



# MADISON COUNTY HEART & SOUL

## PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Madison County Heart & Soul initiative is based upon the Orton Family Foundation's Community Heart and Soul program. Heart and Soul believes that the strength of a community lies in the hearts and the minds of the people who live there. When a community takes the time to get to know itself, it gains a sense of identity and purpose that informs decisions about its future. The Madison County Heart and Soul initiative expands the Orton Family Foundation's program from the community to the county level, recognizing both the commonalities and the diversity of the county's individual communities, rural areas, and neighborhoods. Madison County Heart & Soul's purpose is to honor the voices of the citizens of the county as we develop a county-wide future that represents what matters most to the residents. The best way to identify Madison County's distinctive character – and to find the means to protect it – is to listen to people who live in the county.

## RESPONSIBILITIES of the Madison County Heart and Soul Committee

- Create and implement outreach to involve communities in the Heart & Soul initiative
- Be a liaison to each community that establishes a Community Heart & Soul Committee
- Advise and support both county-wide and community-level projects
- Administer Madison County grant and resources for this project
- Lead (Model) Heart & Soul initiatives at the county level
- Communicate/Involve county-wide officials and leaders

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Ann Bartelt** | St Charles | Retired School Associate Superintendent

**Laura Bertelson** | Van Meter | Community Volunteer

**Mike Bobst** | Dexter | Retired bank loan officer, Real estate broker

**Vicky Brenner** | Winterset | Retired Teacher | Community Activist

**Maxine Bussanmas** | Bevington | Mayor | Business Owner

**Ester Mae Cox** | Peru | Retired ISU Extension Educator | Professional Facilitator

**Diane Fitch** | St. Charles | Ex Officio Member | Madison County Board of Supervisors

**Brenda Hollingsworth** | Winterset | Farmer | Project Lead Historical Preservation Commission

**Tom Leners** | Winterset | Madison County Development Executive Director | Agri-Business

**Rana Scarlett** | Winterset | Nonprofit fund development, Grant Writing Services, and Consulting | R.Scarlett Scribe, LLC

**Scott Smith** | Dexter | Retired Educator | Co-Manager The Iowa Theatre

**Dawn Vetter** | St. Charles | Retired Des Moines School Principal | St. Charles Community Foundation

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the guidelines of the Orton Family Foundation’s Community Heart & Soul model, the Madison County Heart & Soul committee endeavored to involve everyone in their communities and across the county. To accomplish this, an online survey with many open-ended questions enabled residents to share what matters to them, voicing their wants and needs for their communities, neighborhoods, and the county. The survey, marketed via various outreach campaigns, resulted in over 1,000 responses by residents of the county. The robust responses to qualitative questions quickly made analysis challenging. Thus, the Madison County Heart & Soul committee reached out to ThriVinci, a nonprofit that specializes in organizational development and effectiveness consulting, to help analyze the responses in order to provide a framework for unbiased data-driven decision making. ThriVinci not only helped quantify responses so they could be organized into manageable groups of ideas, ThriVinci helped empower the communities and extend the voice of every citizen who responded to the survey.

## REPORT CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	2
<b>SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	2
Gender, Ethnicity, and Age Distributions	3
More Background Information on Respondents	4
<b>CODING THE DATA</b>	6
Rater Training	6
Reliability Analysis	6
<b>THEMATIC ANALYSIS TO IDENTIFY VALUES</b>	7
Madison County Values	7
Top Themes by Question	8
Top Themes by Community	9
<b>MADISON COUNTY HOPES AND CONCERNS: POTENTIAL ACTIONS</b>	10
<b>NEXT STEPS FOR MADISON COUNTY HEART &amp; SOUL</b>	14
<b>APPENDICES</b>	16
Appendix A Potential Initiatives by County	16
Appendix B Potential Initiatives by Community	19
Appendix C Link to Complete Data Set	20

# SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

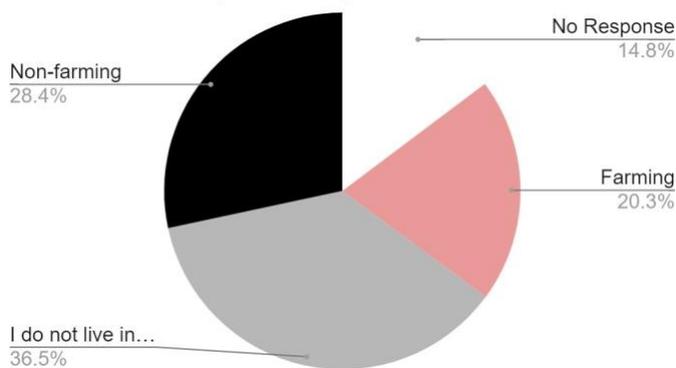
In February 2019, the Heart & Soul Survey opened for residents of Madison County. In addition to promoting the survey electronically, members of the leadership team exhausted efforts to ensure every voice had an option to be heard. The team worked in a wide variety of ways to capture a representative sample: attending community group meetings, wearing sandwich boards at the county fair, providing paper copies of the survey, and even partnering with the schools.

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2018 Madison County was estimated to consist of 16,249 residents. When the survey closed in January 2020, there were 1,037 respondents (6% of residents) who self-elected to complete the survey. The majority of respondents were from Winterset (43%, n = 441), which is the most populated town in Madison County (33%, n = 5,318). The communities of St. Charles, Earlham, Truro, and Peru were represented by 47% of the respondents.

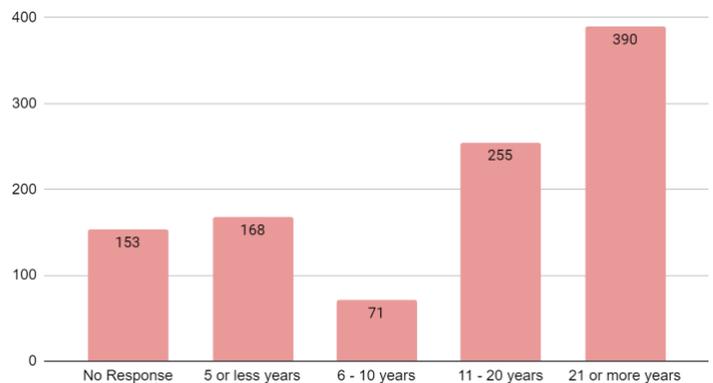
Community within Madison County	Sample Distribution
Winterset Community	441 (42.53%)
Saint Charles Community	200 (19.26%)
Earlham Community	177 (17.07%)
Truro Community	94 (9.06%)
Peru & Walnut Township Community	24 (2.31 %)
Lee and Jefferson Townships	19 (1.83%)
Penn and Jackson Townships	16 (1.54%)
Outside Madison County	15 (1.45%)
Macksburg Community	11 (1.06%)
Bevington Community	5 (0.48%)
Patterson Community	2 (0.19%)
Not Disclosed	33 (3.18%)

There was an adequate distribution of respondents from rural non-farmers (28%), farmers (20%), and those from small town communities (37%). The majority of respondents have been in Madison County the majority of their lives.

**Distribution of Respondents by Environment**



**Length of Time in Madison County**



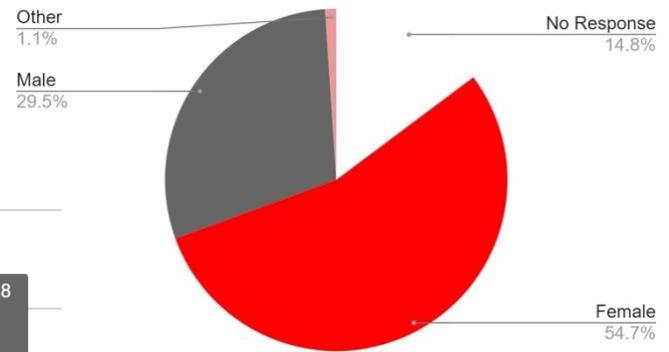
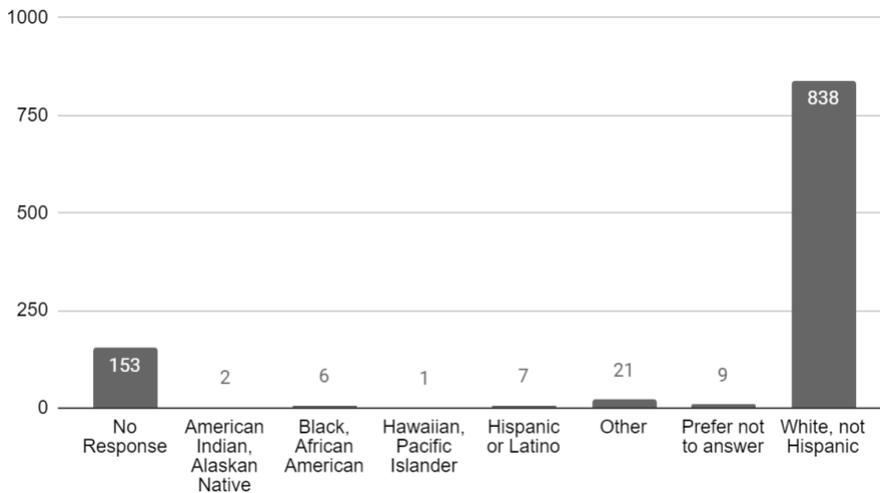
## Gender, Ethnicity, and Age Distributions

### Gender Distribution

Using 2018 estimated US Census data, Madison County is split evenly between males and females. Although 15% of respondents did not state their gender, the majority of the respondents who did were female (55%), which is true across all

individual communities. Males constituted 30% of the sample and there were 1% of respondents who selected 'other' when answering the gender question.

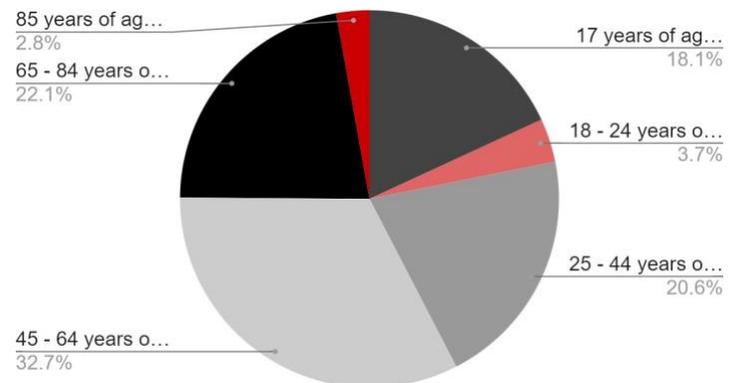
### Survey Respondent Ethnic Breakdown



The majority of the sample (81%) was white or Caucasian and a very small portion were non-white (4%). Note, while 16% of respondents did not provide details on their ethnic background, the 2018 US Census data estimates 97% of Madison County is white, not Hispanic. Community-level analysis had similar findings; note, Peru & Walnut Township had only white respondents.

### Distribution of Respondents who Reported Age Ranges (n = 884)

Based on 2018 US Census data estimates, 31% of residents are under the age of 18. Therefore, to ensure results captured the voice of future residents, the leadership team worked with the schools to gather input from students. 155 students completed the survey, which represented 15% of the sample. Of these 155 students, 148 were 17 years of age or younger and seven were 18-24 years of age. Although 22% of those who reported age were less than 25 years old, the majority of the sample (58%) were 45 years of age or older.



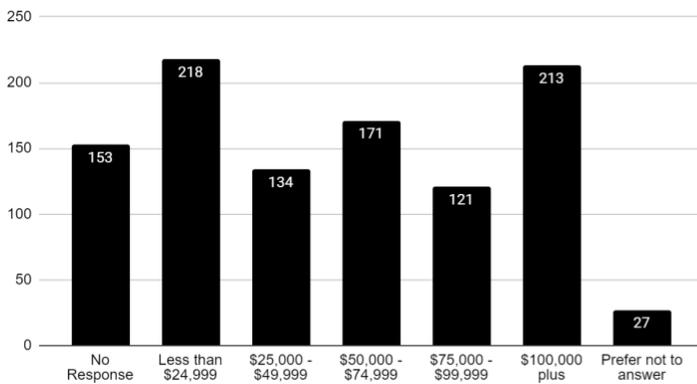
In fact, the sample was slightly older than the population of the county. Although 2018 US Census data estimates 17% of residents are 65 or older, 25% of Heart & Soul survey respondents who reported age represented that age bracket. These findings were consistent when analyzing at the community-level; however, the majority of respondents from Truro were students. It is important to note, 15% of the sample did not report age; these 153 individuals were excluded from age analysis.

## More Background Information on Respondents

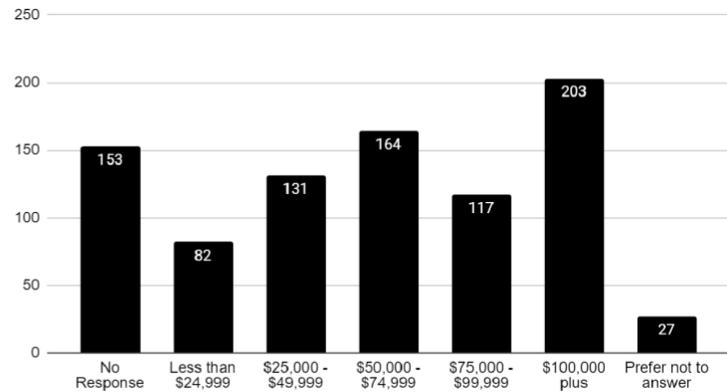
The 2018 US Census estimated the median household income for Madison County was \$64,512, whereas the per capita income averages \$33,069. To ensure everyone has a voice, respondents were asked to report their annual income. The

majority of respondents reported making over \$50,000 (48.70%, n = 505). Furthermore, the largest bracket of respondents (21%, n = 213) reported an income over \$100,000. At first glance, it appears there is a large portion of respondents making less than \$25,000. However, after controlling for respondents who are 17 years of age or younger, the income distribution stays consistent with the county data. The portion of respondents making less than \$25,000 decreased by 62%, suggesting those responses came from students.

**Self-Reported Income Distribution for Complete Sample**



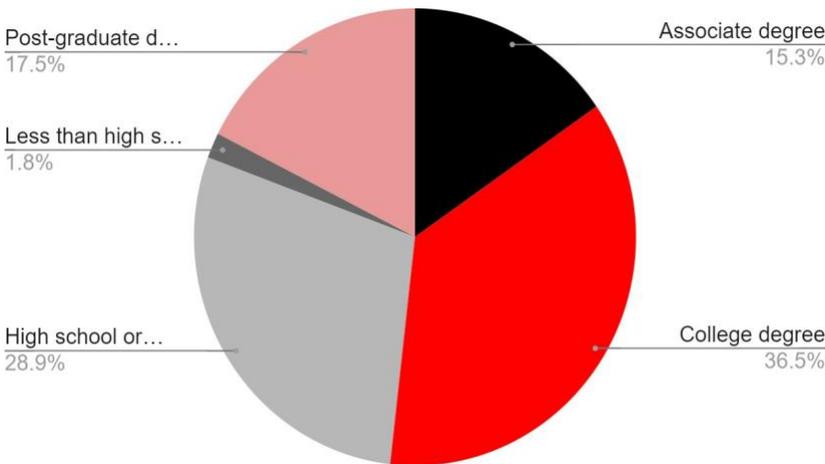
**Self-Reported Income Distribution for Respondents 18+**



It is important to note, when analyzing at the community-level, most of the communities aligned with the income distribution findings.

In 2018, according to US Census data estimates, 95% of residents over the age of 25 had at least a high school diploma, and 24% had a bachelor's degree or higher. To ensure the survey sample represented the county, education level was analyzed after omitting respondents who did not share their education level (15%) and another 15% of respondents who were 17 or younger. Note, 12 out of 160 respondents aged 17 or younger reported having a GED or HS diploma.

**Education Level**



Less than 2% of the respondents that self-reported education and were at least 18 years of age, did not have a high school degree. The majority of respondents (69%) had beyond a high-school education. With 54% of the respondents having a bachelor's degree or higher, adults who took the survey may be slightly more educated than the general population of Madison County. When looking at community-level analysis of reported education levels, Winterset respondents reported more

advanced education than aggregate samples, which may have brought up the average education level as other communities had fewer respondents with advanced degrees. [\(See Appendix C for the complete data set.\)](#)

Only a small portion of surveyed respondents are veterans (6%), which aligns with 2018 US Census reporting estimates that 806 veterans (5%) reside in the county. When looking at community-level analysis, most of the veterans live in the Winterset or Earlham communities.

## CODING THE DATA

Although ThriVinci was responsible for analyzing the data that will be used to create a plan for county-wide-driven initiatives, the success of the analysis depended upon effectively collaborating with the Madison County Heart & Soul team since they were transcribing the responses from text to numeric data.

Thrivinci started by conducting an initial review of the data to identify the underlying themes that may be values. Twenty-seven unique themes were identified. Next, Madison County Heart & Soul recruited 20 local volunteers who coded the open-ended survey responses to themes generated after ThriVinci conducted on-site rater training. The survey was broken into the ten questions, and each rater was assigned a single question to review responses. To reduce bias and increase reliability, two raters were assigned to score each question. Once the raters had scored all of the questions and all of the responses and before analyzing the data, ThriVinci cleaned the dataset and ensured the responses were valid and reliable.

## Rater Training

Thrivinci trained the raters on the themes identified, how to score the survey results, and the importance of understanding bias when rating open-ended and subjective survey responses. Raters were asked to read a response, identify which theme or themes were present in the response, and identify any negative tone and any prescriptive ideas. Raters practiced coding text at the rater training to ensure there were no concerns.

## Reliability Analysis

Thrivinci reviewed the rater agreement for all questions and then tested for inter-rater reliability on the most frequented themes identified by both raters. Inter-rater reliability is a test to see how similar the two raters assigned to each question rated the responses.

This information ensures that when prioritizing the county-wide initiatives, they truly are representative of the respondents' voices. Results for reliability analysis suggest the rating was accurate. However, when analyzing raters, ThriVinci found Rater 1, for Question 1, had a high number of unknown theme selections; but, it did not affect reliability. However, scoring by Rater 1, for Question 3, was incomplete; thus, for that question, only Rater 2 coding was used in the thematic analysis; no inter-reliability was conducted because there was only one rater.

<i>Top Two Themes by Question</i>	<i>IRR</i>
Q1 - Friendly Helpful People	77.05%
Q1 - Small Town Feel	84.96%
Q2 - Beauty and Landscape	88.81%
Q2 - Historic Vibe	94.50%
Q4 - Historic Vibe	89.59%
Q4 - Parks and Playgrounds	94.02%
Q5 - Small Town Feel	84.67%
Q5 - Friendly Helpful People	90.36%
Q6 - Infrastructure	93.25%
Q6 - Business Development	87.66%
Q7 - Access to Businesses	86.79%
Q7 - Infrastructure	92.67%
Q8 - Infrastructure	95.18%
Q8 - Community led	88.33%
Q9 - Infrastructure	96.82%
Q9 - Innovation and Change	77.82%
Q10 - Friendly Helpful People	93.83%
Q10 - Clean and Safe	96.05%

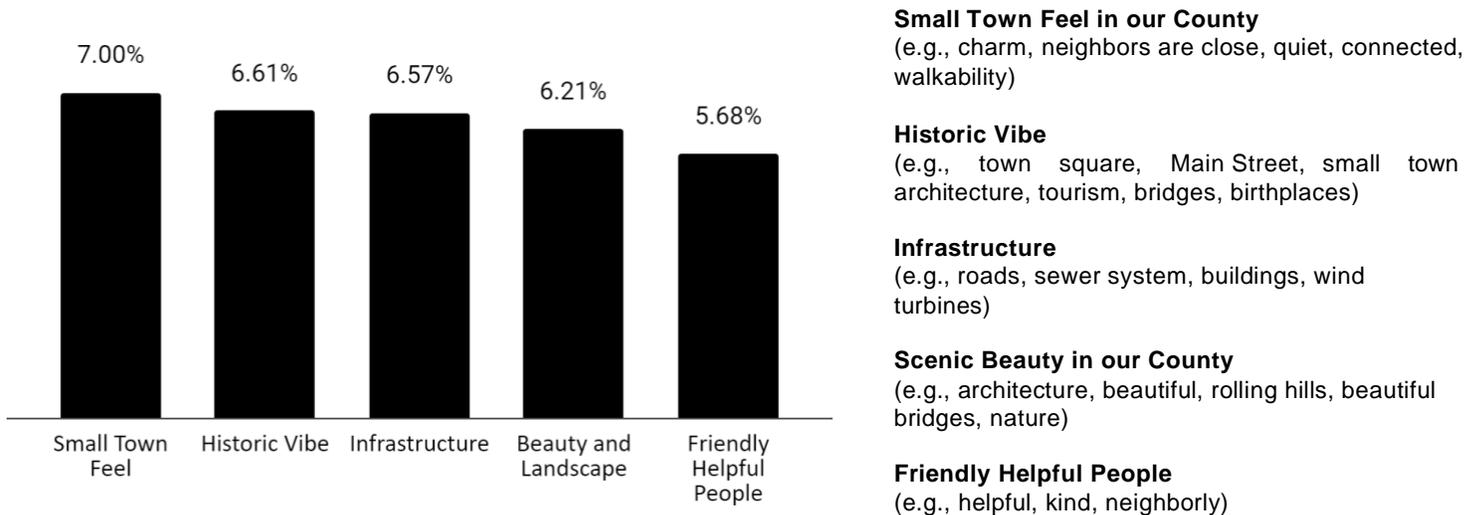
# ANALYSIS TO IDENTIFY THEMES

ThriVinci conducted a thematic frequency analysis to determine what the overall data said about what Madison County Heart & Soul survey respondents value most. Before analyzing the data, individual rater scores were aggregated to increase the reliability of quantifying the data by reducing error. For a theme to be significant, both raters had to be in agreement. Responses that were negative toward a prescriptive idea or theme were coded with a control variable. This ensured that we did not inadvertently identify positive support for a negatively worded entry. In the appendix, two charts report a frequency analysis to identify potential initiatives, along with the number of times each theme was reflected in the survey data.

## Madison County Themes

Of the 27 possible themes, 33% of respondents agreed on five themes, which represent Madison County's themes below. The Madison County Heart & Soul team should review the following themes to truly understand what residents value in their community.

### Top 5 Themes



The percentages above the themes indicate how often that theme occurred out of all the 27 possible themes. For example, across all questions, *Small Town Feel* was scored by all raters 7% of the time so it was selected as a core theme. With 2 raters scoring 10 questions with 27 possible themes, 5% agreement or higher was considered significant. Note, only themes that had significant frequencies were included in the results. Of the remaining 22 themes not listed as significant, agreement ranged from 1% to 2%.

## Top Themes by Question

In addition to the top five themes across all questions, Thrivinci identified the most frequent themes by question to further bring the themes to life. Although two themes rose to the top for most questions, there were three that had less distinctions among the themes.

The percentages in front of the themes below indicate how often that theme occurred out of all the themes for that question. For instance, on question one, both raters scored text responses as *Friendly Helpful People* and *Small Town Feel* 16% of the time, so both were selected. The next theme represented had merely a 4% agreement. With two raters scoring each question with 27 possible themes, 7% agreement or higher was considered significant. Note, only themes that had significant frequencies were included in the results. Of the remaining 23-25 themes not listed as significant, agreement ranged from 0% to 6%.

### **What do you love about your community?**

16% - Friendly Helpful People (e.g. helpful, kind, neighborly)

16% - Small Town Feel (e.g., charm, neighbors are close, quiet, connected, walkability)

### **What do you love about Madison County?**

21% - Beauty and Landscape (e.g., architecture, beautiful, rolling hills, beautiful bridges, nature)

12% - Historic Vibe (e.g., Town Square, Main Street, Small Town Architecture, tourism, bridges, birthplaces)

11% - Undeveloped Land and Scenic Views (e.g. Rural, Rippy Dumps)

### **What are the most important places in your community?**

15% - Schools

10% - Shopping (e.g., convenience store, grocery store, Fareway, Dollar General)

9% - Parks and Playgrounds (e.g., Frisbee Golf, aquatics, fairgrounds, greenspace)

### **What are the most important places in Madison County?**

19% - Historic Vibe (e.g., Town Square, Main Street, Small Town Architecture, tourism, bridges, birthplaces)

14% - Parks and Playgrounds (e.g., Frisbee Golf, aquatics, fairgrounds, greenspace)

### **As Madison County grows, what about your community should stay the same?**

25% - Small Town Feel (e.g., charm, neighbors are close, quiet, connected, walkability)

12% - Friendly Helpful People (e.g., helpful, kind, neighborly)

### **As Madison County grows, what about your community should change?**

13% - Infrastructure (e.g., roads, sewer systems, buildings, windmills)

9% - Business Development (e.g., business district, diverse merchants, growth, revitalization)

### **What would make your community a better place to live?**

10% - Access to Businesses (e.g., specific business, bank, chamber of commerce, car dealerships, hardware store, hair salon, employer)

9% - Infrastructure (e.g., roads, sewer systems, buildings, windmills)

8% - Dining and Eating (e.g., restaurants, wineries, diners, drive-thru, bars)

8% - Attractions (e.g., RAGBRAI, aquatic center, festivals, visitors center)

### **What would make Madison County a better place to live?**

16% - Infrastructure (e.g., roads, sewer systems, buildings, wind turbines)

9% - Community led (e.g., locally owned, civic/political engagement, vote/voice)

### What more could Madison County do to support your community?

20% - Infrastructure (e.g., roads, sewer systems, buildings, wind turbines)

14% - Innovation and Change (e.g., becoming green, inviting others, becoming dog friendly)

### What else is important to you about where you live?

12% - Friendly Helpful People (e.g. helpful, kind, neighborly)

9% - Clean and Safe (e.g., family friendly, police, fire, clean)

## Top Themes by Community

Although the majority (43%) of the 1,037 respondents reside in Winterset, there were also many respondents from St. Charles, Earlham, Truro, and Peru. By capturing input from residents across Madison County, we can identify holistic themes concerning all residents as having a united voice; this increases the likelihood of positive transformation. However, because each community within the county is unique, it is important to see if there are differences in values among the communities.

	<b>Winterset</b> (n = 441)	<b>St. Charles</b> (n = 200)	<b>Earlham</b> (n = 177)	<b>Truro</b> (n = 94)	<b>Peru &amp; Walnut</b> (n = 24)
<b>Historic Vibe</b>	<b>7.94%</b>	6.08%	4.85%	4.85%	6.00%
<b>Parks &amp; Playgrounds</b>	6.44%	4.54%	5.83%	3.64%	3.70%
<b>Beauty &amp; Landscape</b>	6.31%	6.23%	5.16%	4.65%	<b>10.73%</b>
<b>Small Town Feel</b>	6.19%	<b>8.44%</b>	7.67%	8.92%	5.36%
<b>Infrastructure</b>	5.44%	7.59%	5.59%	<b>11.73%</b>	8.17%
<b>Friendly Helpful People</b>	4.72%	6.79%	6.11%	7.80%	5.75%
<b>Schools</b>	3.96%	2.37%	<b>8.14%</b>	8.48%	2.30%
<b>Undeveloped Land &amp; Scenic Views</b>	3.27%	3.31%	2.99%	3.05%	7.28%

Analysis of the themes by community shows there is a close match between the county themes and the individual community themes. In addition to the top five county themes, three additional themes were identified as important by the communities. According to the survey respondents in Winterset and Earlham highly value *Parks & Playgrounds*. Similarly, Earlham and Truro value the *Schools*; while Peru and Walnut Township value their *Scenic Views*. While the Winterset community values align with the county as a whole, Historic Vibe was the highest ranked theme for that community. While all communities value infrastructure, for both St. Charles and Truro survey respondents, infrastructure was the highest ranked theme.

# MADISON COUNTY HOPES AND CONCERNS: POTENTIAL ACTIONS

A series of questions in the survey asked for respondents' ideas and suggestions about what should stay the same and what might make their communities and the county a better place to live. Specifically, the questions asked:

- As Madison County grows, what about your community should stay the same?
- As Madison County grows, what about your community should change?
- What would make your community a better place to live?
- What would make Madison County a better place to live?
- What more could Madison County do to support your community?

## Potential Actions

Data from 1037 surveys provided many ideas for potential actions that could be undertaken in Madison County. Raters coded the suggestions, which have been sorted into categories relevant to community and county growth and enhancement. Some of the suggestions refer to individual communities while others relate to the county as a whole. Further, some of the suggestions have already been realized; some ideas are "in process" with existing governmental and community groups, and other suggestions invite consideration. Just as with any brainstormed list, all the ideas should be researched and vetted for viability, practicality, and sustainability.

The Heart & Soul process provides a framework for reviewing and analyzing these ideas in relationship to the Heart & Soul statements, which were developed from survey data by community and county groups and vetted with the residents. Heart & Soul statements reflect what is important to each community and to Madison County. See the complete Heart & Soul statements at [madisoncountyheartandsoul.org/madison-county/](http://madisoncountyheartandsoul.org/madison-county/)

For a complete listing of all the possible actions the survey data contains, as well as frequency analysis, please reference the Madison County Potential Initiatives Idea Themes table in Appendix A, the Potential Initiatives by Community Idea Themes table in Appendix B, and a link to the complete raw data spreadsheet located in Appendix C.

Data from 1037 surveys provided many ideas for potential actions that could be undertaken in Madison County. Raters coded the suggestions, which have been sorted into categories relevant to community and county growth and enhancement. Some of the suggestions refer to individual communities while others relate to the county as a whole. Further, some of the suggestions have already been realized; some ideas are "in process" with existing governmental and community groups, and other suggestions invite consideration. Just as with any brainstormed list, all the ideas should be researched and vetted for viability, practicality, and sustainability.

### Arts, Culture & Tourism & Small Town Feel

Art studio with activities

Be more inclusive and friendly - host Welcome Wagons, establish county ambassadors, quarterly newcomer mixer

Conserve history (e.g., historic district design guidelines, grants for people to fix up historic homes, Courthouse improvements, etc.)

Maintain small town charm

More community branding

More community events - unique attractions (e.g., extend the fair, holiday parade, more town celebrations, winter activities for Winterset, outdoor music festivals in parks)

### Business, Retail, & Commerce

Ag store

Art supply store

Auto care (e.g., automatic car wash, auto store)

Better gas station

Bookstore

Café or coffee shop or bakery

Children's store

Clothing stores

Grocery store, access to health food

Hardware store

Hotel

Ice cream parlor, Froyo, ice cream truck, Brownie Bar

Laundromat

Local vendors and stores - expand hours (e.g., Farm to Table, food trucks)

More small businesses - incentives for updated spaces for small start-up businesses

Quick serve food - Taco Bell, A&W, Chick-fil-A, Subway, Pancheros, Panera, Burger King

Restaurants (e.g., diverse options, Italian, steak, barbeque, Golden Corral)

Sporting store

Superstore

### Community Aesthetics

Beautify (e.g., more green space, public art, roadside decorations)

Community cleanup - oversight, service crew for low income & elderly - Paint-a-Thon in St. Charles

Form land bank to handle abandoned lots and dilapidated buildings

Renovate older buildings (e.g., facelift to former Dollar Store, replace with local vendors, replace with restaurants, Hutton building)

### Community and Public Services

Affordable child care

Dog friendly - dog park

Emergency services (e.g., better communication with Fire Department, better training, improve relations with diverse populations)

Improve library (e.g., extend hours, expand borrowing books through other libraries without a penalty)

Low cost animal shelter

Low income options and supports varied health insurance (Medicare)

More services for at risk populations (e.g., alcohol and drug prevention, reverse parades for food pantries, community garden, low income, Meals on Wheels, mental health, etc.)

Multi-service health center (e.g., dentists, hospitals, physical therapy, alternative health, etc.)

One-stop service center - combine social services (e.g., Veterans Affairs, DHS, Public Health, food pantries)

Safety - (e.g., expand ambulance service, full-time fire departments)

## Education

Community College - trade occupations training pipeline

Schools - (e.g., conversations with leadership, busing for all ages, auto classes at I-35, life preparedness, adding or updating schools)

Youth programs (e.g., after school care, anti-bullying, suicide prevention, troubled youth, school counseling, access for low income)

Youth sports (e.g., basketball court, football field, indoor facilities, swim, teacher involvement)

## Governments - County and City

Board of Supervisors host town hall - board to meet in varied locations, 5 supervisors, more communication

Bond for road and sewer improvements

Draft community master plan - conserve history and charm, emphasize future, multi-use properties, partnerships across communities, conscientious development

Host more town halls (e.g., give people a voice, be flexible with location and times, review budgets and opportunities)

Lower taxes (e.g., tax companies more, reduce impact on families to make it more affordable)

More customer parking in town square

Zoning (e.g., acreages, conservation, land use, protect environment, rural development limits, water conservation, invest in conservation with tree planting programs)

## Growth & Development

Beautify (conscientious development)

Jobs (e.g., job center, young professional job placement, step up youth job program, expand MOC, manufacturing, call center)

Low income quality housing for all (e.g., town homes, old nursing home for apartments, join the Central Iowa Rural Housing Authority (CIRHA))

Population growth and retention - welcome immigrants

Small businesses (increase) - incentives for updated spaces for small start-up businesses

## Infrastructure - including roads, bridges, broad-band, & utilities

Better internet - especially for rural (e.g., broadband, fiber optic, Century Link, high speed internet)

Bond for road and sewer improvements

Mobile infrastructure

More maintenance services (e.g., leaf-sucking truck, mow Cumming Road, regular tree trimmings, etc.)

Multi-modal transit - Uber, taxi, bus, subway, tram, bike paths - connect towns & DSM (e.g., complete SW connector to DSM Metro, connect trails to bike paths, tram to Interstate, etc.)

Safety - (e.g., 4-way stop north of town, need timed lights, traffic light at 92/169, round-about at 169-92, etc.)

Walkability (e.g., access through town, connect towns, better sidewalks, clean alleys, improve sidewalks, add sidewalks, no parking on streets)

## Parks and Recreation

Adult activities - dance hall, singles night, street dances, lessons (e.g., dance, music), brewery / microbrewery / winery /sports bar near bike paths

Biking & walking anywhere (e.g., bike paths and hiking trails - preferably connecting the towns across the county)

Boating lake (e.g., add a beach, Cedar Lake? city lake?)

Community center - meeting space, gym, rec space, YMCA
Indoor activities (e.g., bowling, arcade, roller & ice skating)
Improve parks (e.g., restrooms, equipment, outdoor skating rink, bridge in Bevington Park, repurpose old baseball field)
Outdoor activities (kayak or canoe rental, pickle ball, cross country skiing)
Outdoor activities - (e.g., public golf course, disc golf course, drive thru movie theatre, stock ponds, public hunting grounds, mini-golf)
Water park / indoor pool / pool
Youth programs (e.g., arts & theatre, music, riding lessons, access for low income)
Youth sports (e.g., basketball court, football field, indoor facilities, swim, volunteer involvement)
<b>Special Interests/Other</b>
Be more inclusive and friendly - host Welcome Wagons, establish county ambassadors, quarterly newcomer mixer
Communication - newsletter, county-wide calendar, newspaper, daily 1-pagers, improve Facebook Rants & Raves
Connect with urban communities
Establish advisory committees (e.g., accessibility, elderly, inclusive, poverty)
Green living (e.g., recycling, sustainable farming, electric cars, alternative energy, environment education, etc.)
Host community forum - windmills/turbines - county-wide vote on wind turbines
Host county conversations - show you care more than just about Winterset (e.g., newsletter, community picnic)
Nature center (e.g., prairie restoration, promote Criss Cove and Clanton Creek Nature area)
Volunteer management center
Zoo or animal sanctuary

## ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL ACTIONS

The SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) process helps to analyze potential opportunities as viable actions for Madison County and its communities. This type of analysis can be utilized by governmental and civic organizations for any initiative being considered. In addition to identifying Strengths -S- and Weaknesses -W- that are influencing the county and communities directly, SWOT analysis ensures attention is also given to the larger ecosystem within which the county and communities operate. Opportunities -O- go beyond what is special to Madison County to help identify what trends in Iowa or the United States could be relevant. For example, considerations might include social or population patterns. Similarly, threats -T- help identify upcoming obstacles or concerns on the horizon that may influence any town or the county (e.g., economic or health crises). Following is a summary of a SWOT analysis for Madison County presented within the context of the Heart & Soul framework.

# MADISON COUNTY SWOT

	HOPES	CONCERNS
INTERNAL FACTORS	<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight individual community initiatives</li> <li>• Vibrant community festivals &amp; celebrations</li> <li>• High tourism related to history &amp; culture</li> <li>• Diverse topography &amp; scenic landscape</li> <li>• Strong economic base provided by thriving small businesses</li> <li>• Low density population with small town feel</li> <li>• High regard for school systems</li> <li>• Individual volunteers &amp; leaders in all communities of the county</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight individual community initiatives</li> <li>• Polarized points of view regarding growth &amp; development</li> <li>• Perception that resources are not distributed equitably</li> <li>• Communication and connections within, between, and among communities</li> <li>• Misinformed public understanding of public &amp; private funding</li> <li>• Establishing &amp; maintaining high quality infrastructure (roads, utilities, broadband, internet)</li> <li>• Tension among acreages, family farms &amp; corporate farms related to land use</li> <li>• Partisanship and divisiveness</li> </ul>
EXTERNAL FACTORS	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close proximity to metropolitan amenities</li> <li>• Thriving tourism</li> <li>• Population growth</li> <li>• Easy access to interstate highways</li> <li>• Quality of life appeals to economically diverse population</li> <li>• Lower cost of living compared to metropolitan areas</li> <li>• Economic disparity</li> <li>• Educate potential new business &amp; industry about market potential relate to location &amp; population density</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequity in broadband access</li> <li>• Interactions between long-time residents &amp; newcomers</li> <li>• Partisanship and divisiveness</li> </ul>

## NEXT STEPS FOR MADISON COUNTY HEART & SOUL

The next steps for the residents of Madison County and its communities are to make decisions that will protect and enhance Heart & Soul values and build toward a future that honors and upholds them. Within the Heart & Soul framework, this is Phase 3, which involves developing options, making choices, and formalizing decisions. This phase moves the Heart & Soul statements, and their accompanying data analysis, to commitment and action planning. Local governments could adopt policies and civic and non-profit organizations could formally adopt ideas for actions, all enhancing the Heart & Soul of where we live.

Phase 4, the final phase of the Heart & Soul initiative, is one of taking action through long-term follow-through and implementation of community and county action plans. These plans, based upon the values expressed in the Heart & Soul statements, establish a compass that helps a community reorient itself as circumstances change. Initiating a first set of actions, while keeping an eye on the compass, will ensure the community is heading in the right direction.

Heart & Soul is about inclusive and meaningful community participation in which **all voices matter**. Heart & Soul fosters a participatory culture which can transform individuals, organizations, and entire communities. By cultivating the heart and soul of our communities and county, **what matters most** will be realized.

## FINAL WORDS FROM THE THRIVINCI PARTNERS

During ThriVinci's work with the Madison County Heart & Soul initiative, it became evident that Madison County is a resilient community with high awareness of its values. To maximize the data analysis conducted by ThriVinci, we recommend the Heart & Soul leadership team share the findings, along with their value statements, with county and community leadership as they develop their long-term county or community master plan. The Heart & Soul statements and the supportive data provide a foundation for actions that will strengthen the county and its communities.

Finally, it is important to remember not all initiatives need to be launched or reimaged. Oftentimes, an awareness campaign about existing community offerings is sufficient. We also recommend establishing a forum for individuals across the county to discuss what is important to them and what is currently being done to address issues. Listen every day to the Heart & Soul of the residents of the county.

Vicki Cunningham

402-619-0750

[director@thrivinci.org](mailto:director@thrivinci.org)

Mitch Cunningham

402-740-2270

[president@thrivinci.org](mailto:president@thrivinci.org)



## Appendix A Potential Initiatives by County

Idea Themes	Frequency	% of Sample	Extrapolated Count
Biking & Walking Anywhere (e.g., bike paths and hiking trails - preferably connecting the towns across the county)	92	8.87%	1442
Community Center - Meeting Space, Gym, Rec Space, YMCA-vibe	90	8.68%	1410
Water Park / Indoor Pool / Pool	54	5.21%	846
Draft Community Master Plan - Conserve History and Charm, emphasize future, multi-use properties, partnerships across communities, conscientious development	47	4.53%	736
Establish Advisory Committees (e.g., Accessibility, Elderly, Inclusive, Poverty, etc.)	47	4.53%	736
Host County Conversations - Show you care more than just about Winterset (e.g., newsletter, community picnic)	43	4.15%	674
Zoning (e.g., acreages, conservation, land use, protect environment, rural development limits, water conservation, etc.)	35	3.38%	548
Low Income Quality Housing for All (e.g., Town Homes, Old Nursing home for apartments, join the Central Iowa Rural Housing Authority (CIRHA))	31	2.99%	486
Better internet [for FREE] - especially for rural (e.g., broadband, fiber optic, century link, high speed internet)	31	2.99%	486
Lower Taxes (e.g., tax companies more, reduce impact on families to make it more affordable)	29	2.80%	454
Host Community Forum - Windmills/Turbines - county-wide vote on wind turbines	28	2.70%	439
Adult Activities - Dance Hall, Singles Night, Street Dances, Lessons (e.g., dance, music), Outdoor activities (kayak or canoe rental, pickle ball, cross country skiing), Brewery / Microbrewery / Winery / Sports Bar near bike paths	25	2.41%	392
Community Cleanup - Oversight, Service Crew for Low Income & Elderly - Paint-a-Thon in St. Charles	25	2.41%	392
Indoor Activities (e.g., bowling, Arcade, roller & ice skating)	25	2.41%	392
Superstore	24	2.31%	376
Board Supervisors Host Town Hall - Board to meet in varied locations, 5 supervisors, more communication	23	2.22%	360
Renovate older buildings (e.g., facelift to Dollar Store, replace with local vendors, replace with restaurants, Hutton building, etc.)	22	2.12%	345
Walkability (e.g., access through town, connect towns, better sidewalks, clean alleys, improve sidewalks, add sidewalks, no parking on streets)	21	2.03%	329
Grocery Store, Access to Health Food, Access to Health Food	20	1.93%	313
Food - Restaurants (e.g., diverse options, Italian, steak, BBQ, Golden Corral, Across county, etc.)	18	1.74%	282
More Services - at risk populations (e.g., alcohol and drug prevention, reverse parades for food pantries, community garden, low income, meals on wheels, mental health, etc.)	18	1.74%	282

Idea Themes	Frequency	% of Sample	Extrapolated Count
Multi-modal transit - Uber, Taxi, Bus, Subway, Tram, Bike Paths - Connect towns & DM (e.g., complete SW connector to DSM Metro, Connect trails to bike paths, Tram to Interstate, etc.)	18	1.74%	282
Youth Programs (e.g., after school care, arts & theatre, anti-bullying, music, riding lessons, suicide prevention, troubled youth, school counseling, access for low income)	18	1.74%	282
Bond for road and sewer improvements	17	1.64%	266
Food - Quick Serve - Taco Bell, A&W, Chick-Fil-A, Subway, Pancheros, Panera, BK	17	1.64%	266
safety - (e.g., 4-way stop north of town, need timed lights, expand ambulance, FT Fire Department, Light at 92/169, round about at 169-92, etc.)	17	1.64%	266
Form land bank to handle abandoned lots and dilapidated buildings	16	1.54%	251
Better Gas Station	15	1.45%	235
Food - Café or Coffee Shop or Bakery	13	1.25%	204
Schools - (e.g., conversations with leadership, bussing for all ages, auto classes at I35, life preparedness, adding or updating schools)	13	1.25%	204
Infrastructure - Affordable Child Care	12	1.16%	188
Infrastructure - Hardware Store	12	1.16%	188
Be More Inclusive and Friendly - Host welcome wagons, establish county ambassadors, quarterly new comer mixer	11	1.06%	172
Green Living (e.g., recycling, sustainable farming, electric cars, alternative energy, environment education, etc.)	11	1.06%	172
Improve Parks (e.g., restrooms, equipment, outdoor skating rink, bridge in Bevington Park, repurpose old baseball field)	11	1.06%	172
Local Vendors and Stores - Expand Hours (e.g., Farm to Table, Food Trucks)	11	1.06%	172
More Community Events / Unique attractions (e.g., extend the fair, holiday parade, town celebrations, winter activities in Winterset, outdoor music festivals in parks)	11	1.06%	172
Outdoor Activities - (e.g., Public Golf Course, Disc Golf Course, Drive Thru Movie Theatre, Stock Ponds, Public Hunting Grounds, mini-golf)	11	1.06%	172
Multi-Service Health Center (e.g., dentists, hospitals, Physical Therapy, alternative health, etc.) - low income options and supports varied health insurance (Medicare)	10	0.96%	157
Population Growth and Retention - Welcome Immigrants	10	0.96%	157
Nature Center (e.g., prairie restoration, promote Criss Cove / Clanton Creek Nature area)	9	0.87%	141
Communication - Newsletter, County-wide Calendar, Newspaper, Daily 1-pagers, Improve Rants & Raves	8	0.77%	125
Food - Ice Cream Parlor, Froyo, Ice cream truck, Brownie Bar	8	0.77%	125
Host more town halls (e.g., give people a voice, be flexible with location and times, review budgets and opportunities)	8	0.77%	125

dea Themes	Frequency	% of Sample	Extrapolated Count
Infrastructure - Clothing Stores	8	0.77%	125
Jobs (e.g., job center, young professional job placement, step up youth job program, expand MOC, Manufacturing, Call Center)	7	0.68%	110
youth sports (e.g. Basketball court, football field, indoor facilities, swim, teacher involvement)	7	0.68%	110
Beautify (e.g., more green space, public art, roadside decorations, conscientious development)	6	0.58%	94
Conserve - History (e.g., historic District design guidelines, grants for people to fix up historic homes, courthouse improvements, etc.) & Charm	6	0.58%	94
Emergency Services (e.g., better communication with Fire Department, Better Training, Improve relations with diverse populations)	6	0.58%	94
Infrastructure - Art Supply Store / Studio with Activities	6	0.58%	94
Volunteer Management Center	6	0.58%	94
Zoning (e.g., acreages, conservation, land use, protect environment, rural development limits, water conservation, Invest in conservation with tree planting programs)	6	0.58%	94
Community College - Trade Pipeline	5	0.48%	78
Improve library (e.g., extend hours, expand borrowing books through other libraries without a penalty)	5	0.48%	78
Infrastructure - Auto care (e.g., Automatic car wash, Auto Store)	5	0.48%	78
More Services - Maintenance (e.g., Leaf Sucking Truck, mow Cumming road, regular tree trimmings, etc.)	5	0.48%	78
Boating Lake (e.g., add a beach, Cedar Lake? City Lake?)	4	0.39%	63
Infrastructure - Ag Store	4	0.39%	63
Low Cost Animal Shelter	4	0.39%	63
More community branding	4	0.39%	63
More customer parking in town square	4	0.39%	63
Infrastructure - Bookstore	3	0.29%	47
more small businesses - incentives for updated spaces for small start-up businesses	3	0.29%	47
Dog Friendly - Dog Park	2	0.19%	31
Infrastructure - Laundromat	2	0.19%	31
Infrastructure - Hotel	2	0.19%	31
Infrastructure - Sporting Store	1	0.10%	16
Connect w. Urban Communities	1	0.10%	16
Infrastructure - Children's store	1	0.10%	16
Mobile Infrastructure	1	0.10%	16
One-Stop Service Center - Combine Social Services	1	0.10%	16
zoo or animal sanctuary	1	0.10%	16

## Appendix B Potential Initiatives by Community

The most frequented proposed initiatives were analyzed at the community level. Below is each idea with the count of respondents by the largest communities in Madison County.

Idea Themes	Winterset	St. Charles	Earlham	Truro	Peru & Walnut	5 Communities	County Total
Biking & Walking Anywhere (e.g., bike paths and hiking trails - preferably connecting the towns across the county)	59	9	18	1	1	88	92
Community Center - Meeting Space, Gym, Rec Space, YMCA-vibe	59	10	13	2		84	90
Water Park / Indoor Pool / Pool	35	3	15			53	54
Establish Advisory Committees (e.g., Accessibility, Elderly, Inclusive, Poverty, etc.)	29	5	7	1	2	44	47
Host County Conversations - Show you care more than just about Winterset (e.g., newsletter, community picnic)	10	15	7	7	2	41	43
Draft Community Master Plan - Conserve History and Charm, emphasize future, multi-use properties, partnerships across communities, conscientious development	28	3	8		1	40	47
Zoning (e.g., acreages, conservation, land use, protect environment, rural development limits, water conservation, etc.)	24	2	3		1	30	35
Lower Taxes (e.g., tax companies more, reduce impact on families to make it more affordable)	22	2	4		1	29	29
Low Income Quality Housing for All (e.g., Town Homes, Old Nursing home for apartments, join the Central Iowa Rural Housing Authority (CIRHA))	13	1	10	2	2	28	31
Indoor Activities (e.g., bowling, Arcade, roller & ice skating)	21	2	2			25	25
Community Cleanup - Oversight, Service Crew for Low Income & Elderly - Paint-a-Thon in St. Charles	11	9	3	1	1	25	25
Superstore	17	3	3	1		24	24

Idea Themes	Winterset	St. Charles	Earlham	Truro	Peru & Walnut	5 Communities	County Total
Better internet [for FREE] - especially for rural (e.g., broadband, fiber optic, century link, high speed internet)	8	6	4	1	5	24	31
Adult Activities - Dance Hall, Singles Night, Street Dances, Lessons (e.g., dance, music), Outdoor activities (kayak or canoe rental, pickle ball, cross country skiing), Brewery / Microbrewery / Winery / Sports bar near bike paths	19		2	1		22	25
Walkability (e.g., access through town, connect towns, better sidewalks, clean alleys, improve sidewalks, add sidewalks, no parking on streets)	14	3	4			21	21
Renovate older buildings (e.g., facelift to Dollar Store, replace with local vendors, replace with restaurants, hutton building, etc.)	9	7	2	3		21	22
Grocery Store, Access to Health Food, Access to Health Food	2	13		3	1	19	20
Multi-modal transit - Uber, Taxi, Bus, Subway, Tram, Bike Paths - Connect towns & DM (e.g., complete SW connector to DsM Metro, Connect trails to bike paths, Tram to Interstate, etc.)	15	2	1			18	18
More Services - at risk populations (e.g., alcohol and drug prevention, reverse parades for food pantrys, community garden, low income, meals on wheels, mental health, etc.)	13	1	3		1	18	18
Host Community Forum - Windmills/Turbines - county-wide vote on wind turbines	7	1	8		2	18	28
Food - Restaurants (e.g., diverse options, Italian, steak, BBQ, Golden Corral, Across county, etc.)	8	6		3		17	18
Youth Programs (e.g., after school care, arts & theatre, anti-bullying, music, riding lessons, suicide prevention, troubled youth, school counseling, access for low income)	11	1	4			16	18
Food - Quick Serve - Taco Bell, A&W, Chik Fil A, Subway, Pancheros, Panera, BK	7	4		4	1	16	17
Board Supervisors Host Town Hall - Board to meet in varied locations, 5 supervisors, more communication	9	2	3		2	16	23

## Appendix C Complete Data Set

[The complete data from the 1037 survey responses can be accessed here.](#)