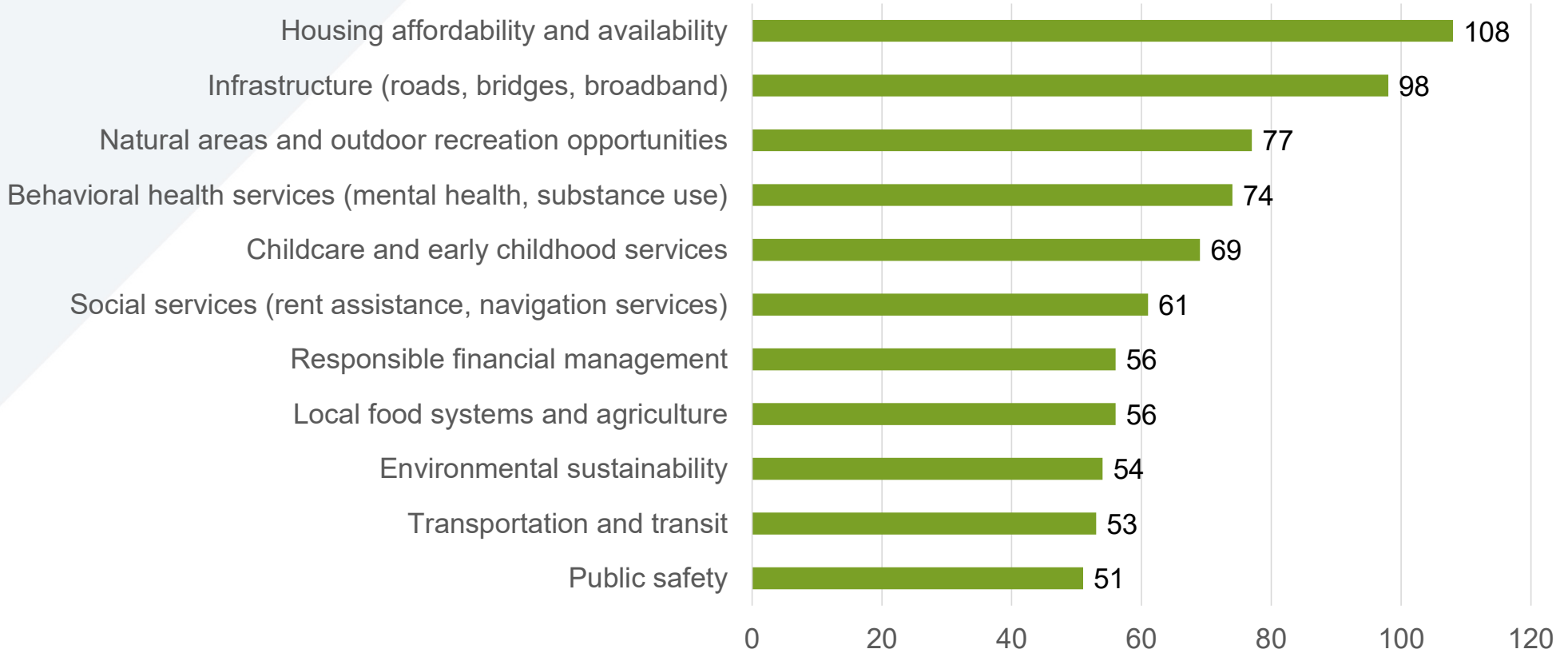
How People Engaged with the Planning Process

1000+ contributors and 15,000+ individuals informed

- ▲ Community forums
 - Solon High School
 - Hills Community Center
 - Coralville Public Library
 - Dream City
- ▲ 35 in-person individual interviews with internal and external stakeholders
- ▲ Three group interviews with County employees
- ▲ Social Pinpoint site



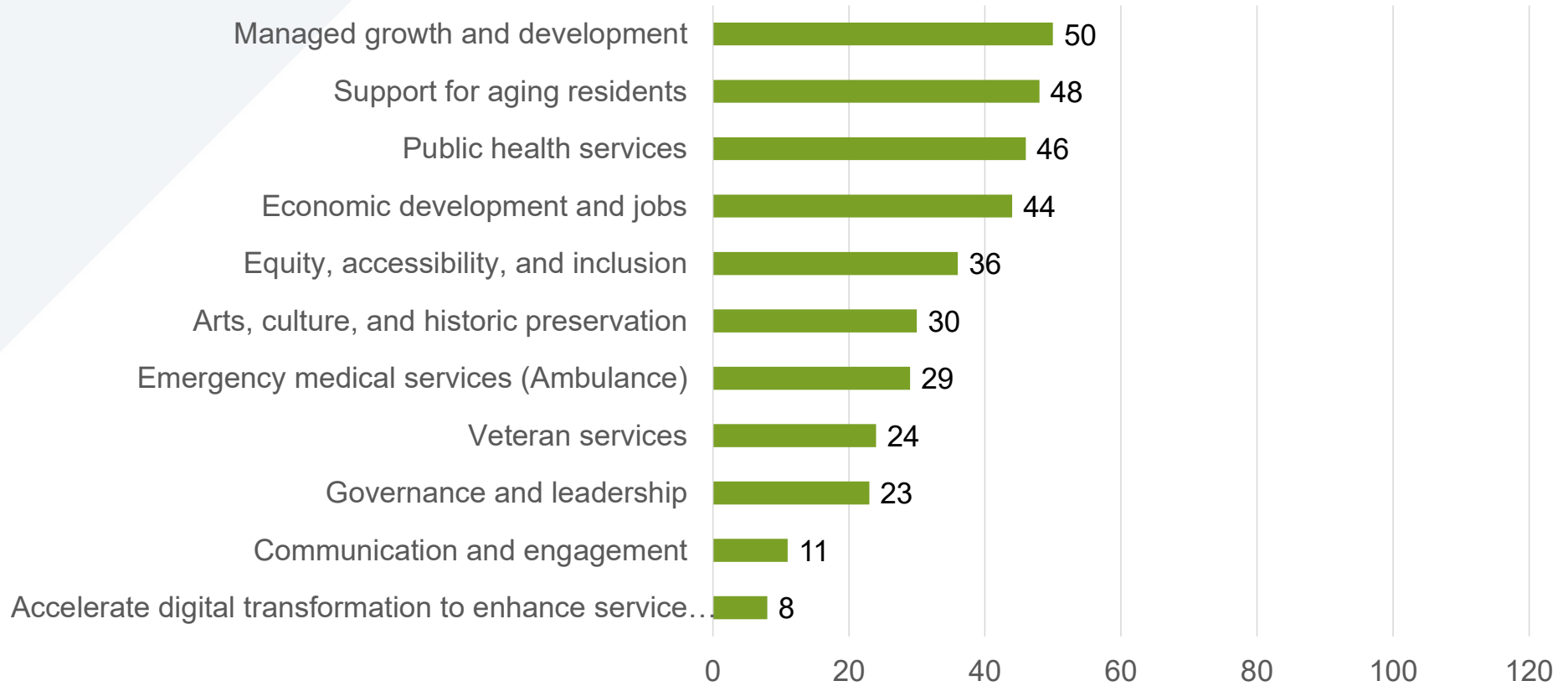
Choose the five aspects the County should prioritize (1)



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

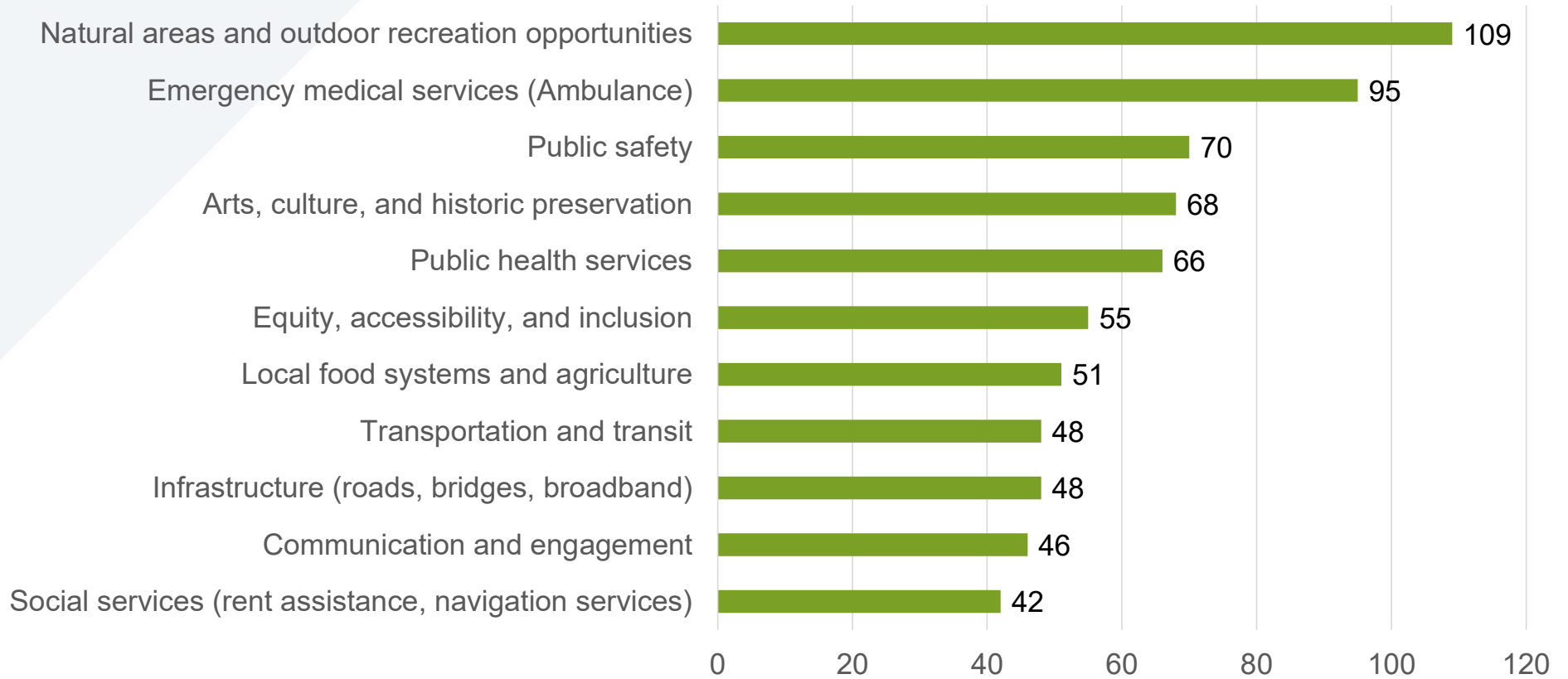


Choose the five aspects the County should prioritize (2)



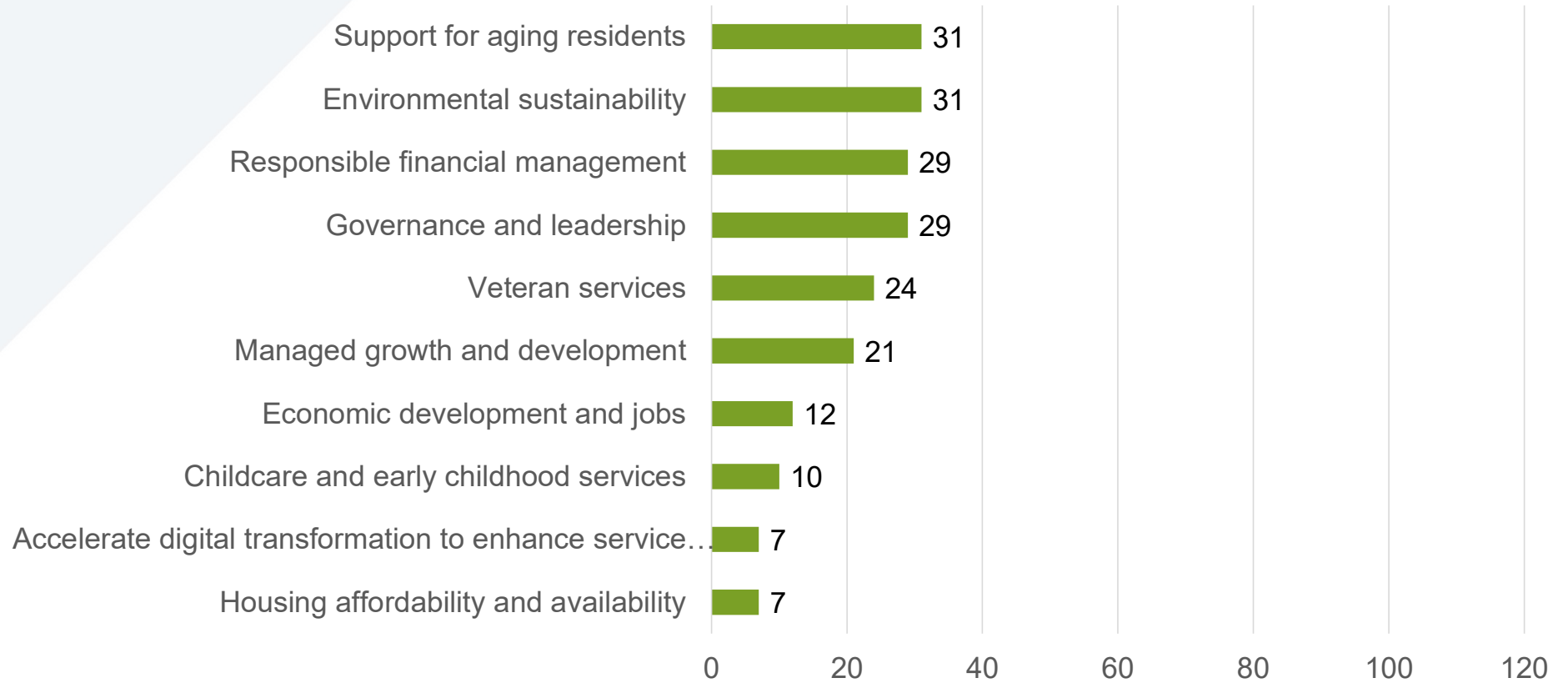
Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

Things the County does well (1)



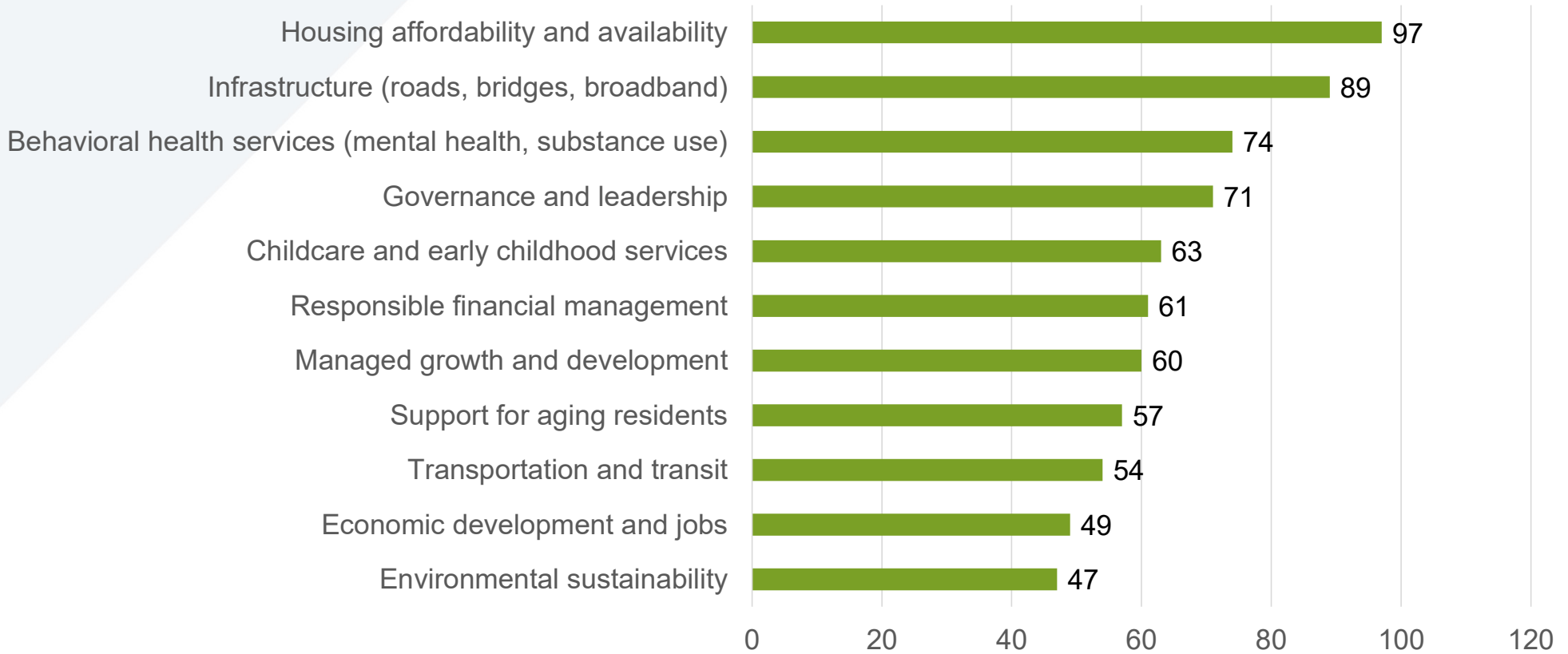
Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

Things the County does well (2)



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

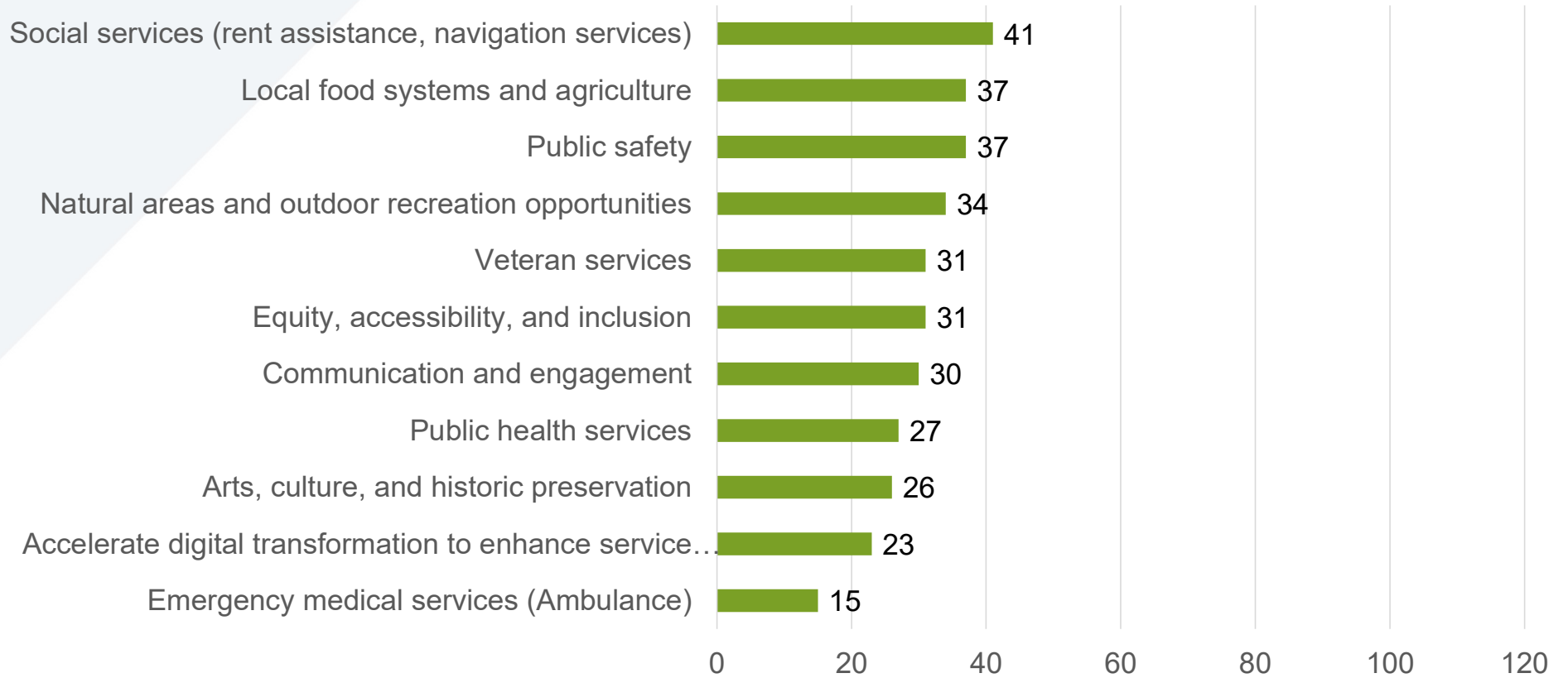
Things the County could do better (1)



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

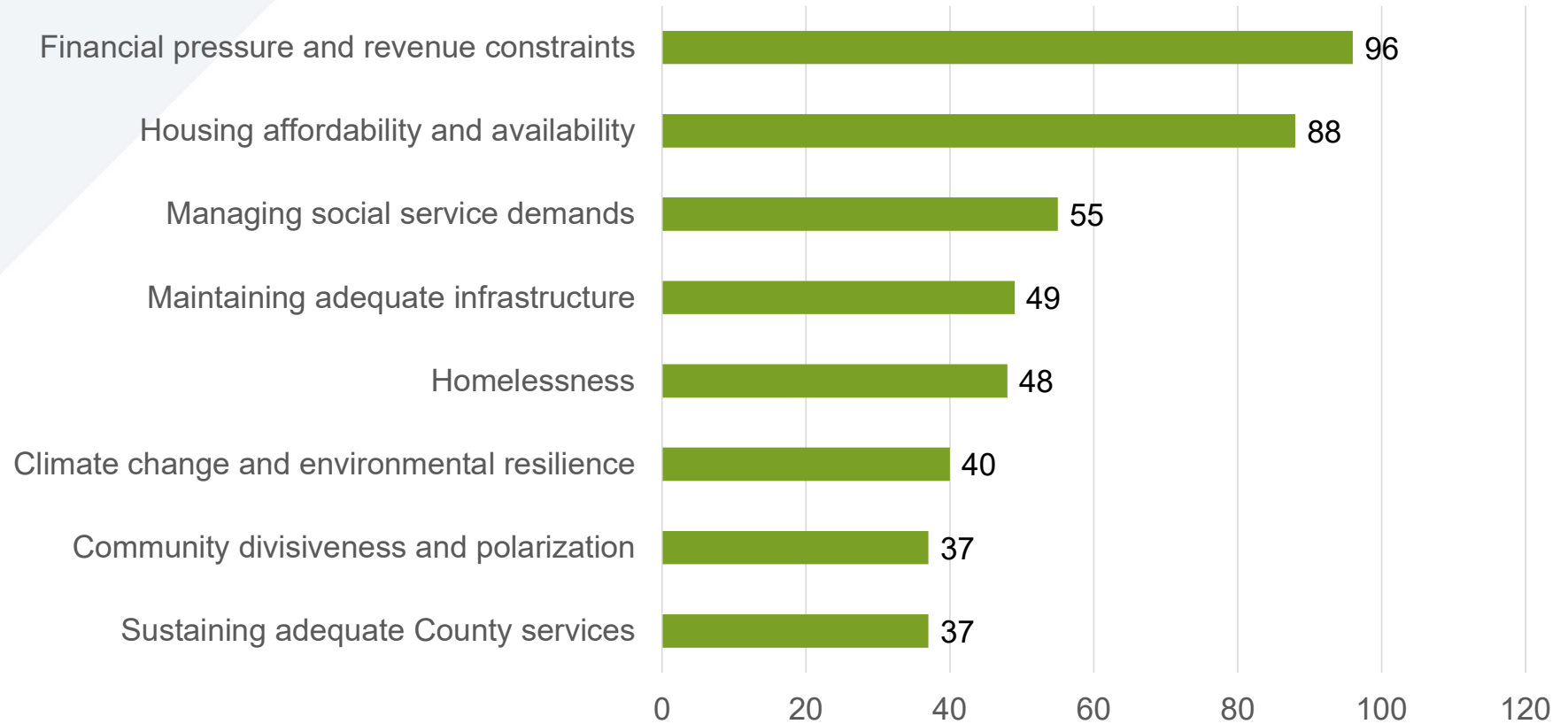


Things the County could do better (2)



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

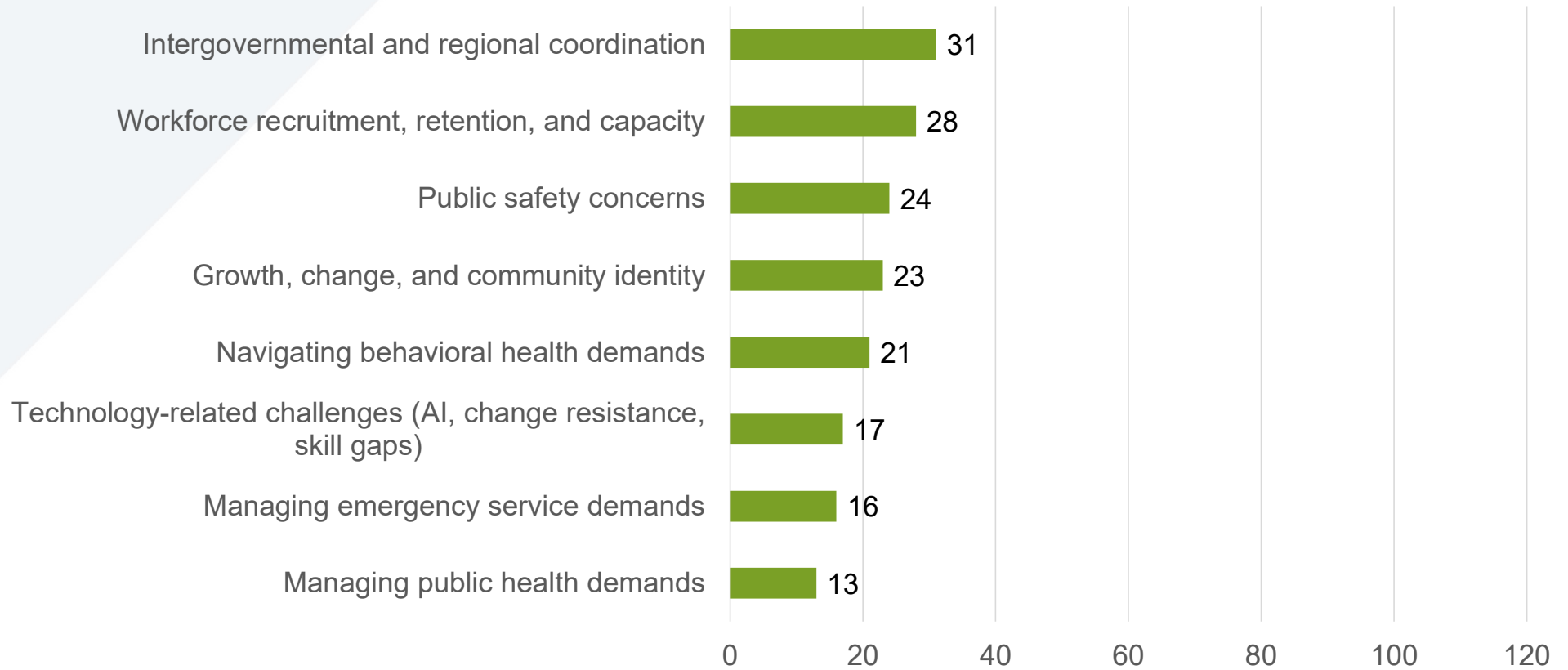
The County's biggest challenges over next five years (1)



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

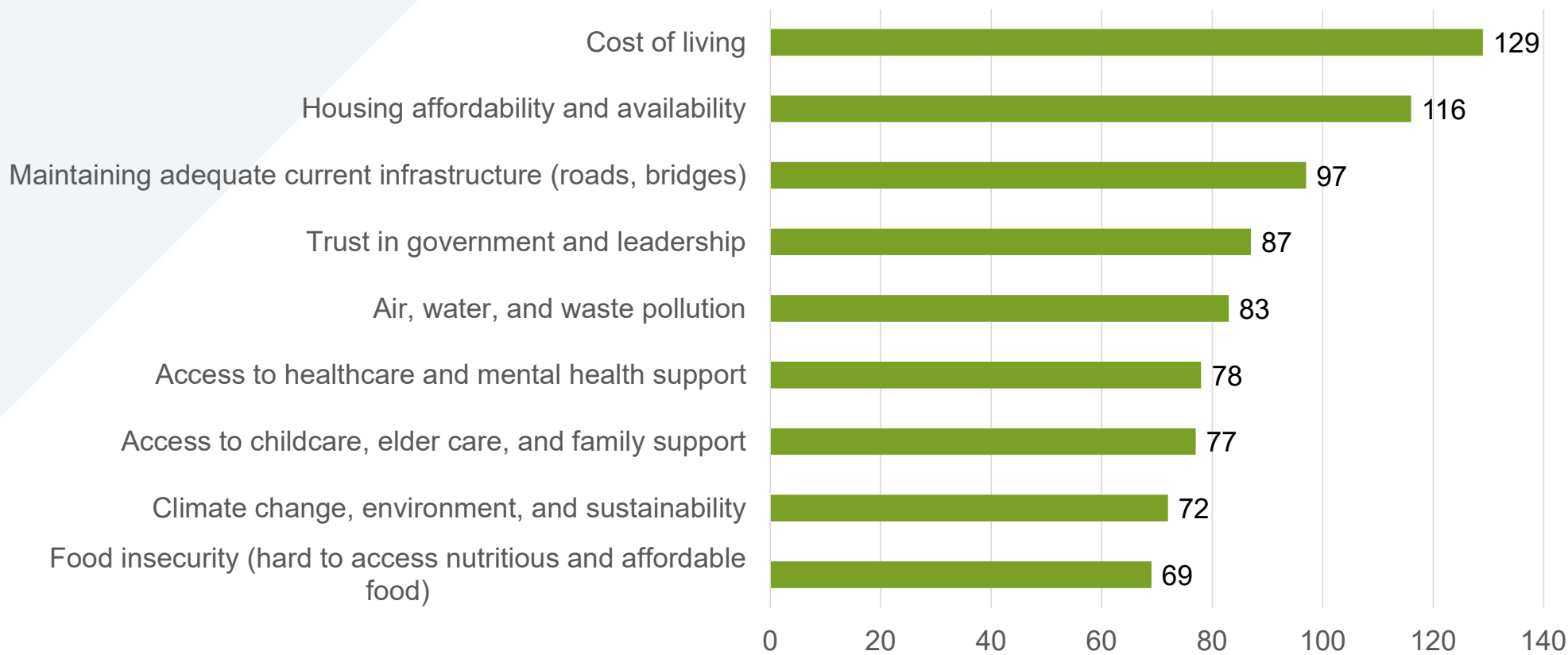


The County's biggest challenges over next five years (2)



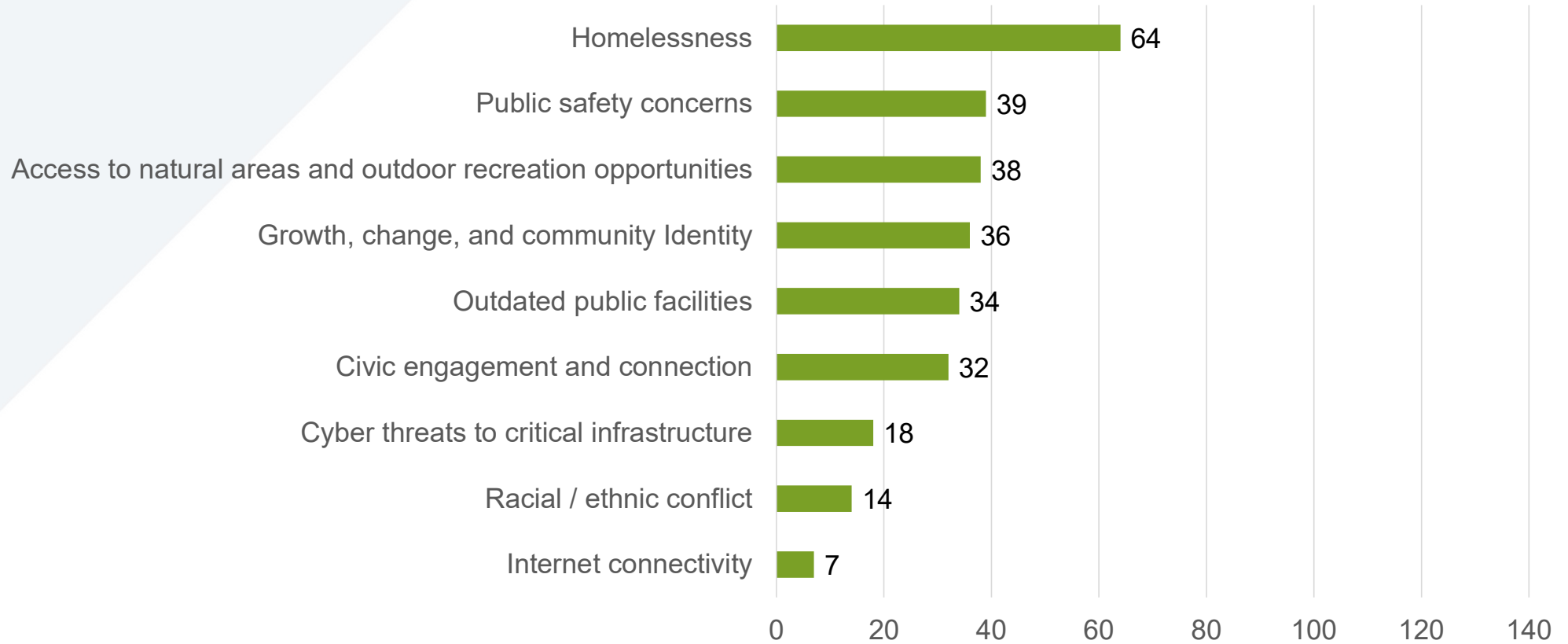
Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

Your five biggest concerns in the community (1)



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

Your five biggest concerns in the community (2)



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

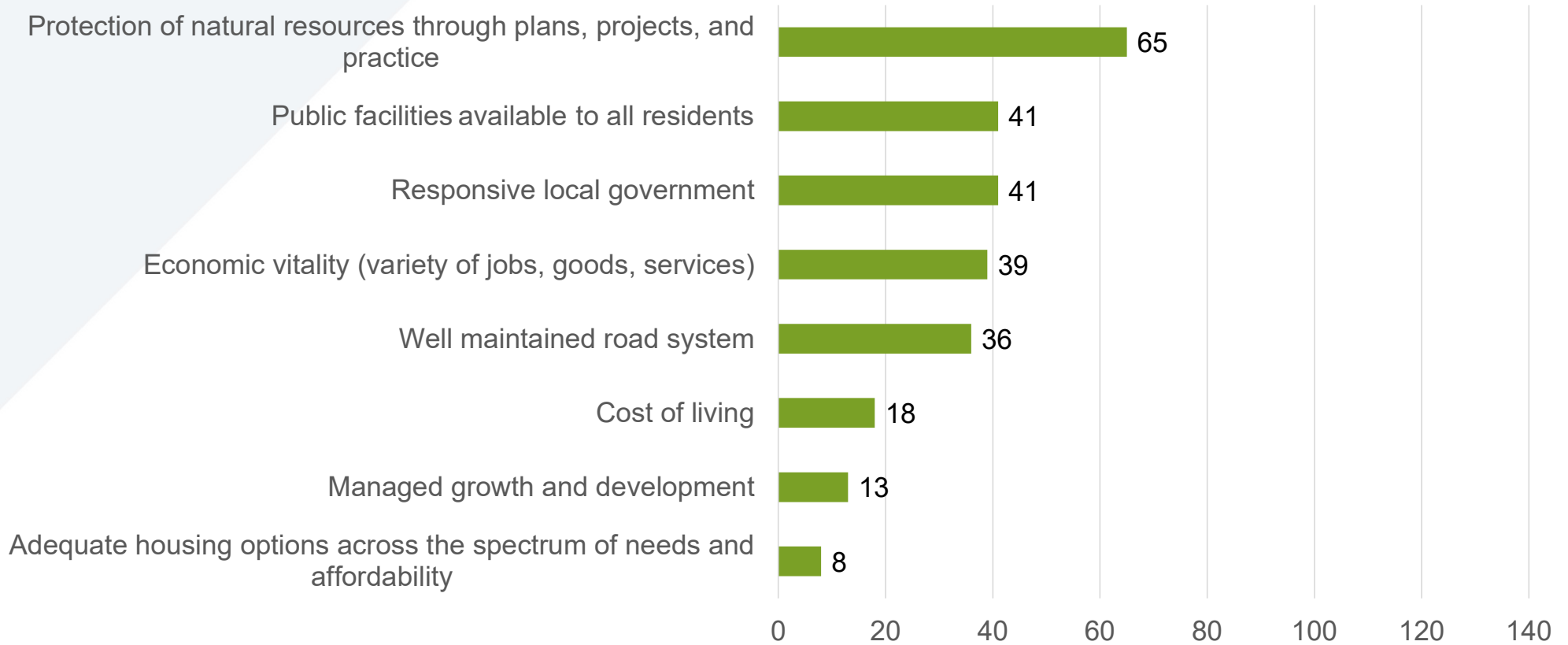


Top five aspects of Johnson County (1)



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

Top five aspects of Johnson County (2)



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

What makes Johnson County unique?

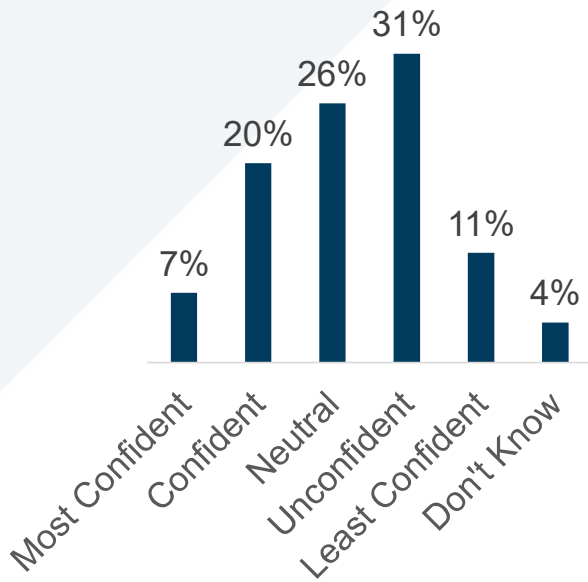
- ▲ **Progressive values and politics** - Liberal identity, social justice, political contrast with Iowa
- ▲ **Education and healthcare** - University of Iowa and UIHC as central anchors
- ▲ **Diversity and openness** - Cultural, ideological, and demographic diversity
- ▲ **Arts and quality of life** - Festivals, arts, recreation, amenities
- ▲ **Civic engagement and services** - Nonprofits, social services, community participation
- ▲ **Urban-rural mix** - Large metropolitan community surrounded by rural areas



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

Confidence in Johnson County

How confident are you the County will be a better place to live in three years?



If you responded "Neutral" or less, what would have to happen for you to be "Very Confident" or "Confident"?

Theme
Less state and federal interference or mitigating policy impacts
Improved housing affordability and lower cost of living
Improved County leadership and governance
Taxes, fiscal responsibility, budget priorities
Infrastructure, public safety, core services (roads, emergency services)
Urban-rural divide and lack of representation and engagement
Economic development and jobs to keep families and prevent brain drain
Social vs. core County services to maintain focus on traditional functions
Education, families, and seniors (childcare, public education, aging-in-place)
Environmental protection and sustainable growth



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

What is one thing Johnson County could do to improve quality of life?

Theme	Definition
Housing and Cost of Living	Affordable housing, stable rent, zoning reform, and prevent residents being priced out.
Infrastructure, Transportation and Roads	Fix roads and bridges, improve rural infrastructure, expand trails, and increase access to reliable public transit.
Taxes and Fiscal Responsibility	Lower property taxes, reduce wasteful spending, and prioritize essential services over symbolic or discretionary projects.
Social Services and Support for Vulnerable Residents	Support for housing-first approaches, mental health services, and assistance for unhoused, low-income, and at-risk populations.
Environmental Protection and Water Quality	Concerns about water quality, agricultural runoff, land preservation, and limiting development that threatens natural resources.
Jobs, Wages and Development	Better-paying jobs, livable wages, and diversified economic development.
Governance, Leadership and Local Control	Stronger leadership, better coordination, transparency, and less interference from state government.
Childcare, Seniors and Families	Affordability, improved services, and policies that support families.



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

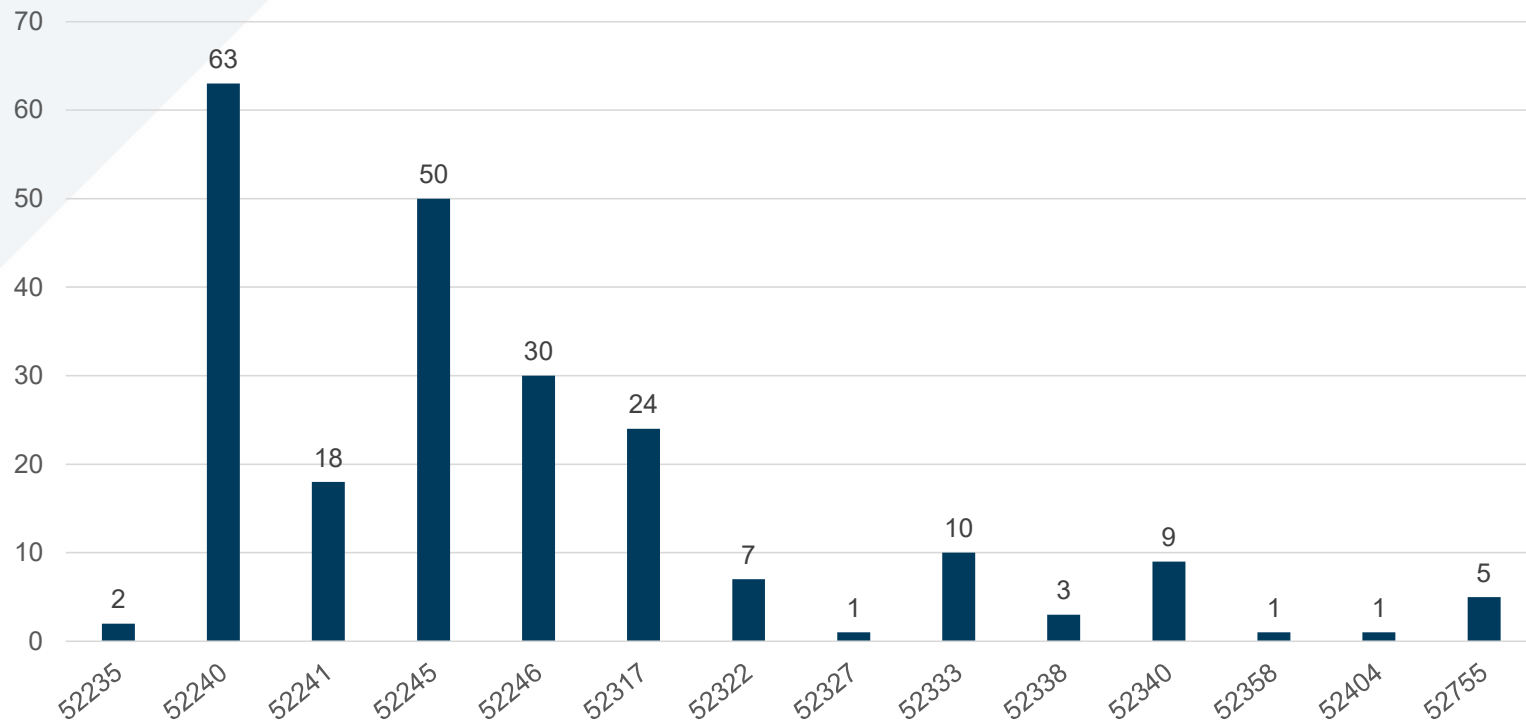
What is one thing Johnson County could do to serve an unmet need?

Theme	Definition
Housing Affordability and Homelessness	Concern for affordable housing across income levels, including rentals, ownership, senior housing, and housing-first solutions for unhoused residents.
Mental and Behavioral Health Services	Strong need for expanded mental health care, crisis response alternatives, and long-term services for children, families, and adults.
Jail and Public Safety Infrastructure	Frequent and polarized calls regarding a new or expanded jail and broader public safety capacity, staffing, and facilities.
Transportation and Infrastructure	Demand for countywide transit, better bus service, regional connections, and maintenance of roads, bridges, and trails—especially in rural areas.
Childcare, Seniors and Family Supports	Calls for affordable childcare (especially infant care), senior housing and services, and supports that help families remain stable.
Environmental Protection and Water Quality	Concerns about clean drinking water, river health, runoff, radon, and protecting natural resources from overdevelopment.
Governance, Equity and Community Inclusion	Desire for clearer priorities, fiscal transparency, rural inclusion, equitable access to services, and government focused on core needs.



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint Community Survey

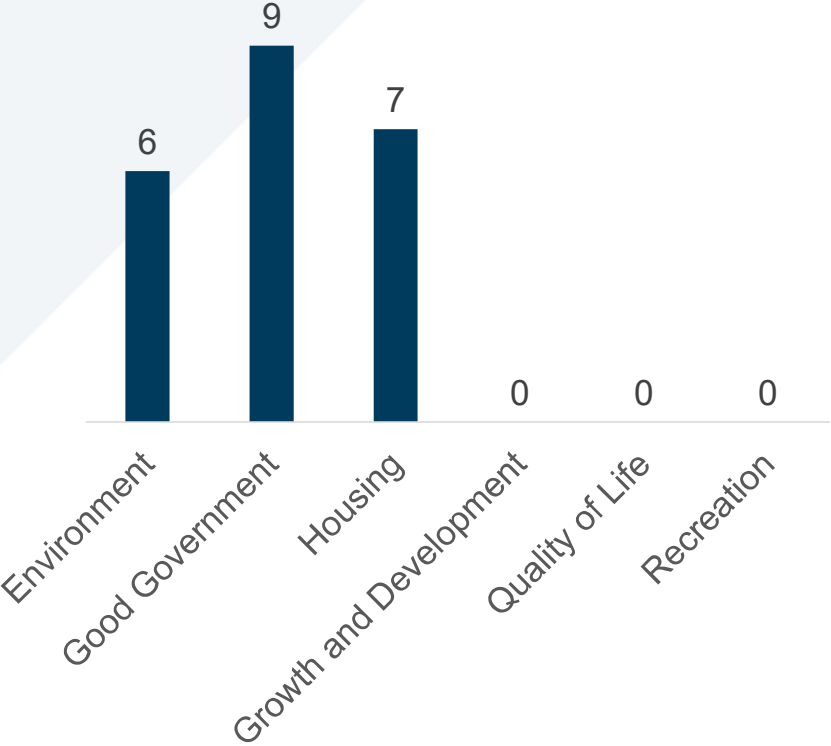
Zip Codes of Respondents



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint



Ideas Wall

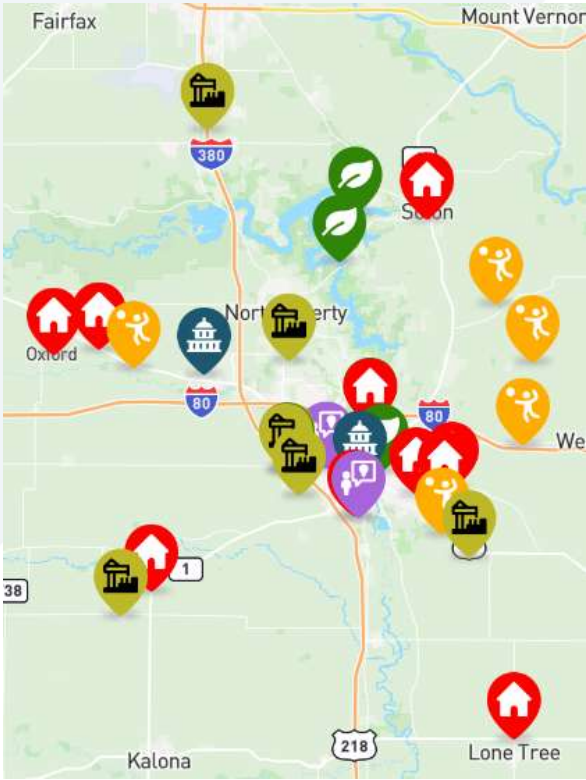


Themes
Environmental Protection and Sustainability
Housing Affordability and Homelessness
Governance, Leadership and Accountability
Public Health, Safety and Standards
Equity and Access to Basic Needs
Role of Government and Use of Resources



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint

Social map



- Housing
- Growth and Development
- Quality of Life
- Recreation
- Environment
- Good Government

Themes	
	Build affordable, multi-unit housing; reform zoning practices
	Expand transit, rail, bike trails, and regional connections
	Protect waterways, trees, habitats from development impacts
	Protect tenants; ensure access to water and services.
	Reduce Iowa City focus; support countywide planning.
	Support community-scale, sustainable economic development.



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint

Forum

Theme	Definition
Governance, Leadership and Transparency	Desire for competent, proactive leadership with clear budgets and accountability.
Housing Affordability and Access	Strong concern over high housing costs and lack of affordable options.
Equity, Inclusion and Civil Rights	Emphasis on removing barriers and protecting marginalized communities through policy.
Environmental and Water Quality Protection	Calls for stronger action to protect water, land, and public health.
Community Engagement and Collaboration	Desire for meaningful resident participation and collaboration with local stakeholders.



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Social Pinpoint

Interview Themes from Board of Supervisors



- ▲ **Housing Affordability and Cost of Living:** Housing affordability is repeatedly cited as a top concern, closely linked to homelessness, workforce retention, and the University of Iowa's impact on rents. Leaders emphasize expanding housing supply both within and outside metro areas while maintaining quality and access.
- ▲ **Governance Structure, Leadership and Accountability:** Current governance is siloed, lacks accountability, and would benefit from a County Administrator/Manager model. Need to reduce micromanagement, empower staff expertise, and strengthen leadership development.



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Board of Supervisors Interviews

Interview Themes from Board of Supervisors

- ▲ **State Interference and Loss of Local Control:** Many respondents describe Johnson County as a target of state-level authoritarianism that limits local authority, funding, and policy flexibility. Protecting local control and creatively navigating state constraints is seen as essential to preserving county values and services.
- ▲ **Environmental Protection and Climate Resilience:** Natural resources—especially water quality, conservation, and climate resilience—are consistently identified as long-term priorities. The county is viewed as a state leader in sustainability, with expectations to continue and deepen this role.
- ▲ **Equity, Inclusion and Civil/Human Rights:** Need to move beyond tokenism toward normalized inclusion across race, class, language, gender, and ability. Protecting civil and human rights and ensuring access to basic needs are seen as core county responsibilities.
- ▲ **Organizational Capacity and Workforce Support:** Concerns are raised about County staff burnout, leadership attrition, and loss of institutional talent. Strengthening internal collaboration, respecting department directors, and investing in staff capacity are viewed as critical to effective governance.
- ▲ **Regional Collaboration and Economic Vitality:** The county’s future is tied to stronger collaboration with cities, rural communities, the University, and regional partners. Economic development is framed as “growing what we have,” aligning infrastructure, housing, and social supports to sustain vitality.



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Board of Supervisors Interviews



Key Themes from External Stakeholders

- ▲ **Housing Affordability and Cost of Living:** Persistent concern about housing affordability, housing diversity, and cost of living pressures affecting workforce retention, aging residents, and overall community stability.
- ▲ **Governance Structure and Leadership:** Strong support for a county manager model, improved professionalism, less infighting, and clearer separation between policy leadership and day-to-day operations.
- ▲ **State Interference and Local Control:** Widespread concern about state legislative actions limiting local authority, funding, and values. The result of this requires increased collaboration, restraint, and strategic responses to protect county priorities.

Source: 2026 BerryDunn External Stakeholder Interviews

Key Themes from External Stakeholders

- ▲ **Environmental Stewardship and Water Quality:** Emphasis on conservation leadership, clean water, climate resilience, and protecting natural assets as defining strengths and long-term responsibilities of the county.
- ▲ **Economic Vitality and Workforce Development:** Focus on diversifying the economy beyond the University, supporting biomedical and advanced manufacturing, building off of the aerospace industry in Linn County and Cedar Rapids, attracting ethical employers, and addressing workforce needs including childcare and spousal employment.
- ▲ **Equity, Inclusion and Social Services:** Continue the commitment to being a welcoming community through inclusive policies, strong social safety nets, immigrant support, childcare access, and reducing disparities across urban and rural populations.
- ▲ **Regional Collaboration and Connectivity:** Need for stronger coordination with cities, rural communities, the University, and neighboring counties on transportation, land use, infrastructure, and shared services to support cohesive regional growth.



Source: 2026 BerryDunn External Stakeholder Interviews



Key Themes from Directors and Leadership

- ▲ **Organizational Health and Workforce Support:** Strong emphasis on staff wellbeing, competitive compensation, training, leadership development, and retaining talent amid stress, uncertainty, and increasing service demands.
- ▲ **Governance Structure and Board–Staff Roles:** Repeated calls for clearer separation between policy and operations, reduced micromanagement, more professionalism, and strong support for a County Manager/Administrator model.
- ▲ **Fiscal Sustainability and Budget Prioritization:** Concern about declining state and federal revenue, high property taxes, and the need for disciplined budgeting focused on core mandates and long-term financial resilience.

Key Themes from Directors and Leadership

- ▲ **Housing Affordability and Cost of Living:** Housing affordability, homelessness, childcare costs, and rising living expenses are seen as major pressures affecting residents, workforce stability, and service demand.
- ▲ **Internal Coordination and Operational Efficiency:** Departments cite silos, weak communication, inconsistent policies, and the need for shared services, standardized procedures, and better cross-department collaboration.
- ▲ **Technology, Data and Systems Modernization:** Workday implementation challenges highlight the need for better training, data use, transparency, and leveraging of technology (including AI) to improve efficiency and decision-making.
- ▲ **External Constraints and Community Trust:** State mandates, political divisiveness, and public mistrust strain operations, reinforcing the need to focus on core services, rural inclusion, and clear communication with residents.



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Directors and Leadership Interviews



Key Themes from Employees

- ▲ **Organizational Support and Workforce Wellbeing:** Employees value teamwork, benefits, and public service but want stronger training, clearer expectations, better communication, and sustained support from leadership and the Board.
- ▲ **Governance, Leadership and Board–Staff Roles:** Repeated calls for the Board to focus on policy, reduce micromanagement, improve management skills, and provide consistent support and accountability across departments.
- ▲ **Facilities, Infrastructure and Capital Needs:** Aging, inadequate facilities—including jail, ambulance, sheriff, and road assets—require investment, maintenance planning, and space to meet growing service demands.

Source: 2026 BerryDunn Employee Focus Groups

Key Themes from Employees

- ▲ **Fiscal Transparency and Responsible Spending:** Concerns about taxes, unclear budgeting, favoritism, and lack of transparency, with requests for clearer explanations on spending decisions and stronger fiscal discipline.
- ▲ **Housing Affordability and Cost of Living:** Employees consistently cite housing shortages, rising costs, and limited housing variety as major pressures affecting residents and workforce stability.
- ▲ **Internal Coordination and Technology Systems:** Need to reduce silos, improve cross-department collaboration, stabilize Workday, expand training, and better use data and digital tools.
- ▲ **Community Trust, Inclusion and Access:** Desire for stronger outreach, rural inclusion, accessible services, safe and welcoming spaces, and clearer communication to build trust and belonging countywide.



Source: 2026 BerryDunn Employee Focus Groups

Summary of Data and Top Areas of Focus

Source: 2026 all BerryDunn Collected Data



Governance, leadership, and fiscal responsibility



Home affordability, lack of diversity, and increasing cost of living



Childcare, family, and senior services, equity and inclusion



Infrastructure repair and maintenance (roads, bridges, broadband)



Preservation of natural resources (air, water) and improving sustainability



Behavioral and social services (mental health, rent assistance, navigation)



Mitigating and responding to impacts of state and federal legislation



Staff connection and support (communication, benefits, inclusion, transparency)



SWOC



Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Challenges

SWOC Analysis



A SWOC analysis assesses the organization's current position before deciding on any strategies.



Using a SWOC analysis allows the County to make the most of its strengths and reduces the chances of failure by understanding what is lacking and eliminating obstacles that get in the way of effective strategy.

SWOC Analysis

Strengths

- **Emergency medical services and healthcare:** The County's medical services are very responsive and effective in meeting community needs. The staff are passionate and strive to provide high quality of services.
- **Public safety and health services:** The County provides many services to help residents in need. Some departments are able to operate very efficiently can even be revenue generating for the County.
- **Equity, accessibility, and inclusion:** Many residents feel welcome and safe in the community, especially considering that Iowa is mostly a "red state."
- **Environmental sustainability:** The County makes strides in conservation efforts, being sustainable, and making long-term decisions to ensure the natural landscape is maintained and preserved.
- **Large educational institution:** The presence of the University of Iowa is a large economic engine that attracts business, increases the educational attainment of the community, and provides numerous cultural experiences and amenities.



SWOC Analysis

Weaknesses

- **Housing affordability:** Some residents are being priced out by increasing property taxes because of increased home values. There is a lack of housing stock and limited variety of housing options.
- **Infrastructure (roads and bridges):** Secondary roads and other infrastructure are in need of maintenance and repair. Bridges are restrictive because of low load ratings.
- **Governance and leadership:** Board involvement in day-to-day operational issues, operational silos, lack of communication of and staff involvement in decision making, poor prioritization of budget initiatives.
- **Childcare and early childhood services:** Families struggle to find affordable and adequate services for their children, adding to financial strain and impacts to daily life.
- **Managed growth and economic development:** Growth within the county is uneven and there is a lack of economic opportunities for residents leading to brain-drain.
- **Rural-urban divide:** Rural residents feel greater focus is placed on the Iowa City metropolitan area.



SWOC Analysis

Opportunities

- **Reprioritize funding:** The County can help the community and address the most important and basic needs by reallocating budget funds from less important or non-essential initiatives.
- **Policy changes:** Updating zoning, permitting, and other policies can increase the housing diversity, stock, and developer interest.
- **Staff knowledge and skills:** Many staff are proud of and fulfilled by their work. They are knowledgeable and passionate to serve the community. The County can improve operations and better serve the community through stronger internal trust and empowering staff with more authority in their areas of expertise.
- **Leverage partnership:** There are many organizations within the community that serve the public. Creating new and refining existing strategic partnerships can improve the cost-effectiveness of services and increase impact.
- **Staff training:** Providing training for staff on technology (e.g., Workday) and other tools will improve efficiency and reduce errors and waste.



SWOC Analysis

Challenges

- **Economic Uncertainty and Competition:** High expectations for improved economic conditions coupled with slow redevelopment and investment. Neighboring communities attract residents and businesses, putting pressure on Johnson County.
- **Political Climate:** State and federal policies negatively impact the County's abilities and operations.
- **Financial pressures:** Policy changes at state and federal level are affecting revenue generation.
- **Social service demands:** Residents from other counties seeking services from Johnson County puts a strain on resources and staff.
- **Upkeep with infrastructure maintenance:** Roads, bridges, and other assets need repair. There is also a lack of space at some of the County's facilities to properly store physical assets leading to quicker deterioration.
- **Jail needs:** The County's jail is at maximum capacity and in desperate need of repairs.



SWOC Analysis: Discussion

Strengths

Weakness

Opportunities

Challenges

- ▲ What are the strengths of the community?
Of the County government?
- ▲ What are weaknesses that need to be considered? In the Community? In County government?
- ▲ What opportunities does the County have that it can capitalize on? For community impact? For County operations, organizational culture, etc.?
- ▲ What challenges is the community facing now and for its future? What threats does the County government face to effectively serve the community now and in the future?

