VILLAGE OF ELM CREEK
COMMUNITY NEEDS ANALYSIS

ESTD 1887

VILLAGE OF

ELM CREEK

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COMMUNITY ALIGNMENT
NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

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Introduction and Purpose of the Needs Analysis

Communities across Nebraska are facing immense challenges; housing, childcare, and declining population to name a few. Rising to meet these seemingly impossible tasks are the local community leaders who care deeply for preserving and bettering their communities. It is this commitment to growth that has led the Village of Elm Creek to go through the Community Alignment process, facilitated by the Nebraska Association of School Boards Board Leadership Team. The board and community administrator recognize the need to come together as a community to begin addressing the mutual challenges that threaten the longevity of our communities and the livelihoods of our families.

The Village of Elm Creek has chosen to provide the opportunity for each individual to become active players in designing the future of their community. Through a comprehensive engagement of stakeholders, the creation of community values and aspirations, and a collaborative planning effort, Elm Creek and NASB will begin laying out the roadmap for the growth of the community.

What is the Needs Analysis?

The Community Needs Analysis is the first step in making positive change happen in Elm Creek. This document reflects the results of a community wide survey engagement, in-person facilitated discussions, and the use of relevant extant data to provide a clear picture of the state of the community. By combining these sources of information, not only will the highest needs and priorities be identified, but the dreams of a better future exist within the community members who participate. It is the responsibility of the Board and Community Administrator to address these needs and priorities, and to make the community vision come to life.

Within this document are the coded results of qualitative and quantitative assessments of various aspects of the community. These are broken down into 8 core elements of a well-functioning community. These results are provided along with relevant extant data to these 8 core elements to identify the current needs of the community. From this information the Village of Elm Creek and the NASB Board Leadership Team will identify and build a comprehensive plan to support community development over the next 3-5 years.

Core Elements

The Needs Analysis and corresponding framework and Strategic Plan are separated into eight core elements. These elements describe the categories of structures, resources, and dynamics of a well-functioning community. Data and identified needs may fall into one or more of these elements. Through careful planning, the use of quality data, and a commitment to continuous improvement, growth in these eight core elements can lead to lasting, positive change for our communities. The core elements are as follows:

1. **Community Culture and Climate**

   The first core element represents the feel and attitudes of the community. How connected are community members? Does the community share a sense of collective self-efficacy? Are the interpersonal dynamics of the community conducive to growth? The conglomeration of shared beliefs among the community forms the basis for this core element.

2. **Healthcare and Wellness**

   Everything to do with excellent physical, mental, and emotional wellness can fall into the second core element. Access to adequate medical care, counseling, or other services is an important part of creating community-wide wellness. The quality and affordability of these is also a major factor in improving quality of life for every individual.

3. **Education**

   While playing a major role, K-12 education is not the only piece of this core element. Adequate early childhood education supports the youngest community members as they enter the K-12 world while higher education institutions and other adult education options can expand and grow the capacity of a community.

4. **Community Structures and Land Use**

   A thriving community must have the physical structures in place to shelter citizens and provide spaces for play, business, and public use. Dedicating space in the community for certain activities through planning and zoning is essential to planning for a community's future. In conjunction, having adequate, appropriate, and affordable housing is crucial to maintaining and attracting community members. Also, the appearance of these structures can directly impact the feel and culture.

5. **Business and Economic Development**

   Every community must have a bustling business community to support its growth. Not only do businesses provide job opportunities, but they form the foundation of the tax base and provide goods and services to the entire community. The generation of resources through business and economic development is essential to providing a community with the resources necessary for growth.

6. **Infrastructure and Communication**

    No community is complete without the essential services such as gas and energy to power homes, clean water, and waste management. Services like internet connectivity, cell service, and street lighting are all necessary to make our communities safe and connected to the rest of the world. Communication with all citizens is necessary for community announcements, engagement, and safety.

7. **Social and Recreation**

    The opportunity for citizens to create, play, compete, and socialize is necessary to build connections across the community. Providing these opportunities also brings joy and satisfaction to the lives of community members. Community sports leagues, arts and theater, or social clubs are great opportunities for community members to engage meaningfully with others.

8. **Governance, Law, and Policy**

    The final core element is an effective system of government. This includes the creation and enforcement of laws, policies, ordinances, and codes that support the growth of the community. Civic engagement by all community members, not just elected or appointed community officials is vital for a truly democratic process in any community. Finally, the ability of the elected officials to govern is an important area to ensure a community actively makes steps towards growth.

Background and Demographics

Community History

The village of Elm Creek was founded in 1866 as Union Pacific built the railroad through Buffalo County. Named for the red elm trees growing near the creek, Elm Creek was incorporated in 1906. That same year, a fire destroyed many of the buildings in town, forcing residents to rebuild in stone. This also prompted the building of a waterworks system and the organization of a volunteer fire department. Like many towns along the Platte River, flooding heavily impacted the town in the 1930's and 1940's. Elm Creek is nestled in between three larger communities, Lexington, Holdredge, and Kearney, providing many "big city" job and education opportunities while still providing the safety and community of a small town. The local school district boasts a wonderful football and track facility, and just recently made significant improvements to their elementary building.

Demographics

The following information was obtained from the US Census Bureau based on the American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

In 2022, Elm Creek was estimated to have a population of 1,176. The following are breakdowns of age and race for this estimate. The median age was 29.2 while the two most common racial groups were White (89.4%) and Hispanic/Latino (7.7%).
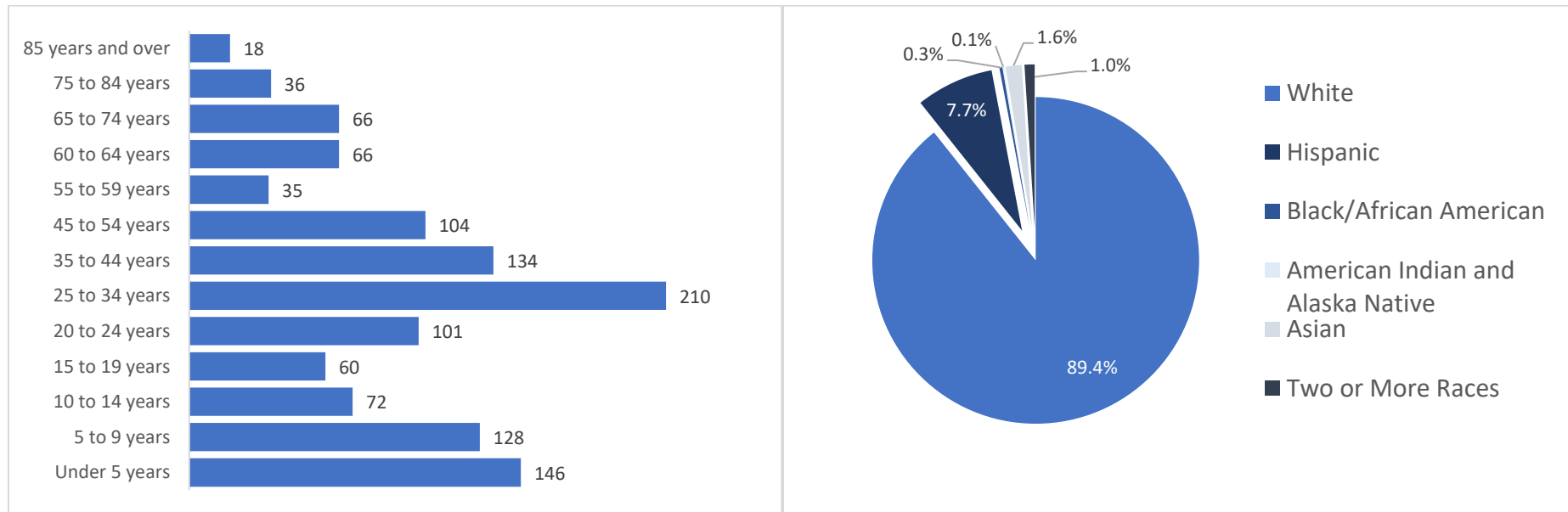
Figure1: Population Age Breakdown - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 2: Race/Ethnicity Breakdown - ACS 5-Year Estimates

The largest categories in the age breakdown are 25-34, and 35-44. This, along with the large number of individuals in the 0-14 age groups suggests a significant number of young families live in Elm Creek. Additionally, according to the American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 16.4% of women aged 15-50 gave birth in the past year. This number is over double the rates for both Buffalo County and Nebraska. This certainly has implications for housing, childcare, and educational needs, but is a positive sign of future growth in the community.

Economics

The median household income in Elm Creek in 2022 was $68,500. The chart below provides details on the breakdown of household incomes across the community. The chart also provides estimates for how this data is broken down by family households and nonfamily households. The median incomes for both groups are estimated to be $77,708 and $31,429 respectively. The difference in distributions between family and nonfamily households could be due to their being multiple earners in family households. This is further illustrated in the distribution of married couple families. The median average for these families is estimated to be $88,750. While the opportunity for having multiple earners clearly increases a household's earning potential, the median earnings for families and married couple families are well over double and just under triple that of non-family households, respectively. The number of family vs. nonfamily households is 274 vs 156, suggesting a strong majority of family households.
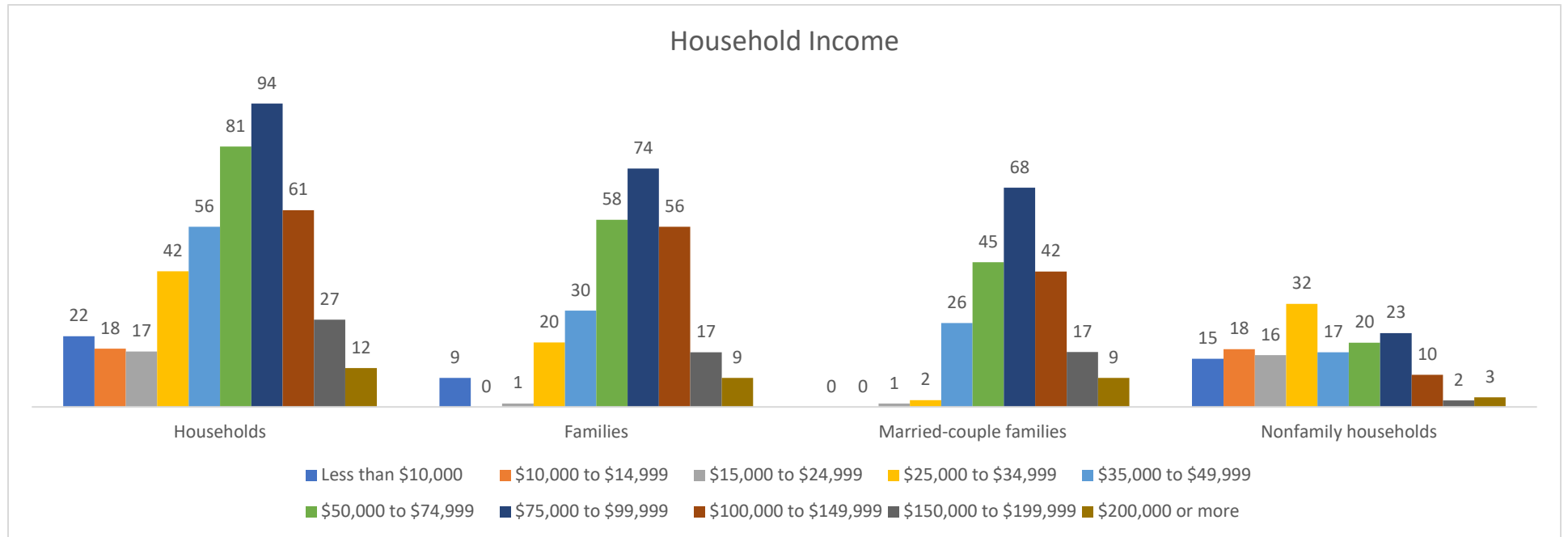

Figure 1: Household Income Breakdown - ACS 5-Year Estimates

Data Collection and Analysis Process

Online Engagement

The primary method of data collection performed was through online surveys administered through the online survey system, Qualtrics XM®. These surveys were provided to the community administrator for distribution throughout the community via a QR code and a general URL link. Methods of distribution included online newsletters, social media posts, the community website, posted notices at community areas, and targeted distribution of the QR code or URL to community groups. Paper copies were also available at the community office.

In addition, the facilitator was able to use a connection with the school district made prior to the engagement of the community to distribute the survey via email to school district stakeholders with verbal permission from the superintendent. The surveys completed provided data on a number of areas including housing, childcare, business and economic development, community appearance, civic services, and more. Online survey engagement was completed in October and November of 2023 and totaled 197 responses. A breakdown of ages of survey respondents is shown below:

Survey Response Age Breakdown

≤ 20	(20, 30]	(30, 40]	(40, 50]	(50, 60]	(60, 70]	(70, 80]	> 80
10	20	67	57	29	8	5	1
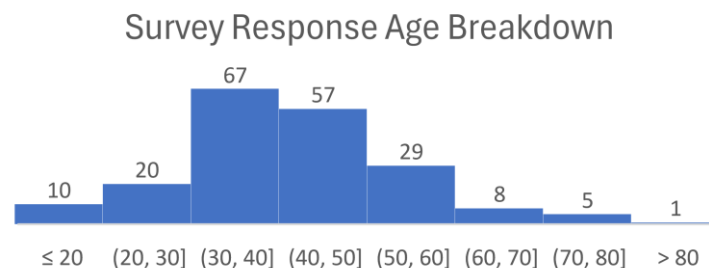
In-Person Engagement

An additional component of the engagement process was a pair of in-person, facilitated focus group discussions. The first of these discussions was a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis of the community. Participants identified positive and negative aspects of the internal community as well as external possibilities and challenges for the community. See the SWOT Analysis section for the results of this meeting.

The second facilitated in-person engagement was a discussion and creation of community values. The group began by identifying aspects of the ideal community member. The next step was to identify community aspirations. These aspirations serve not only as content to form community values from, but also show specific areas of need for community members that the board and community administrator can use as guidance for community development initiatives. The identified characteristics of an ideal community member and community aspirations were then put into categories that would become the core values of the community. The results of this engagement are available in the Community Visioning/Core Values section.

Processing the Data

After the collection of data via online surveys, the data is put through a descriptive qualitative analysis to firstly remove any identifiable characteristics and protect the anonymity of participants, and secondly to identify emergent themes from the qualitative data. All of this data is reported along with the reports from the engagement meetings. The NASB facilitator then uses all qualitative and quantitative data to provide relevant community data for the core elements available in the next section. Combined with data from the ACS Community Survey 5-year estimates and any other current planning initiatives, the following Needs Analysis will provide a clear picture of the current state of the community.
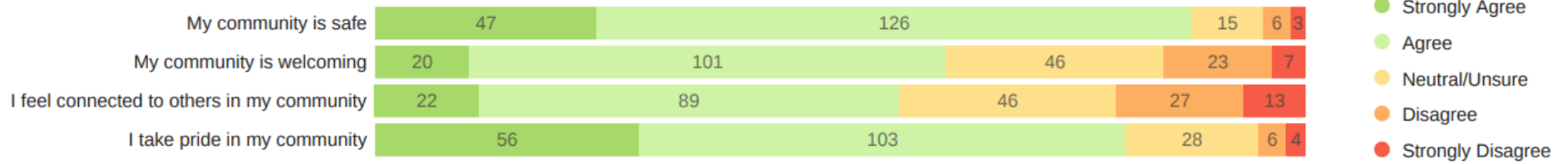
Summary of Identified Needs

The table below provides an overall summary of the needs identified throughout all the data analysis. These needs have been divided using the 8 core elements previously described. Supporting data is available in the corresponding sections to follow.

Core Elements	Identified Needs
Community Culture & Climate	- More Welcoming Community Feel - Intracommunity Connections - Sense of Collective Self-Efficacy and Collective Repsonsiblity
Healthcare and Wellness	- Overall Quality and Access - Pharmacy - Urgent Care Clinic
Education	- Childcare - Finanical Literacy Skills - College and Career Readiness Among Graduates - Alumni Engagement - Student Involvement in Community
Community Structure and Land Use	- Financing for Housing Improvement and Home Ownership - Updated Housing Improvement Needs from 2019 Report - Improvement of Vacant Lots - Code/Nuisance Enforcement
Business and Economic Development	- Restaurants/Dining Options - Boutique - Hardware/Materials Store - Chamber of Commerce/Business Leader Professsional Organization
Infrastructure and Communication	- Street Maintenance - Internet Connectivity
Social and Recreation	- Youth Acitvities - Before/After School Programs - Larger Community Space – Indoor and Outdoor
Governance, Law, and Policy	- Community Leadership Assessment - Increased Community Engagement - Policy Review Cycle

Community Climate and Culture

Indicate to what degree you agree with the following statements:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My community is safe	47	126	15	6	3
My community is welcoming	20	101	46	23	7
I feel connected to others in my community	22	89	46	27	13
I take pride in my community	56	103	28	6	4

What is the best part about living in your community?

Small Community/School	92	Church/Faith Community	2
Peaceful/Quiet	22	Community Cleanliness	2
Close Relationships	21	Ease of Transportation	2
Friendly	16	Similar Community Values	2
Safety	14	Swimming Pool	2
Close to Larger Cities	11	Close to School	1
Neighborly	10	Comfortable	1
Supportive Community	10	Commitment to Community Betterment	1
Good Amenities	8	Dependent on Area of Town	1
School	8	Everything	1
Close to Family	6	Family-Oriented	1
Local Businesses	5	Hometown	1
N/A	5	House/Property	1
Raising a Family	5	School-Community Connection	1
Community Events/Activities	4	Space	1
Community Pride	3	Unsure	1
Nothing	3	Young Families	1
Welcoming	3		

What are 2-3 things you value most?

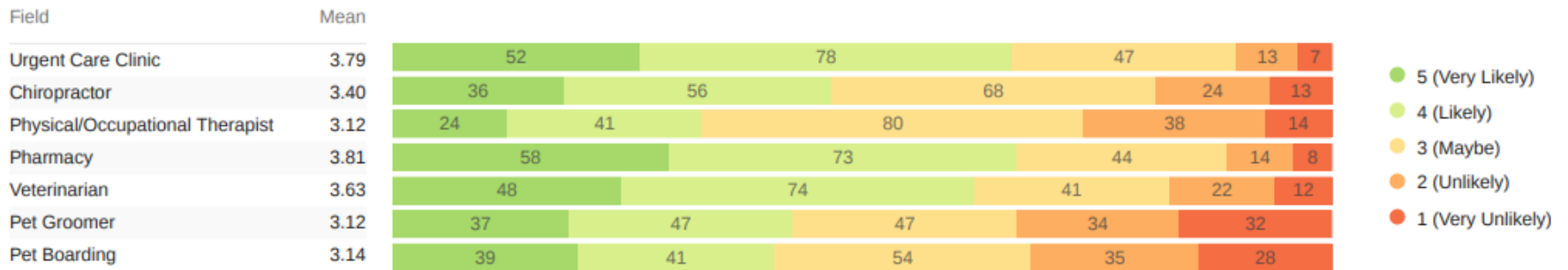|			
Family	51	Clean	2
Quality Education/School	46	Facilities	2
Interpersonal Relationships	42	Honor	2
Safety and Security	38	Library	2
Access to Necessities	23	Money/Resources	2
Community	22	Nothing	2
Small Size Community/School	17	Property	2
Church/Faith	16	Time	2
Local Businesses	15	Values	2
Peace	10	Chickens	1
Honesty	9	Common Sense	1
Kindness	9	Community Events	1
Helpfulness	8	Community Growth	1
Small Town Attitude/Values	8	Community Pride	1
Respect	7	Community-School Relationship	1
Green Spaces	6	Consistency	1
Sports/Recreation	6	Continuous Improvement	1
Opportunity	5	EMS services	1
Privacy	5	Fairness	1
Childcare	4	Fishing	1
Community Involvement	4	Grass Dump	1
Freedom/Liberty	4	Growth	1
Location	4	Home	1
Pool	4	Leadership	1
Unsure	4	Learning	1
Health/Wellness	3	Livestock/Agriculture	1
Integrity	3	Love	1
Life	3	Parade	1
Loyalty	3	Pets	1
Occupation/Job	3	Rural	1
Welcoming	3	Sense of Belonging	1
Work Ethic	3	Trust	1
Accountability	2	Volunteering	1

Health Care and Wellness

According to the American Community Survey 5-year estimates, there is currently 9.4% of the population in Elm Creek living with some form of disability. This is slightly lower than the state average of 12.6%. Additionally, there is currently 9.1% of the population living without some form of health insurance. This is slightly higher than the state average of 6.7%. The data below is an assessment of the access and quality of healthcare in the community:

Please rate your access and the quality of healthcare in your community on a scale of 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Excellent):

	5 (Excellent)	4 (Good)	3 (Average)	2 (Poor)	1 (Very Poor)
Access	13	47	71	45	21
Quality	14	46	82	35	20
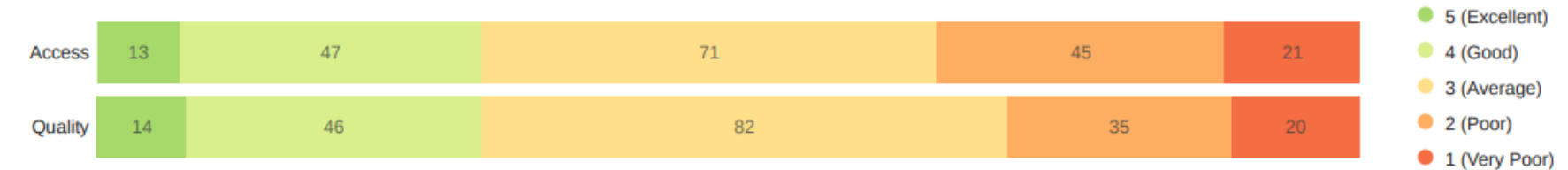
Field	5 (Excellent)		4 (Good)		3 (Average)		2 (Poor)		1 (Very Poor)		Total
Please rate your access to healthcare in your community on a scale of 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Excellent):	7%	13	24%	47	36%	71	23%	45	11%	21	197
Please rate the quality of healthcare in your community on a scale of 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Excellent):	7%	14	23%	46	42%	82	18%	35	10%	20	197

If they were available in your community, how likely are you to use the following services:

Field	Mean	5 (Very Likely)	4 (Likely)	3 (Maybe)	2 (Unlikely)	1 (Very Unlikely)
Urgent Care Clinic	3.79	52	78	47	13	7
Chiropractor	3.40	36	56	68	24	13
Physical/Occupational Therapist	3.12	24	41	80	38	14
Pharmacy	3.81	58	73	44	14	8
Veterinarian	3.63	48	74	41	22	12
Pet Groomer	3.12	37	47	47	34	32
Pet Boarding	3.14	39	41	54	35	28

Field	5 (Very Likely)		4 (Likely)		3 (Maybe)		2 (Unlikely)		1 (Very Unlikely)		Total
Urgent Care Clinic	26.40%	52	39.59%	78	23.86%	47	6.60%	13	3.55%	7	197
Chiropractor	18.27%	36	28.43%	56	34.52%	68	12.18%	24	6.60%	13	197
Physical/Occupational Therapist	12.18%	24	20.81%	41	40.61%	80	19.29%	38	7.11%	14	197
Pharmacy	29.44%	58	37.06%	73	22.34%	44	7.11%	14	4.06%	8	197
Veterinarian	24.37%	48	37.56%	74	20.81%	41	11.17%	22	6.09%	12	197
Pet Groomer	18.78%	37	23.86%	47	23.86%	47	17.26%	34	16.24%	32	197
Pet Boarding	19.80%	39	20.81%	41	27.41%	54	17.77%	35	14.21%	28	197

Education

Elm Creek Public Schools has gone through the NASB Strategic Planning process and continues to work to improve local public education. The identified needs and subsequent planning efforts are based on the community's expectations of education and questions for specific educational stakeholders.

What skills, knowledge or abilities should a student in your community have upon graduation?

Skill	Count	Skill	Count
Financial Literacy/Skills	64	Cursive	3
Life Skills	48	Resilience	3
Career/College Readiness	35	Unsure	3
General Education	33	Agriculture Skills	2
Independence	25	Career Exploration	2
Engaged Citizenship	24	High Test Scores	2
Communication Skills	17	History	2
N/A	17	Reading	2
Family/Consumer Science Skills	16	Adaptability	1
Vehicle Maintenance	16	Community Pride	1
Basic Trades Skills	13	Confidence	1
Good Work Ethic	12	Emotional Skills	1
Job Skills/Professionalism	11	Giving/Receiving Feedback	1
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving Skills	10	Insurance	1
Social Skills	8	Integrity	1
Respect	7	Job Experience	1
Responsibility	7	Math	1
Home Maintenance	6	Motivation/Ambition	1
Appropriate Technology Use	4	Technology Skills	1
General Ethics	4	Time Management	1
Leadership Skills	4	Understanding of Housing	1
Common Sense	3		

In what ways can students participate in community service?

Clean Up/Community Appearance	55	After School Program	2
Senior Assistance	28	Athletic Field Maintenance	2
Help with Community Events	22	Babysitting	2
N/A	18	Scouts	2
Unsure	18	Activity Fundraising	1
Identified Community Needs	14	Adult Volunteering	1
Library Volunteer	9	Already Volunteering	1
School-Community Collaboration	9	Family Involvement in Community	1
Volunteering	9	First Responder Classes	1
Assist Local Businesses	7	Help Local VA Chapter	1
Student Participation in Board Meetings	7	Homecoming	1
Flower Planting/Gardening	5	Jobs Through Village	1
Join Community Organizations	5	Lions Club	1
Ensure Student Voices are Heard	4	Local Daycare	1
Food Pantry	4	Local Job Opportunities	1
Housing Maintenance	4	Maintain School Facilities	1
Sidewalk Clean Up	4	Manual Labor	1
Support First Responders	4	National Honor Society	1
Assistance for Underprivileged Groups	3	Place to Identify Opportunities	1
Church	3	Promote Youth Programs	1
Coaching/Reffing Youth Sports	3	School Events	1
Concessions During Sporting Events	3	Support for Special Programs	1
Initiating Service Projects	3	Support Voting Process	1
None Offered	3	Swim Team	1
Required Volunteer Hours	3	Tutor Younger Students	1
School Credit for Community Involvement	3	Veterans Programs	1
Youth Mentorship	3	Work Study Programs	1

Which of the following should be implemented to promote student leadership development?
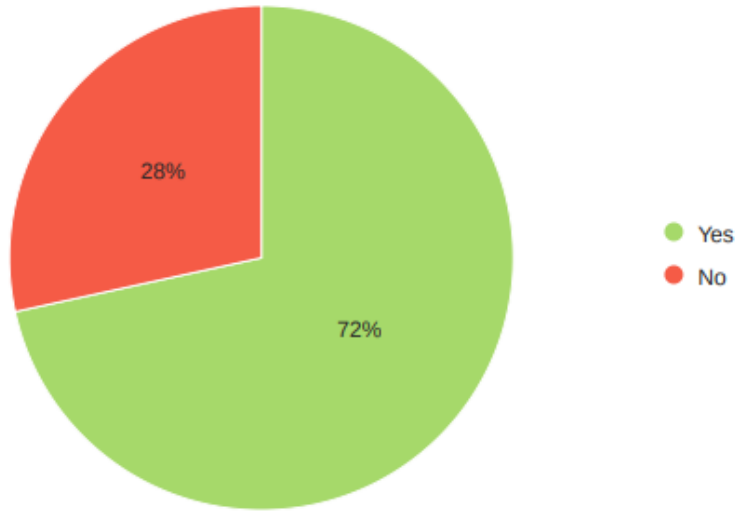
Student Participation in External Leadership Development	50%	98
Student Seats on Community Boards	48%	94
Community Member-Student Mentorship	41%	80
Secondary-Elementary Student Mentorship	35%	68
Other (please specify)	9%	17
Total		197

Other:

Accountability for Bullying	1
All of the Above	1
Community Involvement	1
Critical Thinking	1
Culture Change	1
Extracurriculars	1
Increase Student Motivation	1
Internships	1
Leadership Assignments	1
Public Speaking	1

Parents

Are you a parent of a child under the age of 18?

28%

72%

- Yes
- No

What activities are available in your community for children under the age of 16?

Youth Sports	39
Swimming/Pool	28
Park/Green Spaces	24
None/Nothing	19
Library Activities	17
Baseball/Softball	15
Few Activities	13
School Activities	12
Church Youth Activities	10
School Sports	9
Unsure	9
N/A	6
Volleyball	6
Basketball	5
4-H	4
Football	4
Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts	4
Wrestling	4
Disc Golf	2
Esports	2
School Arts Programs	2
Cheer	1
FCA	1
FFA	1
Tennis	1
Trunk or Treat	1
Walking/Biking	1

What does an ideal before / after school program look like for you and your child?

N/A	33	Transportation	2
Learning Opportunities	21	Affordable	1
Mornings and Evenings	19	After Preschool Care	1
Homework Assistance	18	Anything	1
Not Needed	17	Breakfast	1
Physical Activities	17	Character Education	1
Safety	17	Collaboration Space	1
Arts and Crafts	7	Create Product	1
Structured/Routine	6	Creates District Unity	1
Unsure	6	Ethics Education	1
At the School	5	Event Participation	1
Snack	4	Family Events	1
Engaging for Kids	3	FFA	1
Explore Interests	3	Life Skills Education	1
No Technology	3	Outdoor Time	1
Supervised	3	Promotes Self-Esteem	1
Church/Faith	2	Removes Stress of Pick-Up	1
Early Childhood Educator	2	STEM	1
Flexibility	2	Story Time	1
Mentorship	2	Student Volunteers	1
Not School Related	2	Team Building	1
Reading	2	Trades Education	1
Service	2	TV/Screen Time	1
Social Time	2	Youth Sports	1

Do you currently utilize any form of childcare or are you expecting to utilize some form of childcare in the next 5 years?
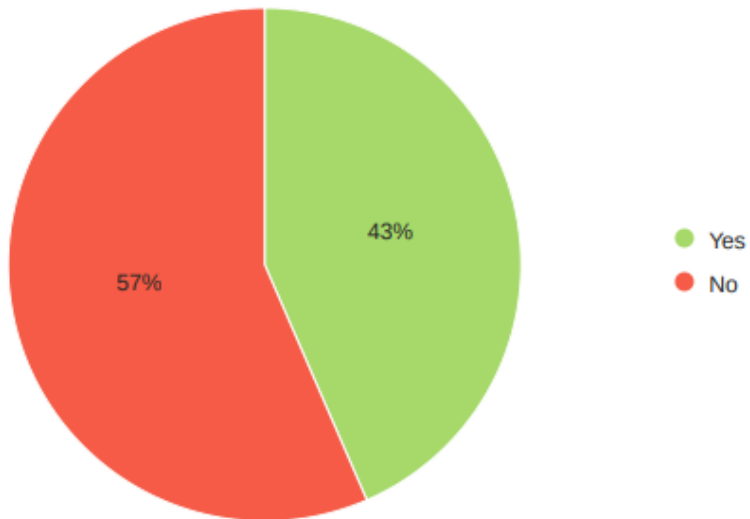

33% Yes
67% No

How many children do / will you utilize childcare for?

1 Child — 19
2 Children — 6
3 Children — 18
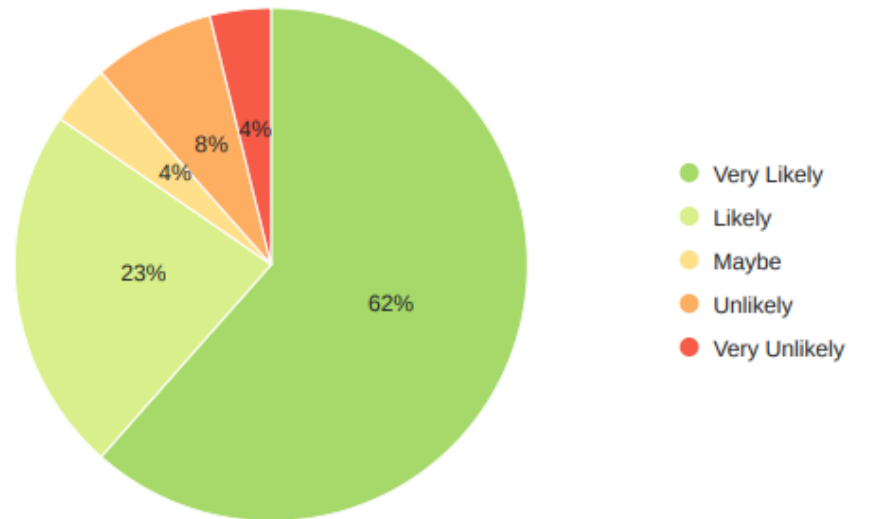4 Children — 3
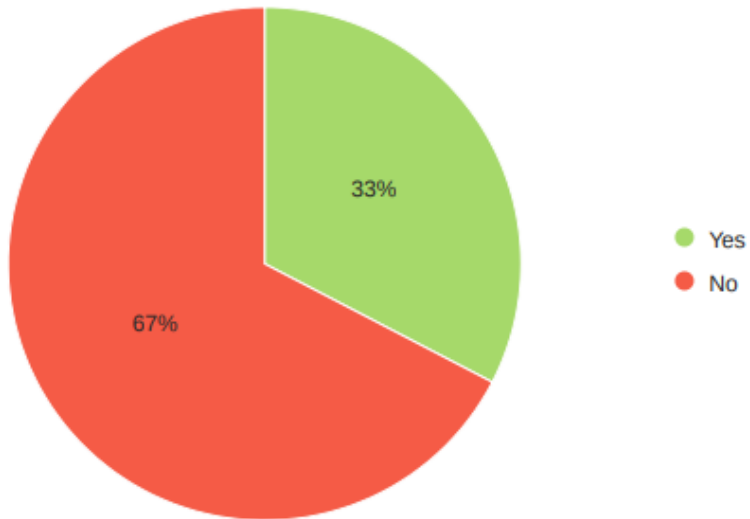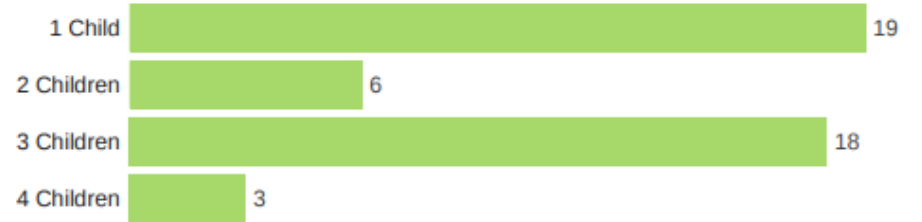
Field	Mean	Sum
How many children do / will you utilize childcare for?	2.11	97.00

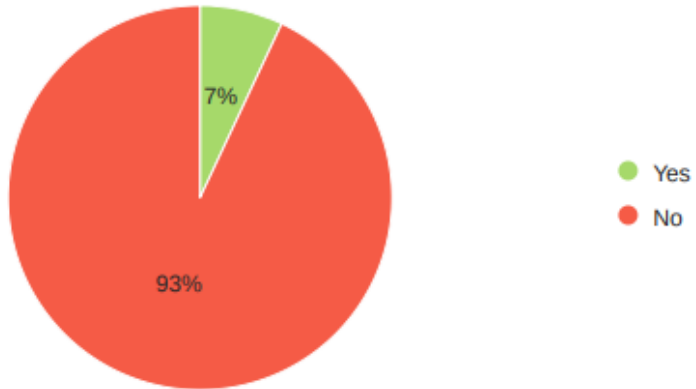## Is the childcare service provider located within your community of residence?

43% Yes
57% No

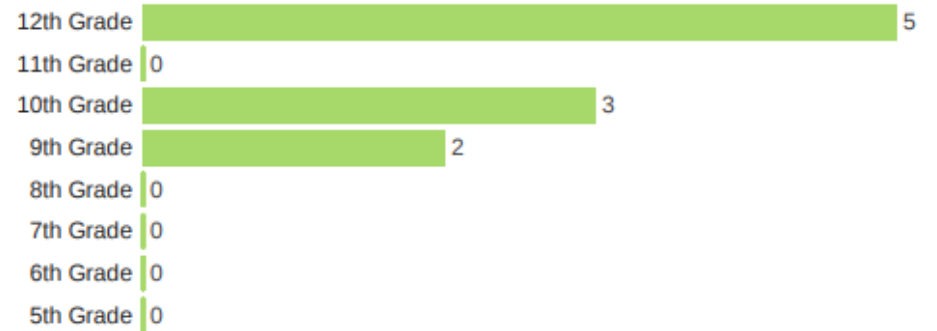## If adequate childcare were available in your community, how likely would you be to utilize it?

62% Very Likely
23% Likely
4% Maybe
8% Unlikely
4% Very Unlikely

Are you currently a student at Elm Creek Public Schools?

7%

93%

- Yes
- No

What grade are you in?

Grade	Count
12th Grade	5
11th Grade	0
10th Grade	3
9th Grade	2
8th Grade	0
7th Grade	0
6th Grade	0
5th Grade	0

What activities should be made available or more accesible to students?

Activity	Count
Nothing	3
Unsure	2
Weight Room/Gym Access	2
Community Activities	1
Internships	1
Tennis	1

Would you participate in student leadership development?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

0%
40%
60%
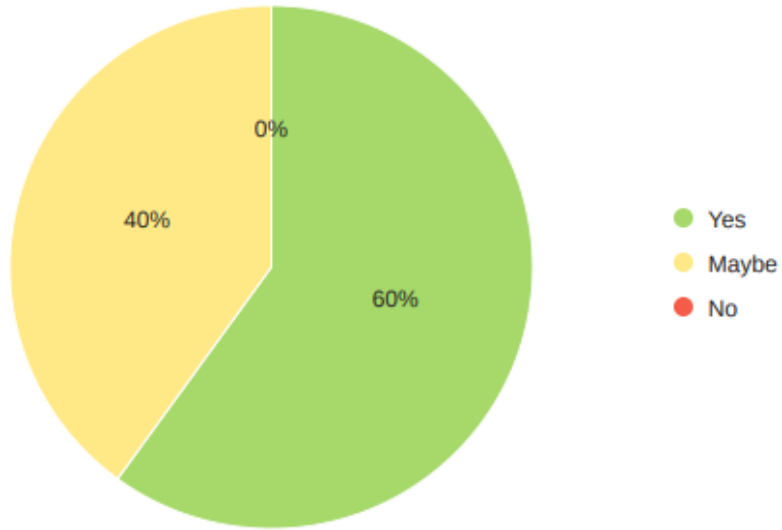
What are your plans after graduating from high school?

Enroll at a 4-year Institution	8
Enroll at a 2-year Institution	1
Trades Apprenticeship	0
Begin Working/Start a Career	0
Other: (Please Specify)	1
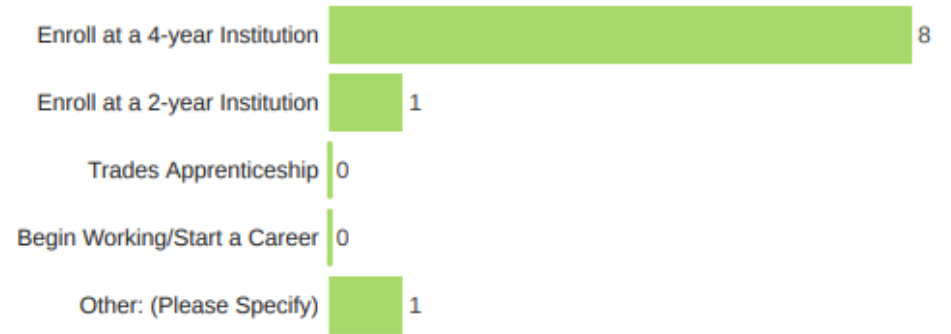
Other:

Unsure

Would you accept and complete an internship with a business/organization in your community?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

10%
20%
70%
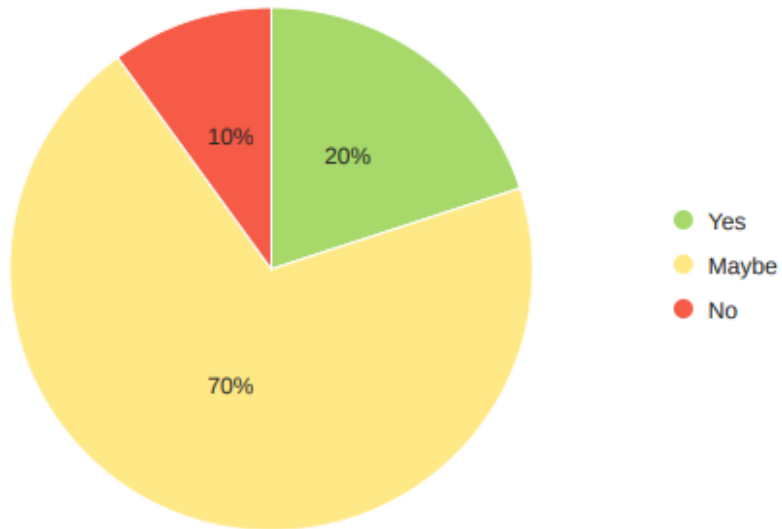
Alumni Engagement

Are you an alumni of Elm Creek Public Schools?

- ● Yes
- ● No

27%

73%
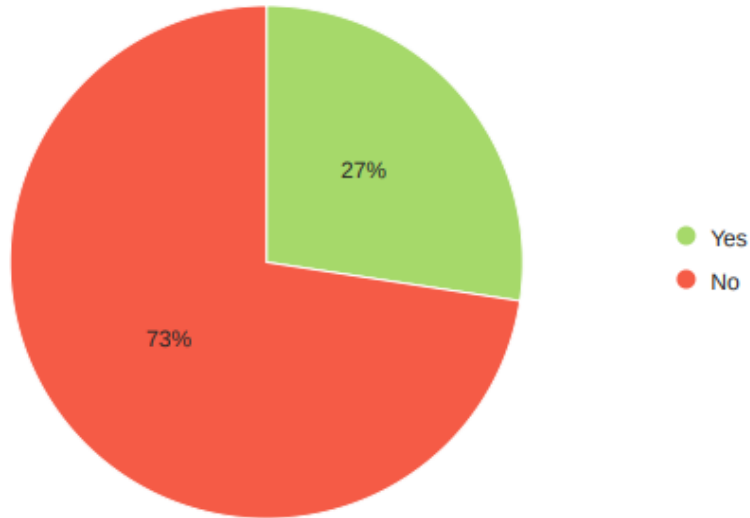
What can be done to better engage alumni?

Communication	8
Unsure	8
N/A	7
Job Opportunities	4
More Welcoming Events	3
School Reunions	3
Already Involved	2
Banquet Accessibility/Affordability	2
Need Village/School Pride	2
Nothing	2
Promotion of School Events	2
Accurate Alumni Database	1
Alumni Committee	1
Alumni Input	1
Childcare	1
Community Events	1
Community Leadership	1
Connections to Current Students	1
Consistent Administration	1
Discounted Sporting Events	1
Foundation Presence	1
Golf	1
Homecoming Alumni Events	1
Housing	1
More Friendly Community	1
Promote Village Residency	1
School Social Media	1
Smaller Alumni Gatherings	1

After graduating from Elm Creek Public Schools, did you ever change residences for any reason?

- Yes — 81%
- No — 19%
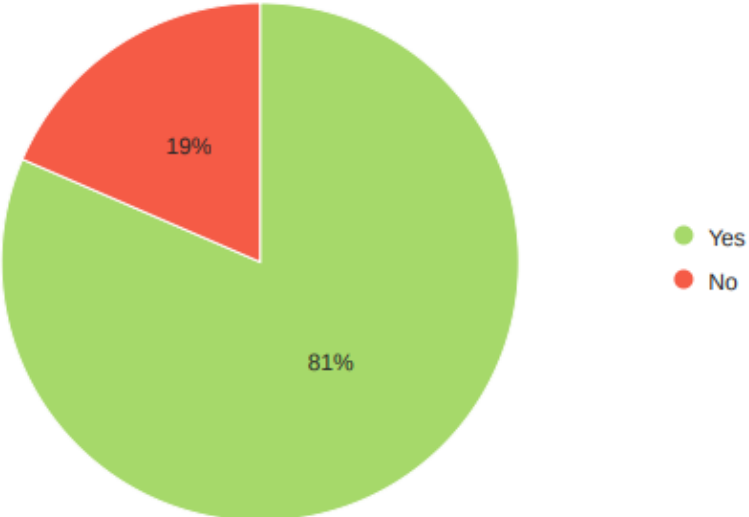
What made you return to live in Elm Creek?

|	
Close to Family	13
Rural Community/Small Town	13
Home	8
Work/Job	6
Farming	4
Friends	4
Housing	4
School System	3
Good Community Values	2
Property Ownership	1
Sense of Belonging	1

Community Structures and Land Use

Housing

The chart below indicates that 83% of respondents to the survey owned homes while 10% rented, and 7% were not financially responsible for owning/renting a home. Most other publicly available information about housing including the American Community Survey indicate that about 70% of homes in Elm Creek are owned while 30% are rented.

Do you rent or own your current residence?

- Own
- Rent
- Not Applicable

7%
10%
83%
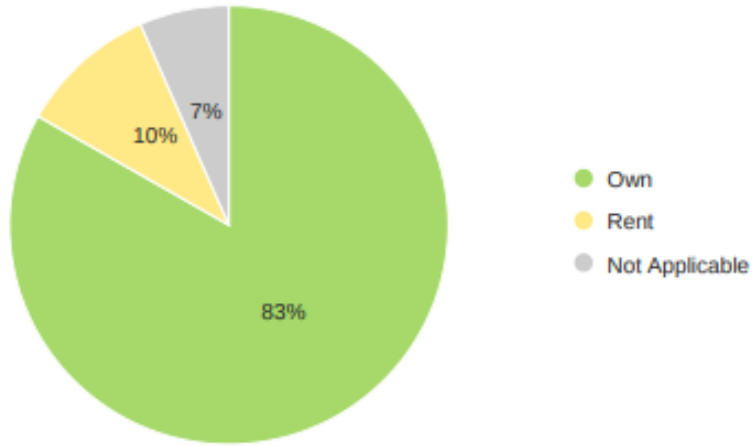
Does your current residence meet your housing needs?

- Yes
- No

11%
89%
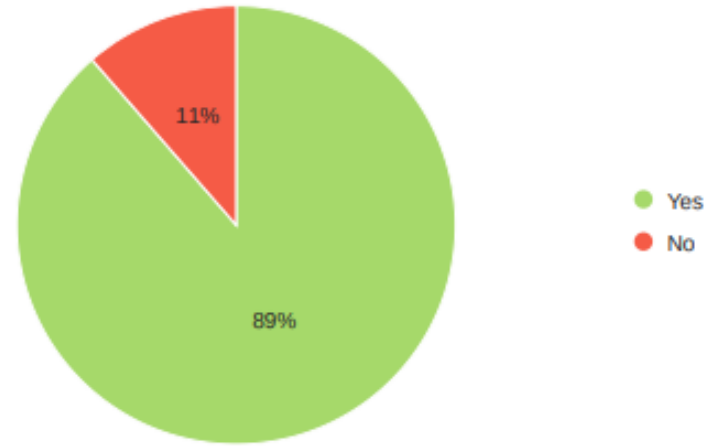
How is your residence _not_ meeting your needs?

Too Small	13
Need for Significant Repairs	6
Too Expensive	1
Other (please specify)	1
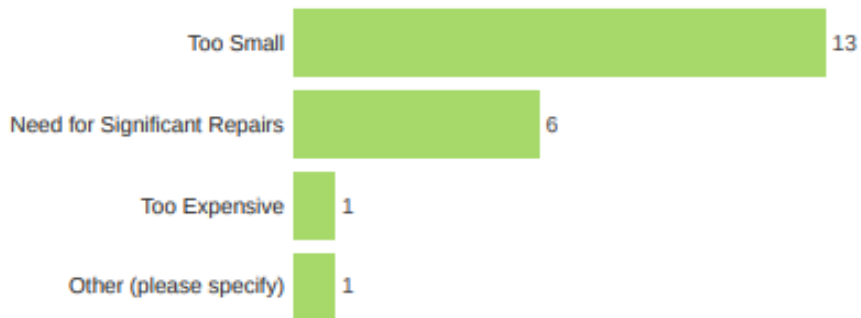
Other:

Water Leak   1

Also indicated in the chart above was that 11% of respondents' residences were not currently meeting their housing needs. The majority of these were said to be too small or in need of significant repairs. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses the American Community Survey to create their Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy data reports. The charts below show the estimated percentage of households with one of the 4 main housing issues (incomplete kitchen facilities, incomplete plumbing, more than 1 person per room, and greater than 30% cost burden) as well as a breakdown of these percentages for homeowners vs renters.
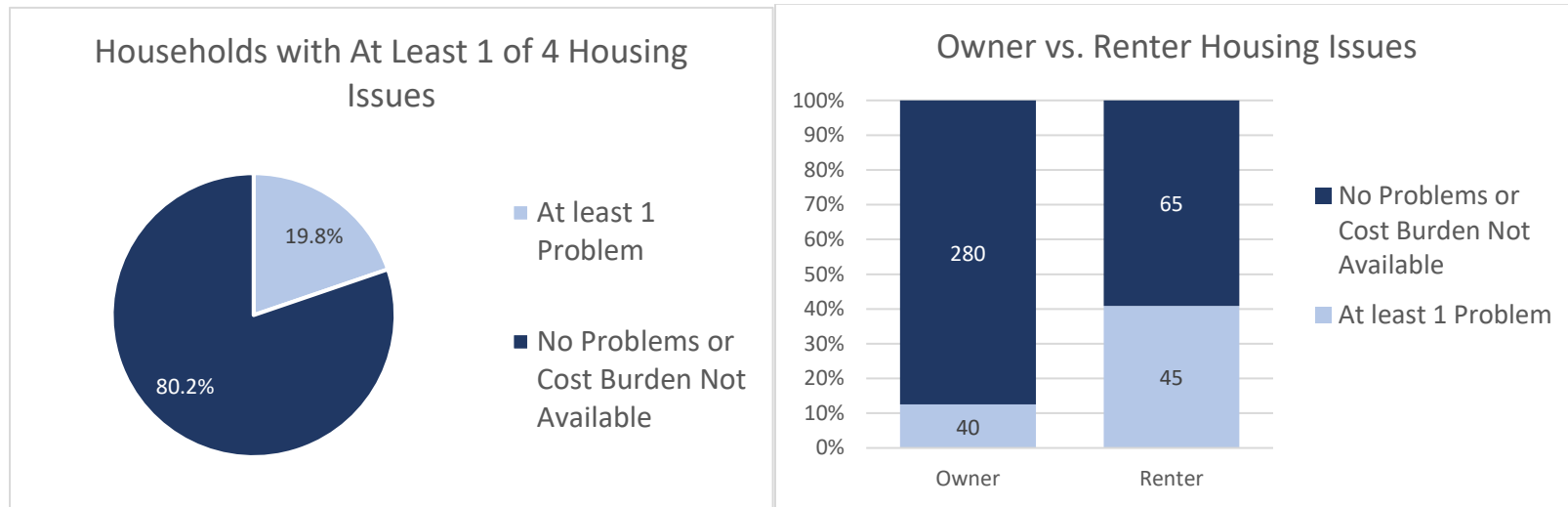
Figure 2: Housing Issues Between Owners and Renters – ACS Community Survey 5-year Estimates (2016-2020)

Because one of the four main housing issues is cost burden, renters are more likely to be labeled in the data above as having housing issues. Below is a distribution of homeowners' and renters' economic statuses based on the same data used to create the charts above. It is important to understand the economic conditions of homeownership as it is a major barrier for many aspiring homeowners, especially young families who help to build thriving communities.

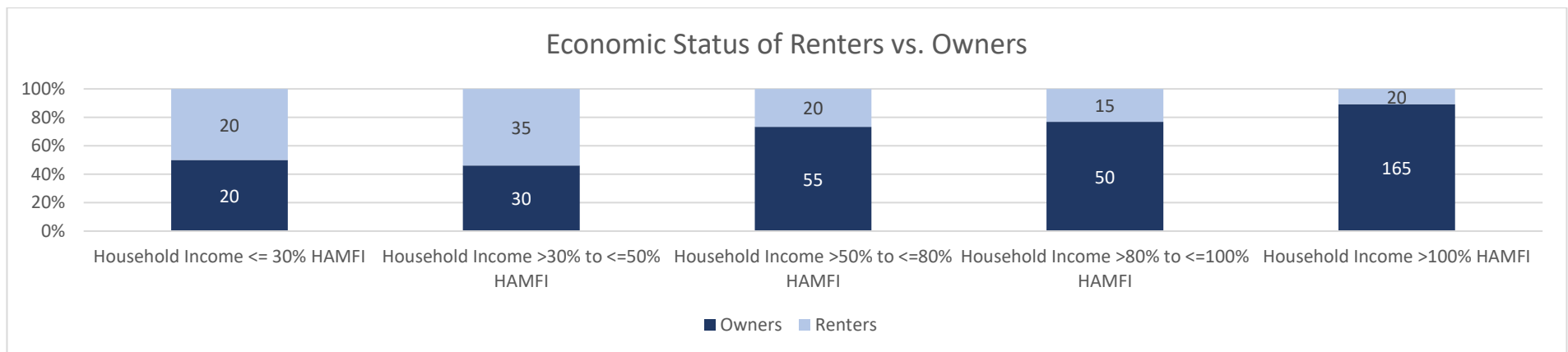*Figure 3: Economic Status of Owners vs. Renters – ACS Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2016-2020)*

Another element of housing is the transition of housing. The continued residence of homes with multiple bedrooms by one individual or couple can be detrimental to a community's ability to grow. Survey Respondents were asked the following questions about their potential move or housing transition:

In the next 5 years, will you be looking to change residences?

- 22% Yes
- 51% No
- 27% Unsure
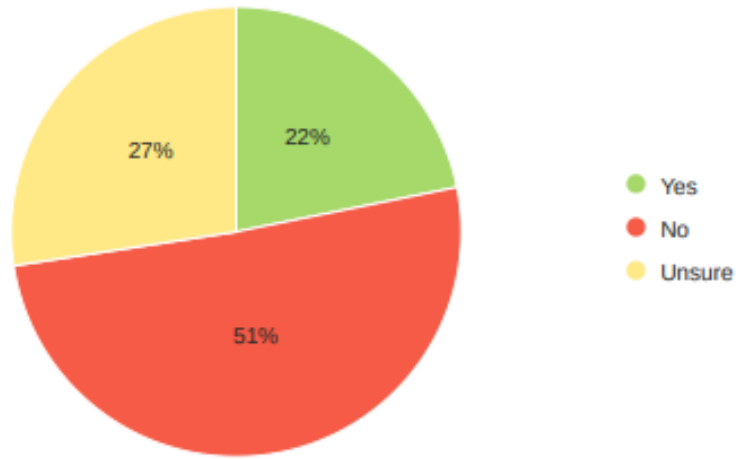
What is your primary reason for looking to change residences?

Reason	Count
Need a Larger Residence	24
Improve Quality	9
Renting to Owning	4
Need a Smaller Residence	0
Other (Please Specify):	6

Other:

Moving for College	3
Freedom to Build	1
Neighboring Properties	1
Outside of Town, Within School District	1
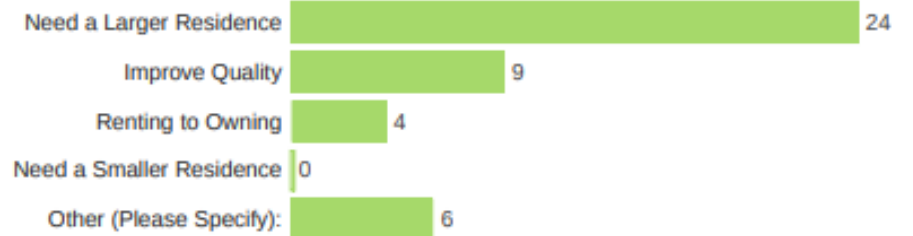
Which type of residence are you most likely to move into?

Type	Count
Single-Family Home	40
Apartment	1
Townhouse	0
Duplex	0
No Preference	2

How likely would you be to move into a new subdivision in your community?

- 12% Very Likely
- 14% Likely
- 44% Maybe
- 16% Unlikely
- 14% Very Unlikely
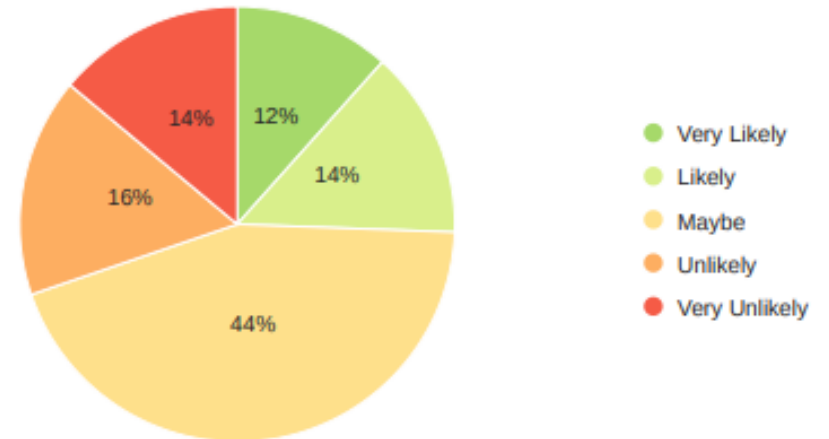
Recreational Facilities

Which of the following facilities / activities are you likely to use or participate within the next year?

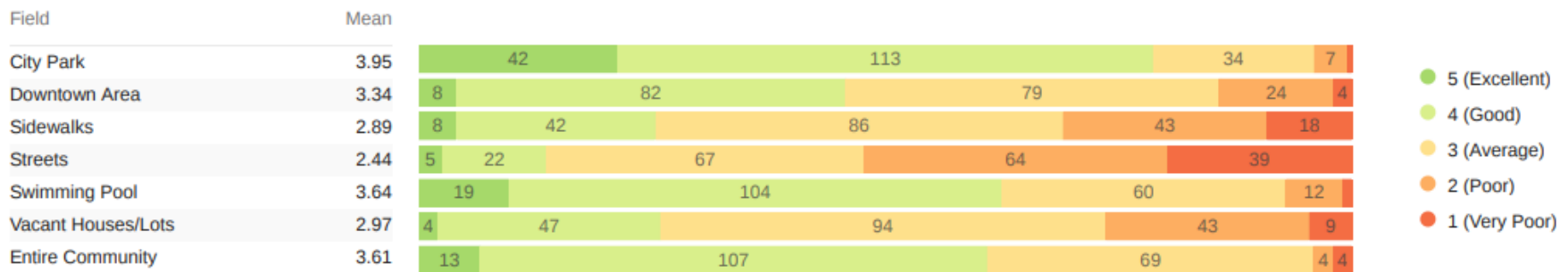| Field	Choice Count
Improved Hiking/Walking/Biking Trails	58% 115
Outdoor Event Space	34% 66
Cornhole/Yard Games	32% 64
Indoor Event Space	29% 57
Baseball/Softball Facilities	29% 57
Gymnasium	22% 43
Running Track	20% 40
Tennis/Pickleball Courts	18% 35
Horseshoe Pits	4% 8
Other: (Please Specify)	9% 17
Total	197

Other:

None	6
Pool	3
Shooting Sports	2
Basketball	1
Community Center	1
Does Not Cost Taxpayers	1
Fishing	1
Hiking/Motorsports Trails	1
Hunting	1
Indoor Recreation Facility	1
Youth Center	1

Community Appearance

Please rate the general appearance of the following on a scale of 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Excellent):

Field	Mean
City Park	3.95
Downtown Area	3.34
Sidewalks	2.89
Streets	2.44
Swimming Pool	3.64
Vacant Houses/Lots	2.97
Entire Community	3.61

Legend: ● 5 (Excellent) ● 4 (Good) ● 3 (Average) ● 2 (Poor) ● 1 (Very Poor)

Field	5 (Excellent)	4 (Good)	3 (Average)	2 (Poor)	1 (Very Poor)	Total
City Park	21.32% 42	57.36% 113	17.26% 34	3.55% 7	0.51% 1	197
Downtown Area	4.06% 8	41.62% 82	40.10% 79	12.18% 24	2.03% 4	197
Sidewalks	4.06% 8	21.32% 42	43.65% 86	21.83% 43	9.14% 18	197
Streets	2.54% 5	11.17% 22	34.01% 67	32.49% 64	19.80% 39	197
Swimming Pool	9.64% 19	52.79% 104	30.46% 60	6.09% 12	1.02% 2	197
Vacant Houses/Lots	2.03% 4	23.86% 47	47.72% 94	21.83% 43	4.57% 9	197
Entire Community	6.60% 13	54.31% 107	35.03% 69	2.03% 4	2.03% 4	197

What efforts should be made to improve the appearance of the community?

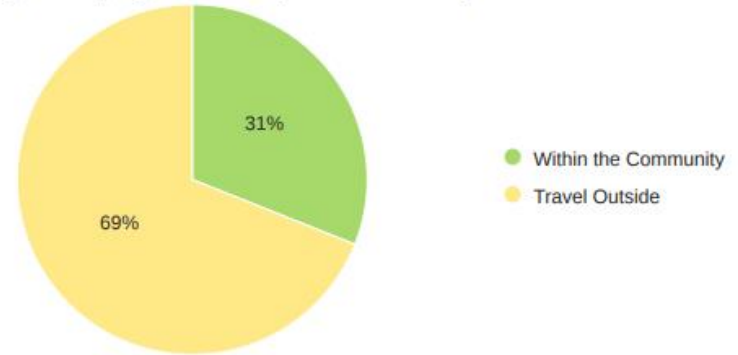|			
Street Quality	89	Upkeep of Welcome Signage	2
Sidewalks	29	Allow Metal Buildings	1
Upkeep of Vacant/Dilapidated Homes/Lots	25	Animal Control	1
More Street Lights	17	Bank Alley	1
Enforce Yard Clean Ups	15	Benches Downtown	1
Highway Appearance	12	City-Wide Trash Roll-Off	1
Downtown	11	Coffee Shop	1
Green Spaces/Park Improvement	10	Community Clean Up Day	1
N/A	10	Employment for High Schoolers	1
Pool Improvements	10	Football Seating	1
Promote Cleanliness	9	Fund Repairs	1
Curb Appeal	5	General Maintenance	1
Unsure	5	Kid Crossing Signs	1
Assistance with Clean Up	4	Medians for Trees	1
Ball Fields	4	More Flowers	1
Business Development	4	More Multifamily Housing	1
Track/Field	4	New Restaurant	1
Main Street	3	Rebuild/Renovate Old Library	1
Railroad Tracks	3	Remove Barriers to Home Improvements	1
Business Appearances	2	Stop Signs at Intersections	1
Housing Upkeep Program	2	Trailer Parks	1
More Trees/Greenery	2	Trim Trees	1
Nothing	2	Walking/Biking Trail	1
South Side Drainage	2		

Business and Leadership Development

The charts below indicate an employment rate of 88%. The American Community Survey 5-year estimate indicates that this number is closer to 72%. Acquiring more responses to survey engagement could verify this discrepancy. The mean travel time to work for citizens in Elm Creek was 22.2 minutes. Consistent with the second chart, this would suggest a majority of the community works outside of their resident community. The "Bedroom Community" phenomenon is common among communities near larger cities or metro and micropolitan areas. The largest industries of employment in Elm Creek were Education, Healthcare, and Agriculture. This is echoed across many rural communities and demonstrates the vital connection between school district, community, rural health organizations and medical care, and other essential industries.

Please select the option that best describes your current employment:

- 79% Full-time
- 9% Part-time
- 12% Unemployed
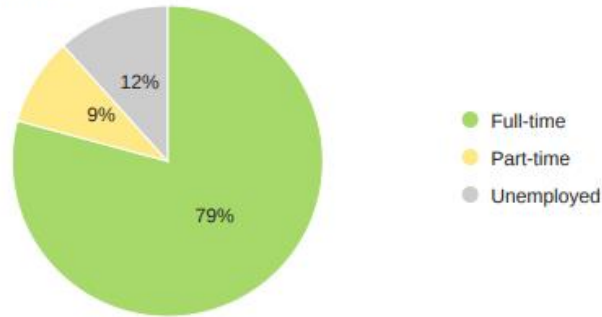
Are you you employed within your community of residence?

- 31% Within the Community
- 69% Travel Outside

Which category best describes your current employment:

Category	Count
Technology	8
Education	34
Business/Finance	13
Agriculture	16
Manufacturing	13
Food Service	6
Music, Art, and Literature	3
Human/Social Services	2
Energy and Natural Resources	2
Healthcare	28
Civil Services	7
Recreation and Tourism	0
Retail/Marketing	6
Other: (Please Specify)	36
Law/Criminal Justice	0
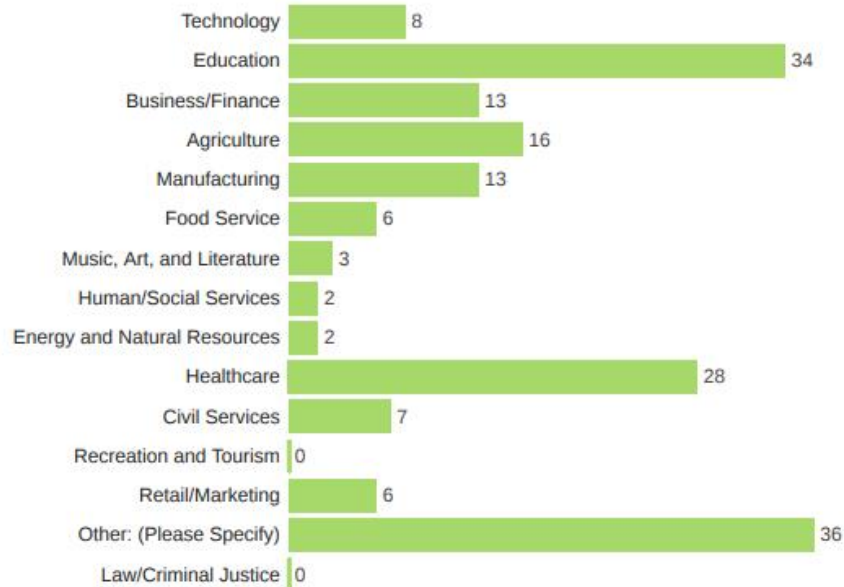
Other:

Construction/Contracting	12
Childcare/Daycare	3
Retail/Marketing	3
Education	2
Mechanic	2
Printing	2
Service	2
Trucking	2
Beauty/Aesthetician	1
Business/Finance	1
Energy and Natural Resources	1
Healthcare	1
Pet Care and Training	1
Stay-at-Home Parent	1

What businesses, services, or amenities are missing from your community?

Restaurants/Dining Options	59	Yard Waste/Snow Removal	2
Childcare/Daycare	35	Barber Shop/Salon	1
None/Nothing	20	Baseball/Softball Field Updates	1
Boutique/Retail	14	City Employees	1
N/A	14	Community Events	N 1
Hardware/Materials Store	12	Community Garden	1
Community/Rec Center	11	Dance Studio	1
Medical Care	11	Dog Park	1
Unsure	9	Entertainment	1
Pharmacy	8	Extended Mail Route	1
Teen/Youth Gathering Place	8	Full-Day Preschool	1
Job Opportunities for Young People	7	Gym Access	1
Swimming Pool Improvements/Splash Pad	7	Handyman/Small Repair	1
Affordable Housing	6	Library Improvements	1
After School Programs	6	Local Law Enforcement	1
Coffee Shop	5	Lodging	1
Youth Activities	5	Longer Business Hours	1
Movie Theater	4	Martial Arts	1
Senior Care	4	Massage Therapy	1
Antique/Thrift Store	3	Meals on Wheels	1
Chiropractor	3	Mental Health Services	1
Internet	3	Office Space	1
Preschool Transportation	3	Parks	1
Walking/Biking Trail	3	Parks and Rec Activities	1
Bakery	2	Pet Grooming	1
Bowling Alley	2	Sidewalks	1
Gas Station	2	Storm Drains	1
Large Grocery Store	2	Stray Cat Problem	1
Longer Gas Station Hours	2	Student-Community Involvement	1
Nail Salon	2	Study Programs	1
Street Improvements	2	Tax Service	1
Transportation	2	Tradesmen/Repair Services	1
Workforce/Business Development	2		

Business Leaders

Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate if they were a leader in their business or organization. These individuals are often looked upon for guidance, community leadership, and to model positive civic engagement. Those indicating they fell under this role were asked the following additional questions:

**Are you a business owner or leader of an organization in Elm Creek?**

- ● Yes
- ● No
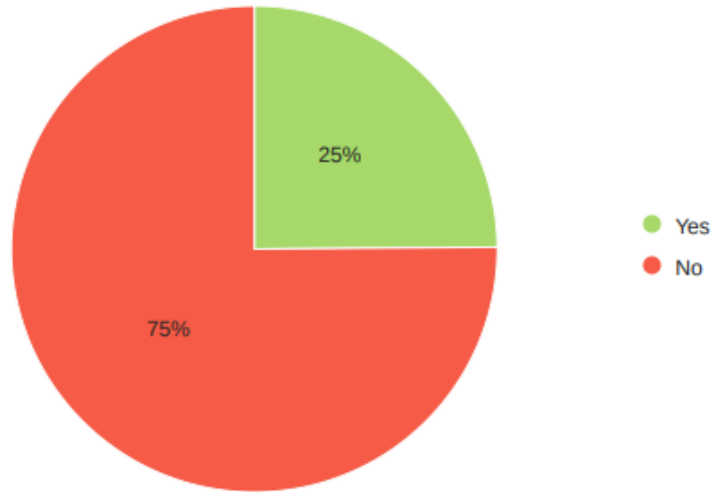
What is the name of your business or organization?

N/A	13
Elm Creek Youth Volleyball	2
Graczyk Lawn & Landscape	2
J Man Concrete	2
Shoemaker Backhoe and Trenching	2
Walters Electric	2
Williams Construction	2
155 Designs by Robinson	1
Booster Club	1
Buffalo Stampede	1
Coffee Coos Chaos Childcare	1
Elm Creek Insurance Agency	1
Elm Creek Public Schools	1
Elm Creek School Board	1
Farming	1
Fire Department	1
Five S Services	1
Graves Consulting LLC	1
Kenzie's Daycare	1
M&M Feeders	1
Munoz Tax	1
NFY	1
O&S Flying Service	1
Parent/Staff Appreciation	1
Prairie Hills Construction	1
Profield Kennels	1
Putnam Enterprises LLC	1
Rustic Shear Hair Salon	1
Sole Proprietor	1
Walker Farms	1
Wrights Roadkill	1

How likely are you to participate in leadership development to improve your business/organization?

- 5 (Very Likely) — 20%
- 4 (Likely) — 18%
- 3 (Maybe) — 35%
- 2 (Unlikely) — 10%
- 1 (Very Unlikely) — 16%
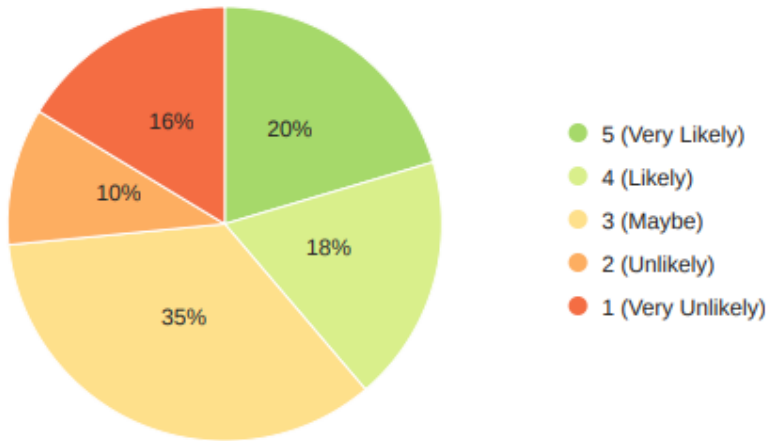
Would you find value in being a part of a Chamber of Commerce or other form of professional group?

- Yes — 29%
- Somewhat — 33%
- No — 39%
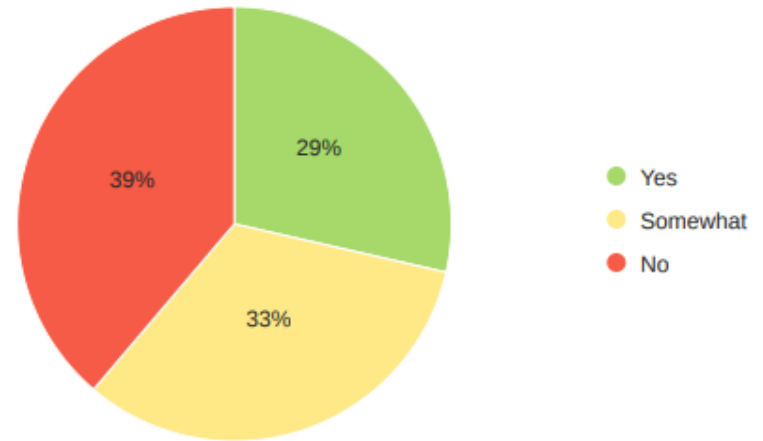
What challenges or unmet needs are you currently facing at your business or organization?

N/A	12
None	12
Staffing	8
Funding	5
Transportation	3
Participation/Involvement	2
Quality Employees	2
Collaboration Challenges	1
Internet Access	1
Lack of Information	1
Lack of Volunteers	1
Limited Ability for Growth	1
No Suppliers	1
Space/Facilities	1
Starting Up	1
Street Access	1
Substitute Teachers	1
Support	1

How could your business/organization benefit from an internship or collaboration with a higher education institution?

N/A	17
None/No Benefit	12
Internships	4
New Employees	3
Unsure	3
Research	2
Would Benefit	2
Awareness of Services	1
Career Exploration	1
Expand Services Around Community	1
Financial Education	1
Help with Custom Projects	1
Knowledge	1
Need Coverage for Teacher Absences	1

Infrastructure and Communication

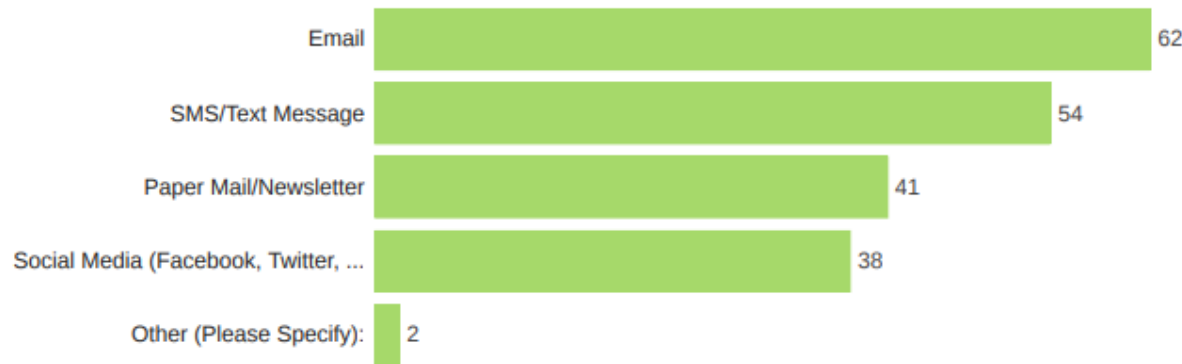## Please rate the quality of the following services on a scale of 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Excellent):

Field	Mean
Community Facilities	3.46
Water/Sewer Service	3.68
Street Maintenance	2.59
Internet Connectivity	3.32
Cell Service	3.58

Legend: ● 5 (Excellent) ● 4 (Good) ● 3 (Average) ● 2 (Poor) ● 1 (Very Poor)
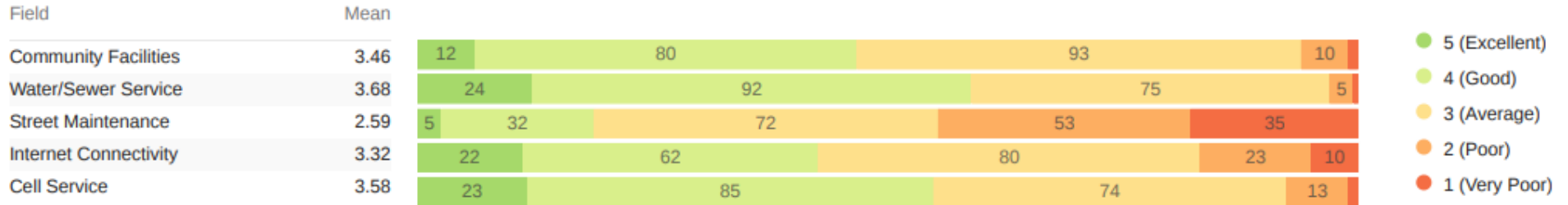
Field	5 (Excellent)	4 (Good)	3 (Average)	2 (Poor)	1 (Very Poor)	Total
Community Facilities	6.09% 12	40.61% 80	47.21% 93	5.08% 10	1.02% 2	197
Water/Sewer Service	12.18% 24	46.70% 92	38.07% 75	2.54% 5	0.51% 1	197
Street Maintenance	2.54% 5	16.24% 32	36.55% 72	26.90% 53	17.77% 35	197
Internet Connectivity	11.17% 22	31.47% 62	40.61% 80	11.68% 23	5.08% 10	197
Cell Service	11.68% 23	43.15% 85	37.56% 74	6.60% 13	1.02% 2	197

What is the best method for you to receive information?

Method	Count
Email	62
SMS/Text Message	54
Paper Mail/Newsletter	41
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, ...)	38
Other (Please Specify):	2

Other Methods:

All of the Above	1
N/A	1

Social and Recreation

What leisure / recreational activities do you currently participate in?

Activity	Count	Activity	Count
Walking/Running	46	Traveling	3
None	35	BBQ	2
Camping	31	Cornhole/Yard Games	2
Fishing	31	Motorsports	2
Volleyball	22	Pickleball	2
Hunting	21	Scuba Diving	2
Swimming	15	Socializing	2
Biking	14	Buffalo Stampede	1
Golf	13	Church Events/Projects	1
Boating	11	Coaching	1
Hiking	9	Community Events	1
Outdoors	9	Concerts	1
Reading	9	Crafting	1
Youth Sports/Activities	9	Dance	1
Basketball	7	Darts	1
Working Out	7	Do Not Have Time	1
Baseball/Softball	6	Dog Training	1
Kayaking	6	Group Exercise Classes	1
Movies	5	Husker Games	1
Family Time	4	Music	1
Sports	4	School Activities	1
Gardening	3	Senior Citizens	1
Lake	3	Skiing	1
Shooting Sports	3	Theater	1
Television	3	Using Internet	1
Tennis	3	Volunteering	1

Which of the following facilities / activities are you likely to use or participate within the next year?

Field	Choice Count	
Improved Hiking/Walking/Biking Trails	58%	115
Outdoor Event Space	34%	66
Cornhole/Yard Games	32%	64
Indoor Event Space	29%	57
Baseball/Softball Facilities	29%	57
Gymnasium	22%	43
Running Track	20%	40
Tennis/Pickleball Courts	18%	35
Horseshoe Pits	4%	8
Other: (Please Specify)	9%	17
Total		197

Other:

None	6
Pool	3
Shooting Sports	2
Basketball	1
Community Center	1
Does Not Cost Taxpayers	1
Fishing	1
Hiking/Motorsports Trails	1
Hunting	1
Indoor Recreation Facility	1
Youth Center	1

Respondents who indicated they were a parent were asked what activities were available for children. Those who indicated they were students were asked what types of activities should be made more available to them.

What activities are available in your community for children under the age of 16?

Youth Sports	39
Swimming/Pool	28
Park/Green Spaces	24
None/Nothing	19
Library Activities	17
Baseball/Softball	15
Few Activities	13
School Activities	12
Church Youth Activities	10
School Sports	9
Unsure	9
N/A	6
Volleyball	6
Basketball	5
4-H	4
Football	4
Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts	4
Wrestling	4
Disc Golf	2
Esports	2
School Arts Programs	2
Cheer	1
FCA	1
FFA	1
Tennis	1
Trunk or Treat	1
Walking/Biking	1

What activities should be made available or more accesible to students?

Nothing	3
Unsure	2
Weight Room/Gym Access	2
Community Activities	1
Internships	1
Tennis	1

Governance, Law, and Policy

The community survey completed as a part of the needs assessment did not contain items about effective governance, policy, or laws. The response rates to the survey serve as the first point of data for this core element. The survey received a total of 197 responses. Of the 1,176 total estimated citizens in Elm Creek, 346 of those residents are below the age of 15 according to the demographic chart on page 6. If we remove the youngest age groups, as they may not have a robust understanding of many functional parts of the community, we are left with 830 potential survey responses. 197 responses out of 830 is 23.7% of citizens participating in the survey. It is the goal of a truly collaborative and democratic governance process to engage as many citizens as possible to ensure the viewpoints of all are represented in decision making. It should be the goal of the Board and Community Administrator to implement strategies and infrastructure to build civic engagement across the community.

Additionally, an assessment of policy to search for a few essential components of effective governance was conducted. The presence of these policies correlates with governance practice that fosters transparency and goodwill with the public, while maintaining effective accountability for elected and appointed officials. The chart below notes the presence of these recommended policies and notes to ensure they are enacted and written purposefully.

Policy	Location in Policies	Notes
Open Meetings and Minutes Archival	Chapter 30.01-30.10	Ensure compliance with this policy to promote effective communication with the public through the board meeting
Policy Review Cycle	Not Present	All policies should be reviewed on a 1 to 3-year cycle
Complaint Process	Not Present	A formal process for a patron complaint should be present to access the Council/Board.
Grievance Process Policy	Not Present	A formal process of complaint should be present for municipal employees and services. (see ECPS 4013 for guidance)
Budget Process	Chapter 33	-
Administrative Regulations and Role	Chapter 31.022	Review to align appointed position's descriptions in policy with their job descriptions
Administrator Evaluation Policy	Not Present	Yearly evaluation is taking place, but should be completed by the entire board and should lead to goals set for the administrator
Board Code of Conduct	Not Present	A standard of performance for board members uphold should be present to promote civic involvement and high performance
Board Evaluation Policy	Not Present	Yearly evaluation on objective standards promotes a positive culture and effective governance

SWOT Analysis

The Village of Elm Creek hosted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis on September 12th, 2023. The meeting was advertised and open to all community members and had 11 total attendees. Each individual was a part of a discussion group of 3-5 people and discussed the Strengths (positive, internal), Weaknesses (negative, internal), Opportunities (positive, external), and Threats (negative, external) of their community. The results of everyone's responses have been compiled and shown by the number next to each topic.

Strengths

- Location (10)
- School District (10)
- Successful Businesses (9)
- Village Resources/Amenities (9)
- Safety (7)
- Good Service Groups (6)
- Room to Grow (6)
- Small Community/Size (5)
- Fire Dept. (4)
- Doctor (4)
- Positive Relationships in Community (4)
- Young, Families (3)
- Manor (3)
- Churches (2)
- Diverse Age Groups (2)
- Quality Daycare (2)
- City Leadership
- Local Sports/Activities
- Grocery Store
- Street Improvement Plan
- Care Home
- Senior Coffee

Weaknesses

- Daycare/Childcare (10)
- Affordable, Appropriate Housing
- (8)
- After School Programs (7)
- No Chamber of Commerce (6)
- Need Larger Community Space (6)
- Community Involvement (5)
- Bussing for Preschool/Hours (4)
- Summer Activities/Programs (4)
- Job Opportunities for Youth (4)
- Curb Appearance (4)
- Evening dining option (4)
- Streets (3)
- Not enough Businesses (3)
- Lack of Welcoming Spirit/Clique Behavior (3)
- Location (3)
- School Turnover (3)
- Community Morale/Negativity (2)
- Image along Highway (2)
- Park Lighting (2)
- Police Presence (2)
- Retiring Doctor (2)
- No Keno (2)
- Housing Repairs (2)
- Grow Tax Base
- Speed Limit Enforcement
- School Crossing
- Organized, Coordinated Community Development Effort

Opportunities

- Keno (9)
- Healthcare/Pharmacy (7)
- Farmers Market (6)
- Co-working Space (4)
- UNK (4)
- Night Market (4)
- Remote Workers (4)
- Old Ag-Dryer Space (3)
- Chamber/Economic Development Committee (3)
- Downtown Revitalization (2)
- Update/Rehab Housing (2)
- Develop Community Engagement (2)

- County Extension (2)
- Housing/Housing Plan (2)
- Welcome Basket for New Residents
- Traveling Doctor When Doc Retires
- Daycare
- Boutique
- Flower Shop
- Buffalo County
- Center for Rural Development
- Economic Development Council/KACC
- Community Engagement Committee

Threats

- Daycare/After School (5)
- Social Media (4)
- Healthcare (4)
- Polarized Politics (3)
- Housing (3)
- Lack of a Sense of Community (2)
- Cultural Changes (2)
- Transportation (2)
- Taxes/Valuations (2)
- Community Diversity (2)
- Loss of New Families
- Outside businesses
- List of Businesses
- State Rules/Regulations

Community Visioning/Core Values

The Village of Elm Creek hosted a Community Visioning session on October 18th, 2023, which was attended by 11 people. The group discussed the characteristics of an ideal community member, listed goals and wishes for the future of the community, and discussed deeper to uncover the core values of the community based on how they responded to the first two items. The group discovered three core values throughout their discussions; Family, Community, and Committed and Growth-Driven. The results of the discussion are listed below.

Family

Characteristics of an Ideal Community Member

- Supports School
- Supports Parks and Activities
- Supports Senior Center
- Family Oriented

Community Aspirations

- Childcare Facility/Daycare (10)
- Housing Development (6)
- After School Program (4)
- Walking/Bike Trail (Odessa-Overton) (2)
- ADA Accessible Playground (2)
- Great School
- School Parking Lot
- Work Program through School
- Bus Drivers
- New Affordable housing
- Youth Board Collaborations
- Recreation Opportunities
- Land to Build Houses
- Transportation for Preschool/Daycare
- Park Development
- Youth Activities
- Track/Football Area

Community

Characteristics of an Ideal Community Member

- Helpful (3)
- Neighborly (3)
- Supports Local (3)
- Seeks Connection to Others (2)
- Inclusive
- Friendly
- Understands "it takes a village"
- Thoughtful
- Kind
- Welcoming
- Takes Care of Home
- Proud of Community
- Giving
- Tax Paying

Community Aspirations

- Chamber of Commerce (3)
- Curb Appeal (2)
- Welcoming Committee (2)
- Downtown Improvements (1)
- Larger Buffalo Stampede
- Welcoming Community Atmosphere
- Community Wellness
- Pharmacy
- Quick/First Care
- Active Community Club
- Elderly/Sick Visit Group

Committed and Growth-Driven

Characteristics of an Ideal Community Member

- Involved in Community (9)
- Entrepreneur/Business Owner (3)
- Passionate (2)
- Cooperative (2)
- Job Creator
- Knowledgeable
- Hard Working
- Courteous
- Reliable
- Empathetic
- Open-Minded
- Growth-Driven
- Innovative
- Planner
- Idealistic

Community Aspirations

- Business Growth (4)
- Larger Community Building (4)
- Restaurant
- New Library Space
- Transportation for Seniors
- Dedicated Community Space
- Increased Community Engagement