

# Kankakee County 2022 Community Needs Assessment

September 6, 2022



# Respark would like to acknowledge the commitment of Kankakee County stakeholders, residents, and leaders who supported this work.

## Acknowledgements

The Kankakee County 2022 Community Needs Assessment was conducted by Respark Leadership Consulting on behalf of Kankakee County. While Respark operates as an independent entity, the vision for this work and elements of the execution would not have been possible without the support of elected officials, organizational leaders, and committed individuals throughout the County. Therefore, the assessment team would like to formally thank the individuals and institutions below for their time and effort during the assessment period.

In addition, we would also like to acknowledge the residents and stakeholders of Kankakee County who have contributed over 420 hours of feedback via participation in the online survey, focus groups, workshops, individual interviews, or some combination of these. This commitment of time and thoughtful responses makes it possible for our assessment team to offer the outcomes of this assessment for the benefit of community decision making and overall improvement to the quality of life in Kankakee County.

- Kankakee County Board, Chairman Andrew Wheeler
- City of Kankakee, Mayor Christopher Curtis
- Kankakee Community College, President Dr. Michael Boyd
- Rincon Family Services, Eddy Borrayo, CEO

## Questions

Any questions about this report should be directed to:  
[administration@k3county.net](mailto:administration@k3county.net)

## Prepared by Respark Leadership Consulting LLC

This report and its associated report summary narrative and all appendices are the combined product of Respark Leadership Consulting LLC. Any custom tools, methods, or approaches used herein are considered proprietary except where noted otherwise. The contributing authors to all pieces of the assessment report are:

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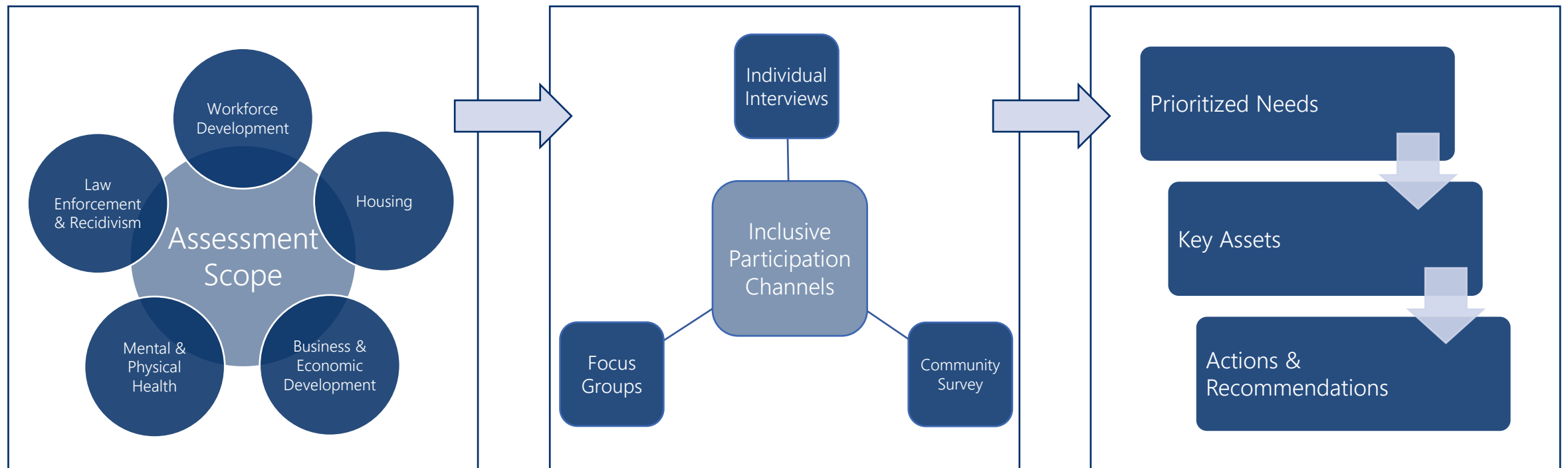
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# Executive Summary



The four-phase process clarified the assessment scope, provided multiple channels for stakeholder input, and synthesized the data for actionable recommendations.

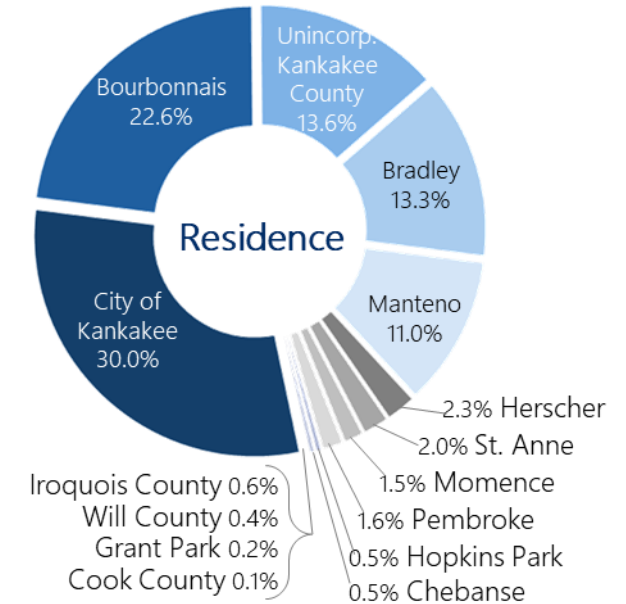
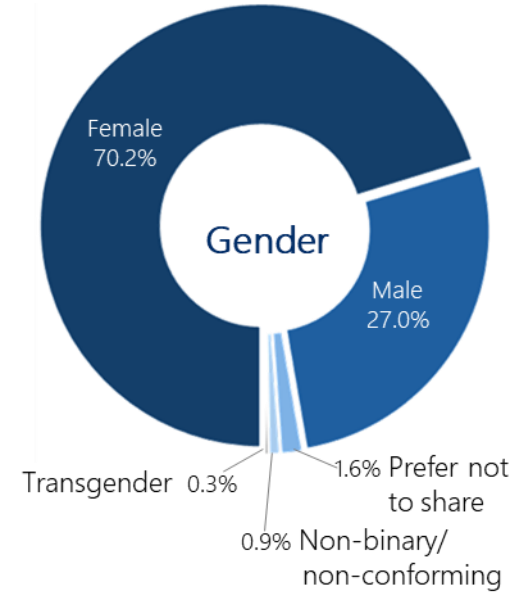
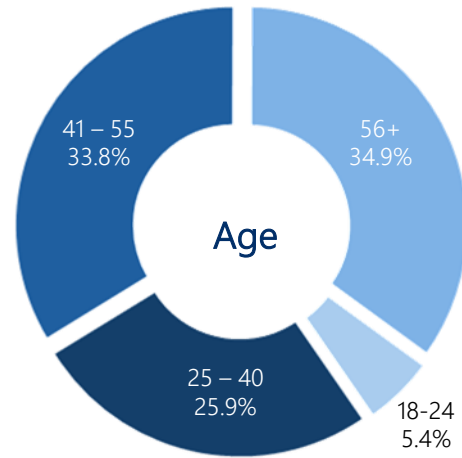
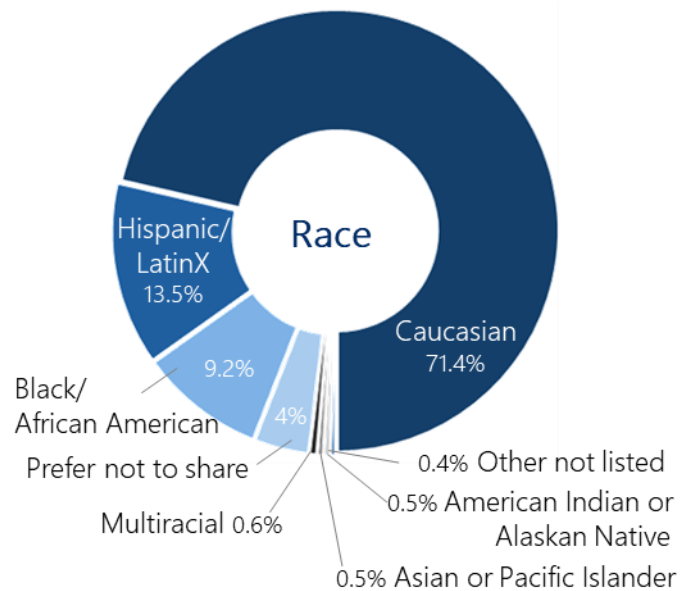


# The county-wide needs assessment survey captured residents' perspectives on key questions related to the five areas of scope.

Scope Area	Sample questions and selection prompts	<b>Community Needs &amp; Assets Survey Design Target</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open to all community members</li> <li>• ~40 questions, &lt;10 minutes</li> <li>• 4 versions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English &amp; Spanish</li> <li>• 14-17 yrs old, 18 &amp; Older</li> </ul> </li> <li>• All digital collection for promotion and analysis</li> <li>• Custom landing page for seamless branded experience</li> <li>• How-To guide for community support</li> </ul>
Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have reliable access to internet at my home.</li> <li>• Select the statement(s) that reflect how you feel about your current job.</li> <li>• What barriers are preventing you from getting the type of job you want in Kankakee County?</li> <li>• I am aware that there are local job training programs specific to high-paying local jobs.</li> </ul>	
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you rent or own your current home?</li> <li>• I am confident my housing is secure for the next 12 months.</li> <li>• My household income is sufficient to cover our basic needs, including housing, food, utilities, and other day-to-day expenses.</li> </ul>	
Business & Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am confident my childcare needs will be met for the next 12 months.</li> <li>• I have reliable transportation to essential places like school, work, the doctor's office, and/or the grocery store.</li> <li>• Kankakee County is a desirable place to live.</li> <li>• I believe continued County efforts to increase tourism are important.</li> <li>• What asset or attraction within the county should be promoted most to attract tourists?</li> </ul>	
Mental & Physical Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past 12 months, my mental health has negatively affected my work, school, and/or home life.</li> <li>• My local government values me as a member of the community.</li> <li>• The future for Kankakee County is positive with the right investments.</li> </ul>	
Law Enforcement & Recidivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel safe in my local municipal downtown.</li> <li>• I feel safe in most places in the county.</li> <li>• I have a positive view of law enforcement in my community.</li> </ul>	



1,062 community stakeholders participated in the survey, providing a broad sample that generally reflects the County population.



#### Demographic outliers of note:

- Black/African Americans are underrepresented in the sample (9.2% respondents vs. 15.2% County population)
- Females are overrepresented in the sample population (70.2% respondents vs. 50.4% County population)
- Youth ages 13-17 years old response rate did not reach validity; youth survey responses are not included in reporting
- Digital survey collection may have been a barrier for some residents

#### 95% confidence level +/- 5% margin of error is a standard survey metric.

95%

- Represents the likelihood that a response will mirror the average response in a follow up survey
- Confidence Level was chosen with the goal of identifying key community themes that are actionable
- Target Minimum Sample Size to achieve this for the majority was 383

Interview, focus group, and workshop participants represent diverse resident subpopulations with perspectives on the five areas of scope.

Interview, focus group, and workshop participant demographics

	Total Participants	Race / Ethnicity				Sex		Elected Officials	Assessment Area				
		C	AA	H	O	M	F		WD	H	BED	MPH	LER
Individual Interviews	41	27	12	2	-	25	15	11	8	9	13	4	5
Focus Groups	48	27	14	5	2	20	28	3					
Leaders Workshop	42	30	9	3	-	22	20	14	9	8	12	9	4

Table Key			
C	Caucasian	WD	Workforce Development
AA	Black/African-American	H	Housing
H	Hispanic/Latinx	BED	Business & Economic Development
O	Other	MPH	Mental & Physical Health
		LER	Law Enforcement & Recidivism



# Key findings highlight residents' needs in response to targeted themes in each of the five scope areas.



## A. Workforce Development (WD)

1. More than 10% of respondents are currently looking for other jobs and some face barriers related to pay, skills, and experience.
2. Almost half of respondents lack awareness of job training or career development programs and report that they would participate in educational opportunities provided close to home.
3. Hispanic/Latinx respondents have lower rates of vocational and college-based degrees, while more than 28% report having not completed a high school equivalency.

## B. Housing (H)

1. Nearly 36% of renters indicated their housing may become insecure within the next 12 months.

## C. Business & Economic Development (BED)

1. While a majority of respondents have positive sentiment regarding the County's future, 30% are undecided and between 23% - 36% report not having enough income to cover basic needs.
2. Nearly 30% of parents of children 12 years and younger face uncertainty related to childcare in the next 12 months; half report challenges with affordability and availability.
3. Despite Covid-19 limiting tourism and many residents feeling undecided about the impact of recent efforts to increase tourism, almost 70% believe continuing these efforts is important.

## D. Mental & Physical Health

1. 34% - 47% of respondents report negative mental health impacts in the last 12 months and almost 4% have faced challenges because of substance use.
2. Many respondents believe that mental health and social services should be more accessible, and between 32% - 42% are unaware of mental health resources in the County.

## E. Law Enforcement & Recidivism

1. There is broad support for law enforcement and respondents feel more can be done to strengthen community relationships.
2. About 1 in 4 respondents disagree that they feel safe around the County and most believe their community would benefit from an additional localized law enforcement office.

## F. Additional Findings

1. Negative perceptions about Kankakee County persist at multiple levels and present a range of challenges from individual identity to County-wide marketing and branding.
2. An inclusive and transparent process may generate an increase in trust and personal identification with the County community, adding additional benefits beyond direct investments.

# Assessment participants generally understand the community's needs as inter-related pieces, among which youth supports, mental health, and housing seem most urgent.

- There is broad concern about youth development across community members. Residents believe that the future of Kankakee can be bright and feel that investments in youth are key to that hope being realized.
- The overall support system for youth- family, community, education system, etc.- is not effectively preparing young people with life skills for transition to adulthood. The education system is taking on- and struggling to support- a growing set of youth development responsibilities that were supported by other aspects of the community in generations past.
- Mental health concerns for people of all ages were frequently expressed as exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its lasting impact. Residents believe that mental health issues are increasing and compounded by needs related to food, housing, safety, employment, and overall quality of life.
- Housing is a leading concern of municipal leaders and many county residents. Access to quality housing is understood as a community need and viewed as an underlying factor to issues such as public safety, youth development, and pride in our community.
- Investments in educational systems and infrastructure are viewed as 'high impact' opportunities. Many residents believe that existing and new education systems can be leveraged for broader systemic impact that improves peoples' lives today and into the future.
- Racial and ethnic divisions exist in the community and are understood by many to be part of the root cause of existing needs. There is a desire to overcome these and be viewed as a progressive county by some community members, including private citizens and public officials.
- "Community" is localized. Many people who live within a municipality consider that to be their community and do not generally identify with the County. Any County-wide change effort will require the collaboration, support, and leadership of local municipal officials.
- Despite barriers, many people feel a bright future is possible in Kankakee County.

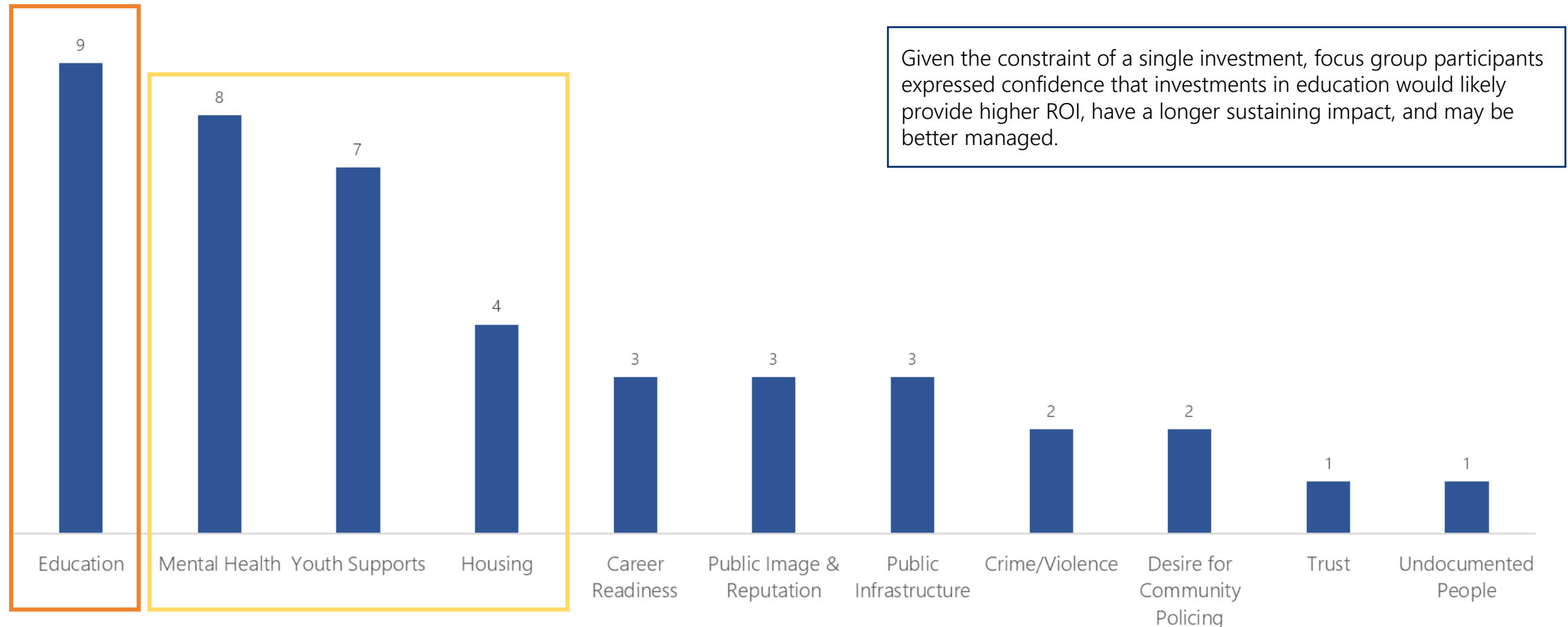


Opportunities exist for system investments that yield systemic benefit.

# When restricted to one investment, education emerged as the priority “need” among focus group participants.

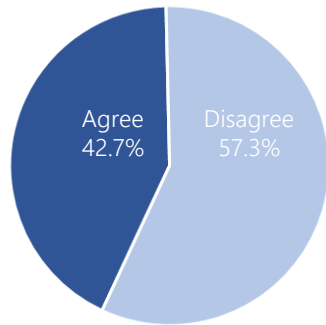
“NEED” is defined here as: “anything that is essential for a community member’s well-being as a participant in the society.”

Focus group participants' priority area for investment.



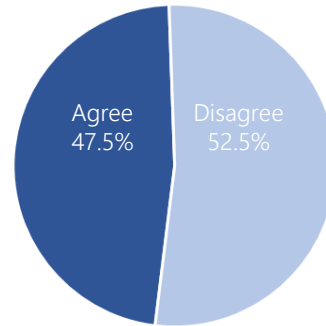
# At least half of Spanish-speaking respondents find language a barrier to accessing government programs and services.

There is someone at the government offices who can assist me in Spanish.



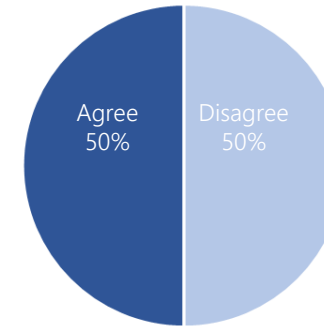
n = 62

I am able to access information for government programs in Spanish.



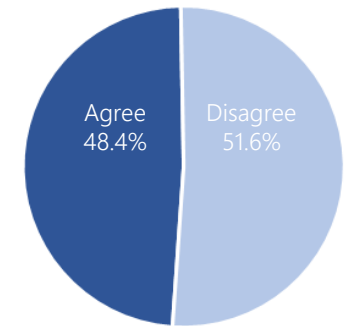
n = 61

Language is a barrier for accomplishing tasks in my day-to-day life.



n = 63

I rely on my children to help me with translation.



n = 62

Participants in a Spanish language focus group felt that language barriers and immigration related barriers prevent Hispanic families from accessing health and other social services.

## Key needs/challenges in the Hispanic community:

1. Lack of access to social services
2. Lack of culturally appropriate ways of communication and outreach to Hispanic families in Kankakee County
3. Health education and education in general
4. Mental health is a unique challenge due to the stigma associated with mental health in the Hispanic community

According to focus group participants, a significant number of Hispanic residents do not access social services because they are afraid of being categorized as a public charge by the government, and such a categorization may jeopardize their immigration status.

# Available assets to help drive change hinge on hope and a collaborative mindset, and include resources ranging from the Kankakee River to key people and programs.

“ASSET” is defined here as: “those things which are or can be leveraged to advance the goals of the community.”



Collaboration, pride, and hope in the future are mindsets that can be leveraged to meet needs and support change.

- When asked, “What’s works well in Kankakee County?” the most common response shared by a majority of interviewees is “Collaboration.”
- Community members expressed a sense of pride for being rooted in Kankakee and in what the County contributes to the local and national economy, infrastructure, and food supply.
- 51% of survey respondents feel positively about the future of Kankakee and another 30% selected “undecided,” suggesting that they are open to seeing the positive impacts of change.

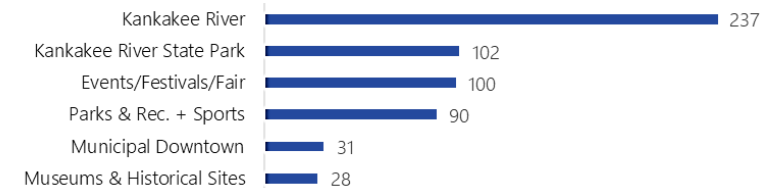


The Kankakee River, Kankakee State Park, and municipal parks were named by focus group and survey respondents as key assets that are underleveraged and can be used to support health, drive tourism, and promote growth.



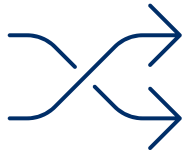
“Teens and youth” and “newly elected officials” (two years or less) were named repeatedly alongside programs of the State’s Attorney’s Office, the Economic Alliance of Kankakee County, the NAACP, and the Sheriff’s Department as key resources and under-leveraged community assets.

What asset or attraction within the county should be promoted most to attract tourists?



# County leaders can impact community needs by focusing on efforts that drive structural change, foster collaborative multi-functional infrastructure, and transform youth development and mental health.

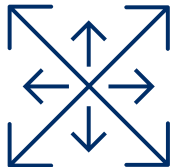
## Recommendation 1



### Target investments that drive structural change in society.

1. Invest time and resources into activities that can impact the way community members view themselves and others.
2. Create opportunities for young people to play active roles in municipal and county government to increase their buy-in and influence on the future of the County.
3. Explore innovative ways to increase access to education and expand offerings, including formation that goes beyond the classroom and focuses on mentorship and workforce development
4. Capitalize on momentum from recent housing assessments to align efforts for retaining housing while increasing inventory and affordability of the market overall.

## Recommendation 2



### Target collaborations in multi-functional infrastructure.

1. Promote a “no wrong door” approach for anyone needing services in the County by developing systems and tools that enable service providers to connect residents with all available supportive services.
2. Focus on developing safe community spaces in public areas that youth can congregate.
3. Create residential housing corridors that bring together home life and community interaction.
4. Develop a social and economic plan to leverage the Kankakee River for years to come.

## Recommendation 3



### Target transformative projects for mental health and youth development.

1. “Transformative” thinking requires alternative perspectives, concept borrowing, non-traditional collaborations, risk taking, room for failure, and an adaptive mindset to learn-as-you-go.
2. Key focus areas to explore are:
  1. Social engagement
  2. Community Interaction
  3. Outdoor activity
  4. Skill development

# Assessment Approach



# Kankakee County leaders sought a community needs assessment to inform strategies to maximize ARPA funding impact.

2020 - COVID-19 pandemic brought health and economic hardships

- local governments forced to expand services despite shrinking resources

2021 - Kankakee County received \$21.3 M of federal ARPA funds

- mitigate economic disruptions and associated social impacts

2022 - Kankakee County Board partnering with Rincon Family Services (RFS)

- formulate the social services response, including programming and funds management
- ensure ARPA funds are invested sustainably in targeted, high-need areas
- foster collaboration and innovation among community service providers

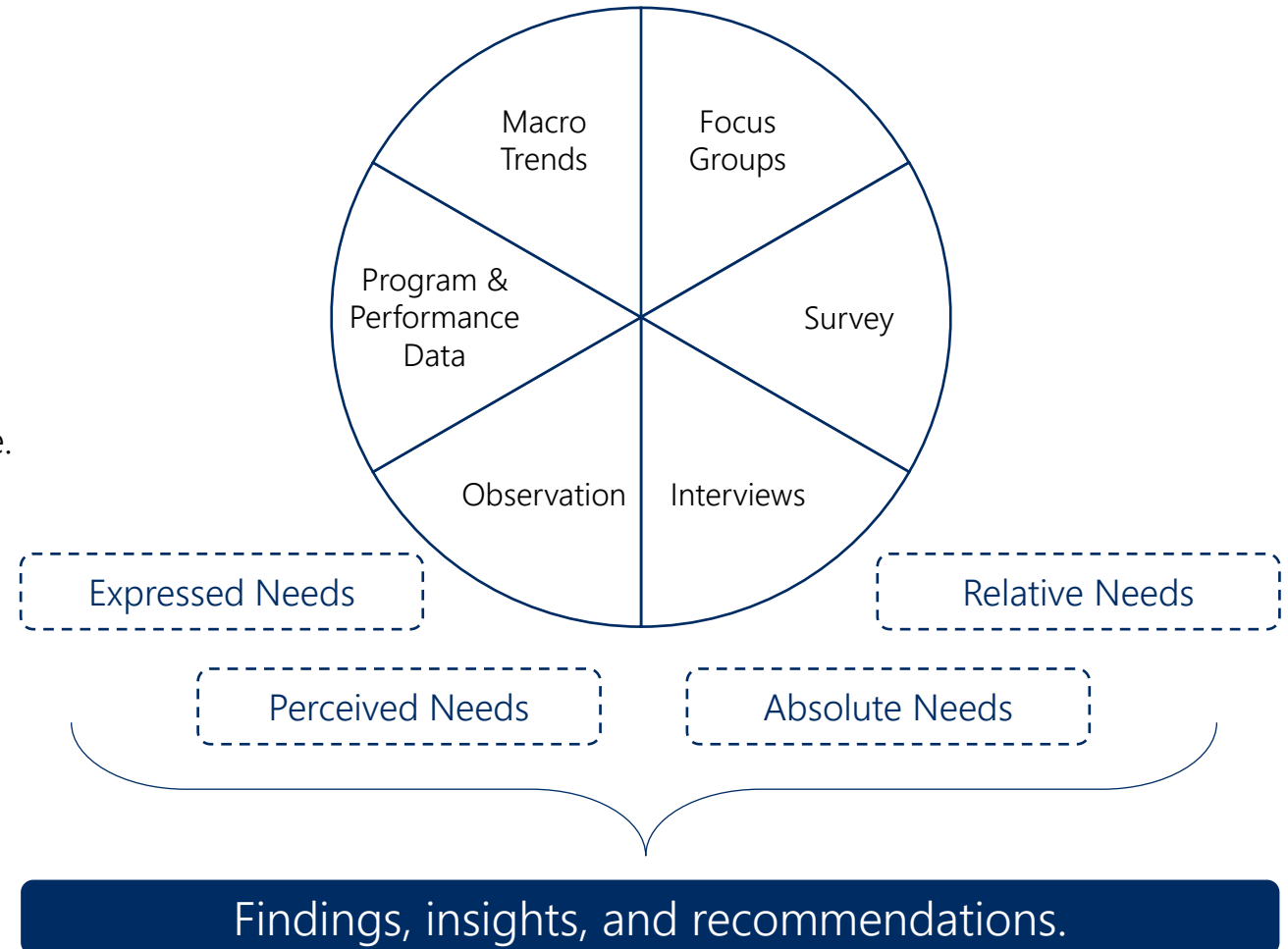


- **Understand community needs** and existing strengths of businesses, agencies, and other community-based organizations (CBOs)
- **Identify programs and projects** specifically targeted to the unique situation and continuum of care in Kankakee County
- Highlight where social services programming might **provide meaningful impact**
- Recommend strategies to leverage ARPA funding to **build capacity and capability** for local organizations

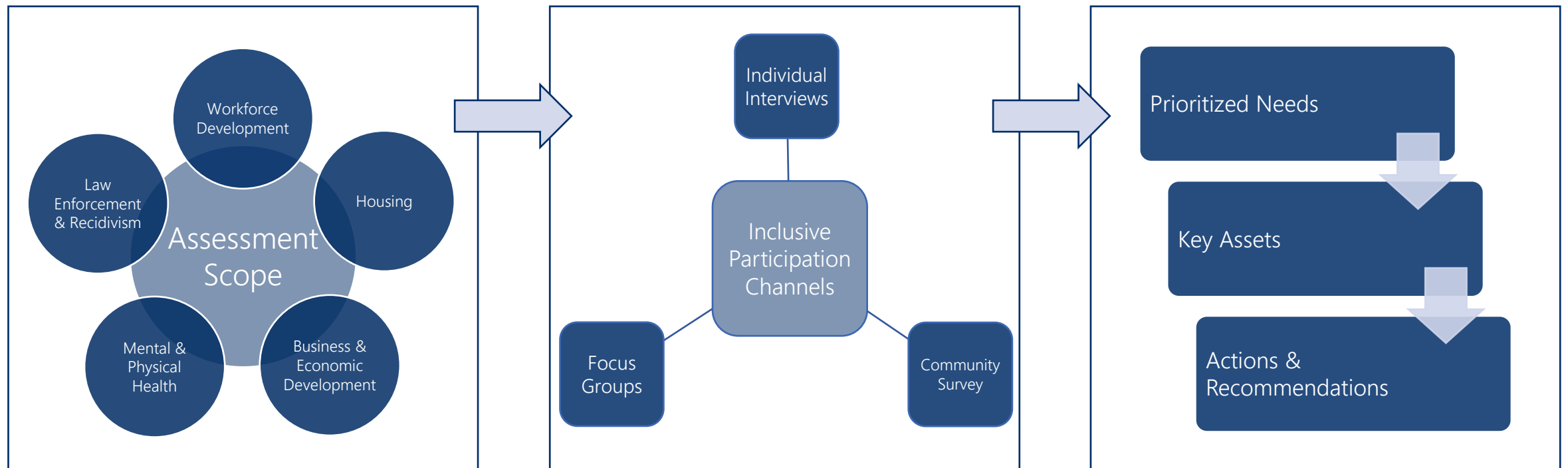


# Respark's approach was designed to be broadly inclusive while conducting a focused and efficient assessment.

- Collaborative community assessment framework to discover the right populations and community elements to assess.
- Collect feedback and assessment data across the breadth of stakeholders and with enough depth to discover the real issues and opportunities for change.
- Assess the stakeholder priorities and suggest strategies that make the best use of existing resources.
- Focus on impact that adds real value to your community and creates measurable, scalable results that change people's lives.



The four-phase process clarified the assessment scope, provided multiple channels for stakeholder input, and synthesized the data for actionable recommendations.



“Community,” “needs,” and “assets” are key assessment parameters that were defined with stakeholder input.

Community	Needs	Assets
<p>Defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “all residents of Kankakee County”</li> <li>• Where relevant, “community” was more narrowly defined as local municipalities</li> <li>• Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latinx minority sub-communities were highlighted for focus within the assessment</li> <li>• Considerations for other “communities” included racial and ethnic subpopulations as well as peer groups ranging from age and profession to roles such as business owner or congregation member</li> </ul>	<p>Defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “anything that is essential for a community member’s well-being as a participant in the society”</li> </ul> <p>Four categories of “Needs”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Expressed Needs</b> – those things which community members have requested help for from local government and institutions, especially by formal channels such as petition, community forum, private interview, etc.</li> <li>2. <b>Perceived Needs</b> – those things which community members believe they need in order to succeed</li> <li>3. <b>Absolute Needs</b> – those things which are required to sustain human existence, e.g., food, shelter, clothing, safety, belonging, etc.</li> <li>4. <b>Relative Needs</b> – those things which are required to succeed and thrive in a specific community as it exists; for example, if the community requires money to acquire food and a majority of jobs require a stable internet connection, then a stable internet connect is a relative need.</li> </ol>	<p>Defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “those things which are or can be leveraged to advance the goals of the community”</li> </ul> <p>Example assets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Financial resources</b> such as tax revenues and local community funds</li> <li>• <b>Local institutions</b> such as hospitals, libraries, and community-based organizations</li> <li>• <b>Natural resources</b> such as crop land, waterways, and mineral deposits</li> <li>• <b>Specific individuals</b> such as a broadly liked and highly effective community visionary or a highly impactful behind-the-scenes volunteer</li> <li>• <b>Mindsets, attitudes, and beliefs</b> that foster growth and sustain development</li> </ul> <p>Sources: <a href="https://www.rosterfy.com/blog/community-needs-assessment-guide-with-examples">https://www.rosterfy.com/blog/community-needs-assessment-guide-with-examples</a>; <a href="https://medium.com/galaxy-digital/how-to-conduct-a-community-needs-assessment-5d6f46595d76">https://medium.com/galaxy-digital/how-to-conduct-a-community-needs-assessment-5d6f46595d76</a></p>



# County leaders defined the scope to include five broad areas believed to have ongoing impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- |   |                                 |  |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Workforce Development           | Aspects of the community related to education, job training, career paths, and employment leading to the County's ability to foster and attract major industry and employers and residents' ability to acquire and maintain employment earning a 'family-sustaining wage.'   |
| 2 | Housing                         | Aspects of the community related to residential infrastructure, home ownership, housing availability, housing accessibility, housing security and homelessness.<br><i>*This area of scope was supported by a review of recent county housing assessments and incorporation of those findings within this analysis.</i> |
| 3 | Business & Economic Development | Aspects of the community related to owning and operating a business, attracting potential employers, and otherwise stimulating economic activity.  |
| 4 | Mental & Physical Health        | Aspects of the community related to supporting residents' health and well-being.<br><i>*This area of scope was restricted primarily to a review of the most recent county health assessment and incorporation of those findings within this analysis.</i>  |
| 5 | Law Enforcement & Recidivism    | Aspects of the community related to interactions with law enforcement, perceptions of County and municipal law enforcement agencies and personnel, public safety, and the local judicial system.   |



Broad questions about strengths, assets, needs, and investments were used to explore areas of scope in interviews and focus groups.



### Strengths and Assets

- What works well in the County or your municipality today?
- What aspects of your community life are you most proud of?
- What organizations, programs, or resources are essential?
- What has untapped potential that could make a big impact on people?



### Needs and Investments

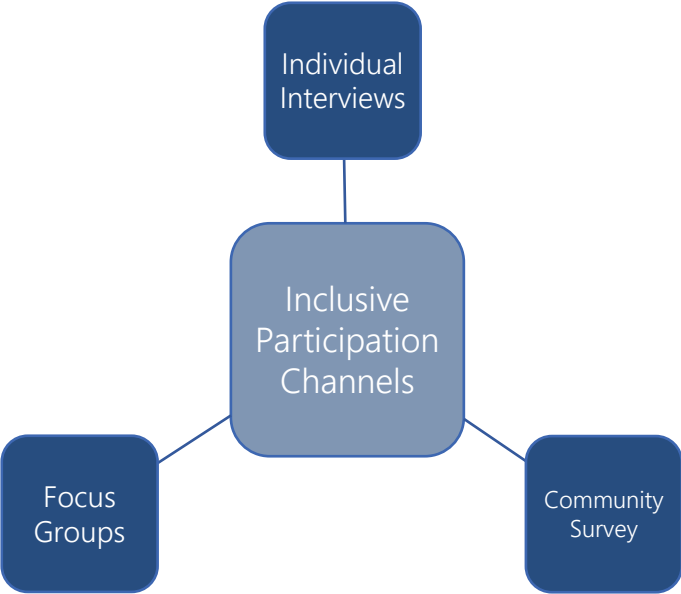
- What struggles do people in your community face regularly?
- What would improve your quality of life?
- What holds you or others back from reaching goals?
- How has the pandemic impacted you and those around you?

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Multiple participation channels engaged first-hand perspectives of community members to clarify local needs and identify impact opportunities.



Channel	Invited	Participated	Avg. Time	
Individual Interviews	108	41	30 min	
Focus Group	109 – direct 622 – via Survey	48	90 min	17 focus groups conducted
Focus Group categories: general, Black or African-American, Hispanic, business owners, HR and workforce, non-profit leaders, elected officials, youth advocate/parent, young adults				
Community Survey	n/a	1,062	9 min	Survey available from July 12-31
Community Leaders Workshop	55	42	4 hours	

Over 420 hours of dedicated time from Kankakee County residents contributed to this assessment.



Respark reviewed 30+ documents from past community assessments, ARPA funding requests, development plans and other related reports to inform perspectives on trends and opportunities.



Health	Housing	Social Services	Development Plans
7 Community Health Assessments	5 Housing Assessments	16 Kankakee County Social Services ARPA Funding Applications	4 Development Plans / Proposals
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kankakee County 2021 CHNA-final report as well as discrete pieces</li><li>• AMITA 2022-2024 plan</li><li>• Presence St. Mary's 2018 CHNA</li></ul>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2020 Rental Market analysis</li><li>• 2022-2024 Community Block Grant Consolidated Plan</li><li>• 2021-2022 Community Block Grant Action Plan</li><li>• Impediments to Fair Housing</li><li>• City of Kankakee Land Bank Feasibility Study</li></ul>	Examples services areas and projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community center construction</li><li>• Mental health facilities expansion</li><li>• Youth services</li><li>• Food pantry services</li><li>• Racial equity services</li><li>• Immigrant community services</li></ul>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kankakee Riverfront Master Plan</li><li>• Bourbonnais 2030</li><li>• Pembroke/Hopkins Park Quality of Life &amp; Sustainability plan</li></ul>



# Certain constraints related to the methodology and approach may have impacted the volume of respondents and participation in the assessment.

- **Timing** – The assessment definition and data collection preparation phases began in late May 2022 and ran through June 2022- a time of year when regular routines are disrupted as individuals and families conclude the academic year and transition to summer break and/or vacation travel. The assessment team encountered a high number of automated out-of-office responses, vacation notices, and non-responses while scheduling interviews which may have impacted community awareness. The public survey period was conducted during the month of July 2022, when most schools in the County are not in session. This likely impacted the 14-17 year old participation.
- **Time** – The public survey period was July 12 – July 31, 2022. The 20-day survey window aligned certain community and project calendars and completed the assessment within the timeline. While it is likely that more community members would have participated if the survey remained available longer, more than 1,100 survey responses were initiated.
- **Reach** – The primary channels for requesting participation were mostly connected to Kankakee County offices, agencies, programs, and individuals. This may have limited reach and awareness of the assessment to individuals already connected to the County and/or engaged in County-provided services, which may have resulted in some skew in the data.
- **Interview methodology** – Individual interviews were primarily conducted via video conference or telephone, with only a small portion conducted in person. The assessment team feels that the data gathered through these media is of sufficient quality. Some individuals do not feel as comfortable on the phone or video conference, and indirect observations of non-verbal communication are more limited in these media. Therefore, it is possible that this interview method may have impacted the assessment.
- **Digital survey collection** – The assessment team recommended an all-digital survey collection approach to meet the desired timelines for the County. Efforts were made to increase access and provide support for individuals who may not have regular internet access or use of a smartphone. However, the all-digital survey collection may have presented barriers to participation for some and may have created a possible skew toward residents who are more comfortable with technology and/or have regular internet access.
- **Focus group location** – Focus groups for this assessment were conducted in only one location in the County. This decision may have impacted individual participation in focus groups.
- **Trust** – One of the findings of the assessment is a lack of trust among some community members of government officials, people working on behalf of the government, and/or people not of their own racial or ethnic background. The assessment team encountered several instances where interview, focus group, or survey participants challenged the intentionality and/or anonymity of the assessment process. Survey participants were able to select a "Prefer not to share" response to many questions, and this option was selected by a portion of respondents whenever available. Taken together, it must be assumed that the level of trust in the community imposed a constraint that may have influenced participation and possibly impacted the data.
- **Survey fatigue** – Surveys have become a frequently used (if not overused) tool in our context, often resulting in survey takers trying to find the path of least resistance to completing a survey. This can result in skipped questions, incomplete responses, errors in selection, and even malicious submissions- all of which can have an impact on the data.
- **Interpretation** – While the assessment team has been diligent in crafting context-specific survey questions in language that should be accessible for most community members, it cannot be ensured that every question is interpreted the way it is intended. Therefore, any assessment of this nature includes a probability of skew due to interpretation.



# Community Participation Snapshot



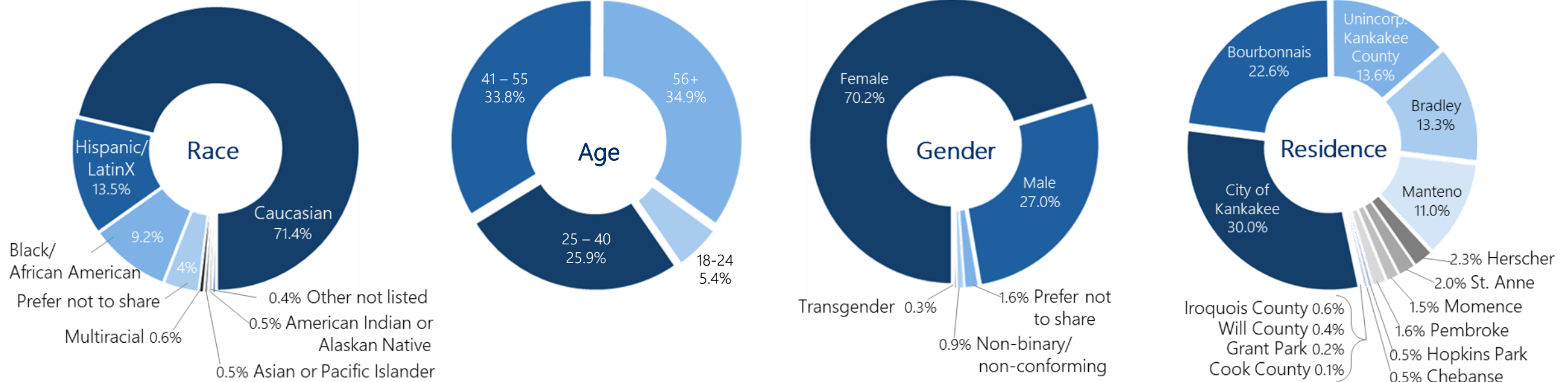
Interview, focus group, and workshop participants represent diverse resident subpopulations with perspectives on the five areas of scope.

Interview, focus group, and workshop participant demographics

	Total Participants	Race / Ethnicity				Sex		Elected Officials	Assessment Area				
		C	AA	H	O	M	F		WD	H	BED	MPH	LER
Individual Interviews	41	27	12	2	-	25	15	11	8	9	13	4	5
Focus Groups	48	27	14	5	2	20	28	3					
Leaders Workshop	42	30	9	3	-	22	20	14	9	8	12	9	4

Table Key			
C	Caucasian	WD	Workforce Development
AA	Black/African-American	H	Housing
H	Hispanic/Latinx	BED	Business & Economic Development
O	Other	MPH	Mental & Physical Health
		LER	Law Enforcement & Recidivism

1,062 community stakeholders participated in the survey, providing a broad sample that generally reflects the County population.



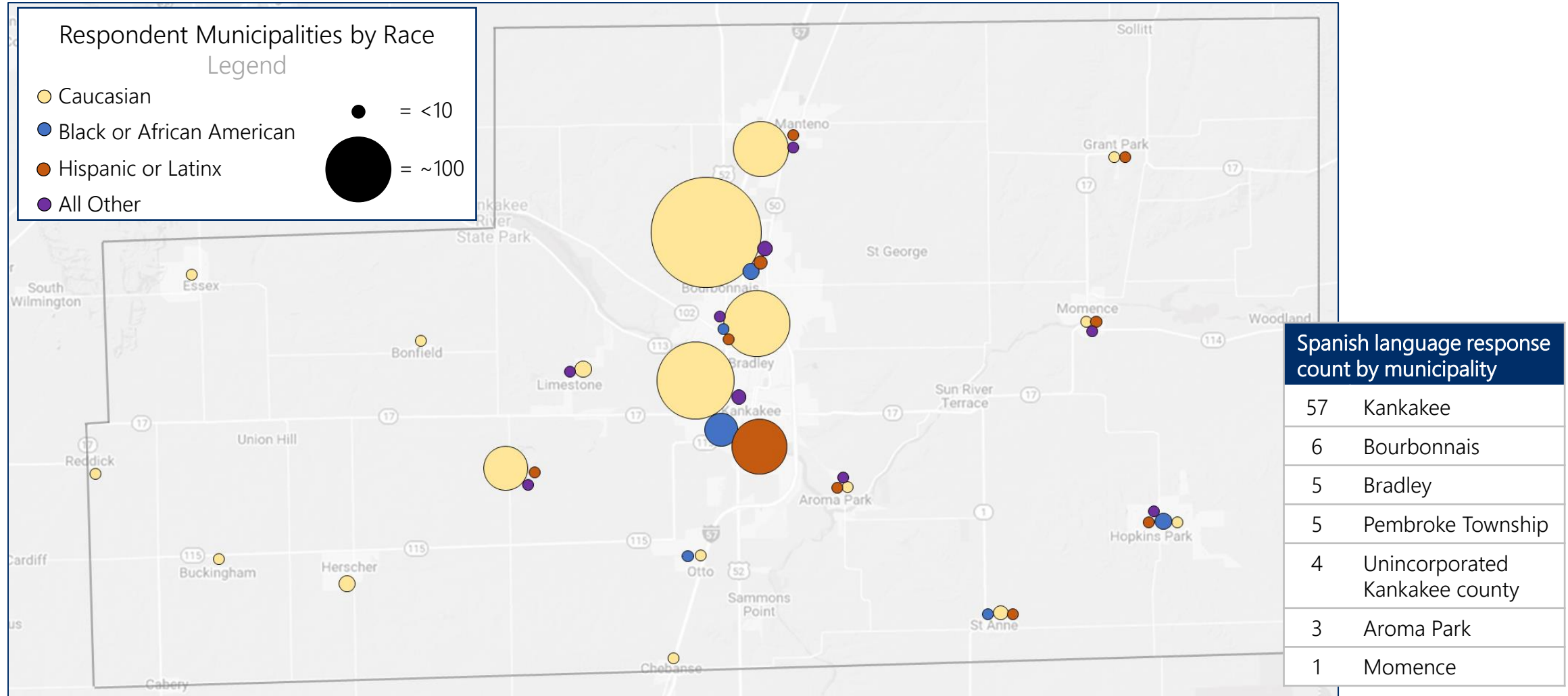
### Survey Responses Quick Facts

Total Respondents	1062
Spanish Language Respondents	81
Zip Codes	15
Municipalities	22

### Demographic outliers of note:

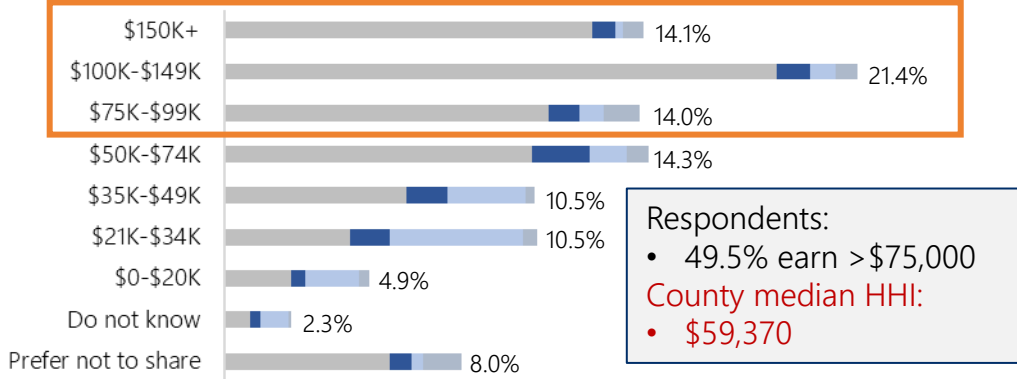
- Black/African Americans are underrepresented in the sample (9.2% respondents vs. 15.2% County population)
- Females are overrepresented in the sample population (70.2 respondents vs. 50.4% County population)
- Youth ages 14-17 years old response rate did not reach validity; youth survey responses are not included in reporting
- Survey responses were collected digitally, which may have been a barrier for some residents without access to or comfort with certain technologies

Survey respondents live in all areas of the County and the majority of respondents are from the four largest municipalities.

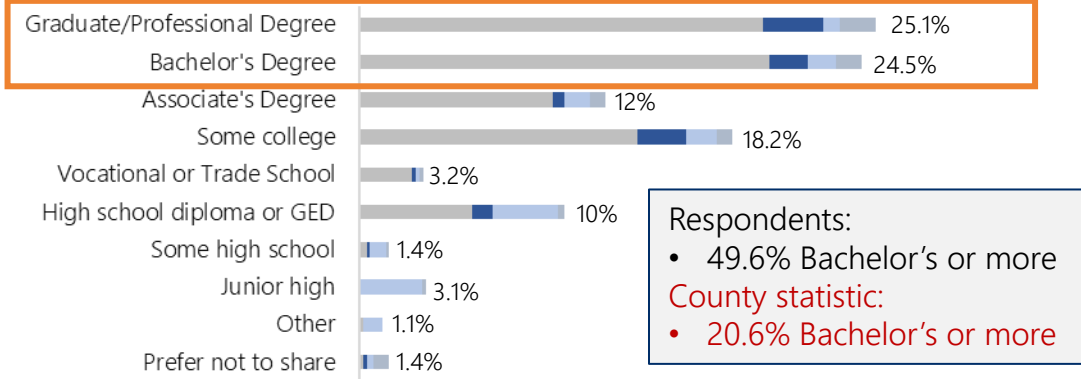


Survey responses skew toward higher income, education levels, rates of home ownership, and fulltime employment status compared to other County demographic assessments.

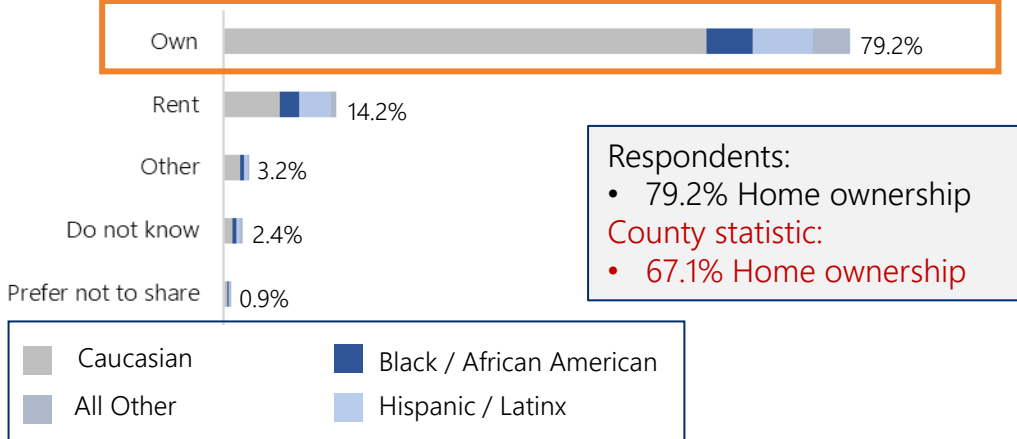
Respondent 2021 Household Income n = 1062



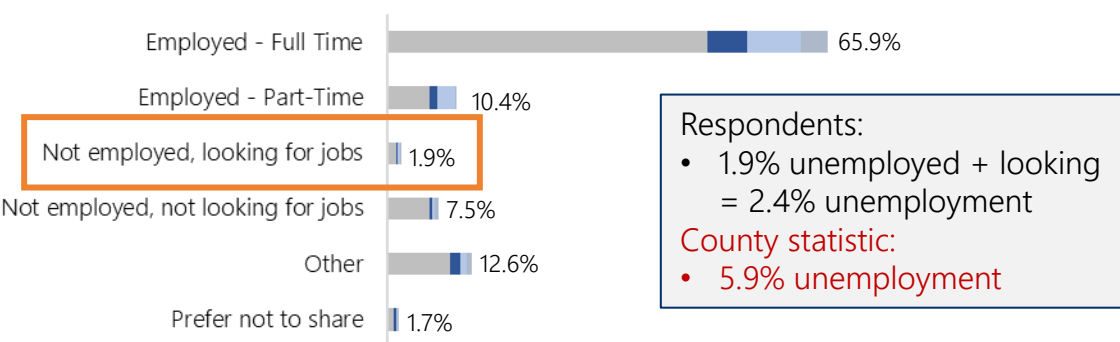
Respondent Highest Level of Education n = 1035



Respondent Home Ownership n = 1021



Respondent Current Employment Status n = 1013



Sources: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/kankakeecountyillinois/PST045221>  
<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/ILKANKOURN>



Respark believes the survey data is valid to support the assessment and recommendations despite probable skew and approach constraints.

95%

95% confidence level +/- 5% margin of error is a standard survey metric.

- Represents the likelihood that a response will mirror the average response in a follow up survey
  - Confidence Level was chosen with the goal of identifying key community themes that are actionable
  - Target Minimum Sample Size to achieve this for the majority was 383
- Margin of error for every primary question varies from 2.99%-5%
    - A “primary” question is shown to all survey respondents and is not filtered by any sort of question logic or dependent on a certain response(s) to a previous question
    - The Community Needs Assessment survey was comprised of 45 primary questions and 15 additional response-dependent questions
  - Questions with less than 383 responses fall outside of the 95% confidence and/or have a larger margin of error
  - Responses dissected by additional demographics (i.e., race, income, etc.) may fall out of confidence or margin of error depending number of respondents
  - Responses specific to childcare have a 5.52% margin of error
  - Responses needing additional research for validity:
    - Not having Wi-Fi at home
    - Effects of rising rents over the next 12 months
    - Security of renters over the next 12 months
    - Barriers to finding jobs for the unemployed
    - Impact of the Spanish language barrier

# Response Themes & Key Findings





Findings are organized by the five areas of scope; additional findings included at the end.



**A. Workforce Development (WD)**

1. More than 10% of respondents are currently looking for other jobs and some face barriers related to pay, skills, and experience.
2. Almost half of respondents lack awareness of job training or career development programs and report that they would participate in educational opportunities provided close to home.
3. Hispanic/Latinx respondents have lower rates of vocational and college-based degrees, while more than 28% report having not completed a high school equivalency.

**B. Housing (H)**

1. Nearly 36% of renters indicated their housing may become insecure within the next 12 months.

**C. Business & Economic Development (BED)**

1. While a majority of respondents have positive sentiment regarding the County's future, 30% are undecided and between 23% - 36% report not having enough income to cover basic needs.
2. Nearly 30% of parents of children 12 years and younger face uncertainty related to childcare in the next 12 months; half report challenges with affordability and availability.
3. Despite Covid-19 limiting tourism and many residents feeling undecided about the impact of recent efforts to increase tourism, almost 70% believe continuing these efforts is important.

**D. Mental & Physical Health**

1. 34% - 47% of respondents report negative mental health impacts in the last 12 months and almost 4% have faced challenges because of substance use.
2. Many respondents believe that mental health and social services should be more accessible, and between 32% - 42% are unaware of mental health resources in the County.

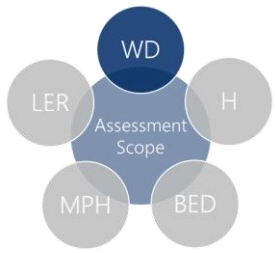
**E. Law Enforcement & Recidivism**

1. There is broad support for law enforcement and respondents feel more can be done to strengthen community relationships.
2. About 1 in 4 respondents disagree that they feel safe around the County and most believe their community would benefit from an additional localized law enforcement office.

**F. Additional Findings**

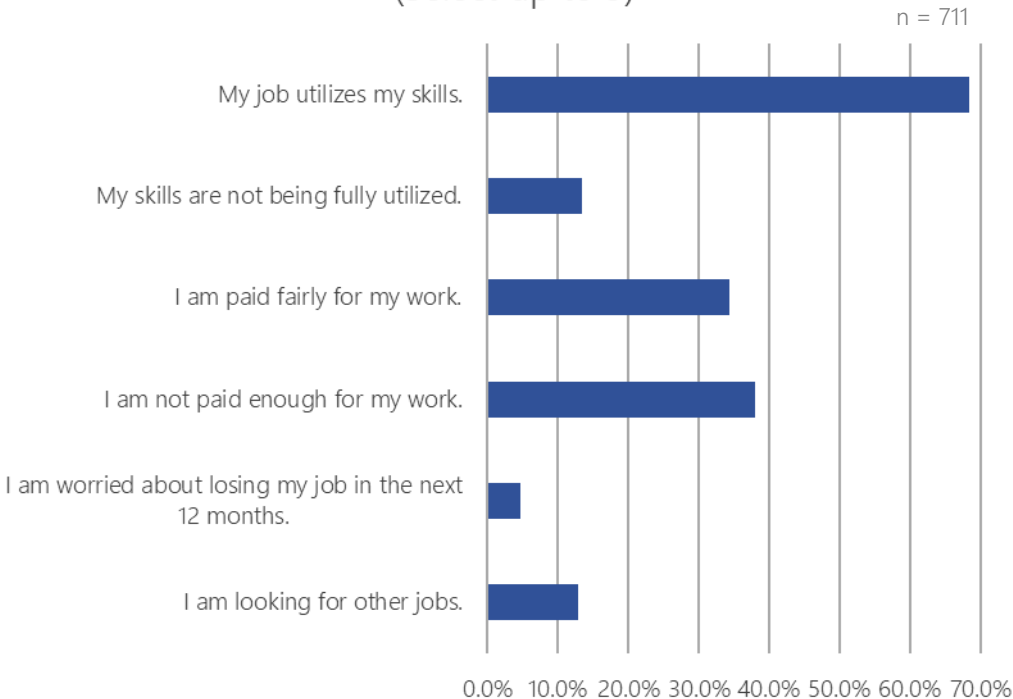
1. Negative perceptions about Kankakee County persist at multiple levels and present a range of challenges from individual identity to County-wide marketing and branding.
2. An inclusive and transparent process may generate an increase in trust and personal identification with the County community, adding additional benefits beyond direct investments.



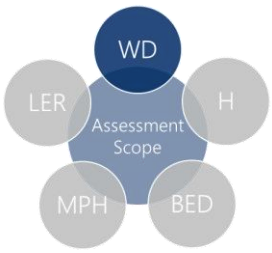


More than 10% of respondents are currently looking for other jobs and some face barriers related to pay, skills, and experience.

How do you feel about your current job?  
(Select up to 3)

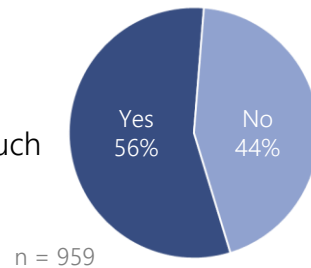


Barriers from job you want:	n = 26	Selected
Available jobs don't pay enough for my skills or credentials		12
Available jobs do not align with my skills		9
Other		7
Do not know		6
I lack the required job training		4
I lack the required job experience		4
I lack the appropriate credentials (e.g., diploma, etc.)		3
I don't have access to the transportation I need		3
I don't have access to the childcare I need		3
Lack a desire to work		1
No Barriers. I am satisfied with my employment.		1

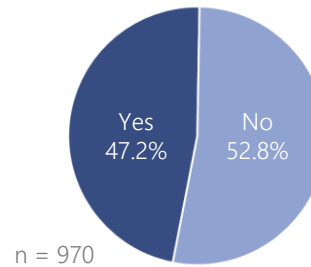


Almost half of respondents lack awareness of job training or career development programs and report that they would participate in educational opportunities provided close to home.

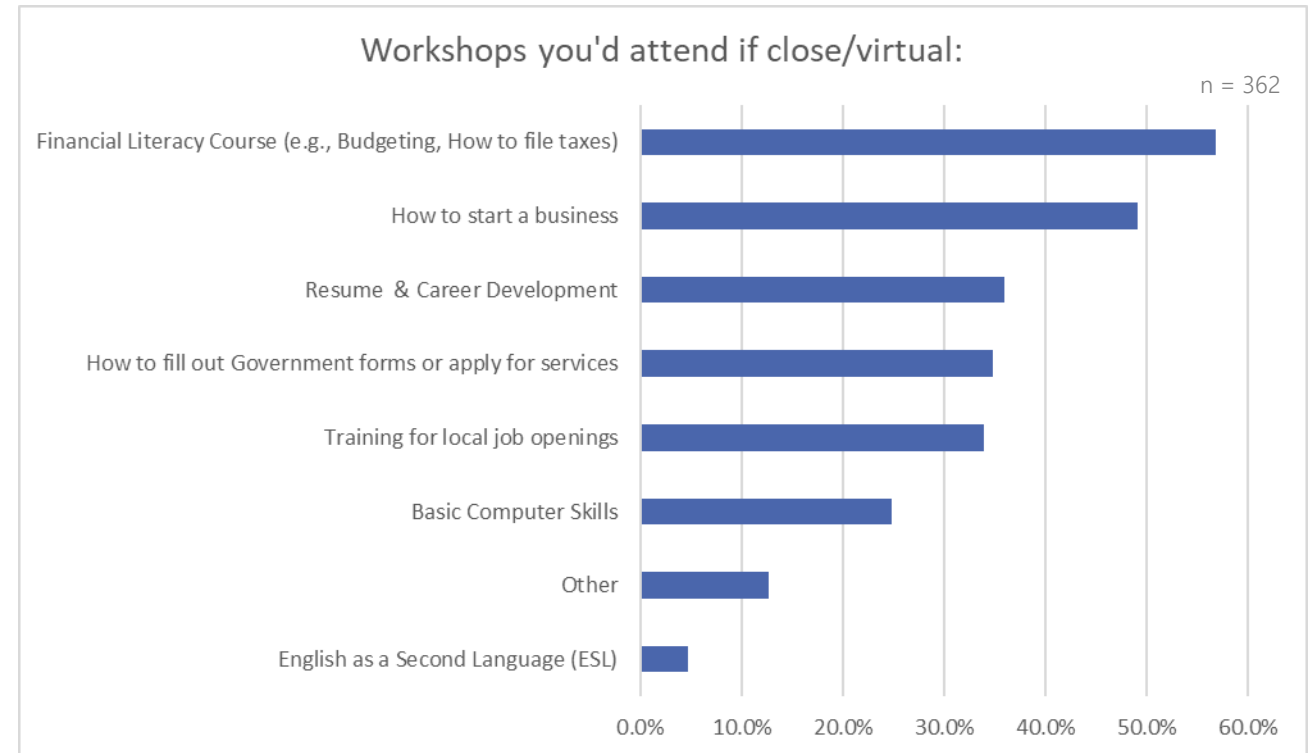
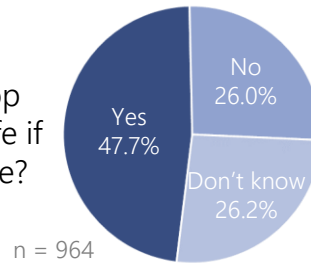
I am aware of short-term and long-term employee development programs here in the County (such as at KCC) dealing with topics such as management techniques, organizational procedures, and skill enhancement.



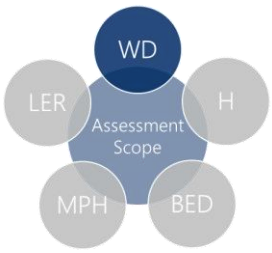
I am aware that there are local job training programs specific to high-paying local jobs.



Would you participate in a course or workshop focused on improving your career or home life if it was provided virtually or close to your home?

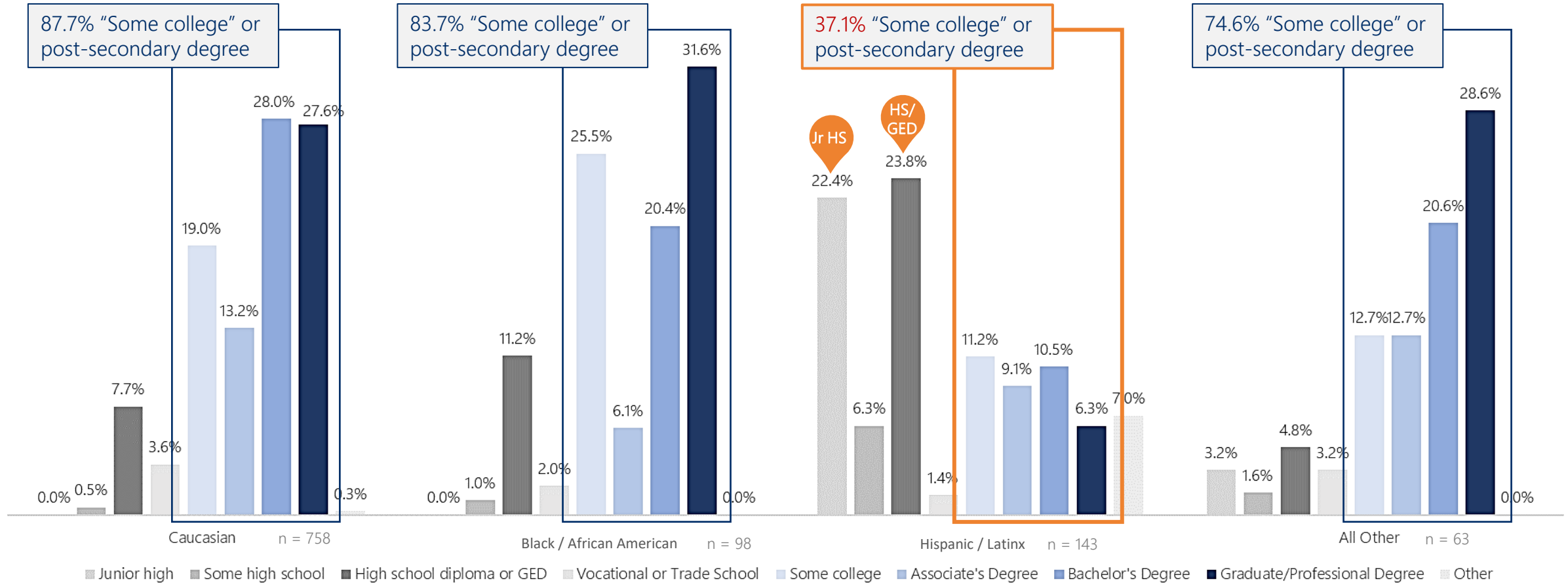


*A list of write-in responses provided for "Other" can be found in the Appendix.*

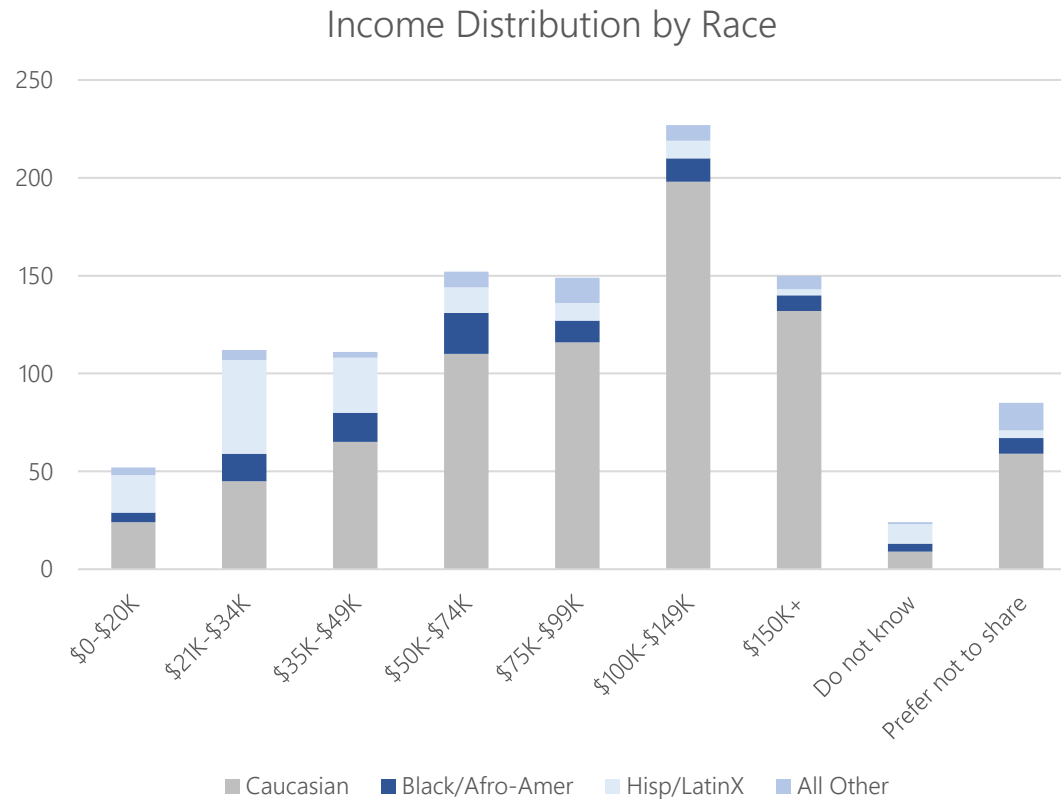


Hispanic/Latinx respondents have lower rates of vocational and college-based degrees, while more than 28% report having not completed a high school equivalency.

Highest Level of Education by Race/Ethnicity

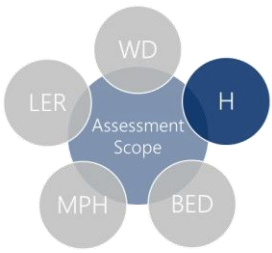


# Access to services in Spanish may be key for helping native Spanish speakers transition into higher earning brackets.

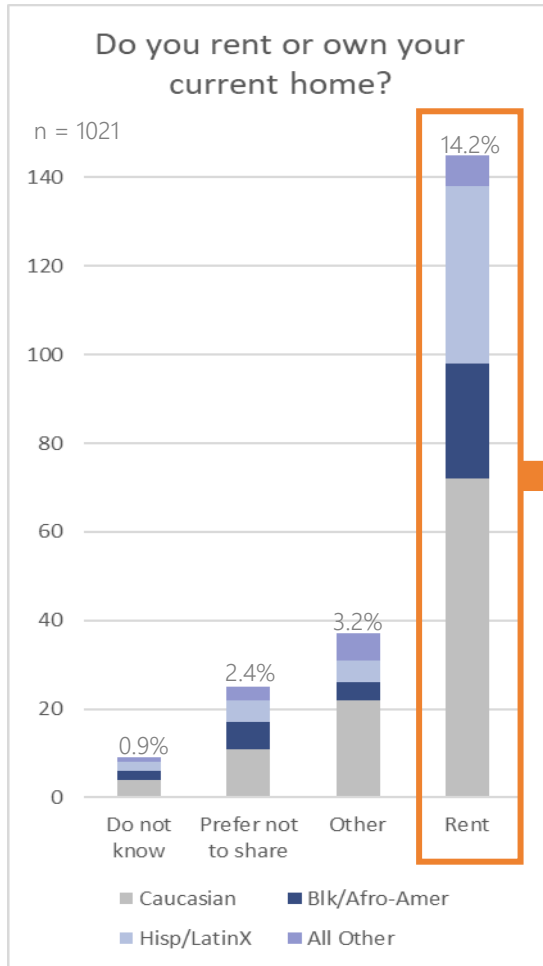


Selected "Hispanic or Latinx"	Spanish Language	% Spanish Language	2021 Total Household Income (HHI)
3	1	33.3%	\$150K+
9	2	22.2%	\$100K-\$149K
9	5	55.6%	\$75K-\$99K
13	4	30.8%	\$50K-\$74K
28	14	50.0%	\$35K-\$49K
48	28	58.3%	\$21K-\$34K
19	15	78.9%	\$0-\$20K
10	7	70.0%	Do not know
4	2	50.0%	Prefer not to share

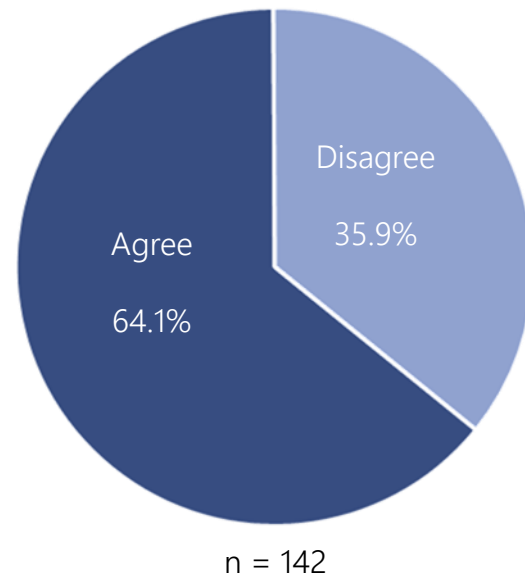
Among respondents who selected "Hispanic or Latinx" as part of their racial and ethnic demographic, the percentage of Spanish language responses decreases as 2021 HHI increases, suggesting language may be a barrier to higher earning.



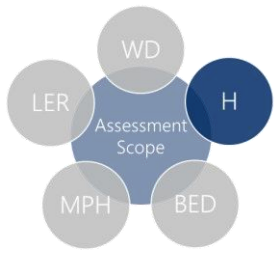
Nearly 36% of renters indicated their housing may become insecure within the next 12 months.



I am confident my housing is secure for the next 12 months.



n=63 If my rent increases in the next 12 months, I will likely:	
46.0%	Move out of my place, but I'm not sure where I will go
22.2%	Find a cheaper place to live locally
19.0%	Pay the increased rent to stay in my home
6.3%	Move in with a local friend or family member
1.6%	Move out of the county
1.6%	Other
3.2%	Prefer not to share



Concerns about scarce affordable or quality housing inventory shared in focus groups describe a negative development cycle that is reinforced in prior community housing studies.



Lack of quality affordable housing is an issue mostly for renters

- Quality and affordability are separate issues but compounded in many situations, adding to the scarcity



The prevalence of disrepair and abandonment are of concern on multiple levels:

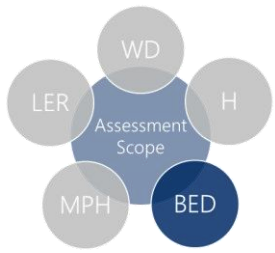
- Contribute to concern over community image and reputation
- Mismatch: Many need affordable and stable housing while housing sits empty due to needed repairs and investments

### The Cycle



- a) Owners need money to rehab → need renters to pay rents that will incorporate costs of rehab
- b) Renters can't afford higher rents → owners can't make needed repairs
- c) Housing may continue in disrepair or abandonment while home seekers struggle to find affordable housing

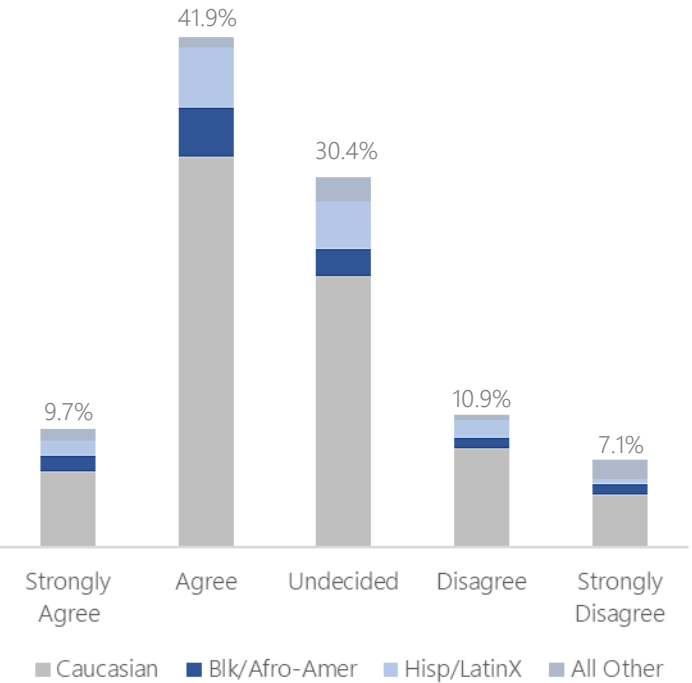
Sources: *An Analysis of the Market Potential for Apartment Development: Kankakee County, IL*, Tracy Cross & Associates, Inc., 2/14/2020.  
*2020-2024 Community Development Block Grant Consolidated Plan Including the 2020-2021 Annual Action Plan*, City of Kankakee ECDA.



While a majority of respondents have positive sentiment regarding the County’s future, 30% are undecided and between 23% - 36% report not having enough income to cover basic needs.

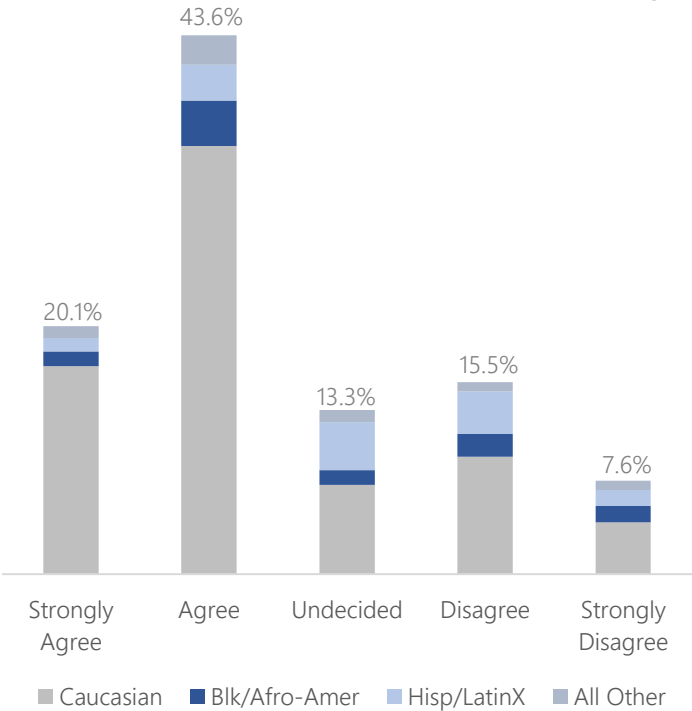
The future for Kankakee County is positive with the right investments.

n = 911

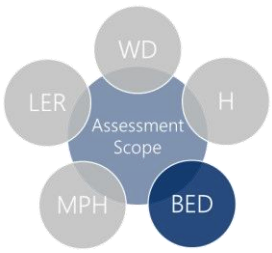


My household income is sufficient to cover our basic needs.

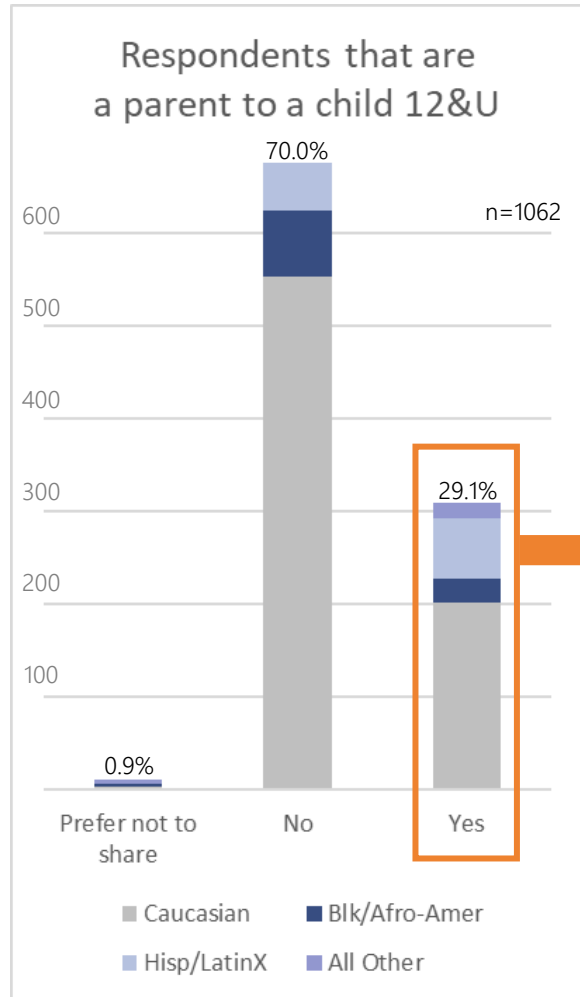
n = 927



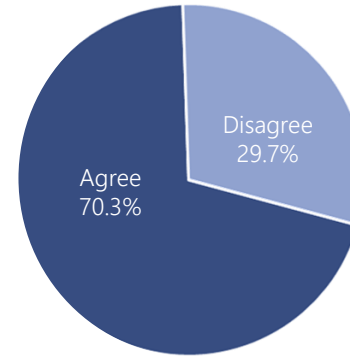




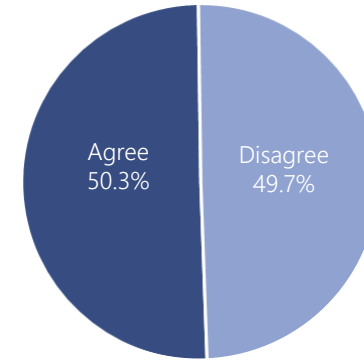
Nearly 30% of parents of children 12 years and younger face uncertainty related to childcare in the next 12 months; half report challenges with affordability and availability.



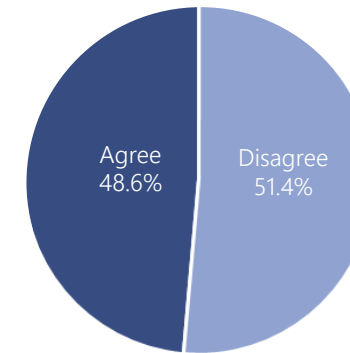
I am confident my childcare needs will be met for the next 12 months.



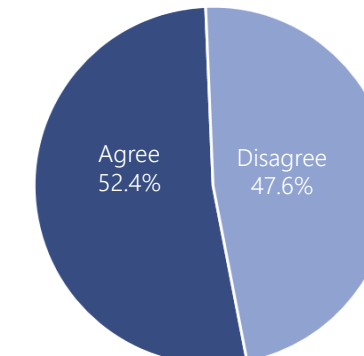
I can find daycare centers with availability near me.



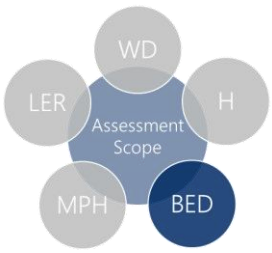
I can afford childcare in my community.



I can find daycare centers with days and hours that meet my needs.

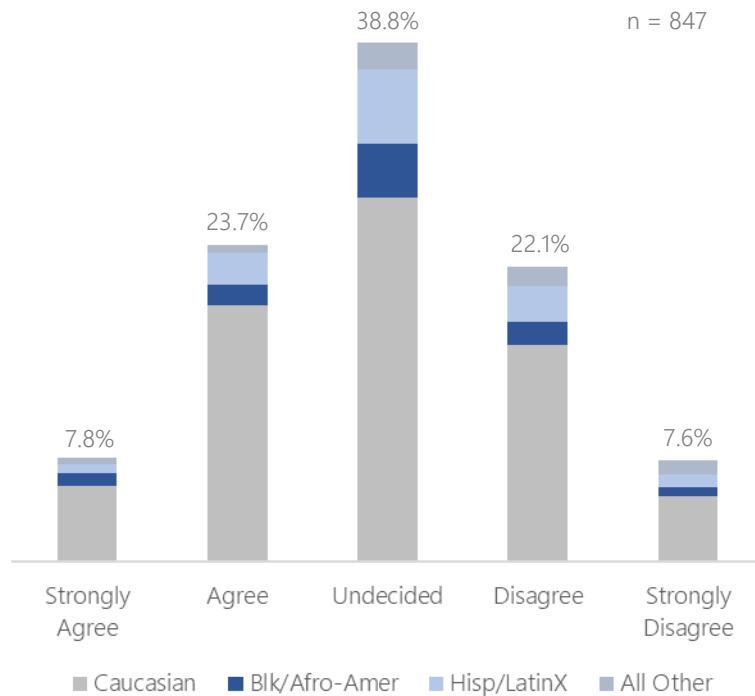


n=292

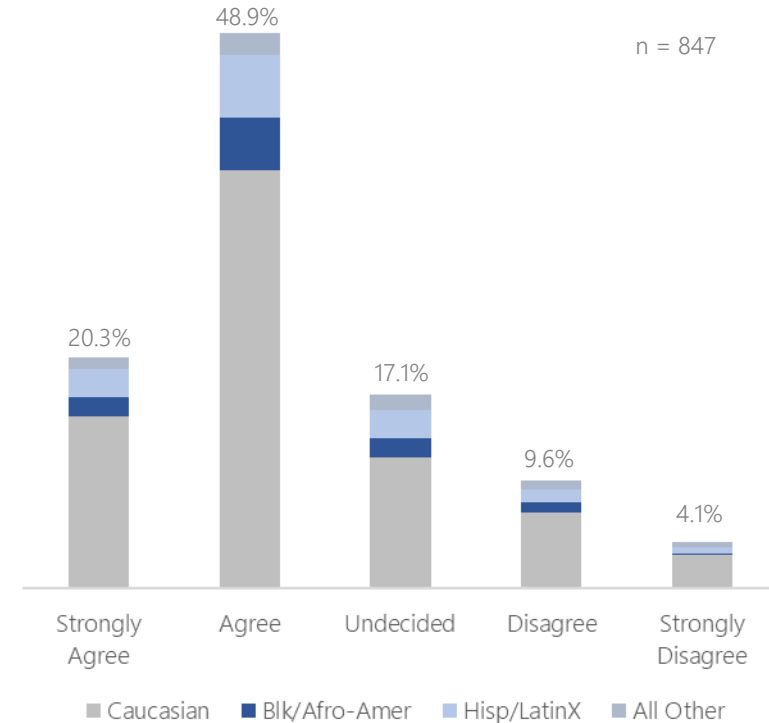


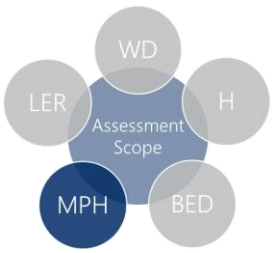
Despite Covid-19 limiting tourism and many residents feeling undecided about the impact of recent efforts to increase tourism, almost 70% believe continuing these efforts is important.

The county level efforts to increase tourism over the past 3 years have had a positive impact on our community.



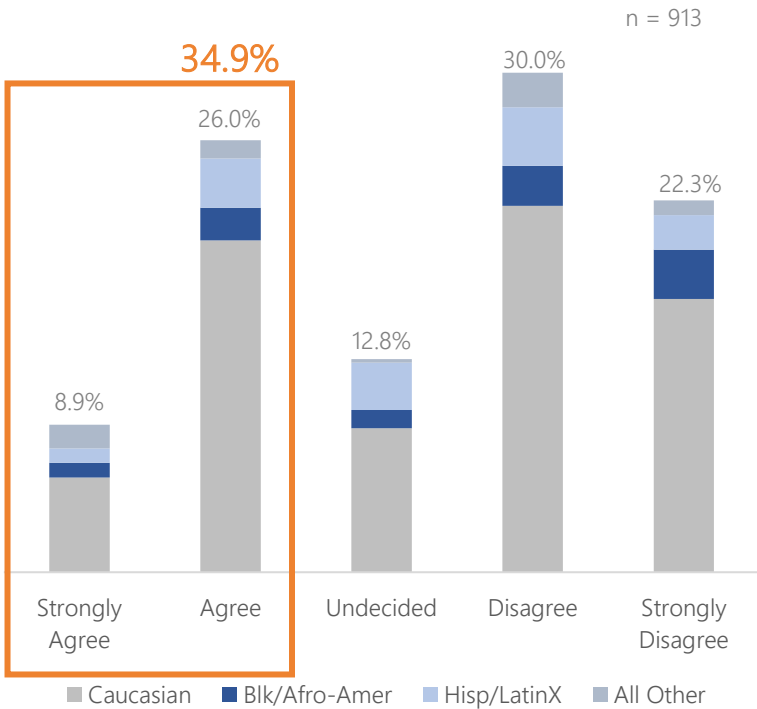
I believe continued county efforts to increase tourism are important.



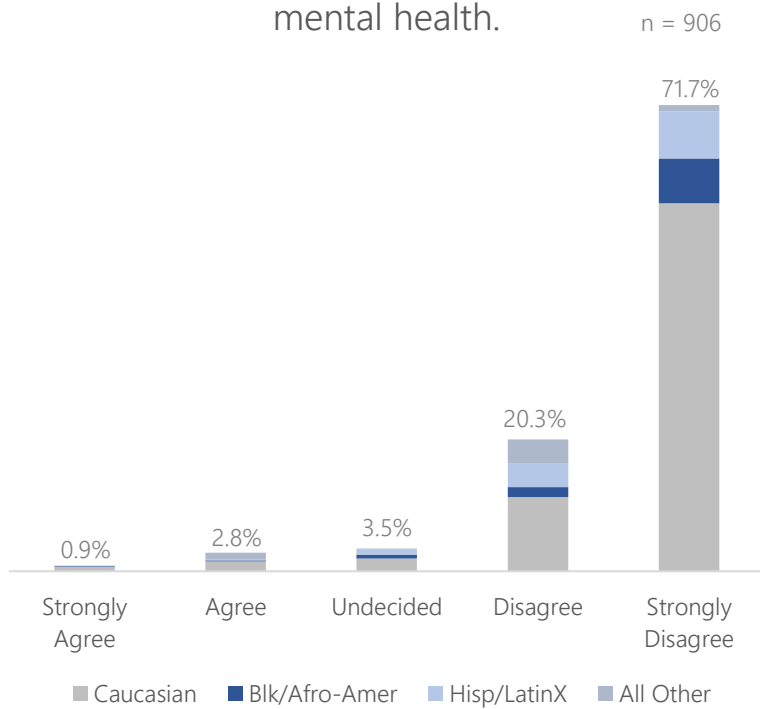


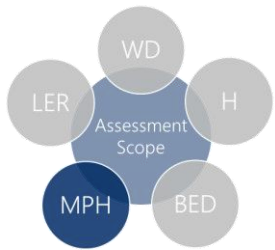
34% - 47% of respondents report negative mental health impacts in the last 12 months and almost 4% reported having faced challenges because of substance use.

In the past 12 months, my mental health has negatively affected my work, school, and/or home life.



In the past 12 months, my substance use has negatively affected my work, school, relationships, home life, and/or mental health.





Other recent health assessments validate multiple social determinants can negatively impact one's physical and mental health.



Lack of financial resources to get to or pay for health resources



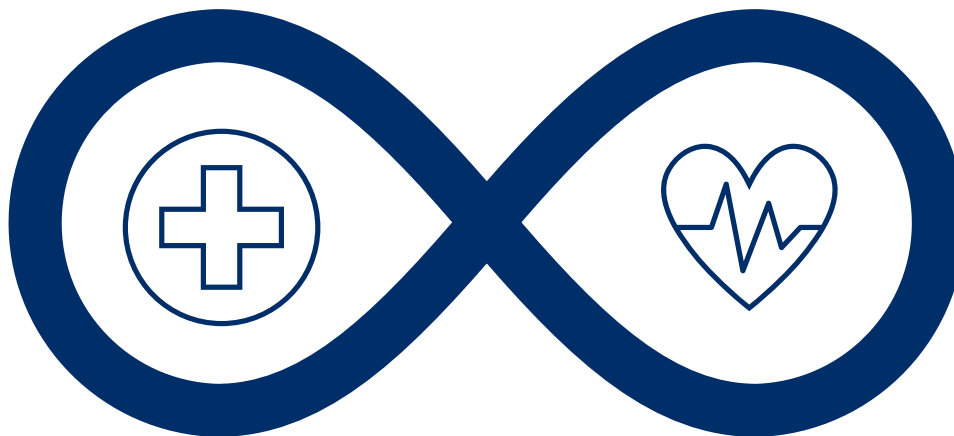
Not enough providers or the right type of providers



Lower education connected to poorer health outcomes



Physical and built environment connected to poorer health outcomes



Additional health assessment findings indicate repeated themes of specific mental and physical health needs.



Behavioral health:

- increase in both prevalence and severity across age groups,
- additional emphasis likely needed for youth and senior supports
- suicide rate is a helpful data point but proactive interventions should address wellness and prevention of crisis



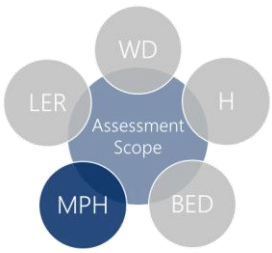
Substance use:

- Inconsistent findings on severity of need with attention needed to stabilize rates of use and overdose



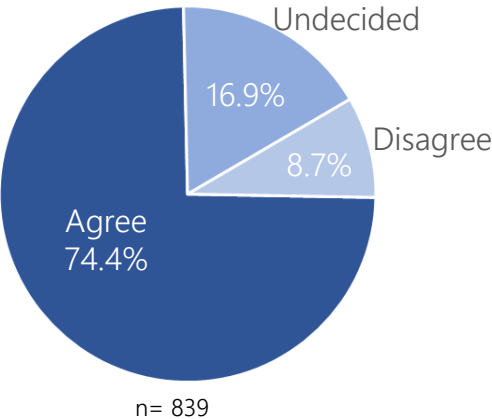
Education related to income related to overall health status

Source: 2021 Kankakee County Community Health Needs Assessment (and its component assessments)

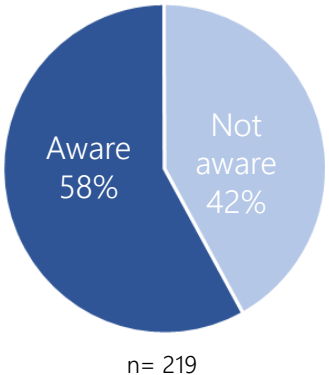
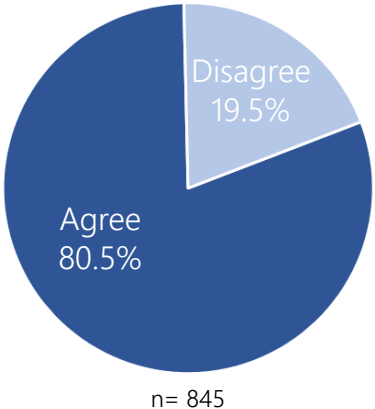


Many respondents believe that mental health and social services should be more accessible, and between 32% - 42% are unaware of mental health resources in the County.

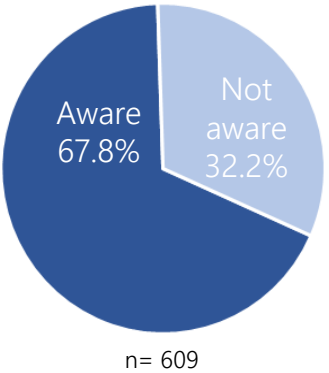
My community would benefit from an additional social services location.



The Sheriff's office should consider ways to incorporate social workers and mental health professionals to help respond to situations.

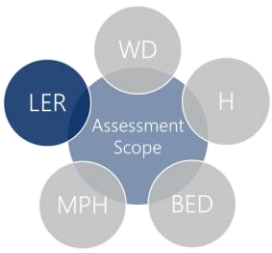


Non-Caucasian awareness of County mental health resources



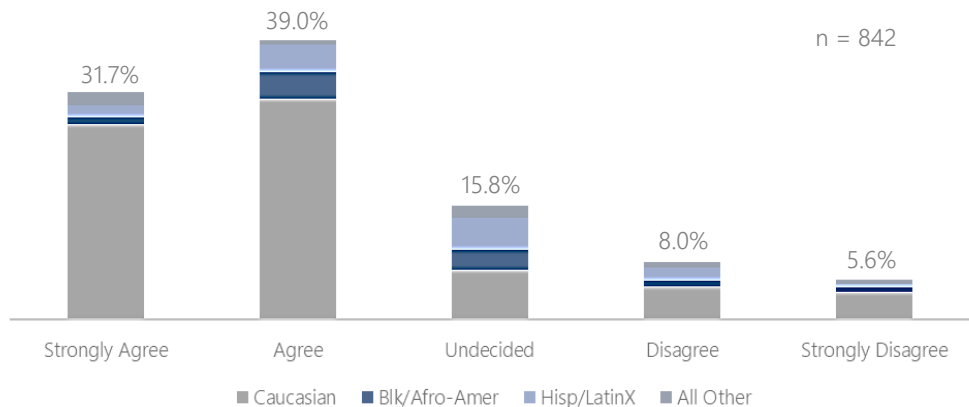
Caucasian awareness of County mental health resources



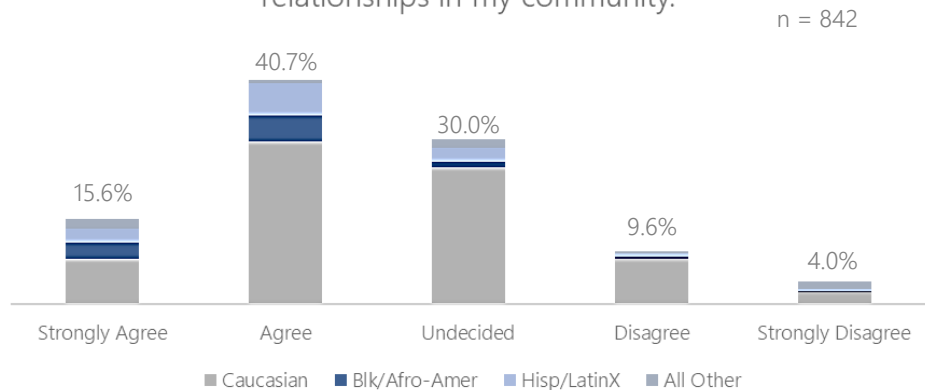


There is broad support for law enforcement and respondents feel more can be done to strengthen community relationships.

I have a positive view of law enforcement in my community.



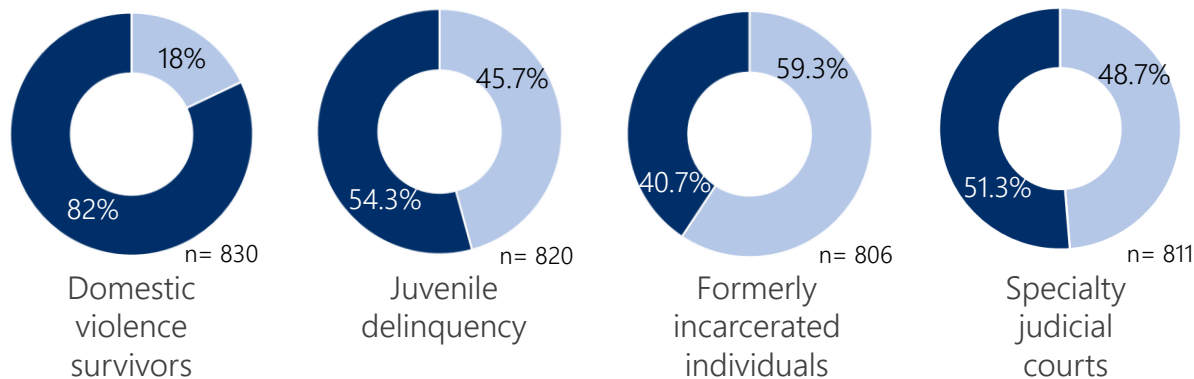
The Sheriff's office should do more to strengthen relationships in my community.



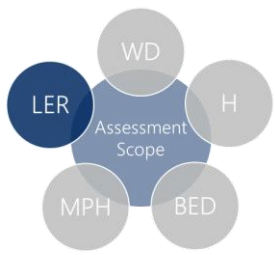
Many community members are unaware of resources available to County residents related to public safety and the justice system.

Awareness of County resources and programs:

Aware Unaware

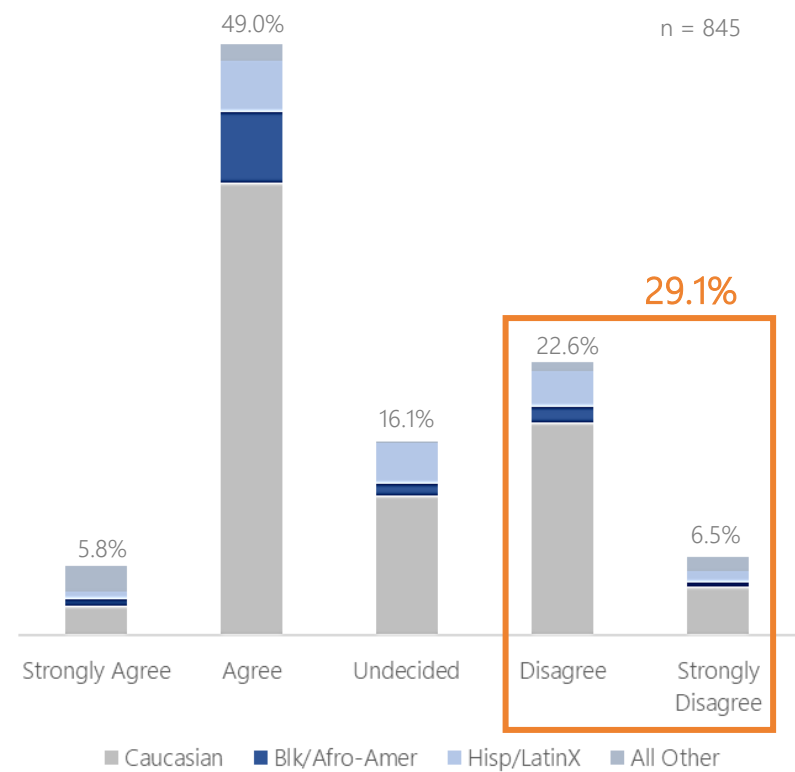


- 60% of survey respondents felt that "Public Safety and Justice Institutions" are one of the three most important assets that municipalities should support more to better serve the community.

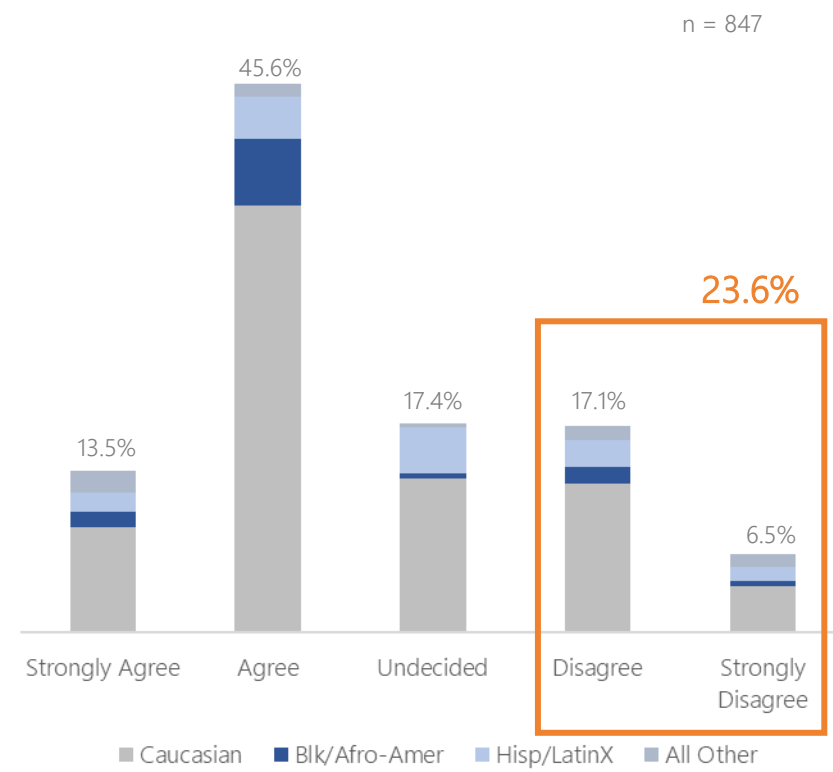


About 1 in 4 respondents disagree that they feel safe around the County and most believe their community would benefit from an additional localized law enforcement office.

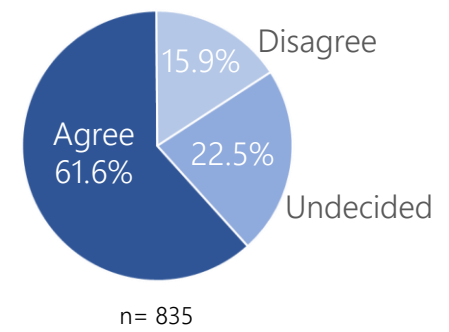
I feel safe in most places in the County.



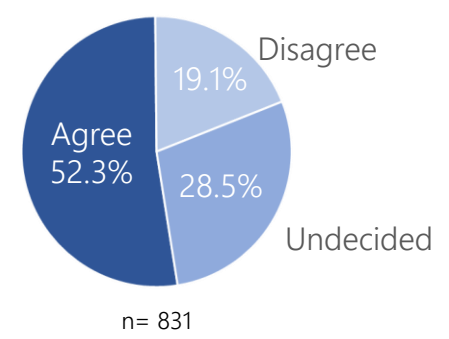
I feel safe in my local municipal downtown.



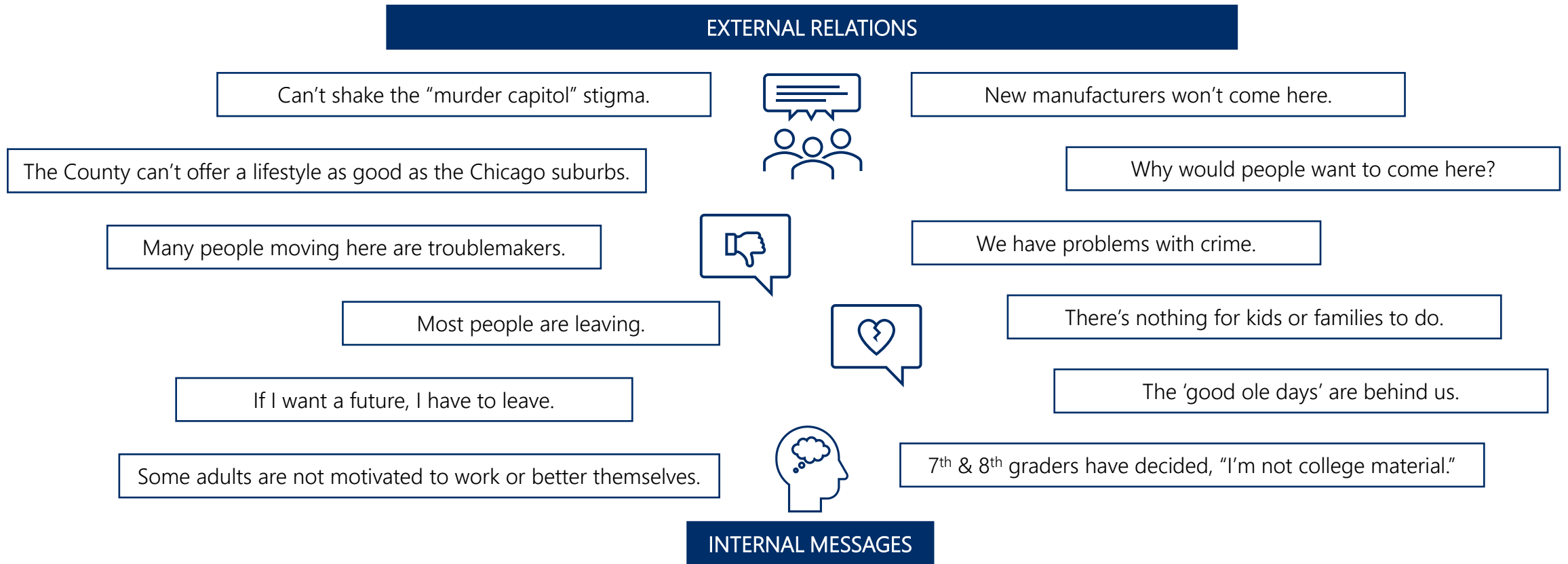
My community would benefit from an additional local Sheriff or Police office.



My community would benefit from an additional local justice center/courthouse.



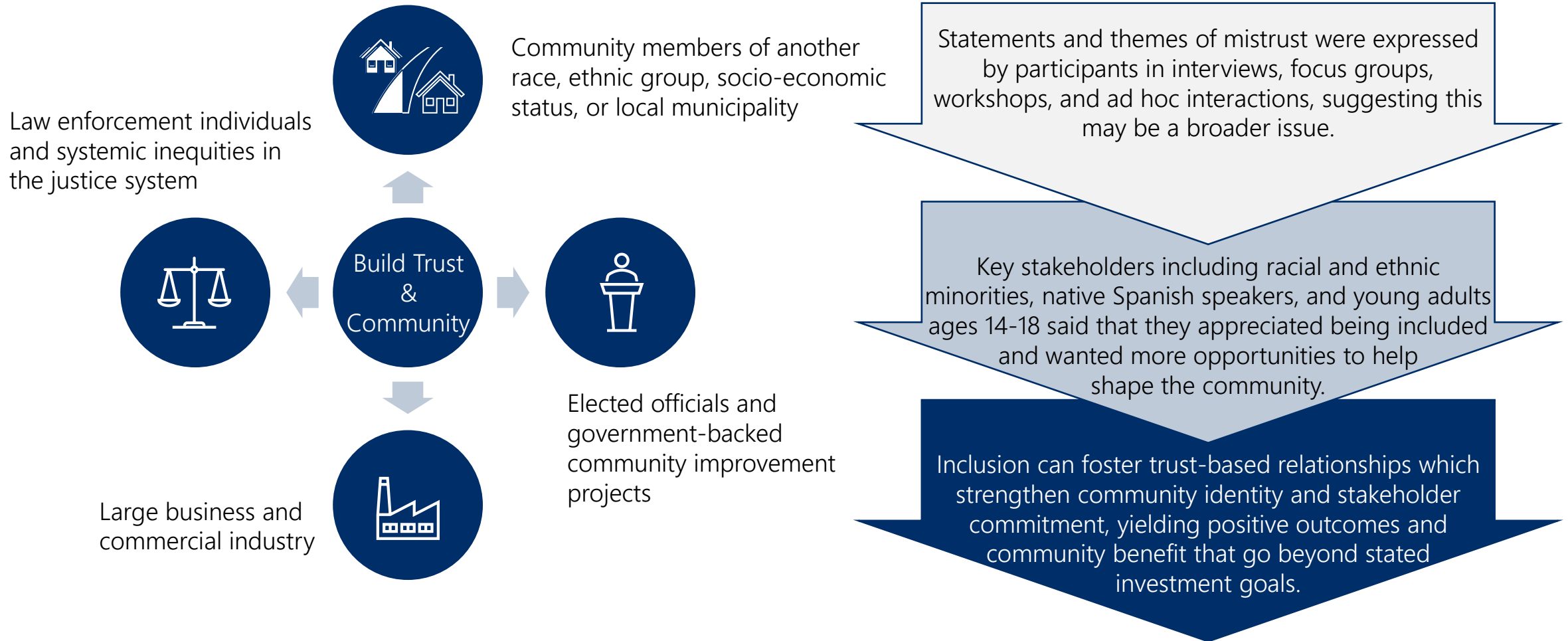
# Negative perceptions about Kankakee County persist at multiple levels and present a range of challenges from individual identity to County-wide marketing and branding.



While a sort of social malaise is present in some of the attitudes, responses, and concerns raised by assessment participants, a belief in what is possible can become the foundation for change.



An inclusive and transparent process may generate an increase in trust and personal identification with the County community, adding additional benefits beyond direct investments.



Focus group participants commonly identified mental health, housing, and youth supports as key areas to address.



### Mental Health

- More access overall, youth and adults
- Lack of motivation and accountability
- Group therapy
- Crisis center
- Partnerships (i.e. police, schools)



### Housing

- More affordable housing
- Restoration, rebuilding
- Awareness of assistance



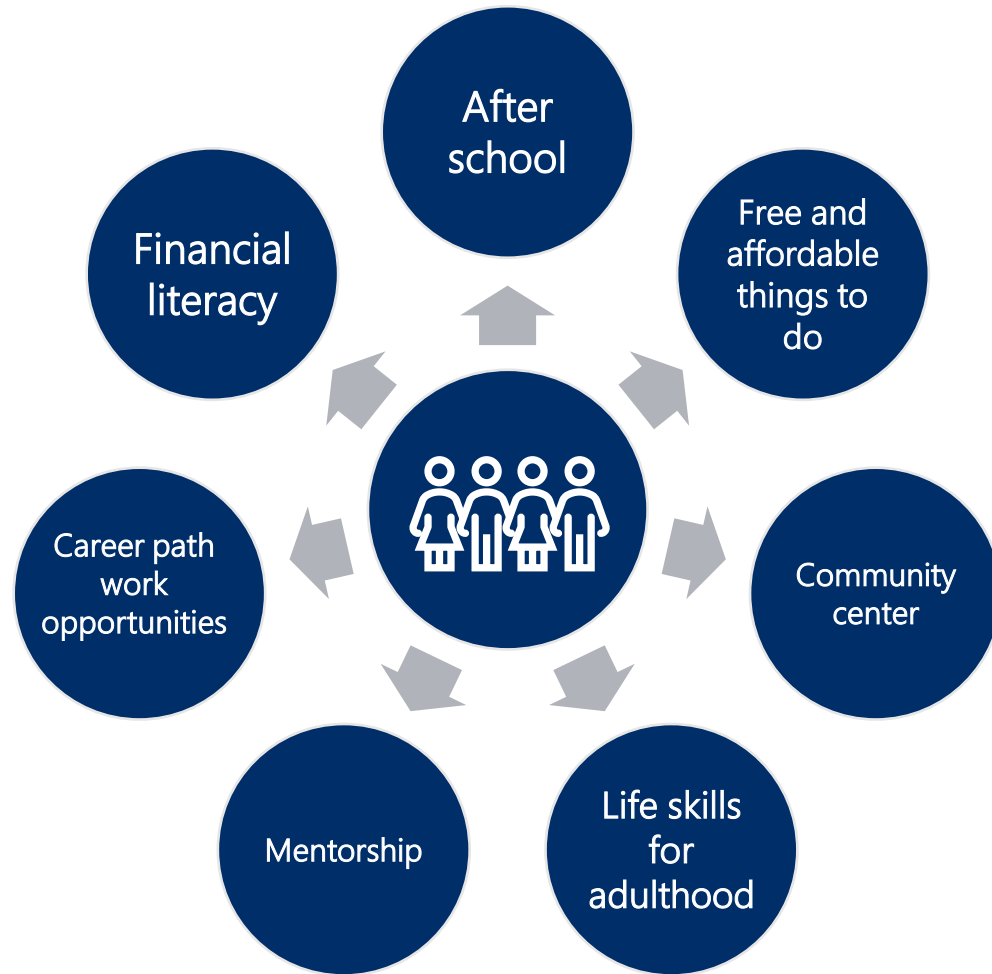
### Youth Supports

- Free and affordable things to do
- After school
- Community center
- Life skills for adulthood
- Mentorship
- Career path work opportunities

### Other common themes related to “needs”

- Parks
- Public infrastructure
- Education
- Racism
- Crime / violence
- Leadership
- Desire for community policing or improved relationships with police
- Lack of trust of government and other institutions
- Specialized needs of undocumented individuals

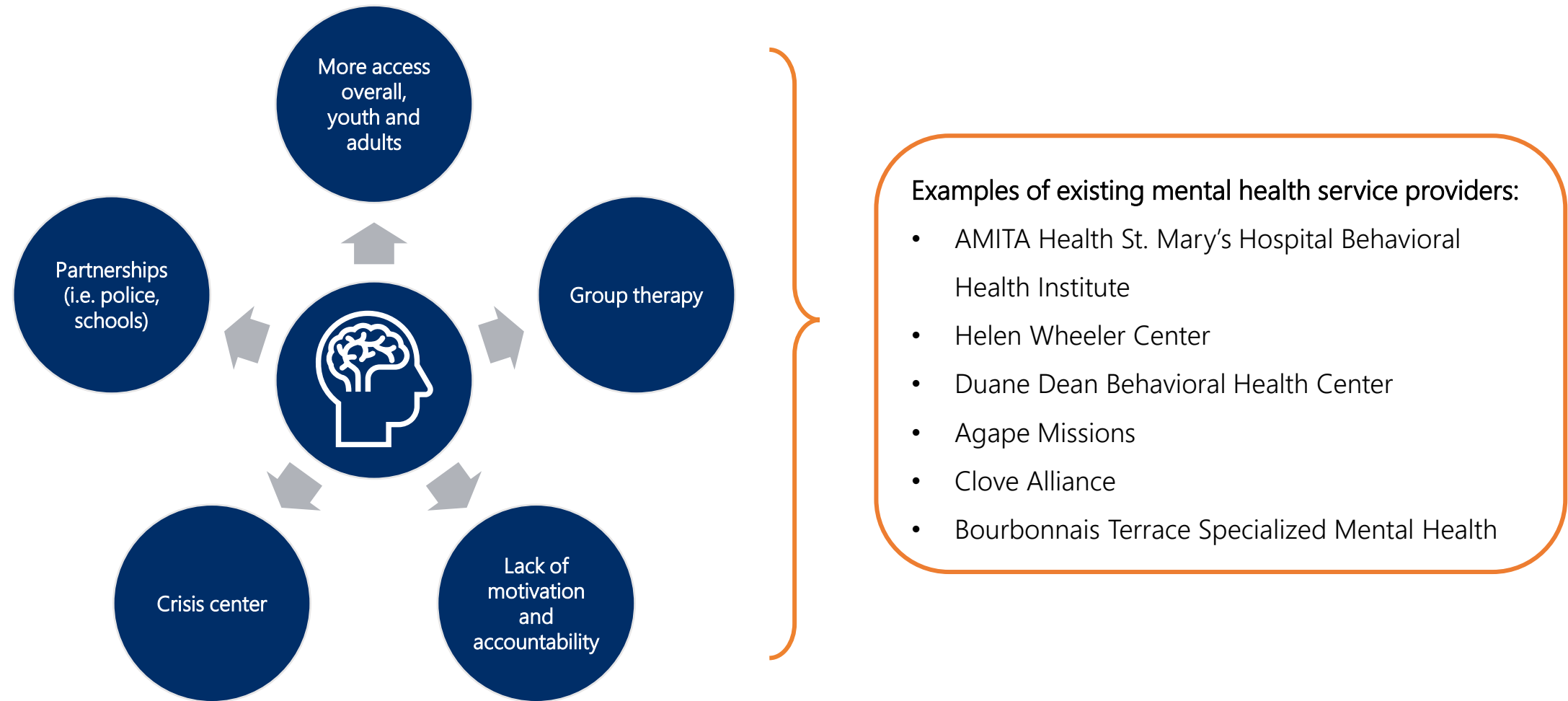
“Youth supports” encompasses broad concerns related to the health, well-being, and development of the County’s young people.



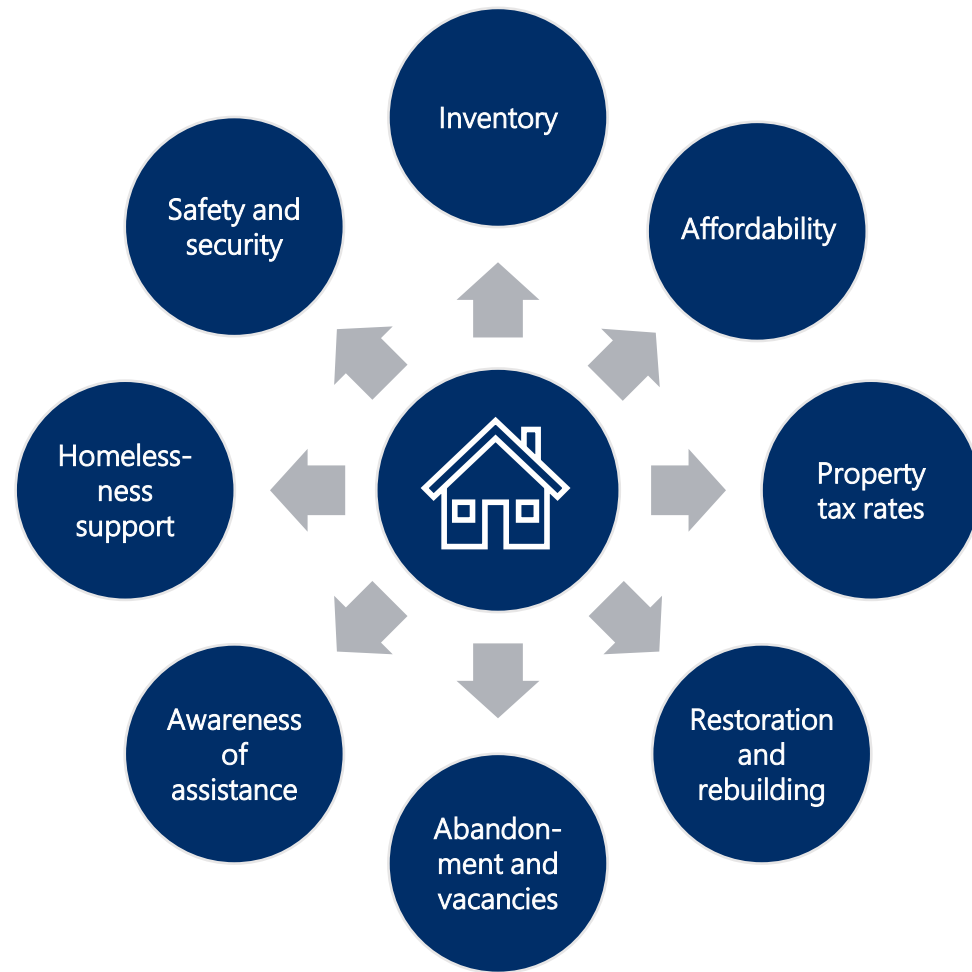
**Examples of existing youth supports:**

- Public Libraries
- Kankakee Area Career Center
- YMCA
- Garden of Prayer Youth Center
- Youth for Christ City Life Center
- JUMP (Juvenile Mentoring Program)
- Still I Rise

“Mental health” is understood by community members as an essential component to well being that underlies other needs in Kankakee.



Housing was identified as a key aspect of community building, ensuring that the basic needs of community members are met.



Examples of existing housing service and support organizations:

- Kankakee County Housing Authority
- Fortitude Community Outreach
- Habitat for Humanity of Kankakee County
- The Salvation Army
- Veterans Assistance Commission of Kankakee County
- Catholic Charities – Diocese of Joliet

# Assessment participants generally understand the community's needs as inter-related pieces, among which youth supports, mental health, and housing seem most urgent.

- There is broad concern about youth development across community members. Residents believe that the future of Kankakee can be bright and feel that investments in youth are key to that hope being realized.
- The overall support system for youth- family, community, education system, etc.- is not effectively preparing young people with life skills for transition to adulthood. The education system is taking on- and struggling to support- a growing set of youth development responsibilities that were supported by other aspects of the community in generations past.
- Mental health concerns for people of all ages were frequently expressed as exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its lasting impact. Residents believe that mental health issues are increasing and compounded by needs related to food, housing, safety, employment, and overall quality of life.
- Housing is a leading concern of municipal leaders and many county residents. Access to quality housing is understood as a community need and viewed as an underlying factor to issues such as public safety, youth development, and pride in our community.
- Investments in educational systems and infrastructure are viewed as 'high impact' opportunities. Many residents believe that existing and new education systems can be leveraged for broader systemic impact that improves peoples' lives today and into the future.
- Racial and ethnic divisions exist in the community and are understood by many to be part of the root cause of existing needs. There is a desire to overcome these and be viewed as a progressive county by some community members, including private citizens and public officials.
- "Community" is localized. Many people who live within a municipality consider that to be their community and do not generally identify with the County. Any County-wide change effort will require the collaboration, support, and leadership of local municipal officials.
- Despite barriers, many people feel a bright future is possible in Kankakee County.



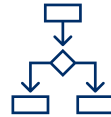
# Prioritized Needs



# Respark analyzed the respondent data to identify four types of community needs and impact opportunities.

“NEED” is defined here as: “anything that is essential for a community member’s well-being as a participant in the society.”

- Categorization is considered for the purpose of analysis, prioritization, and solutioning.
- Categories are not mutually exclusive; in this context, needs can (and often do) fall into more than one category.



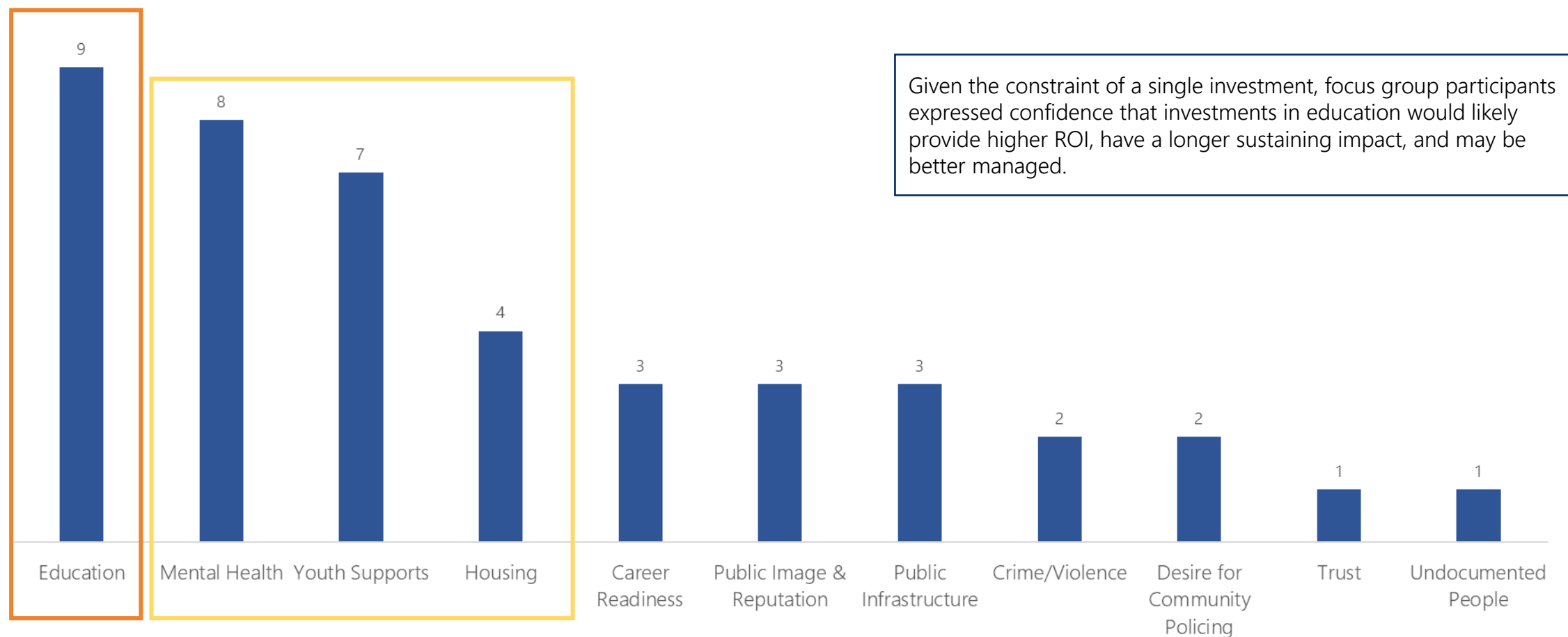
Absolute	Relative	Perceived	Expressed
Those things which are required to sustain human existence, e.g.,	Those things which are required to succeed and thrive in a specific community as it exists;	Those things which community members believe they need in order to succeed	Those things which community members have requested help for from local government and institutions, especially via formal channels
<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean water</li> <li>• Food</li> <li>• Shelter</li> <li>• Clothing</li> <li>• Personal safety</li> <li>• A sense of belonging</li> </ul>	<p>Example:</p> <p>A stable internet connection is a “relative need” that is required for remote education and remote work, which is expected for participation in the community schools and the local employment market, and which is required in order to earn money to pay for food and shelter.</p>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A car</li> <li>• A cell phone</li> <li>• A college degree</li> <li>• A certain type of industry or employer</li> </ul>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A community member takes up a petition for road maintenance and paving in a specific area with justification</li> <li>• A community member shares a story at a town hall meeting about not having ambulance service during a medical emergency</li> </ul>

Sources: <https://www.rosterfy.com/blog/community-needs-assessment-guide-with-examples;>  
<https://medium.com/galaxy-digital/how-to-conduct-a-community-needs-assessment-5d6f46595d76>



When restricted to one investment, education emerged as the priority “need” among focus group participants.

Focus group participants' priority area for investment.



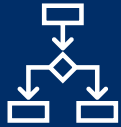
A sense of safety is the absolute need that most directly impacts investment opportunity areas identified by the community.



**Absolute Needs:** those things which are required to sustain human existence.

	Youth	Mental Health	Housing	Education
Sense of safety:				
• Mental health	x	x		x
• Public spaces				
• Immigration status				
Access to quality and affordable health care		x		
Access to affordable heat			x	
Access to affordable housing			x	
Access to clean and affordable water			x	
Access to grocery stores and/or healthy food options	x			

The relative needs that may have the biggest impact for community members are employment with a family-sustaining wage and access to affordable childcare.



**Relative Needs:** Those things which are required to succeed and thrive in a specific community as it exists.

	Youth	Mental Health	Housing	Education
Jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage	x	x	x	
Access to affordable childcare: • Esp. during 2nd & 3rd shifts	x	x		x
Positive community identity	x	x		
Health Insurance	x	x		
Paved roads & regular roadway maintenance, esp. in remote areas			x	x
Quality public education K-12	x			x
Specific job training	x			x
Stable high-speed internet	x			x
Reliable transportation: • Esp. for 2nd & 3rd shifts		x		

Resources for the undocumented and various education and training topics are perceived needs that may have a big impact.



**Perceived Needs:** Those things which community members believe they need in order to succeed.

	Youth	Mental Health	Housing	Education
Resources for the undocumented	x	x		x
Career pathways	x			x
Specific job training	x			x
Financial education	x			x
Public safety	x	x		
Mentorship for youth	x	x		
Youth activities	x			
Better job opportunities				x
Trust in community leaders	x			
Re-entry support		x		
Community collaboration within the County				x

Public safety is a frequently expressed need, which- along with social and emotional education and access to information- may have broader impact for the community.

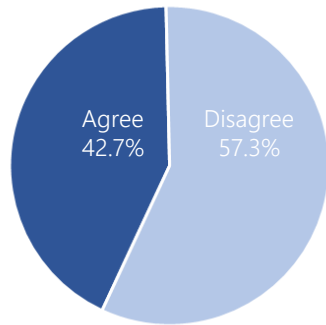


**Expressed Needs:** Those things which community members have requested help for from local government and institutions, especially via formal channels.

	Youth	Mental Health	Housing	Education
Public safety	x	x	x	x
Social and emotional education	x	x		x
Access to information (in English and in Spanish)		x	x	x
Affordable childcare	x			
Outdoor activities	x			
Updated parks and recreational programming	x			
More mental health providers	x	x		
Mental health providers that speak my language (esp. Spanish)		x		
Eliminate old infrastructure/houses and beautify public spaces			x	
Community + Law Enforcement relationships	x			x
Family-sustaining wage				x

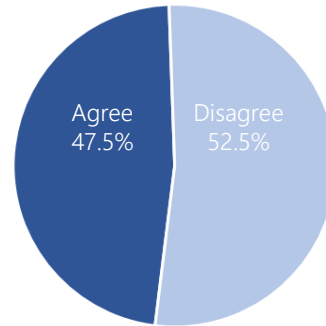
# At least half of Spanish-speaking respondents find language a barrier to accessing government programs and services.

There is someone at the government offices who can assist me in Spanish.



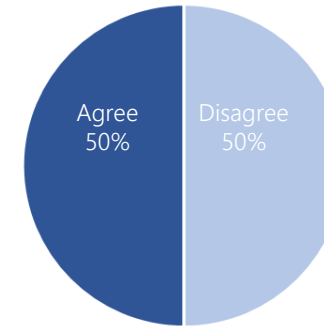
n = 62

I am able to access information for government programs in Spanish.



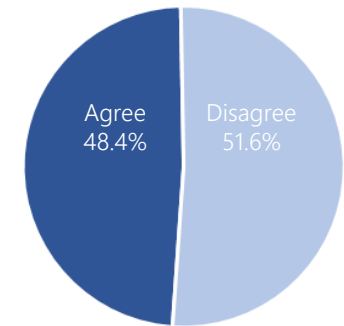
n = 61

Language is a barrier for accomplishing tasks in my day-to-day life.



n = 63

I rely on my children to help me with translation.



n = 62

Participants in a Spanish language focus group felt that language barriers and immigration related barriers prevent Hispanic families from accessing health and other social services.

## Key needs/challenges in the Hispanic community:

1. Lack of access to social services
2. Lack of culturally appropriate ways of communication and outreach to Hispanic families in Kankakee County
3. Health education and education in general
4. Mental health is a unique challenge due to the stigma associated with mental health in the Hispanic community

According to focus group participants, a significant number of Hispanic residents do not access social services because they are afraid of being categorized as a public charge by the government, and such a categorization may jeopardize their immigration status.

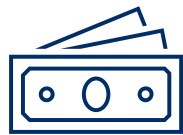
# Community Assets



# Survey respondents and focus group participants reflected on five types of assets that could be leveraged in the community.

“ASSET” is defined here as: “those things which are or can be leveraged to advance the goals of the community.”

- Categorization is considered for the purpose of analysis, prioritization, and solutioning.
- Categories are not mutually exclusive; in this context, assets may fall into more than one category and can be interdependent on other assets.



Financial Resources	Natural Resources	Institutions	Individuals	Mindsets & Beliefs
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tax revenues</li><li>• Local community funds</li></ul>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crop land</li><li>• Waterways</li><li>• Mineral deposits</li></ul>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hospitals</li><li>• Libraries</li><li>• Community-based organizations</li></ul>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A broadly liked and highly effective community visionary</li><li>• a highly impactful behind-the-scenes volunteer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foster growth</li><li>• Sustain development</li><li>• Bolster healthy individual and community identity</li></ul> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “We’ve overcome challenges in the past, and we can do this too.”</li></ul>

Sources: <https://www.rosterfy.com/blog/community-needs-assessment-guide-with-examples>;  
<https://medium.com/galaxy-digital/how-to-conduct-a-community-needs-assessment-5d6f46595d76>



Survey respondents consistently ranked Public Safety & Justice Institutions and Parks & Recreation Centers among the most important assets that municipalities should support.

Select the 3 most important assets your municipality should support to better serve your community:

Municipal Residents	Parks & Recreation Centers	Kankakee River	Public Library	Public Safety & Justice Institutions	Community Events (festivals)	Riverfront	Downtown Kankakee	Community Non-Profits (e.g., United Way, YMCA)	Faith-Based Organizations & Congregations
Kankakee	130	56	49	121	63	51	74	104	39
Momence	6	6	1	4	4	3	1	2	1
Bourbonnais	103	40	44	121	45	32	32	56	28
Bradley	68	29	27	73	34	15	11	34	12
Manteno	49	21	16	49	30	20	15	26	10
Pembroke Twnp & Hopkins Park	7	1	4	5	8	1	2	5	6
Herscher	8	3	6	18	5	2	2	7	8
Limestone	8	7	1	15	5	4	3	2	3
Aroma Park	6	5	2	5	1	1	3	2	2
Otto Township	1			3		2		2	1
Chebanse	1			3	1	1		2	
Unincorporated Kankakee County	25	32	13	41	17	18	24	19	12

Communities with fewer than 3 responses: Bonfield, Buckingham, Dupage, Essex, Ganeer, Gilman, Grant Park, Milford, Reddick

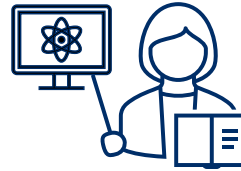
# Focus groups commonly identified natural resources, education, community organizations, and collaboration as County strengths.

## Natural resources



- Municipal Parks
- The Kankakee River

## Education



- Kankakee Community College (KCC)
- Olivet Nazarene University (ONU)
- Kankakee Area Career Center (KACC)

## Community Organizations



- Cultural and community events
- Community-based organizations/nonprofits

## Collaboration



- Community dynamics: collaborations, diversity
- New leaders are elected officials that care

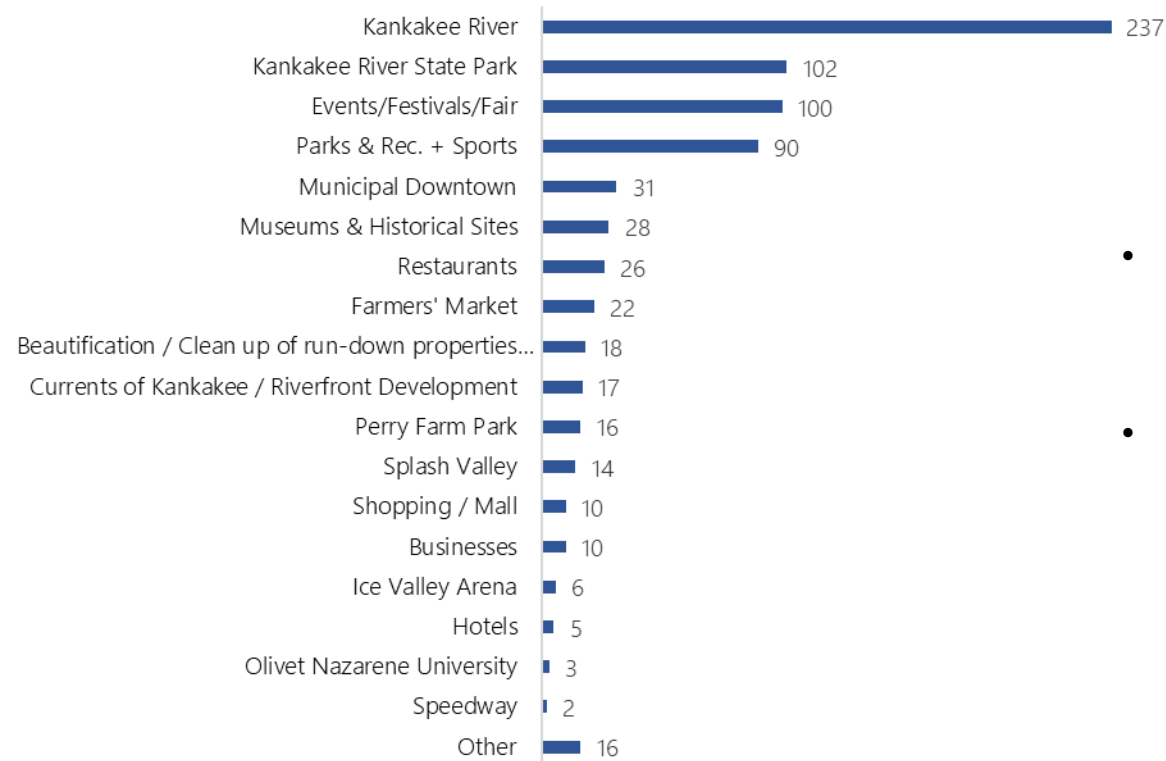
# Several groups of people and individual community members were named repeatedly as key assets in the County.

- **Teens/Youth** – In each focus group and for a majority of interviewees, youth, teens, and young adults were named as one of the most important and underleveraged assets in the County. Many participants believe that investments in youth today will spur change and pay dividends in the future by channeling young people away from delinquent or criminal activity and into productive pathways as County residents. Others believe that, beyond future dividends, these investments have an immediate impact because young people have new ideas and energy to contribute to the community; they are viewed as key stakeholders in Kankakee today, and are a source for idealism and innovation, a trainable entry-level workforce, consumers, and otherwise economic contributors.
- **Newly elected officials** – Several interviewees and focus group participants named, “newly elected officials” (meaning people who have been in office for two years or less) as people who “truly care about their community.” The sentiment was interpreted as individuals who put public service before personal ambition, and was especially reflected in statements related to minority demographics and people of color in office as well as people not originally from Kankakee but now living in the County and investing their time and effort in the community.
- **Jim Rowe & the State’s Attorney’s Office** – Multiple interviewees singled out State’s Attorney Jim Rowe and the programs his office leads for people in trouble with the law, especially young men. The programs, the visionary leadership of Attorney Rowe, and the personal time investment of Rowe and his staff are viewed as key assets to help drive positive change.
- **Tim Nugent & Economic Alliance of Kankakee County** Mr. Nugent wears several hats in Kankakee County, including as the CEO of the Economic Alliance of Kankakee County and the elected Mayor of Manteno. Through these roles and others he has held in the past, Mr. Nugent was identified by interviewees and focus group participants as an asset to the community, credited with helping leaders understand the needs of businesses and working collaboratively to attract new employers to the community.
- **Theodis Pace & NAACP** – Mr. Pace was named frequently as a trusted partner who, through relationships, is able to bring and/or represent the voices of many typically underserved community members. His leadership and the support of the local NAACP chapter is viewed as an asset by community members and County leaders as they work to address systemic inequalities and build a community in which all members can thrive.
- **Mike Downey & Sheriff’s Department** – Sheriff Downey was named by several interviewees as a key asset for law enforcement and improving public safety. His efforts to reach out to community members are mostly positively received. Focus group participants named as assets activities conducted by the Sheriff’s department to build relationships with County residents, stating that these are key to changing the dynamic between law enforcement and people of color in the community and they would like to see more of this type of engagement.



# The Kankakee River and Kankakee State Park were named by survey respondents as key assets to drive tourism and promote growth.

Count of mentions in open-ended survey responses to:  
What asset or attraction within the county should be  
promoted most to attract tourists?



- Natural resources and/or outdoor activities are prominent in three of the top four categories
- Parks and recreation was mentioned 90 times and includes a range of things like municipal and County parks for enjoying nature, park-based activities for learning and recreation, recreation rentals, and hosting sporting events

Additional categories of “Unsure/None” and “County Focus” were identified beyond listed assets gleaned from the open-ended responses.

Q: What asset or attraction within the county should be promoted most to attract tourists?

#### Unsure / None – 81 Responses

##### Respondents Examples:

- “I cannot think of any.”
- “no opinion”
- “?”
- “IDK”
- “No lo sé.” (I do not know.)
- “Ha. There isn’t one at this time.”
- “I don’t believe we have anything special to provide tourists in Kankakee.”

#### County Focus – 6 Responses

##### Respondent examples:

- “I think we should worry about the people who live in Kankakee before worrying about if we have tourists here”
- “I care less about tourists and more about who lives here.”
- “We are not a tourist destination so none. Focus on people who live and work here.”
- “We need to take care of our own first. Mental health in our area is troubling. Update Diamond point with turf then build the Bourbonnais interchange. It’s already a province tourist attraction. Mental health is a mess here.”



# Collaboration, pride, and hope in the future are mindsets that can be leveraged to meet needs and support change.

## Collaboration



- When asked, "What's works well in Kankakee County?" the most common response shared by a majority of interviewees is "Collaboration."
- A spirit of collaboration expressed by municipal leaders and fostered by a vision for regional impact at the County level was credited for much of the recent change and improvement across the County.

## Pride in the community



- In interviews and focus groups, several participants shared stories of proudly being connected to or rooted in Kankakee for many generations.
- Other community members expressed a sense of pride in what Kankakee County contributes to the local and national economy, infrastructure, and food supply.

## Hope & Belief in the Future of Kankakee



- Focus group respondents often expressed feelings of hope that, although there are issues in the County, residents and community leaders can work together to build a prosperous and thriving future.
- 51% of survey respondents feel positively about the future of Kankakee and another 30% selected "undecided," suggesting that they are open to seeing the positive impacts of change.
- Youth advocates frequently expressed urgency around improving youth engagement and support across the County with the understanding that, "They are our future. Anything good that will happen will involve our youth." Many also expressed opportunities for older generations to invest their time, experience, and mentorship with the County's young people as a pillar of building a prosperous future for all.

# Recommendations



# In May 2021, the US Government funded the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) with seven categories of use to expedite economic recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“Within the categories of eligible uses, recipients have broad flexibility to decide how best to use this funding to meet the needs of their communities.”

– *The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Fact Sheet*

- Fill revenue shortfalls among these governments
- Provide immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses
- Address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the inequal impact of the pandemic on certain populations
- Support the communities and populations hardest-hit by the COVID-19 crisis\*

Support public health response	Address negative economic impacts caused by COVID-19	Serve the hardest-hit communities and families	Replace lost public sector revenue	Provide premium pay to essential workers	Invest in water and sewer infrastructure	Invest in broadband infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services and programs to contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19</li> <li>• Services to address behavioral healthcare needs exacerbated by the pandemic</li> <li>• Payroll and covered benefits expenses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering assistance to workers and families</li> <li>• Supporting small businesses</li> <li>• Speeding the recovery of the tourism, travel, and hospitality sectors</li> <li>• Rebuilding public sector capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressing health disparities and the social determinants of health</li> <li>• Investments in housing and neighborhoods</li> <li>• Addressing educational disparities</li> <li>• Promoting healthy childhood environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid cuts to government services due to budget shortfalls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize the heroic contributions of essential workers</li> <li>• Provide premium pay directly, or through grants to private employers, to a broad range of essential workers who must be physically present at their jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements to their water and sewer infrastructures, including projects that address the impacts of climate change</li> <li>• Drinking water infrastructure projects</li> <li>• Wastewater infrastructure projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• areas that are currently unserved or underserved— lacking a wireline connection that reliably delivers minimum speeds of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload.</li> <li>• Achieve last-mile connections to households and businesses</li> </ul>

Source: [SLFRP-Fact-Sheet-FINAL1-508A.pdf \(treasury.gov\)](https://www.treasury.gov/press-releases/Pages/2021/05/20210511)





# While the federal government's intention was to broadly empower local leaders, there are defined eligible and ineligible uses of funds.

## Sample Ineligible Uses of ARPA funds:

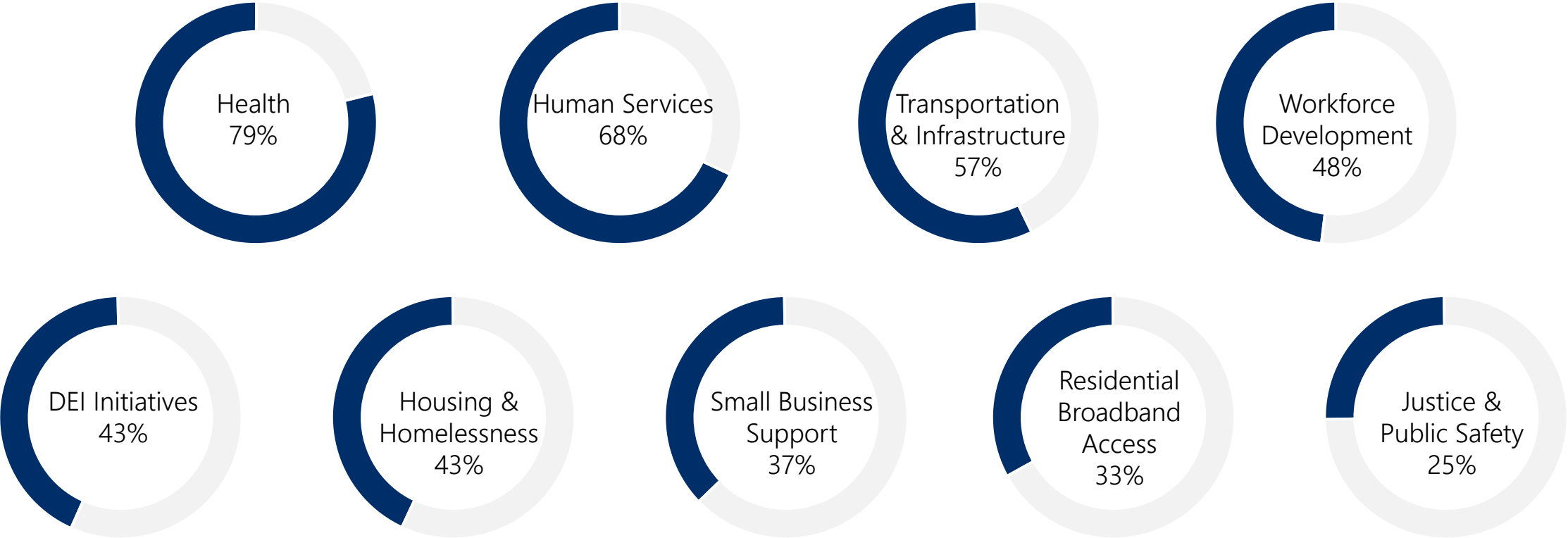
- x To directly or indirectly offset a reduction in net tax revenue due to a change in law from 3/3/2021 through the last day of the fiscal year in which the funds provided have been spent
- x Deposits to a pension fund
- x Funding debt service
- x Legal settlements or judgments
- x Deposits to rainy day funds or financial reserves
- x Costs incurred prior to 3/3/2021

A full list including examples of eligible and ineligible uses is available from the U.S. Treasury.

Source: [SLFRP-Fact-Sheet-FINAL1-508A.pdf \(treasury.gov\)](#), p. 8.



As of Nov. 2021, counties nationwide reported ARPA fund allocations that prioritized health, human services, infrastructure and workforce development.

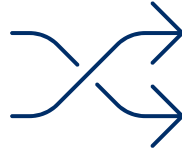


Source: National Association of Counties, [Counties and the ARPA Recovery Fund: Executive Summary \(naco.org\)](https://www.naco.org/research-and-policy/2021-counties-and-the-arpa-recovery-fund-executive-summary)



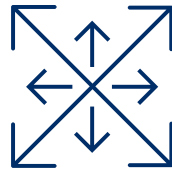
County leaders can impact community needs by focusing on efforts that drive structural change, foster collaborative multi-functional infrastructure, and transform youth development and mental health.

#### Recommendation 1



Target investments that drive structural change in society.

#### Recommendation 2

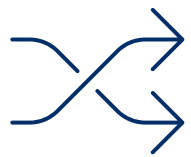


Target collaborations in multi-functional infrastructure.

#### Recommendation 3



Target transformative projects for mental health and youth development.



# R1: Target investments that drive structural change in society.



Invest time and resources into activities that can impact the way community members view themselves and others.

Example activities include:

- a. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) workshops among various racial and ethnic groups.
- b. Trust-building exercises among law enforcement and community members.



Create opportunities for young people to play active roles in municipal and county government to increase their buy-in and influence on the future of the County.

Example engagement opportunity:

- a. Establish a County-wide Youth Advisory Council – charter a group of young people to participate in and represent the voice of their generation at County meetings. A County-level council could sit at the apex of municipal councils, expanding opportunities for young people to engage with their local government and take ownership of driving change in their communities.



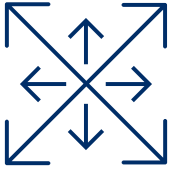
Explore innovative ways to increase access to education, increase utilization of existing programs and resources, and expand offerings. Include formation that goes beyond the classroom and focuses on mentorship and workforce development, especially for:

- a. youth and young adults ages 12-18
- b. Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and other racial or ethnic minority demographics
- c. native Spanish speakers



Capitalize on momentum from recent housing assessments to align efforts for retaining housing while increasing inventory and affordability of the market overall.

- a. Work with landlords to stabilize rents and provide resources for needed upgrades and repairs.
- b. Explore community redevelopment models that increase paths to homeownership, drive stability, and build equity in the community such as housing cooperatives, community land trusts, and community housing improvement programs (CHIP).



## R2: Target collaborations in multi-functional infrastructure.



Promote a “no wrong door” approach for anyone needing services in the County by developing systems and tools that enable service providers to connect residents with all available supportive services.

Example system upgrade:

- a. County-wide digital intake center – a single point of contact for anyone seeking support services, whether provided by the County, municipality, or private entity, to collect the high-level information required to establish a cross-agency profile, serve the user’s immediate support request, help them identify other services for which they may be eligible, and then connect them to the correct resources to access those service. Must be in English and Spanish.



Focus on developing safe community spaces in public areas that youth can congregate.

Examples include:

- a. Upgrade, expand, add new parks and recreation facilities across the county to included youth-focused gathering spaces, flexible programming space, remote work centers, and day-use office space for service providers.
- b. Upgrade community school buildings and other education-related facilities to promote positive self-image, positive peer-to-peer interaction, and value in education.



Create residential housing corridors that bring together home life and community interaction.

Example recommendations from other assessments:

- a. Address housing retention for renters at risk of losing housing whether due to lack of affordability or poor condition of the housing.
- b. Explore zoning changes that increase opportunity to repair, redevelop, or construct affordable housing.
- c. Remove dilapidated and abandoned properties and replace with intentionally designed community-based residential infrastructure.



Develop a social and economic plan to leverage the Kankakee River for years to come, such as an all-County river development plan that highlights access to, protection of, use of, and enjoyment of the river in all communities along the river in the County.



## R3: Target transformative projects for mental health and youth development.

The county should seek proposals related to mental health and youth development efforts that transform the way the community understands and delivers these services and supports the target stakeholders.

### Key transformative areas for MH & Youth:



Social engagement



Community interaction



Outdoor activity



Skill development

### Transformative projects often feature some or all of these characteristics:

- Use existing resources in new ways
- Pair tools, strengths, and assets from adjacent services or stakeholders
- Forge unprecedented partnerships with seemingly unlikely allies
- User-based design
- Community driven and engage new audiences

**TRANSFORMATION:** Transformative thinking requires alternative perspectives, concept borrowing, non-traditional collaborations, risk taking, room for failure, and an adaptive mindset to learn-as-you-go. Very frequently, established program leaders and long-standing institutions struggle to innovate service design and delivery to meet needs in new, more holistic, sustainable, and efficient ways. Familiarity with existing services and systems, perceived dependence on heavily-invested platforms, and confirmation bias as the service owner can all lead to blind spots and “+1” thinking for service evolution.

**“+1” THINKING:** This most common type of service or product evolution is characterized by incremental improvement in the use or efficiency of a product or service. Typical “+1” incremental service evolutions often involve applying an existing technology to an existing service, such as building a scheduling app to replace a phone-based appointment system or using virtual appointments to replace in-person visits.

# The County's next steps should continue to elevate the voices of stakeholders and proactively align county-wide and municipal efforts to address community needs.

<b>1. Communicate Findings</b>	Inform stakeholders of assessment findings and their contributions to influencing County action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to promote a transparent process and reflect stakeholder contributions to future development</li> <li>• Set expectations regarding next steps the County will take</li> </ul>
<b>2. Conduct focus groups</b>	Conduct targeted focus groups for essential stakeholders who may be underrepresented in the 2022 needs assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County residents ages 12-18 years old and/or in grades 6-12</li> <li>• Residents of Hopkins Park and Pembroke Township</li> <li>• Native Spanish speakers across the County, especially within the City of Kankakee</li> </ul>
<b>3. Develop decision criteria</b>	Outline the priorities and key drivers that will guide funding allocations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain transparency and set expectations for County stakeholders</li> <li>• Maintain leadership focus on the most important activities for the County</li> </ul>
<b>4. Create a consolidated action plan</b>	Collaborate with municipal leaders and develop a consolidated approach to all action plans from this and other recent assessments to address community needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify opportunities for system-level collaborations</li> <li>• Create a sector/impact-based "map" to avoid duplication, align community investments and maximize efforts</li> <li>• Identify required outcomes and desired success metrics</li> <li>• Allows for tracking of investments by geographic areas (municipality, zip code, etc.) and fund type (such as tax levies or COVID relief measures—ARPA, PPP, CARES act, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>5. Build on systems change and "seed + sustain" opportunities</b>	Remain abreast of other funding opportunities that align with County needs, especially focusing on systemic initiatives that incentivize cross-sector collaboration or those that sustain efforts catalyzed by County or local municipality investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u><a href="#">IL Healthcare Transformation Collaboratives</a></u></li> <li>• <u><a href="#">Activating Relationships for Systemic Equity (ARISE)</a></u></li> <li>• Related cross-sector advisement from nonprofit, health, and business leaders</li> <li>• Consider establishing a <u><a href="#">708 Mental Health Board</a></u> to fund continued investments into mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities at the county or township level(s)</li> </ul>



# Appendix





# Appendix: Workshops you would attend if available locally/virtual: Other (please specify)

Cont. Edu / Professional Dev./ Career Training	Taxes/ Financial Lit. / Investing/ Homebuying	Household / Community	Retirement	Learn a Language	Leadership Development / Diversity	Grant Writing
Marketing	In depth financial-such as what questions/concerns, etc. to take to a financial advisor	I'm an encouraged learner in many aspects. I'm willing to learn anything to help myself, household, and community in many ways.	I'm nearly at retirement age.	Spanish as a second language	Leadership or diversity workshops	Grant writing
Trade course	Advanced financial literacy - retirement, investing, etc.	Cultural History	Retirement	Spanish for second language	leadership development	Grant writing
Professional continuing education	How to purchase a home classes would be great as well as how to qualify for grants.	assisting with social services	Retirement planning	Learn Spanish	Career development as a leader of color	
Workshops pertaining to my current profession of teaching	Taxes	Information on what is available in Kankakee.	Retirement planning, Understanding Medicare	learning sign language	Public speaking	
Professional development	Home Economics	Anything to enhance my life is beneficial to me and my family as well as the community.	Special interest activities in retirement	ASL		
Continued computer skills and training on specific programs (Excel, QuickBooks)	Landlord assistance and training, How to pay less taxes legally	Classes on becoming a foster parent, classes on coping as a caregiver for the elderly. Classes on parenting. Classes on resources for the elderly.	More senior programs			
Career training	Financing for a business.	Homemaking efficiency, How to make routines and schedules				
Microsoft	Real Estate Investment	general well being				
Lifelong learning courses	Business management					
	How to become rich					





# 2022 Community Needs Assessment Summary

September 6, 2022

Prepared for the County of Kankakee, IL



## Content

This assessment summary is a companion to the full *2022 Community Needs Assessment Report* produced by Respark Leadership Consulting (Respark). The full report can be obtained from the Kankakee County administration office.

## Acknowledgements

The Kankakee County 2022 Community Needs Assessment was conducted by Respark Leadership Consulting on behalf of Kankakee County. While Respark operates as an independent entity, the vision for this work and elements of the execution would not have been possible without the support of elected officials, organizational leaders, and committed individuals throughout the County. Therefore, the assessment team would like to formally thank the individuals and institutions below for their time and effort during the assessment period.

In addition, we would also like to acknowledge the residents and stakeholders of Kankakee County who have contributed over 420 hours of feedback via participation in the online survey, focus groups, workshops, individual interviews, or some combination of these. This commitment of time and thoughtful responses makes it possible for our assessment team to offer the outcomes of this assessment for the benefit of community decision making and overall improvement to the quality of life in Kankakee County.

- Kankakee County Board, Chairman Andrew Wheeler
- City of Kankakee, Mayor Christopher Curtis
- Kankakee Community College, President Dr. Michael Boyd
- Rincon Family Services, Eddy Borrayo, CEO

## Authorship

This report summary and its associated pieces are the combined product of Respark Leadership Consulting LLC. Any custom tools, methods, or approaches used herein are considered proprietary except where noted otherwise. The contributing authors to all pieces of the assessment report are:

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## Questions

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## Background

As governments worldwide respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, one such federal program in the U.S. provides \$350 billion for state and local governments. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (“ARPA”) aims to mitigate negative financial impacts of the pandemic on local governments, individuals, and businesses. ARPA funds are granted to a county or local municipality and then allocated to fill government revenue shortfalls, offer immediate financial support to households and businesses, and address systemic health and financial challenges that contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic on certain populations and communities.

The County of Kankakee (“the County”) received \$21.3 million in ARPA funds. A portion of the funds are envisioned to support County-wide needs and strengthening of related social service capacity via grants/distributions to local organizations. The County contracted Respark Leadership Consulting to conduct a community needs assessment (“the assessment”) and to make recommendations related to future social service RFQs/RFPs. This narrative is a companion summary of the full assessment report which is intended to inform County prioritization and decision-making for targeted investments, especially- but not limited to- leveraging ARPA funds that can have meaningful impact on community needs.



## Assessment Approach

Respark held a series of meetings with County leadership to define the assessment scope and process, focused on five areas:

- 1) Workforce development
- 2) Housing
- 3) Business and economic development
- 4) Mental and physical health
- 5) Law enforcement and recidivism



Interviews were then conducted with 41 individuals, including 11 elected officials, to validate the themes of interest within these five areas. The interviews subsequently informed development of an online survey and a series of in-person focus groups that were open to all County residents. The survey was available in English and Spanish with separate versions for youth and adults. In-person focus groups were also offered in English and Spanish and some targeted certain stakeholder sub-populations such as business owners, Black or African American community members, Hispanic or Latinx community members, elected officials, or teenagers.

The Respark team also conducted an historical data review which included documents from recent community health, land, and housing assessments dating from 2018 to present. This information was used in part to avoid duplicative efforts and to corroborate findings from the current assessment. Additionally, these assessments provided a view into other County-wide activities that may offer opportunities for collaboration on needs assessment recommendations.

## Participant Snapshot

Over 1,075 people provided input into the 2022 community needs assessment through interviews, surveys, workshops, and focus groups. Generally, the sample reflects the County population in most age, race, and location demographics. However, there are certain demographic cohorts that were likely underrepresented including Black/African Americans, youth ages 13-17, and Spanish speakers. Survey responses skew toward higher income, education levels, rates of home ownership, and fulltime employment status compared to other County demographic assessments. The volume of participation in the survey achieves a 95% confidence level for the majority of survey questions. Despite any skew in the data, the assessment team feels that the findings are broadly representative of County residents' needs and sentiments, and therefore can be used to inform leadership decisions.



## Findings

The assessment findings are organized by the 5 key areas of interest. Additional findings that include broader themes and observations follow summarily. Select findings for each section include:

### ***Workforce Development***

- More than 10% of respondents are currently looking for other jobs and some face barriers related to pay, skills, and experience.
- Almost half of respondents lack awareness of job training or career development programs and report that they would participate in educational opportunities provided close to home.
- Hispanic/Latinx respondents have lower rates of vocational and college-based degrees, while more than 28% report having not completed a high school equivalency.

### ***Housing***

- Nearly 36% of renters indicated their housing may become insecure within 12 months.
- Concerns about scarce affordable or quality housing inventory shared in focus groups describe a negative development cycle that is reinforced in prior community housing studies.

### ***Business & Economic Development***

- While a majority of respondents have positive sentiment regarding the County's future, 30% are undecided and between 23% - 36% report not having enough income to cover basic needs.
- Nearly 30% of parents of children 12 years and younger face uncertainty related to childcare in the next 12 months; half report challenges with affordability and availability.
- Despite Covid-19 limiting tourism and many residents feeling undecided about the impact of recent efforts to increase tourism, almost 70% believe continuing these efforts is important.

### ***Mental and Physical Health***

- 34%-47% had negative mental health impacts in the last 12 months.
- Almost 4% have faced challenges because of substance use in the last 12 months.
- 32%-42% of respondents are unaware of mental health resources in the County.
- Mental health was an area specifically called out as worsening because of the pandemic and its continued impact.

### ***Law Enforcement & Recidivism***

- There is broad support for law enforcement, and respondents feel more can be done to strengthen community relationships.
- About 1 in 4 respondents disagree that they feel safe around the County.
- Most believe their community would benefit from an additional localized law enforcement office.



**Additional Findings** The needs of the community do not exist as individual challenges but rather are often the symptom of more complex, inter-related dynamics. Some additional findings were observed by the assessment team that extend beyond the five areas of focus. These findings may provide helpful context to understanding the experiences of County residents.

- Sense of “community” is localized, with many not generally identifying with the County.
- Racial and ethnic divisions exist and are understood by many to be part of the root cause of existing needs. There is a desire to overcome these and be viewed as a progressive county by some, including private citizens and public officials.
- Access to government programs is unequal, with the majority of Spanish-speaking respondents finding multiple barriers to participate (language barriers, cultural stigma, immigration fears).
- The social determinants of health noted in this community assessment are validated by other recent health assessments. Not addressing the underlying determinants can lead to repeated patterns of mental and physical health needs.

## Priority Needs and Key Assets

Assessment methods explored both resident needs as well as perceptions of key assets that exist throughout the County.

**“Need”** Defined as, “anything that is essential for a community member’s well-being as a participant in the society.” Four types of needs were identified and explored during the assessment. Categories are for the purpose of analysis and are not mutually exclusive.

- 1) Absolute need: Things that sustain human existence, such as food, shelter, clean water.
- 2) Relative need: Things required to thrive in a specific community as it exists, such as a stable internet connection to participate in the remote workforce or remote education.
- 3) Perceived need: Things that residents believe that they need, such as a car or cell phone.
- 4) Expressed need: Things that residents have asked government and local institutions to assist, such as road maintenance or expanded ambulance service.

**Prioritization** Within each category, the assessment team prioritized the following areas of need:

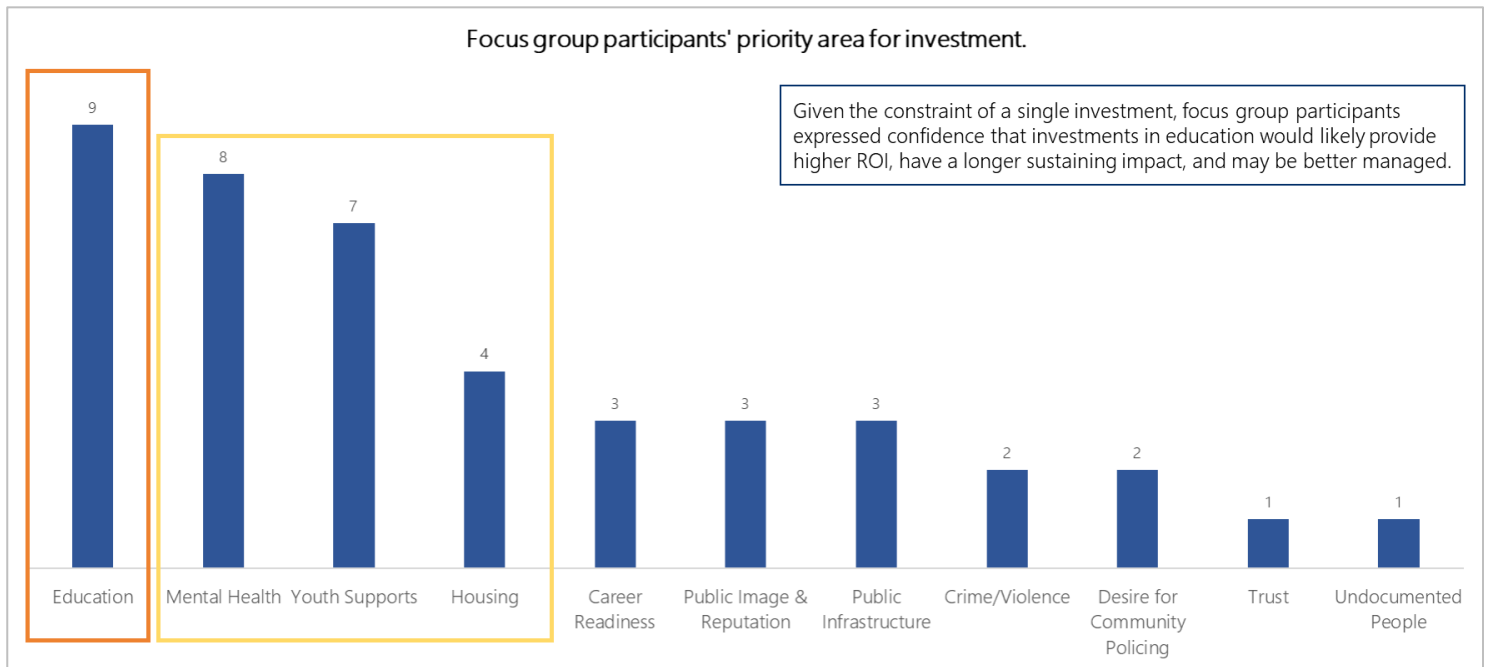
- 1) Absolute: Sense of safety- mental health, public spaces, immigration status
- 2) Relative: Employment with a family-sustaining wage, access to affordable childcare
- 3) Perceived: Resources for the undocumented, various topics related to education
- 4) Expressed: Public safety





Focus group participants named mental health, youth supports, and housing as key areas to address. When restricted to choose only one area for investment, education became the primary focus. This is likely because:

- Investments in education can build on a system that already exists and has a structure for coordination.
- Education institutions are trusted community resources.
- Education is a single point that can have long-term impact on the identified priority needs (youth supports, mental health, and housing).



**“Asset”** Defined as, “those things which are or can be leveraged to advance the goals of the community.” Asset categories are for the purpose of analysis and are not mutually exclusive. The five categories are:

- 1) Financial Resources
- 2) Natural Resources
- 3) Institutions
- 4) Individuals
- 5) Mindsets & Beliefs

Available assets to help drive change in the County hinge on hope and a collaborative mindset. The most commonly identified resource among assessment participants was the Kankakee River and other natural resources, including the Kankakee River State Park and other municipal parks. Teens, youth, and newly elected officials are perceived as under-utilized, while the individual leaders and associated local offices or organizations of the NAACP, the Sheriff’s department, the State’s Attorney, and the Economic Alliance of Kankakee County were all repeatedly named as existing strengths that should be built on. Most respondents expressed a sense of pride in the





community and many stated that existing and future regional collaborations were key leverage points for continued growth.

Survey respondents consistently ranked Public Safety & Justice Institutions and Parks & Recreation Centers among the most important assets that municipalities should support.

Select the 3 most important assets your municipality should support to better serve your community:

Municipal Residents	Parks & Recreation Centers	Kankakee River	Public Library	Public Safety & Justice Institutions	Community Events (festivals)	Riverfront	Downtown Kankakee	Community Faith-Based Non-Profits Organizations (e.g., United Way, YMCA) Congregations	
Kankakee	130	56	49	121	63	51	74	104	39
Momence	6	6	1	4	4	3	1	2	1
Bourbonnais	103	40	44	121	45	32	32	56	28
Bradley	68	29	27	73	34	15	11	34	12
Manteno	49	21	16	49	30	20	15	26	10
Pembroke Twnp & Hopkins Park	7	1	4	5	8	1	2	5	6
Herschler	8	3	6	18	5	2	2	7	8
Limestone	8	7	1	15	5	4	3	2	3
Aroma Park	6	5	2	5	1	1	3	2	2
Otto Township	1			3		2		2	1
Chebanse	1			3	1	1		2	
Unincorporated Kankakee County	25	32	13	41	17	18	24	19	12

Communities with fewer than 3 responses: Bonfield, Buckingham, Dupage, Essex, Ganeer, Gilman, Grant Park, Milford, Reddick

## Recommendations

The full report includes examples of possible investment efforts for each of these recommendation areas.

### Target investments that drive structural change in society.



- ✓ Invest time and resources into the way community members view themselves and others.
- ✓ Create opportunities for young people to play active roles in municipal and county government to increase their buy-in and influence on the future of the County.
- ✓ Explore innovative ways to increase access to education, increase utilization of existing programs and resources, and expand offerings. Include formation that goes beyond the classroom and focuses on mentorship and workforce development.
- ✓ Capitalize on momentum from recent housing assessments to align efforts for helping resident retain current housing while increasing housing inventory and affordability of the market overall.

### Target collaborations in multi-functional infrastructure.



- ✓ Promote a “no wrong door” approach for anyone needing services in the County by developing systems and tools that enable providers to connect residents with all options.
- ✓ Focus on developing safe community spaces in public areas where youth can congregate.



**Target transformative projects for mental health and youth development.**



- ✓ Create residential housing corridors that bring together home life and community interaction.
- ✓ Develop a social and economic plan to leverage the Kankakee River for years to come, such as an all-County river development plan that highlights access to, protection of, use of, and enjoyment of the river in all adjacent communities.
- ✓ Pursue interventions for mental health and youth development that transform the way the community understands and delivers these services.
- ✓ Focus specifically on changes for increasing social engagement, community interaction, outdoor activity, and development of life skills.
- ✓ Prioritize projects that use existing resources in new ways, incorporate user-based design, forge partnerships with seemingly unlikely allies, engages new audiences, or pairs tools, strengths, and assets from adjacent services or stakeholders.

## Next Steps

The County's next steps should continue to elevate the voices of stakeholders and proactively align county-wide and municipal efforts to address community needs. This includes:

- 1) **Communicate findings of the community needs assessment** so that stakeholders are aware of its outcome and how their contributions made a difference in guiding County action.
- 2) **Conduct additional focus groups** for essential stakeholders who may have been underrepresented in this assessment. This includes youth ages 12-18, residents from Hopkins Park and Pembroke Township, and native Spanish speakers.
- 3) **Develop decision criteria** to outline the priorities and key drivers that will guide funding allocations. Articulating explicit decision criteria can help maintain transparency, set expectations for stakeholders, and ensure leaders stay focused on the most important activities for the County.
- 4) **Create a consolidated action plan** from this and other recent assessments to align responses to community needs. Mapping these investments, their recommendations, and outcomes can reduce duplication and foster collaboration for sustaining community change.
- 5) **Build on systems change and "seed + sustain" opportunities.** Remain abreast of other funding that aligns with County needs, especially focusing on systemic initiatives that incentivize cross-sector collaboration or those that sustain efforts catalyzed by County or local municipality investments.





# 2022 Community Needs Assessment

## Appendix 1

### Open-ended Responses

September 6, 2022

Prepared for the County of Kankakee, IL



**Survey Question: Workshops you'd attend if close/virtual: Other (please specify)**

46 open-ended responses:

- Real Estate Investment
- how to become rich
- Anything to enhance my life is beneficial to me and my family as well as the community.
- Leadership or diversity workshops
- Marketing
- Grant writing
- Advanced financial literacy - retirement, investing, etc.
- NA
- I'm nearly at retirement age.
- Professional continuing education
- leadership development
- Spanish as a second language
- 'How to purchase a home' classes would be great as well as 'How to qualify for grants.'
- Spanish for second language
- Retirement
- Taxes
- learning sign language
- Learn Spanish
- Retirement planning
- Information on what is available in Kankakee.
- Career development as a leader of color
- Home Economics
- Classes on becoming a foster parent, classes on coping as a caregiver for the elderly. Classes on parenting. Classes on resources for the elderly.
- ASL
- Workshops pertaining to my current profession of teaching
- Landlord assistance and training, How to pay less taxes legally
- Professional development
- Career training
- Retirement planning, Understanding Medicare
- Continued computer skills and training on specific programs (Excel, Quickbooks)
- Assisting with social services
- Financing for a business.
- Cultural History
- In depth financial-such as what questions/concerns, etc. to take to a financial advisor
- Microsoft
- Homemaking efficiency, How to make routines and schedules
- Special interest activities in retirement
- I'm an encouraged learner in many aspects. I'm willing to learn anything to help myself, household, and community in many ways.
- Business management
- Public speaking



- More senior programs
- Lifelong learning courses
- General well being
- Grant writing
- More major company closer home: Amazon, Costco
- Trade course

**Survey Question: Barriers that prevent you from using government services: Other (please specify)**

91 open-ended responses

- Not eligible
- Don't qualify for services in which the government steals my money for.
- Don't think I qualify. Household utilities have quadrupled over the last 18 years and it's getting harder and harder to pay these bills.
- Services don't answer the phone or give out numbers that do not work.
- I think this area is very aware of how to obtain free services
- Don't qualify
- Not eligible for the services offered
- This is not necessarily my issue but others I know.
- Qualifications
- I'm not a shitbag
- No access to technology such as a computer and internet access
- Make too much but still can't make it
- People are frustrated with the forms and if not completed appropriately there is delay after delay resulting frustration and giving up
- I don't need these types of services
- I don't qualify
- Many of my neighbors are undocumented and can't access government services due to requirements
- No more handouts
- Have not tried to use these services
- Those are all services that come from my paycheck
- None
- Right over the maximum income limit for assistance
- Too timely, people need to work vs wait on the phone for hours
- With my full time and part time job I make just too much to qualify for snap but cannot afford to quit my second job.
- I make too much for assistance.
- Males don't get all help that females get
- At work while service organizations are open
- I make too much money to receive
- Imigrante
- Desconozco si afectaría mi status (carga pública)



- Work for state of Illinois
- Offices are not open when I am available to visit them.
- My income is slightly too high
- Don't qualify/need
- I do not qualify
- Que según ganamos mucho y no calificamos
- Income guidelines are too small
- I would not be eligible for these
- Having worked in resource and referral services for a long time in our community, a BIG problem is lack of awareness for resources. Services like 211 or the Kan-I Help website are available to help people find services, but too many people are not aware of these resource and referral options.
- Do not qualify based on full time employment
- We don't qualify for services due to our income
- My household income is " too much"
- I make too much money to qualify for any of these.
- The guidelines say I don't qualify but we are struggling.
- Make too much money for programs?
- I avoid using government services.
- There is no help for the ones who are just getting by. No help for the ones in the middle.
- I've never attempted
- I am fine
- Very difficult to get local DHS office to answer phones
- I believe people are fearful and too proud to ask for or seek help from local agencies.
- Don't think I qualify at the income level I am at, although the cost of everything has increased so much there is nothing left over
- Income too high
- Most services are only available during working hours, when you work full time it is very difficult to utilize services. It seems like services are meant for non-working people.
- We need to do a better job of supporting the low-income families, making sure they have reliable transportation and child care and access to food. We need to focus on community building, actual relationships with our community, and building local support networks that can be trusted.
- I supposedly make too much. I pay out of my pocket for EVERYTHING. People who receive the benefits end up making more money than I do because of the way this is setup.
- No one answers the phone
- Make too much per their requirements
- I supposedly make too much money to qualify for services
- I work so I don't need these services
- Ability of staff to work with elderly and disabled to fill out paperwork or who don't use computer
- Income qualifications
- Status legales
- Think way too much is given away. Just makes people lazy and dependent
- Need more LGBTQ services local to town
- I do not qualify
- No documento



- Not eligible
- Don't make enough to get by but make too much to qualify for help
- Does not apply
- Lack of coordination of available services
- The programs are very convoluted and the instructions are not clear, even to the staff. Differing instructions depending on who you speak to.
- Make too much
- They go off gross income and not net income. Even being over by \$3 makes me unqualified
- My daughter can't afford daycare and I do it for free. Daycare is too expensive for working families.
- Threshold for services is way lower than a livable wage/income. During the pandemic, while unemployed, even getting child support meant I wasn't qualified for services I needed
- I don't use government services out of distrust.
- Don't qualify
- No needed
- Financial
- Do not need any of these services
- Single people are typically excluded from receiving help.
- Lack of access to human staff to assist. (Offices closed due to COVID and lack of sufficient staffing when office is open. Phone service is horrendous/non-existent. Can't get any human or call back.)
- I work two jobs to make ends meet. I've worked at my current job at Recorder's office for 5 years and part time at a local store for 3 years. I just want to be stable enough but at the same time be present in many ways for my daughters.
- Earn just enough in household to NOT qualify for any assistance
- I am on Medicare
- I don't qualify.
- Do not need the services
- We have snap, QMB, MEDCARE AND MEDICAID, ILLINOIS LICENSE PLATE DISCOUNT
- Make too much money to qualify but not enough to pay all of the basic bills.
- Don't qualify



**Survey Question: Select the 3 most important assets that your municipality should support more to better serve your community.**

**(Select up to 3)**

129 open-ended responses:

- Affordable housing
- Schools
- Removing Indian Oaks Academy from the diversatech neighborhood.
- remove the sand from the river
- Mental health supports and all types of family supports (counseling, parenting classes for ALL ages, support groups)
- INFRASTRUCTURE (roads, sidewalks, etc.)!!!
- Teen centers
- Splash Valley
- Fixed the roads and abandon buildings, fix downtown
- Access to town for those west of 57
- Schools
- Youth rehabilitation programs
- Although I live in Manteno, I believe Kankakee needs investment in order to improve the whole county.
- Get rid of Section 8 Housing
- Mental health services
- Exit 312
- Support strategic business growth across the county
- Childcare
- There is an assumption in this question that the municipality of Kankakee is the emphasis of support for the entire county
- not eligible
- New non profits
- Invest in the people
- Education
- Less welfare and section 8. And more strict on criminals. Quit letting the criminals out
- Lowering ridiculously high property taxes
- We never use the river
- Beatification Projects (lighting, streetscapes, etc.)
- public transportation
- Social service agencies
- Youth programs/childcare
- don't qualify for services in which the government steals my money for.
- Mall
- Definitely I do not support municipalities supporting non-profits
- Improved training for public safety/justice institutions
- Affordable housing and affordable medical care
- More activities for children
- Grocery store or dollar store
- Public safety





- Minority awareness
- giving county employees a raise
- e services
- Don't think I qualify. Household utilities have quadrupled over the last 18 years and it's getting harder and harder to pay these bills.
- Organizaciones que ayuden directamente a la comunidad
- Better walkability and more trees planted along court street to provide shade during increasingly hot summers.
- community care through providing basic needs, and mental health services
- affordable housing
- Adequate street lighting throughout the city
- Roads they need to be fixed
- Housings
- Arreglar la carreteras de Kankakee
- Neighborhood rehab/ investments
- Resources/funding to aid low income individuals, a homeless shelter and case management, transportation for seniors
- Supporting small/local businesses
- Older Adult Resources
- The SCHOOLS!!!!!!
- Don't know
- Kid areas for activities
- Support farmers
- Pet rescue, adoption, spay/neuter services; sustainable energy and resources
- Programs to invest in at risk youth to reduce gun violence
- utilize other resources besides the same funded non-profits that do not produce results
- Stop pissing away taxpayer money.
- Services for the elderly
- Pave the roads
- More manufacturing jobs. We have a lack of good jobs.
- Support local businesses to generate jobs
- Acceso a programas de salud y a doctores
- Veterans
- Free activities like hiking/biking trails, with camping allowed (like the Appalachian Trail)
- Mental health services
- Hydro electric plant
- The number one priority must be assistance to the homeless population in Kankakee. The city and county have turned a blind eye to this demographic. On another topic the care and maintenance of the Parks and recreation facilities in the City of Kankakee is woefully inadequate to the point that I am embarrassed for the Parks and Rec Department.
- LGBTQ resource centers
- 3 choices to this question is not enough. The river and riverfront is tied to parks and recreation. The library is tied to downtown. Community events bring us together and bring people into our community. Our United Way and YMCA are positive change catalysts. Our faith-based organizations & congregations support unity, resilience and strong



family values. Each one of these choices impacts the others. Safety is a number one priority. Our downtown is a hub that long term residents say we were known for and yearn to have it back.

- Safety
- We need a skatepark that is worth something. It would draw tourists from all over if you actually spend the fucking money and not give us 5 fucking ramps \*cough cough\* Bourbonnais skatepark is dog shit
- Sidewalks
- Quality public transportation
- Community violence
- Community poverty
- Tourism
- Parenting programs
- Taxation on home owners
- Family housing too many board up
- Eventos comunitarios serían fenomenal sin embargo la inseguridad es mucha ya nadie está seguro en las calles de Kankakee
- Housing, rental assistance that does to requires 50 pages to fill out
- Homes
- There is nothing for children aged 13 to 17 to do in our community. Why won't you support KSD 111 building a community center?
- Mental health
- Youth
- Education and jobs training
- The kids need something to do because the parents aren't parenting
- Safety of road condition
- Senior citizens
- Mental health/ Domestic violence
- Medical and recreational marijuana dispensary to bring in tax \$
- Transportation
- Schools
- Homeless
- Adequate storm sewers in Heritage Point
- Services to seniors to stay in own home
- Highway maintenance
- We need to find a way to help the mall. The empty building looks so sad. I think that it would be nice to have each town in the county take care of a store, and call the building The Kankakee Landing or Kankakee Commons. It would be a great place to host local events in the winter time.
- Youth activities
- No cash bail
- Renovate the county courthouse.
- Sustainability Efforts
- Look into consolidating rural fire departments. Response time is poor to non-existent due to declining manpower. It doesn't make sense to purchase and maintain 8+ vehicles when you can only get one (or none) out the door. Check with Kancomm for the number of "passes" or multiple "pages" occurring for emergency calls.
- Bring in manufacturing companies



- Mental health
- Affordable childcare
- Reduce fossil fuel usage by 50% by 2030.
- Reducing density/prevalence of poverty
- Jobs, crime, drugs
- Invest in the poor communities throughout Kankakee, and Improvement where the poor people live please it's a lot can be done for the poor section of Kankakee.
- Transportation for elderly or sick or disabled residents
- Not for profit community resources
- Libraries for all in the county
- State park
- Education
- County board members and township officials that inform residents of what's going on in their township.
- Fill empty businesses
- Cleaning the area
- Community centers, supervised activities for children
- High speed internet for rural areas
- Lower home taxes
- Infrastructure
- More Amazon companies in Kankakee, than being all up north
- Mental health and health programs





# 2022 Community Needs Assessment

## Appendix 2

### Open-ended Responses: Tourism Assets

September 6, 2022

Prepared for the County of Kankakee, IL



**Survey Question: What asset or attraction within the county should be promoted most to attract tourists? (Fill in the blank)**

708 open-ended responses:

1. Modern mall
2. Puestos de comida
3. Parkes grandez
4. Las calles
5. Kankakee River
6. All of our area's small businesses!
7. Downtown
8. The river
9. Downtown and upcoming river front
10. The community activities
11. River
12. River walk
13. Local businesses, arts/artists, music festivals. The riverfront project could create a desirable place to spend extended amounts of time/money.
14. River
15. Local owned businesses
16. Festivals
17. The River, natural parks and recreation
18. River
19. park district centers and events
20. Riverfront, downtown, recreational parks.
21. Kankakee River
22. Kankakee river
23. Kankakee speedway,
24. Festivals, restaurants
25. Ice Valley, State Park, Farmer's Market, Grapes & Hops, Indian Caves
26. State Park
27. Festival and events
28. River, parks, and entertainment
29. River and riverfront
30. River, splash valley, downtown Manteno
31. river front camp grounds
32. Kankakee Riverfront
33. Splash valley, restaurants, special events at Olivet, kid friendly activities like Adventure commons mini golf, downtown Manteno, ice skating, etc
34. Kankakee River and the state park and surrounding communities
35. State Park
36. Parks and river Front
37. Youth sports venue
38. K3 river?
39. The Kankakee River and Diamond Point Park in Bourbonnais.
40. The Riverfront project in the City of Kankakee
41. State Park and the river
42. Perry Farm and the River
43. State park
44. Parks, river
45. river front parks
46. Downtown Kankakee and all the Festivals, Farmer's Market, and river trips
47. Kankakee River, Ball parks/diamonds, State Park
48. The fairs
49. The state park or Splash Valley
50. Free or low cost activities for youth. Festivals, community gatherings, cultural celebrations.
51. State park, sports facilities, river area
52. The river
53. Kankakee River, Ice Rink, Parks
54. Farmers market, music events
55. Shopping, concerts, winery, brewery, theater, park district events,
56. Kankakee State Park
57. Festivals
58. State park
59. Local festivals Riverfront
60. Area golf courses, State Park, Kankakee River
61. The Kankakee River and Music Fest
62. State parks/ natural elements
63. The river
64. Riverfront Diamond point for tournaments Legacy park for tournaments
65. The natural attractions that are in this area. (State park, river, forest preserve etc)
66. Kankakee River
67. State park , perry farm
68. River
69. Kankakee River/ State Park
70. State Park
71. State Park
72. State Park
73. Kankakee River and County wide Activities
74. Non chain restaurants and local businesses. Lots of folks visit the state park from the suburbs every weekend and may not know what is available.
75. I am looking forward to Bourbonnais' new project. Concerts, events, etc...
76. Music festival
77. The Kankakee River
78. Kankakee River
79. Recreation, higher end restaurants, special events, farmers market



80. Nature, recreation, historical points of interest
81. State park, canoe rentals, recreation
82. Kankakee State Park
83. Baseball games at the ballfields in Bourbonnais.
84. The historic section. The River!
85. Barn Quilt attraction promotion Individual community historical society support/marketing
86. Kankakee River and State Park - having activities to enjoy the outdoors
87. Kankakee river state park
88. River
89. River, parks, sporting events increased draws to downtown
90. The river is about all we got
91. River
92. County fair
93. Airport, Kankakee State Park, Kankakee River, many community festivals.
94. Bourbonnais new campus plan!
95. Programs for children and young adults
96. Festivals, Farmers Market,
97. Local shopping and state parks
98. Splash valley
99. River
100. The Kankakee River
101. Downtown and river
102. Riverfront project/Currents of Kankakee
103. The river
104. Kankakee River
105. K3 River
106. Festival
107. Perry Farm Park
108. Parks, Kankakee River, Music Fests
109. Riverfront/river
110. State park
111. Diamond point ballparks Kankakee river
112. Northfield mall
113. Riverfront town centers in Bradley and Bourbonnais
114. Kankakee River State Park Downtown Kankakee
115. Downtown Kankakee and riverfront project. All fests in county
116. The River/ Riverfront development; sports invitationals, theatre performances, Olivet events, festivals
117. Riverfront
118. The Kankakee River as well as the Kankakee River State Park
119. River
120. Frank Lloyd Wright Bradley House
121. State park
122. Kankakee River
123. The Kankakee River
124. river & state park
125. Kankakee River-Perry Farm
126. The river is the greatest asset we have. It should be protected and maintained.
127. state park
128. River State Park
129. River
130. For local people the Kankakee County Museum is not promoted enough. For those coming from outside of town, the Perry farm or the state park are great ones.
131. Farmers market
132. Riverfront
133. State Park
134. The state park
135. Kankakee River and a downtown hotel or state park lodge
136. The Kankakee River
137. The river should be utilized more along with the state park
138. The river.
139. River
140. Kankakee River
141. River, farmers market, festivals
142. Kankakee River
143. River
144. River
145. River/Riverfront
146. River and recreation opportunities
147. Kankakee River
148. Kankakee River
149. Kankakee River
150. River
151. Our parks, our parks are our most beautiful attractions here. They also get the community together!
152. Downtown and Riverfront
153. Kankakee Farmer's Market
154. Schulyer Ave
155. The Farmers Market.
156. State parks
157. Cultural events
158. The four wheeler tracks
159. The parks
160. Na
161. River
162. Ricer
163. Perry Farm, Exploration Station, State park
164. local and small businesses
165. Kankakee County Fair
166. Waterfront



- 167.Kankakee County Fairgrounds. A versatile venue able to support multiple, differing events that would appeal to a wider overall demographic.
- 168.Kankakee River
- 169.Kankakee County Museum and the new River Walk Project
- 170.Bradley house
- 171.River
- 172.Festivales y eventos
- 173.Rio Kankakee
- 174.Es más tranquilo que Chicago para criar a los hijos
- 175.Downtown y parques
- 176.Parques acuáticos eventos familiares restaurantes deportes
- 177.Great attraction, clean environment, etc.
- 178.Outdoor areas/events, such as the State Park, Merchant Street Music Festival, and the Farmer's Market
- 179.Nature?
- 180.Rio
- 181.The development of the Kankakee Riverfront.
- 182.River Front
- 183.The Kankakee River and the ongoing riverfront projects.
- 184.Dispensary
- 185.Downtown
- 186.El rio
- 187.State Park
- 188.River walk
- 189.The river
- 190.The Kankakee River
- 191.State Park
- 192.Breweries
- 193.El río de Kankakee y la Feria
- 194.Communities
- 195.Rio de Kankakee
- 196.Parks
- 197.The two main local festivals, I guess.
- 198.Music, museums, restaurants , shopping, things to do
- 199.State Park
- 200.The River
- 201.Kankakee River
- 202.Natural resources
- 203.Cobb Park
- 204.Merchant Street Music Festival
- 205.Kankakee Riverwalk when finally made available
- 206.Downtown
- 207.The Riverfront project, Merchant Street Music Fest, and the Kankakee Farmers' Market come to mind.
- 208.Downtown Kankakee
- 209.Downtown/riverfront
- 210.I think the river is our best asset. However, I really worry about keeping it clean, livable and safe for the wildlife.
- 211.Kankakee River
- 212.The river, glad fest
- 213.Riverfront/downtown
- 214.River
- 215.Riverfront development with restaurants/bars along the river.
- 216.Historic sites, state park, splash valley, downtown Manteno, downtown Kankakee, local breweries
- 217.The Kankakee River, River walk, downtown restaurants
- 218.State park
- 219.Parks
- 220.State Park, Kankakee River
- 221.Police
- 222.Events like Merchant Street Music Fest and Shoe Fest should happen more often.
- 223.State Park
- 224.Festivals
- 225.River and parks
- 226.El Rio, conciertos
- 227.The river
- 228.River
- 229.-Bradley House and other architectural gems in the area -Kankakee River State Park
- 230.The Kankakee State Park
- 231.River
- 232.El Río de Kankakee
- 233.Downtown Manteno
- 234.State park
- 235.River and history of area
- 236.The river, downtown, and the history of the county
- 237.river opportunities
- 238.State Park
- 239.The Kankakee River, Frank Lloyd Wright Home Water Park & Ice Rink Perry Farm
- 240.African American historian in Pembroke that's goes back to slavery instead of putting Pembroke down as the poorest community let's lift it up as a historian site
- 241.Diamond Point Park, Willow haven Park & Nature Center, Perry Farm Park, State Park and its campgrounds
- 242.The river and state park. The wasted opportunity there is crazy
- 243.Downtown Kankakee
- 244.River
- 245.The River, the riverfront
- 246.The river
- 247.the river - that's all we have





248. Parks and boating areas. State park.
249. Festivals
250. River, Parks
251. Manteno Park District's parks are very nice.
252. merchant street fest
253. Kankakee State Park
254. The state park!
255. Dining, local events, museums, recreation
256. The river or state parks.
257. Our festivals and downtown area
258. Splash Valley Perry Farm
259. ONU
260. The river walk, downtown Kankakee, Bird Park.  
Focus more on the farmers market, the local small business owners, and community events. Be loud!!
261. Fair
262. River
263. Downtown Kankakee
264. Farmers market and the Tuesday nights in the park movies
265. State Park
266. All parks, especially the Kankakee River State Park and Perry Farm. These are great attractions for people from the city. The Kankakee River State Park is very under utilized as a destination and has great potential with enough capital.
267. Kankakee River
268. Kankakee river
269. Kankakee River State Park
270. State park
271. State park and Kankakee River
272. Water park
273. Manteno Oktoberfest, Kankakee Merchant Street  
Music Fest, Farmers Market
274. Kankakee River and State Park
275. Ice rink and splash valley
276. less violence
277. Kankakee River
278. Parks & Recreation
279. Sports complexes
280. El río de Kankakee y los parques
281. River
282. Don't know
283. Kankakee State Park Campground
284. State Park Campground
285. Sports complexes
286. The Kankakee River and parks
287. Kankakee River
288. Museums
289. Parks, recreation and river
290. Bradley House
291. River
292. State park
293. Golf courses, State Park, Perry Farm,
294. The River
295. The River is the biggest/best attraction the county has going for it at this time....ag tourism would be a close second
296. Natural resources-river, parks
297. Fairs and Festivals, Kankakee River State Park and Kankakee River
298. State park, Perry Farm.
299. River and parks
300. River
301. Kankakee River
302. Need more festivals
303. Kankakee river
304. No idea
305. Recreation
306. Community festivals, concerts, etc.
307. Boat races - river attractions
308. Hydro plant and river
309. Downtown
310. festivales o eventos sobre el rio
311. Community events
312. Rio
313. Not sure
314. Local parks, business, community
315. Los servicios y apoyos
316. El tren y el rio
317. River, parks, history
318. The river and the Kankakee State Park
319. The river, boating
320. State park
321. Riverfront/state park
322. RIVERFRONT
323. Kankakee River State Park
324. boating/ kayaking , Frank Lloyd Wright house and farmer's market.
325. Traditional historic places
326. merchant street music fest or farmers market
327. Riverfront
328. The Kankakee river
329. The River
330. River
331. River
332. Kankakee River
333. River
334. Kankakee Farmers Market, small businesses weekend get aways
335. Golf courses, parks, river area.
336. River





337. River
338. Kankakee River
339. Events
340. Fair
341. State Park
342. River
343. El río
344. The River
345. Perry farm and the trials through the state park
346. Parques y ríos
347. Rio Kankakee
348. Rio de Kankakee
349. River
350. merchant street music fest
351. Water park, train museum, Frank Lloyd Wright home.
352. River
353. Splash valley, concerts at Cobb Park in the summer, farmers market, library events
354. Restaurants in the city of Kankakee
355. Freedom Festival
356. State Park
357. State parks and river
358. Music
359. State park
360. River
361. Downtown
362. Farmers market
363. Kankakee State Park
364. River activities
365. River and parks
366. downtown
367. El río de Kankakee y sus parques
368. The Market Place
369. State part
370. Eventos en la comunidad
371. Parques
372. Kankakee River State Park
373. River
374. Local farms, artist, producers, small business, etc.
375. Parks
376. River
377. State park / campgrounds K3 downtown + events (like farmers market, etc)
378. Bike path
379. Recreational and medical marijuana dispensaries
380. music festivals
381. El río de Kankakee
382. Kankakee river areas
383. Park district events
384. The Kankakee River
385. Splash/Ice Valley
386. Kankakee River
387. Perry farm
388. Riverfront, festivals, baseball tournaments
389. Downtown Kankakee events
390. The Farmers Market
391. State park
392. Bradley house/ Kankakee river
393. County Fair and River
394. Kankakee River State park
395. Kankakee River
396. Kankakee River
397. Public sports/entertainment complex.
398. Entertainment venues
399. Kankakee State Park, local park district amenities, traveling sports teams
400. Mall
401. Olivet, Bourbonnais park district,
402. riverfront
403. Local talents, music and art.
404. La naturaleza
405. The State Park, River/boating
406. Los parques
407. River
408. River
409. Parks and riverfront
410. River activities, parks, community events
411. The beautiful Kankakee River FLW Bradley House
412. Kankakee river
413. State park
414. Perry Farm & Exploration Station
415. Kankakee River State Park Campground
416. Ice Valley Arena, Diamond Point
417. Available activities for families to participate in
418. State park
419. The Kankakee River
420. State park
421. River
422. River, state park, local farmers markets and community arts events
423. County Fair
424. Kankakee State Park
425. We have the river, and that is about it
426. Visit family.
427. River
428. Kankakee River
429. Kankakee river and parks adjoining
430. State Park
431. Our mall lol
432. County fair, fishing on the river...
433. The Kankakee River, Kankakee River State Park, The Perry Farm



434. Dining and community events
435. River access
436. Perry Farm
437. The River and local & state parks
438. The safety of people should come first.
439. Different events that bring people to town - concerts at Olivet, etc.
440. Our parks and the Kankakee river
441. Kankakee State Park
442. Kankakee River
443. State Park
444. The river
445. Positive activities for families .
446. State park offerings including camping, festivals,
447. Kankakee State Park
448. River
449. Community events such as summer festivals.
450. Kankakee River
451. Local events
452. Pool, music arena, or sporting events
453. State park and the River
454. The river
455. Kankakee River
456. Festivals
457. Parks and river
458. The various Festivals that are held throughout the County.
459. Splash Valley Kankakee Speedway ONU
460. farms
461. All abandoned houses & buildings that are falling down, cover by boards, covered by over grown weeds trees.
462. state park
463. the river front
464. Local restaurants
465. State park
466. Splash Valley
467. The river
468. The river.
469. Downtown
470. River
471. River
472. River
473. River
474. Water Park
475. We have great parks and natural amenities. Those can only go so far. People want to get away sometimes but they also like to have some of the comforts from where they are from as well. I'm not sure how to square that circle but we need more higher income people if we want these types of investments.
476. The river, but not with a 50 year 8 figure program. Bring back the boat races. Repair all the docks. Stop wasting money on consultants.
477. Not sure but many have no clue ice Valley exists
478. There's an opportunity to make a riverwalk style area similar to Naperville if you wanted to. This could attract business and tourism.
479. there is a lot of history for downtown Kankakee but not very safe to walk around
480. More along our beautiful river, resort, walking trails.
481. diamond point but they need artificial turf so they don't cancel games and tourneys. Possibly host big youth soccer tourneys.
482. Need to work on the crime in Kankakee County before trying to get tourists in.
483. You cannot promote the river, Frank Lloyd House, Sears Homes or any other area until you deal with crime, an unattractive exit and the public/media awareness/stigma that Kankakee is an economically depressed, crime ridden and unsafe area with no jobs and a vastly under educated population. The city needs economic development - factories for skilled workers that will provide hope and income similar to the way it was when it was on the cover of Life magazine in 1950.
484. Riverfront project; east side development
485. Add things like iFly, Discovery Zone. River festivals.
486. The river and having all communities including Bradley working cohesively toward bettering our community. The future is now and if Bradley takes their ball and goes home it impacts everyone.
487. A variety of events that cater to the right people who would attend; a variety of family friendly types of music, arts & crafts festivals, food truck fests, antique book trading, eating competitions, laser/ light/ projector show...? 10 seconds of creativity-
488. We have a lot of great events, but overall we could use more events, maybe themed events?
489. Build small businesses and KEEP them!
490. Bring back the Regatta.
491. Necesidades en corporal atracciones diversas.
492. Reduction in crime
493. We have the most beautiful parks and trails here. Our river needs to be a major priority. I'm so glad that they're finally doing the riverfront project. I have hoped for that my entire life. I love Kankakee. We just need to do a better job telling our story. I hope that the downtown area remains a priority as well.



494. Promote festivals outside the city of Kankakee.  
Tourists DO NOT NEED OR WOULD WANT TO GO TO DOWNTOWN KANKAKEE AND SEE ALL THE CRIMINALS AND DRUGS AND DANGER IN KANKAKEE
495. Kankakee river should be developed
496. I love that we advertise it as a destination for girls trips, romantic trips, etc. I think we need to work on getting more small shops/boutiques to make it more attractive for day trips like a Galena or Morris.
497. Music concerts, Comedy shows, Art Shows, Car shows, Boat shows, Camping and Outdoor shows. Bring some dine-in restaurants on East Court Street. Hotel chain for exit 312
498. The river if it can be expanded, providing more opportunities for recreational use etc.
1. Better hotels and located closer to the community's core (Bourbonnais Main St. And Kankakee Downtown) 2. Local festivals including MSMF and Shoe Fest 3. Youth sports facilities (the lumber yard)
499. Privately funded indoor multi-sport complex or indoor waterpark.
500. Each community has their own special event or venue so we need to promote all
501. Kankakee River & State Park. River improvements much needed.
502. River improvement, camping
503. Kankakee river and river front properties. Like to see a restaurant on the river front.
504. Frankfort days type events Better shopping - no mall people shop out of town
505. Bourbonnais plan on the table now.
506. The Kankakee river has some exciting things such as tubing, boating, and fishing. I also think that the parks should be advertised a bit more for how much work has been put in them.
507. More activities clean up and stop the crime. Bring in more attractions clean up the mall and make a convention center
508. Fixing or getting rid of the abandoned houses
509. State park, safety river areas, museums, bicycle routes and events for the family that are safe.
510. Utilize public river property. Put barn quilt tour accessible online.
511. Monthly festivals, outdoor movie theatre, garden, nice outdoor restaurant
512. Limpieza, seguridades
513. Seguridad
514. Las calles estas muy mal ay muchas con ollas y no las arreglan
515. Actividades Para niños y jóvenes Para mantenerlos ocupados y fuera de peligro
516. River beach or splash pad. Riverside outlets. Much better walkability throughout the municipality.
517. Something to bring residents from around the state/country to our area. We had Bears camp, but since that has left, why would someone want to come here? an idea is like a indoor waterpark at the mall with all the hotels nearby. The mall NEEDS to be dealt with - concert venue? Something. its depressing
518. Music fest. Farmers Market. New River front when finished. The football camps that Hagler and Ward has.
519. River usage. Build restaurants, bars shops along the river walk. Or build an area that includes all.
520. rental car office by the train station and by the Metra stop from midway.
521. A more developed downtown area that promotes and encourages residents to be out and walking around more frequently. An investment/campaign that encourages small businesses to open store fronts i think could contribute. I also believe a more developed waterfront would be attractive to current residents and would tie into the downtown area.
522. There aren't any single events that make the county more desirable. It's about having a variety of things for people to choose from.
523. Areas outside of downtown Kankakee. Other towns are just as important.
524. More for youth to do.
525. Decrease crime first. I'm not certain what would most attract people to our county.
526. Clean up our city. With all the resources we have, the City of Kankakee should be strong & striving with support of more businesses, local community members, local policing, all stakeholders while helping to reduce all negative violence that is occurring in our community, most importantly our youth. We need to build a stronger foundation & offer higher paying jobs to help clean up our communities
527. We can promote assets better when we deal with the violence first. No asset or attraction is beneficial if a person feels unsafe.
528. I think something needs to be done with the mall area. The mall doesn't attract tourists the way that it used to.
529. Need to focus on community safety
530. They can do something nice to the river. They can also think of ways to make downtown better with more things to do!
531. Olivet hosts many events that could be more tied into the community, events like merchant street music fest



- and farmers market are great for community but also bring in others from out of town. splash pads and park recourses host plenty of events that can be geared for locals and others. more parades and other community minded events are what bring tourists to town.
- 532.Whichever asset can be promoted by private organizations and groups without taxpayer money being involved.
- 533.There are no assets that important unless our county is safe. There is too much crime and not enough services. NO one wants to come here and chance getting shot
- 534.The State Park and river are the only viable attractions now that ONU no longer hosts the Chicago Bears training camp.
- 535.The River. Unfortunately it's not in the safest area or easily accessible nor much to do.
- 536.The river is probably our best asset, however if people had more disposable income, small shops would have a better survivability rate. Small shops and restaurants could be an attraction.
- 537.More things to do
- 538.More needs to be done to utilize our river and a river front
- 539.The county lacks assets for tourists attractions plus crime rates are increasing. Locals have to go to other communities that have better tourist attractions such as the Frankfurt Fall festival, Swedish days in Geneva, or some other type of event. The Bears training camp brought many tourists in but I don't believe the county and village did enough to take advantage of that tourism. We don't have many businesses that attract tourism either. There are many types of businesses that could attract tourism mostly entertainment type businesses. Grocery stores, mattress stores and restaurants (unless they are unique) don't create much tourism. I have seen some efforts to have some smaller events but they aren't something that would attract tourists since most towns have their own small events.
- 540.Los lugares más bonitos y en mejores condiciones por supuesto
- 541.Create and develop new attractions which brings visitors to the county. Say like a dirt bike race track
- 542.Court Street needs a complete overhaul of buildings. Some visitors are intimidated.
- 543.perhaps the Riverfront, but again until the homeless issue is addressed I wonder about inviting people to Kankakee.
- 544.The only thing Kankakee County has going for it are parks, I know people from out of the county come to the dog parks in the area and that parks like LEGACY in Manteno draw a lot of people
- 545.All our assets are important but not really working together to benefit each other. We need a County/Community unified goal of a safe, healthy, welcoming culture for all our residents and visitors. Kankakee proud, accountable and committed to restoring and sustaining our rich history of diverse and memorable daily event experiences. A culture that does not tolerate bashing our community or our residents. A culture and a standard of expectation that asks ourselves what have we and what can we can do to strengthen our community.
- 546.Más limpieza eventos
- 547.Empty buildings, lots, houses, need more businesses
- 548.Kankakee River. Please continue to clean up the downtown too.
- 549.Our parks are beautiful but they get no acknowledgement.
- 550.Our county has many attractions that contribute to a positive reflection of our area. Our greatest asset is supporting our fellow communities as they create new and exciting tourist attractions. The Village of Bradley is a terrible example of supporting the county at large. Our village board's desire to leave the County Tourism Bureau is an embarrassment and speaks volumes about their failure to collaborate. We are far stronger together, and trying to create things individually is an embarrassment when we have so many diverse skills in our community that should be incorporated.
- 551.More for families to do!!
- 552.More outdoor activities. Bike and scooter rentals. Outdoor dining.
- 553.The Kankakee River making it boatable
- 554.The safety of the residents are number one. No one will be visiting Kankakee County if it isn't a safe community.
- 555.Continued sprucing up of depressed areas including the tearing down vacant houses. Continued cleaning a vacant lots.
- 556.Need more things to do
- 557.More activities more things to do
- 558.Crime free community
- 559.Ahora mismo yo no recomendaría ningún lugar a los turistas .. si no todo lo contrario que no visiten el condado asta no tener la seguridad suficiente primero para los residentes y después poder invitar turistas KANKAKEE para nada RECOMENDABLE
- 560.Having a fountain or something of a sculpture garden as a public place and attraction for people visiting the area.



561. Farmers market/downtown Kankakee is the only thing I can think of. Maybe if the Kankakee river and parks were revived a bit that could also be an attraction?
562. Tearing down abandoned houses, cutting weeds/grass, fixing the roads
563. We should have more festivals with activities. Not just music but things people can do. The hot air balloon festival in Peotone last weekend had weather cooperated was a great idea
564. I care less about tourists and more about who lives here.
565. There was a Barbeque fest the used to be it needs to come back. Kids 13-17 need something to do that builds their skills and connections to the community.
566. Return of the boat races
567. I think we should worry about the people who live in Kankakee before worrying about if we have tourists here
568. Tener un mall con muchas tiendas y aprovechar el río para hacer un parque acuático grande con toboganes
569. Parks and Recreation to bring family's together and into the community
570. Well we could focus on actually having small businesses like shops and restaurants open up here places like Austin and Portland have been favorites of mine in the past because of small, family own, wallet friendly stores and restaurants. Vacationing here isn't going to be the main option for younger people because of our higher tax rates.
571. the art (bring back Feed)
572. Campsites, we need new attractions like a swimming pool, roller derby, or new fitness gym/basketball courts in Bradley.
573. Bring back the boat races
574. Beautification of downtown riverfront area
575. Fix the roads
576. Hacer un parque acuático. Festivales en verano. No dejar que siga cerrando tiendas en el Mall de Bradley
577. Nothing until crime and street violence are under control.
578. Water shows maybe, and a Taste of Kankakee
579. Bourbonnais need a pool not another park. I would promote festivals and existing attractions.
580. Reenactment of Indians at park.
581. Beautifying the riverfront with restaurants, stores, wineries and breweries like other cities have
582. Tourism is important, but I feel that crime and infrastructure must be addressed before inviting others to the area. I know that much of the crime occurring in the area does not make it to the media. There are areas of Kankakee City I will not travel in, and I re-located from Chicago. Control the gangs and go after the troubled housing units.
583. Get rid of section 8 housing and bring in manufacturing jobs
584. We need to take care of our own first. Mental health in our area is troubling. Update Diamond point with turf then build the Bourbonnais interchange. It's already a province tourist attraction. Mental health is a mess here
585. State Park, Fishing Derby, new Riverfront possibly with restaurants. Safety from gang bangers with proper prosecution!
586. Safety issues gun and gang violence
587. Kankakee River and State Park upgrades
588. riverfront restaurants and walkways
589. Kankakee River used to be wonderful. Now it is full of trees and debris. Should be removed ... more important than fishing
590. We need to begin with positive mentorship. Individuals who aren't trying to be part of the community just for pay but based off of compassion, experience, and efforts to change our upbringings.
591. Improvements at the Kankakee River State Park, ie - bathroom clean & accessible, we miss renting the cabin in the camping area.
592. To really improve Kankakee throughout in the poor section of Kankakee?, so when people visit they will see how nice the streets are the sidewalks the houses that's what make people want to come to a city and sell down when they see it looking like it belong to the community and everyone happy and striving in that community, a place where you can feel safe?.
593. Promotion and resources to underserved areas such as Pembroke township.
594. The Kankakee River should be put to great use. Offering Kayaking or canoeing would be nice for the Summer. I do feel like Kankakee needs to take the focus off of downtown Kankakee (Schuyler) and maybe make another area similar to downtown Kankakee to attract more events and people
595. Not sure... More publicity for things/ festivals going on would be great. A lot of things I find out about last minute and just doesn't fit in our schedule
596. Parks, bike path, historic buildings, create a destination event from the history of Kankakee, create recreations of how the town appeared and have events of what was popular then, support small businesses and help new ones start that help with supporting the image you want to promote for Kankakee, help local investors buy and repair restore the homes of the community, if you have programs make then known





to the black community members, help create a culture of pride by catering to the youth of Kankakee, meet the needs of the community members by having funds in the programs to help members buy homes to live in, help offer free tuition to kcc for all youth graduates, we need more shops downtown that are exciting to go to, your updates have made the Kankakee area ok more appealing and beautiful, young people want to work downtown but there are no interesting jobs downtown, I have tons more of ideas that I'd be willing to share.

- 597.County doesn't have much to attract people
- 598.State Park is area's best asset. Needs funding and improvements.
- 599.Diamond Point Baseball complex could be a goldmine if in better shape
- 600.River walk project and downtown beautification.
- 601.Fix roads in Pembroke
- 602.We need auditorium space for large concerts and conventions. The city of Kankakee also needs hotels, major department stores.
- 603.More police
- 604.Our river front we have a beautiful river here and we need to utilize it and tell more people about it.
- 605.Safe lodging, eating places & events
- 606.music festivals or sport activities that bring in overnight guests.
- 607.Update small towns. Some of our towns look like slums. Rebuild & bring in more business on main streets. Frankfort, Tinley Park are a great example of how-to bring tourism Kankakee County. All we have in Manteno are gas stations, banks and pizza restaurants. If you can do away with the politics connection, Bring in major businesses like Jewels, etc. these would create jobs.
- 608.Tener más puntos de vista de atracción
- 609.Clean up the area just off I 57 in Bourbonnais and Kankakee so it is immediately aesthetically pleasing first, then have more festivals and other local events.
- 610.Crime
- 611.Ha. There isn't one at this time.
- 612.There are none
- 613.No one wants to visit a shit hole, first get the gang bangers and crack heads under control to make the area more appealing. then fix the river and state line bridge
- 614.None. The water park is seasonal, the ice rink is only available for a few hours of staffing is there, downtown is a dump and the "bike path" doesn't help, shopping is terrible with a vacant mall and shopping

- centers, crime doesn't help, and we aren't close enough to any real venues to support hotels and hospitality.
- 615.We are not a tourist destination so none. Focus on people who live and work here.
- 616.Anything to detract from our crime rates!
- 617.Although it is not the appropriate answer, Infrastructure improvements for rural areas to prevent accidents at intersections. (Stop lights, flashing signals, etc.)
- 618.The state park attracts the most out of town guest along with youth sports. KCCV Bureau is useless, it's a group of women that go around taking pictures of themselves. They were shut down for the past year and nobody noticed or cared. Farm & Fleet attracts more out of county visitors than the KCCV Bureau.
- 619.I don't believe we have anything special to provide tourist in Kankakee.
- 620.There is no decent housing available, the rents are extremely expensive and the housing issue is terrible here, I have been looking for the past 4 years and you can't find anything 10 to 50 people all begging for one house and security deposits are astronomical for run down houses, I work at Shapiro thinking I was doing good but looking for housing here I see that I'm not
- 621.I don't think we have anything to promote
- 622.Bringing tourists brings traffic, crime and mess and it does not bring in as much spending as you need to compensate for the problems
- 623.Money in the school districts is needed. People will move here if the schools are good. Too much money is being spent to improve the city look but the schools are still struggling.
- 624.Tourists are temporary. Concentrate on improving life for residents.
- 625.Do we have any??
- 626.We are not a desirable tourist destination. Focus on bringing in businesses that will draw people to the community via their employees moving here and customers coming to town to do business
- 627.Put a fence around Kankakee County
- 628.K3 county and the city is a dumpster for Chicago gangs.
- 629.Unsure.
- 630.Can't think of any
- 631.n/a
- 632.Don't know
- 633.I Don't Know
- 634.Nothing
- 635.Don't know.
- 636.There aren't any besides the river



637.Nothing here attracts  
 638.I am unaware of anything in our county that would be  
       worthy of travelling to from another community.  
       Exception: a day trip to see The Bradley House.  
 639.none  
 640.Not sure  
 641.Unknown  
 642.Undecided  
 643.?  
 644.na  
 645.Idk  
 646.Undecided  
 647.can't think of any  
 648.Nada  
 649.No se  
 650.n/a  
 651.I am not sure  
 652.No lo sé,  
 653.Not sure  
 654.Na  
 655.N/A  
 656.N/A  
 657.Not sure  
 658.no idea  
 659.N/a  
 660.Idk  
 661.Not sure.  
 662.Not sure  
 663.Dnt know  
 664.Nothing to promote  
 665.Na  
 666.I don't know?  
 667.I used to say the Bears Training Camp, but I don't  
       know now  
 668.I do not know  
 669.Unsure - I feel Kankakee is not somewhere where one  
       would like to vacation to  
 670.I don't know if any we have other than the food truck  
       festival that's new.  
 671.None

672.Undecided  
 673.Not sure  
 674.None  
 675.NA  
 676.None  
 677.undecided  
 678.Not sure  
 679.Nothing here  
 680.Not sure  
 681.no opinion  
 682.Idk  
 683.?  
 684.Na  
 685.undecided  
 686.Na  
 687.No lo se  
 688.na  
 689.?  
 690.I don't know  
 691.Idk  
 692.?  
 693.Nothing  
 694.Don't know  
 695.Don't know  
 696.Can't think anything I'd recommend as a tourist  
       attraction.  
 697.Nothing  
 698.There is a need for something to attract tourism.  
       There's nothing here  
 699.I cannot think of any.  
 700.Don't know  
 701.Na  
 702.NA  
 703.noota  
 704.nothing  
 705.none  
 706.X  
 707.N/a  
 708.?

