



Story, WY Community Review

May 30 & 31, 2018

PHASE 1 - LEARN

A service of the Wyoming Business Council in partnership with the University of Wyoming Extension, the University of Idaho and University of Montana.

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COMMUNITY REVIEW REPORT

Story, Wyoming

May 30 & 31, 2018

Sponsoring Agencies and Organizations

Story Community Fund
Story Women's Club
Wyoming Business Council
University of Wyoming Extension

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the many individuals who generously shared their time, opinions, and knowledge by serving on the home team, completing a survey, participating in a listening session or other conversation with the visiting team. Special thanks to Patrick and Paula Morgan for hosting the visiting team.

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Executive Summary

The Story Community Review team would like to thank the organizers and citizens of Story for their time and hospitality. The tour provided to the review team showed how truly beautiful the Story area is with a rich history and abundance of natural assets.

Story has the distinction of being the first community to participate in the Wyoming Business Council's new Community Review Program. The new program is a hybrid of our long standing (20+ year) and successful Community Assessment Program, with new processes and a partnership with Montana and Idaho. During this three-state grant project, the Wyoming Business Council and University of Wyoming are collaborating with the University of Idaho, Montana State University and the Montana Economic Development Agency to develop the very best review process in each of our states. Dr. Lorie Higgins, University of Idaho Extension, is leading and guiding the project.



As part of the three-state collaboration, each state has its own design team. The Wyoming Design Team is guiding the four-phase process to help identify community needs, build community capacity and provide resource information to address community needs.

The tri-state Community Review website is now up and running at <http://www.comunityreview.org>, where you can find a searchable database of resources for community development and other useful information. It will prove to be of immense help to communities now and far into the future.

Thank you again, for sharing your hopes and vision for Story during the Story Community Review. Working together, much will be accomplished.

Wyoming Community Review Process Overview

The Wyoming Community Review Process has four phases. Not every community will go through all the phases, but the opportunity is available to grow and achieve success through four phases of assistance. A community coach is made available to help the community prepare for success. Story has completed Phase I.

- Phase I – LEARN - Includes the application, community pre-assessment survey and exploration, community team training, the Community Review with priority setting, and initial report.
- Phase II – LEAD - Community training (if needed and in areas identified), Home Team members with the assistance of a community coach develop a workplan/action plan, set up committees to work on areas identified, and a final report outlining the activities to be undertaken.
- Phase III – LAUNCH – Determine funding sources, identify consultants or other community success stories, follow-up and technical assistance. In-depth training, if needed.
- Phase IV – EVALUATION/CELEBRATION – One-year follow-up and celebration, report out of community successes and return on investment. Celebrating successes.

Community Review Agenda

May 30

10:00	Tour Story	Story Pines
1:30 – 3:30	Open House Listening Session	Women’s Club
4:00 – 5:00	Youth Listening Session Open House	Women’s Club
7:00 – 8:00	General Listening Session	Women’s Club

May 31

9:00 – 10:00	Business Listening session	Women’s Club
10:00 – 11:00	Tourism Listening session	Women’s Club
11:30 – 1:00	Senior Listening Session	Women’s Club
1:30 – 5:00	Team Meeting	Women’s Club
7:00 – 9:00	Town Hall Meeting	Women’s Club

Tour of Story

Sally Johnson and Don Fisk, along with the Sheridan Trolley, provided a tour, which included businesses and history in Story, Ft. Phil Kearny, the Wagon Box Monument and Fetterman Monument. Story is in a beautiful setting, full of natural charm and history.



Community Listening Sessions

Community Listening Sessions are open-ended, focus group-like discussions with stakeholders in the community. We ask the same questions at each session and offer several sessions to encourage as many participants as possible. We started off with two open houses, so people could drop in and answer the questions without taking an hour out of their day; 35 people attended. The other four sessions were facilitated, more formal sessions asking the same questions and had a total 27 people attend. It culminated in a town hall meeting to report our initial findings. 41 people attended the Town Hall. Group work was completed to get ideas from the community about how to address community-identified priorities.

Town Hall Meeting

Community Input on Improving Community Communications

In response to the concerns raised about a lack of communication within the community, the closing town hall meeting included a World Café type activity to elicit community members' specific concerns and more importantly, their ideas for what should be done about those concerns. To ensure the best chance for everyone to participate, the individuals in attendance were asked to count off from 1 to 6 and to join others with the same number that they were assigned. This created 6 groups with approximately 7 people in each group. Most people joined their assigned group; however, some individuals chose to form larger groups and stay with the people they came with. Each group was asked to respond to three questions:

1. How would increased/improved communications benefit the Story community?
2. What are the barriers to improved/increased communication and how can they be overcome?
3. What are your ideas for getting input from those who were not here?



Each group started with one of the questions and was given between 5 and 10 minutes to discuss and record their responses to it. At the end of the designated time, they were asked to move on to the next question and add their responses to those of the group who had been there previously. Most groups provided an opportunity for everyone to participate, however, in a few cases a couple of people dominated the conversations. At one point an individual expressed frustration to the activity facilitator that their thoughts were not being recorded. They were encouraged to grab a pen and add their

ideas to the flipcharts themselves. Instead of duplicating what others wrote, participants were encouraged to add a star (*) to items already written to indicate their agreement.

1. How would increased/improved communications benefit the Story community?

- Hold meeting when more people can attend (working class) *
 - Greater participation (more volunteers) *
 - Need central location to receive input (internet, local clubs, newspaper)
 - Way to communicate to larger global community (snowbirds, outlying area, people with 2nd and 3rd homes) *
 - Less feelings of exclusion
 - Better reflection of the whole community
 - Better feeling of true community: knowing each other
-
- Reduce rumors / misconceptions **
 - Increase/build trust *
 - Giving more people a voice *
 - Reduce fear *

- Increased involvement *
- Willing volunteers ****
- Foster interaction between the groups within the community
- Diverse Audience (youth, seniors, landowners, business owners, commuters)
- People need invitations to join / be involved

2. What are the barriers to improved/increased communication and how can they be overcome?

Barriers:

- No present system
- No knowledge of information process
- WEB does not reach all
- Lack of participation
- Loss/lack of gathering places

How to Overcome:

- Advertise / educate
- Community dance
- Happy hour / coffee hour – gathering place *
- Promote during Story Days
- Dedicate ½ of post office bulletin board (outside) for community info and announcements
- Library board

-
- Small Group making decisions
 - Lack of communication with whole community
 - Some do not have email
 - Secret meetings
 - People like to be hermits (reclusive)

- Monthly town meeting
- Idea box at the post office
- Mailings (Local newsletter)
- Don't bother us
- Electronic board at the post office

3. What are your ideas for getting input from those who were not here?

- Another bulk mailing – newsletter
- Visit with your neighbors
- Bulletin board(s) – list of board members (output) *
- Presentations / emails with social clubs / churches/ non-profits
- Set meeting days for input – Happy hour / coffee hour *
- Suggestion Box
- Communication Agreements
- Social Media - Facebook
- Welcome back for snowbirds
- Host community events – community wide
- Information both outside the post office
- Suggestion box
- Public meeting with SCF

-
- Send out another survey with the Story community fund letterhead on the envelope so people don't mistake it for junk mail. → how can story residents get the word and codes out?
 - Word of mouth
 - Talk to neighbors that aren't here
 - Yard sale day – table or other event **
 - Put something up at the post office

- Work with pastors to get info out
- Town meeting each month with youth rep!
- Story website
- Send out email through Garden Club or Women's Club (Community Wide) if not a member (word of mouth) *
- Newsletter posted at post office * Library, store or churches, bars, or restaurants.

During the debrief session an additional idea was shared to have a representative from each of the major clubs/groups in the community serve on this Story Community Fund board.

Before concluding the activity, the participants were asked who was willing to serve on a communications committee to further explore the ideas shared and work to implement them.

Recommendations

1. Communication
 - a. Form a communication committee
 - i. Include all service groups, businesses, churches and a wide variety of people
 - ii. Come up with an action plan to increase communication. Include who will do what, by when and cost if applicable.
 - iii. Utilize the public input from the Town Hall Meeting.
2. Trails and Pathways
 - i. Due to the controversy surrounding the topic a clear consensus was not formed to move this project forward.
 - ii. If there is interest in moving this project forward community conversations should be held to identify and address the interests and concerns of community members, both those in support of the project as well as those opposed.
3. Fire evacuation plan and fire break
 - a. Those who signed up for the committee should reach out to the fire department to determine what has been done, what is planned, and offer their support.
 - b. Work with the communications committee to share what is learned and being done.

Survey Results

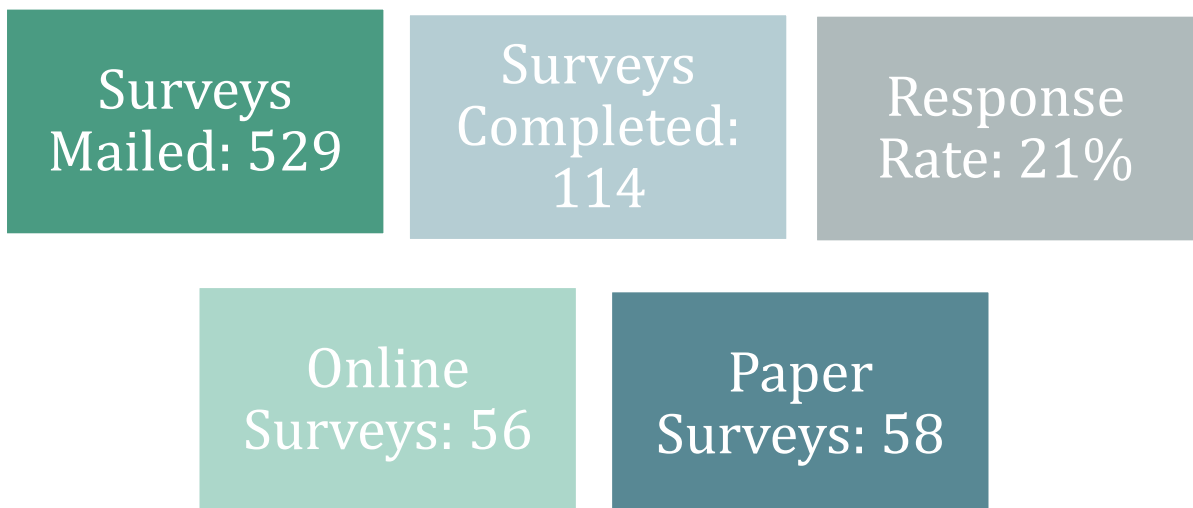
A “Community Satisfaction Survey” was conducted in Story prior to the community review team visit to conduct listening sessions and community meetings from May 30 - 31. This survey was conducted by University of Idaho and the HELPS Lab at Montana State University. The full survey is included in Appendix B of this report.

Survey results serve a number of purposes. Quantitative data can serve communities in multiple ways. Results can be used to bolster grant proposals, demonstrate support for new policies or the status quo. Citizen groups and municipalities can use this data as a guide for planning and identifying future initiatives.

In addition, Community Review delivery organizations and partnering Universities use this data to identify common interests and concerns across multiple communities, which in turn helps these organizations develop programs and resources to better assist rural communities. In order to identify commonalities and differences across communities, surveys need to be relatively standardized. Therefore, some questions in a standardized survey may be more or less relevant to particular communities. We appreciate your willingness to assist these service organizations with this important effort.

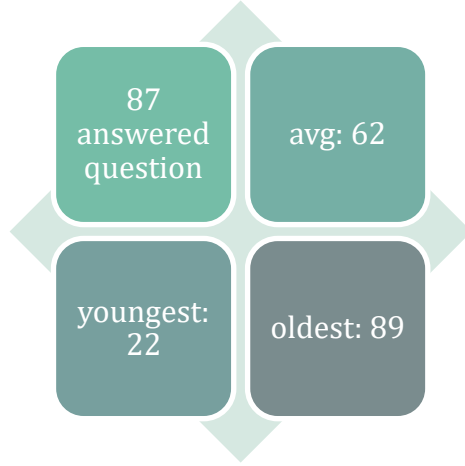
During the community visit, concerns were expressed that due to the post marks on the survey (University of Idaho and Montana State University) some had thrown out their surveys, thinking it was junk mail. At every community meeting and on the Story web page and Facebook page, information was provided about how to obtain a new survey code to replace discarded paper surveys and postcards. At most, only one or two residents took advantage of this opportunity. Still, the response rate was over 20%, which is a better than average survey response rate.

Survey Response Details

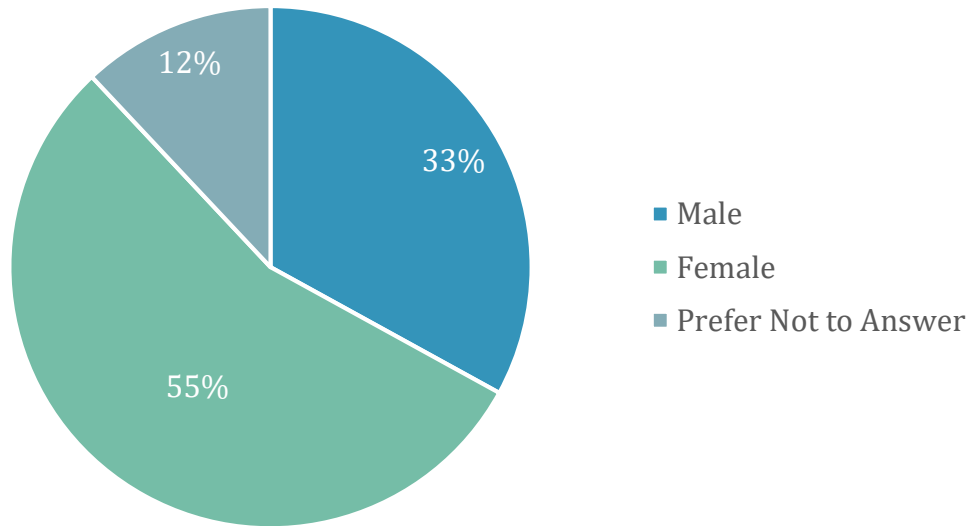


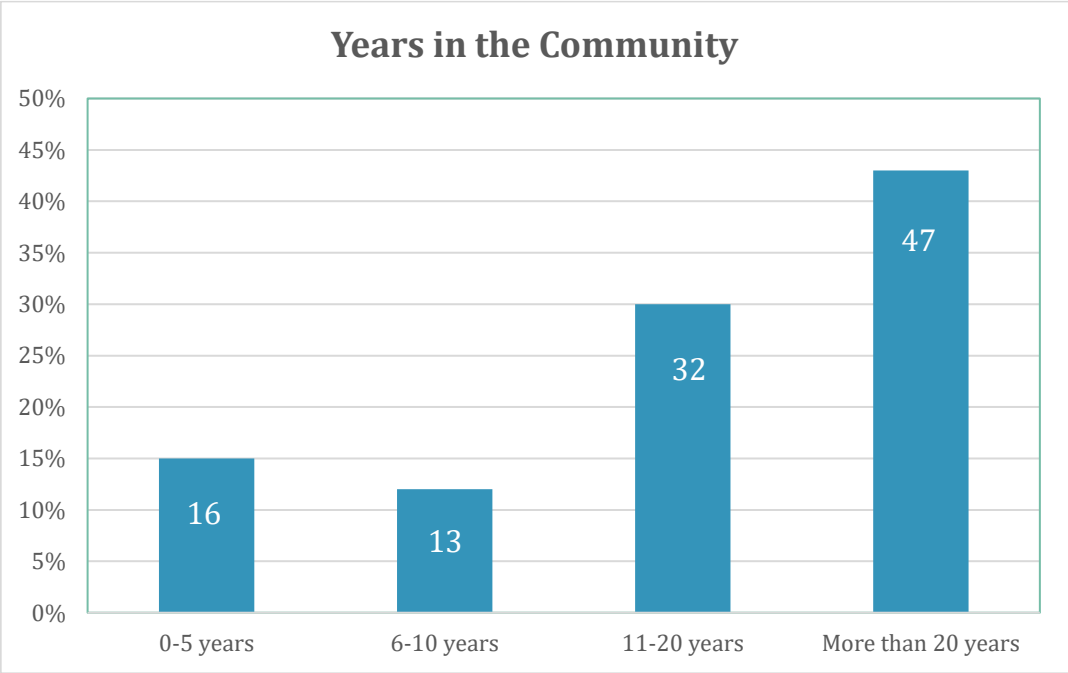
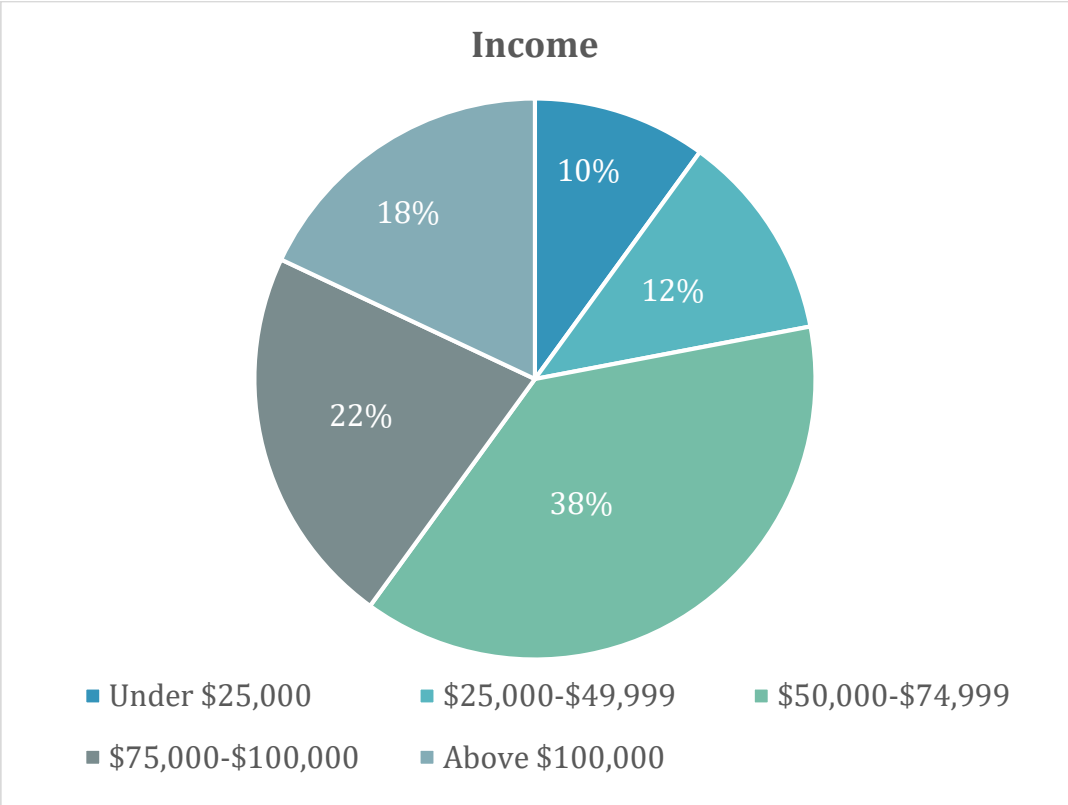
Who Responded

Age of Respondents



Sex





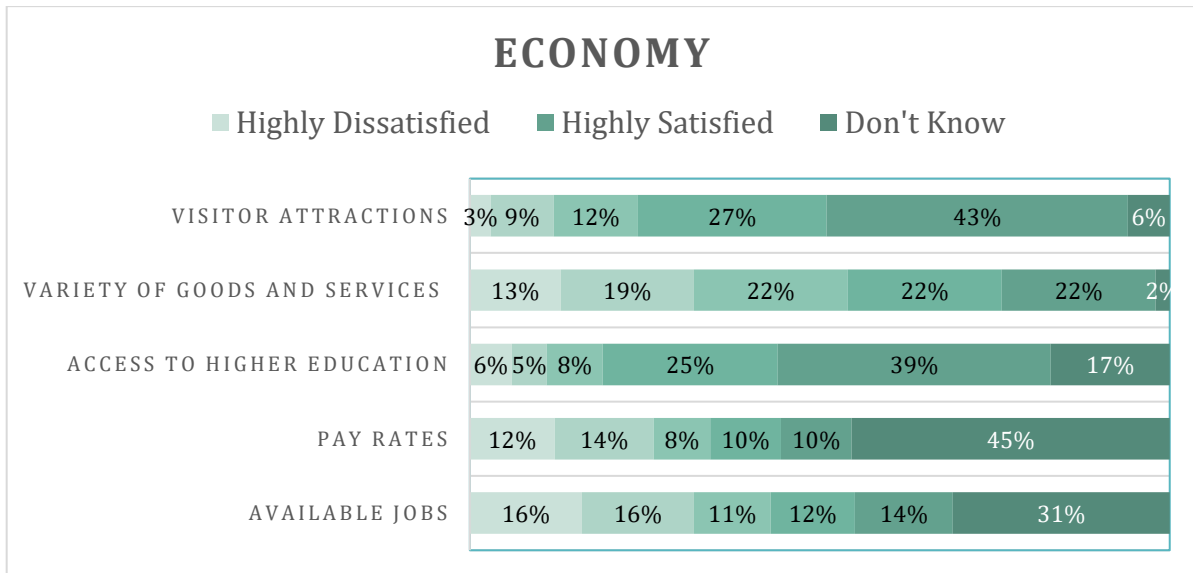
A note about the “satisfaction” section of the survey results: reported percentages are of those who answered the question. In a few cases many respondents did not select any of the options. Items where more than 25% selected “don’t know” as a response include “Local K-12 school system” “Childcare/early childhood education,” “Public transportation,” “Mental health services,” “Available jobs,” “Senior citizen support services,” and “Pay rates,” and “Responsiveness of local government.” This is probably due to a lack of awareness, knowledge or applicability of the question.

Story residents were least satisfied (more were dissatisfied than satisfied) with “Public transportation,” “Mental health services,” “Available jobs,” and “Pay rates.” For all other items in the satisfaction list, more expressed satisfaction than dissatisfaction.” Residents were most satisfied (more than 50% expressed satisfaction) with the local K-12 school system, housing, parks & playgrounds*, bicycle & pedestrian access, condition of streets and roads, appearance of downtown and neighborhoods, police protection/law enforcement, access to higher education, civic and nonprofit organizations, friendliness of residents*, and visitor attractions (* indicates greater than 75% satisfaction).

There were several opportunities for survey respondents to explain their satisfaction ratings and provide additional information and ideas. Those comments are summarized below.

2. Economy

Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your community?



The following summarizes comments on economic issues in response to question two, which was “Would you like to comment or explain why you rated your satisfaction with any of these public services and community amenities in the way you did?”

Economic development is not a primary concern for a majority of survey respondents. Though a few comments expressed a desire for more services, such as gas stations and restaurants, most expressed satisfaction with existing services and businesses, noting that the proximity of Buffalo and Sheridan is such that meeting basic needs is not challenging for most residents.

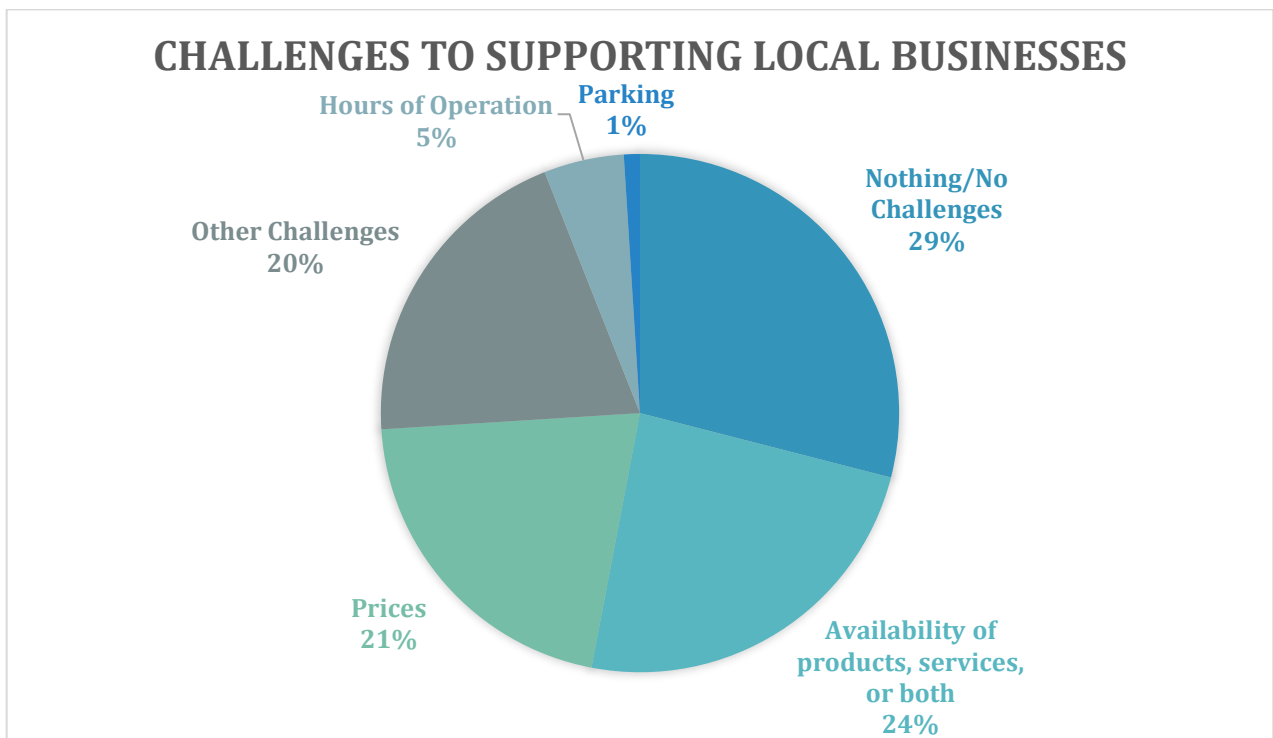
The following comments shared in the survey is representative of 24 comments provided in response to question two:

I believe my comments take into consideration of what my ideals are relating to a small-town atmosphere. I cannot and will not have high expectations on several areas of concerns in this survey simply because I know I can't have it both ways. One cannot have high expectations in a coveted rural setting with a limited population.

We don't need development in Story. The great thing about Story is that it isn't developed. That is what makes it such a great town.

Many said they moved to Story BECAUSE it does not have all the bells and whistles of an incorporated town and that they would very much like to keep it that way.

Question: Do any of the following factors challenge your ability to support Story's locally owned businesses? (Select all that apply.)



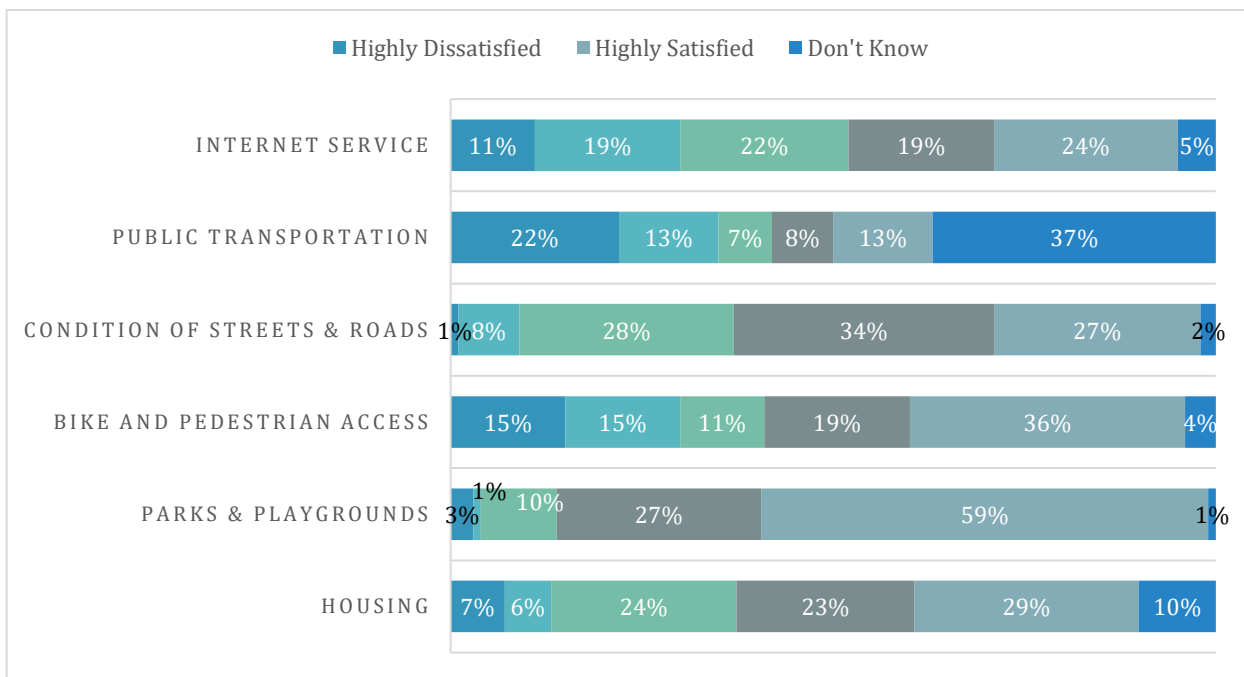
“Nothing” was the most frequently provided response to this question, followed by “Availability of products, services, or both,” “Prices,” and “Other Challenges.”

Survey takers also had an opportunity to explain responses to this question. Though most did not comment several indicated that there simply aren't many businesses in Story to support and residents are happy to spend most of their money in Sheridan and Buffalo. A few mentioned dissatisfaction with local restaurants. Issues specifically mentioned included prices, one moving from a family menu to a higher end menu, and that smokers tend to congregate around the entrance of another. Several others indicated

disappointment with disappearing eateries: *“I miss having 3 good cafes and a coffee place. Having a gas station was nice.”*

3. Infrastructure and Housing

Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your community?



Of the infrastructure-related survey items, Story residents were least satisfied with public transportation and most satisfied with local parks and playgrounds. In listening sessions and conversations, we heard a desire to have public transportation for those who either do not drive or do not have a vehicle, so they might get to Sheridan or Buffalo for appointments and shopping. Though residents responding to the survey overwhelmingly prefer to keep Story as it is, some have a few items on their community services wish list. These quotes represent those sentiments:

It’s probably not too helpful, but in our house, we’d like Story developed a little more—but not too much. Sheridan is close enough for medical care, etc. (though a little clinic would be nice). A couple of smaller mom and pop shops, maybe internet-based businesses could be attracted? Would want a gas station, for sure. Affordable housing is a problem for service workers. Some nice apartments in or around Story would not offend us.

This is a community with many seniors. In part this is because housing has become so expensive that younger members of long-time families can’t afford to stay and raise kids

here. I think we need both more senior oriented programs and housing programs to keep people from traditional families and groups in Story's population here.

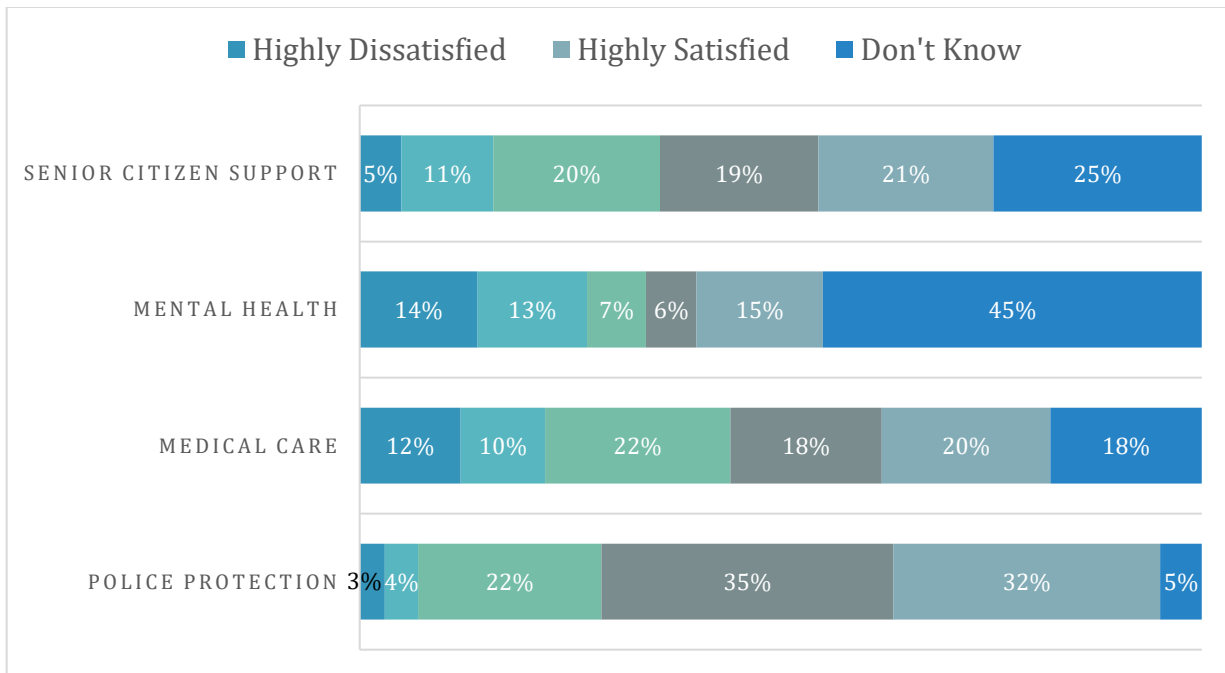
It would be nice to have walking/biking paths along the main roads in Story. Much safer for pedestrians.

Comments about walking and biking paths and expanded shoulders for roads focused primarily on safety issues.

Need shoulders on highway from Story School to Story Fish Hatchery and North Piney until pavement ends as children and adults use for walking and bike riding. Speeding cars make a situation that could result in an accident, especially on summer weekends. At least on one side of the road with some shoulder or a painted walking biking area on the road.

4. Services

Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your community?



For the most part, Story residents accept that services are necessarily limited.

Story is not suited for businesses or residents who can't be relatively self-sufficient. The infrastructure is not designed for a large population and new roads just can't be built. The limited access and threat of forest fires precludes over development.

However, there are concerns that a community full of senior citizens are at least 20 minutes from the closest medical care.

As a senior citizen, I worry that we don't have an ambulance any longer, so a medical emergency will take at least 20 minutes round trip to Sheridan, and perhaps further if the condition cannot be treated there. When I first purchased my home, the volunteer fire department had an ambulance with trained EMT's. Being at least 20 minutes from medical care is not a good situation in a community where so many of our residents are seniors.

One service not asked about on the survey, but that residents very much appreciate is the recycling program.

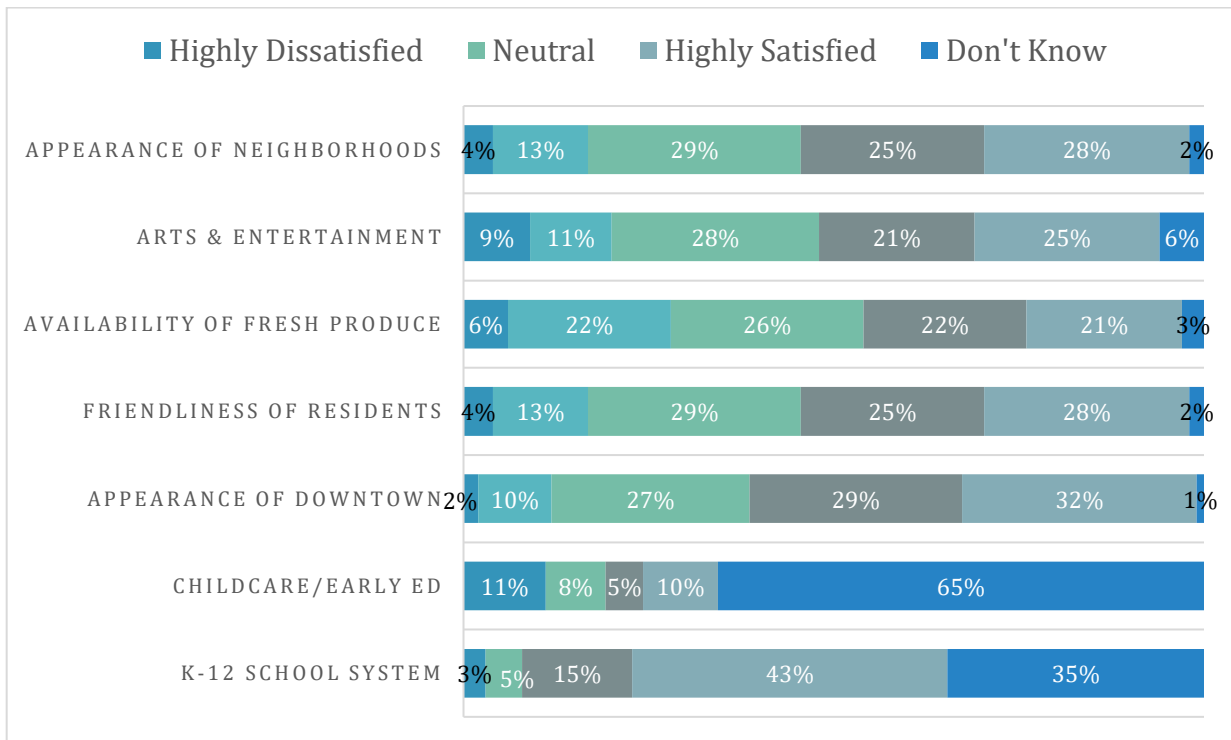
I love that we can recycle here in Story but worry it will stop being we don't have the funds to pay for it. Very expensive!

It would be nice if the city of Sheridan would use our property tax to pay for recycling.

Other comments expressed appreciation for the post office and library.

5. Placemaking

Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your community?



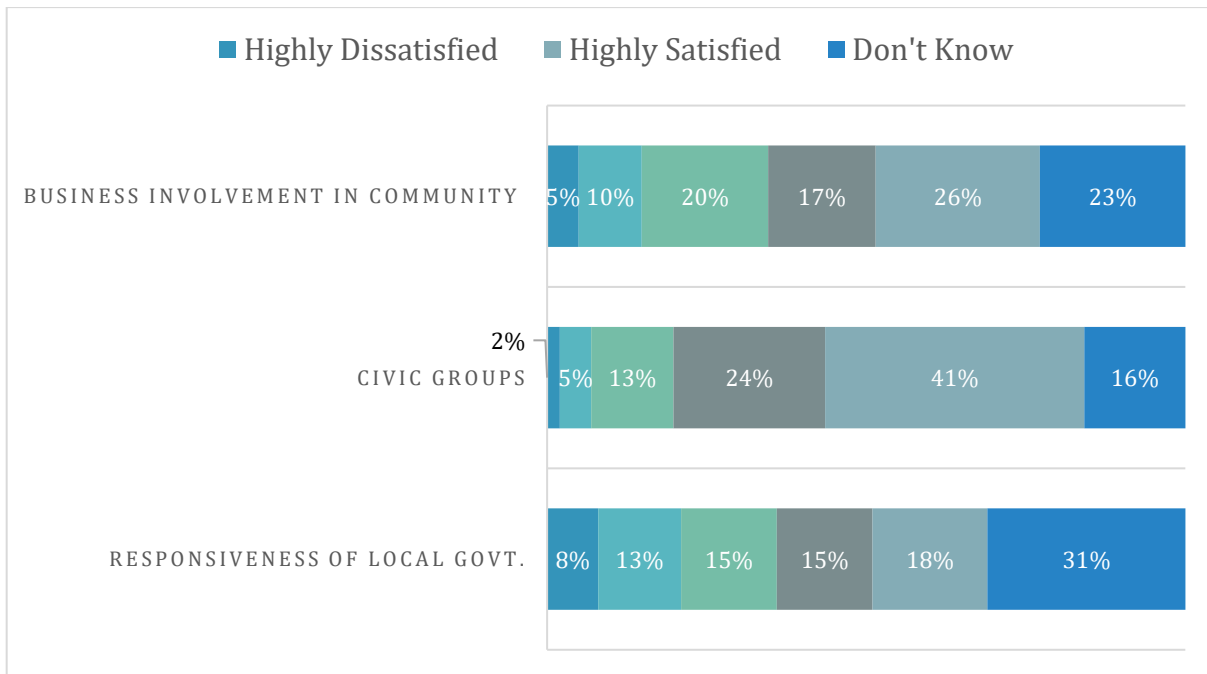
Though respondents did not have much to say about this group of questions, the most common comment was about unkempt properties.

*One of the improvements that could improve the community is to help individuals clean up their property of old junk/vehicles/ and other discarded items—all this leaves a very negative 1st impression of the downtown area, especially.
Privately owned property (old gas station) at the entrance to the community is run down and unkempt.*

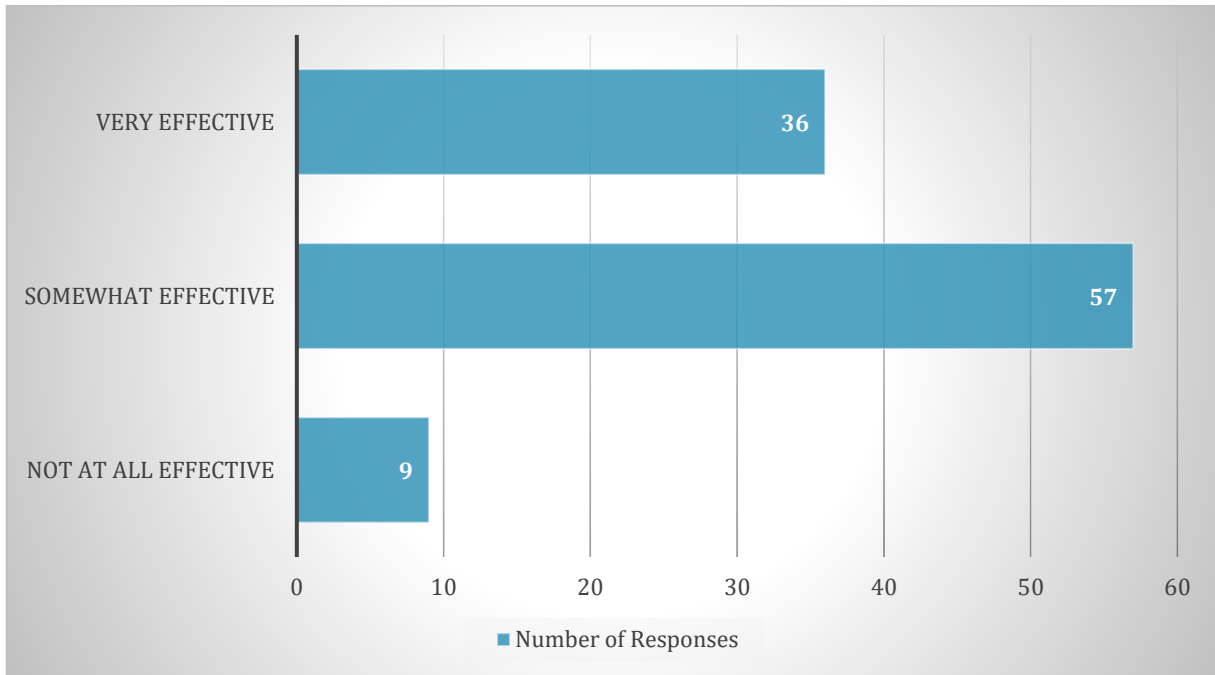
There were only a few comments in this vein, however, with most expressing this sentiment: “Story is beautiful and unkempt.”

5. Leadership

Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your community?



Question: In general, how effective do you think the residents of your community are at working together to solve challenges?



A number of respondents explained their answer to this question. The most common type of comment expressed appreciation for local groups.

There is a very strong sense of community here. I feel it is uniquely strong in this community. The Women’s Club, Lions Club, and community church are very active and work together often.

Women’s Club, Garden Club, Lions Club and a wonderful branch library that welcomes volunteers.

There are some great volunteer groups in this town. Look at the library, Women’s Club, recycling, and the community park. All maintained by volunteers. That is really cool.

This community has many great things: recycling, Women’s Cub, library, community park and Lion’s Club. If it weren’t for these groups, many of the great things in this town would not exist.

Others offered a different take on the state of community engagement in Story. There were many comments like this one:

We tend to leave each other alone until someone has trouble, then we reach out and help one another. This is a very giving community.

Some noted a lack of opportunities to come together:

Have only lived here two years and have not seen anything related to “community-wide” discussion about how to discuss and deal with community challenges. These discussions might be going on, but we have not learned of any as of yet.

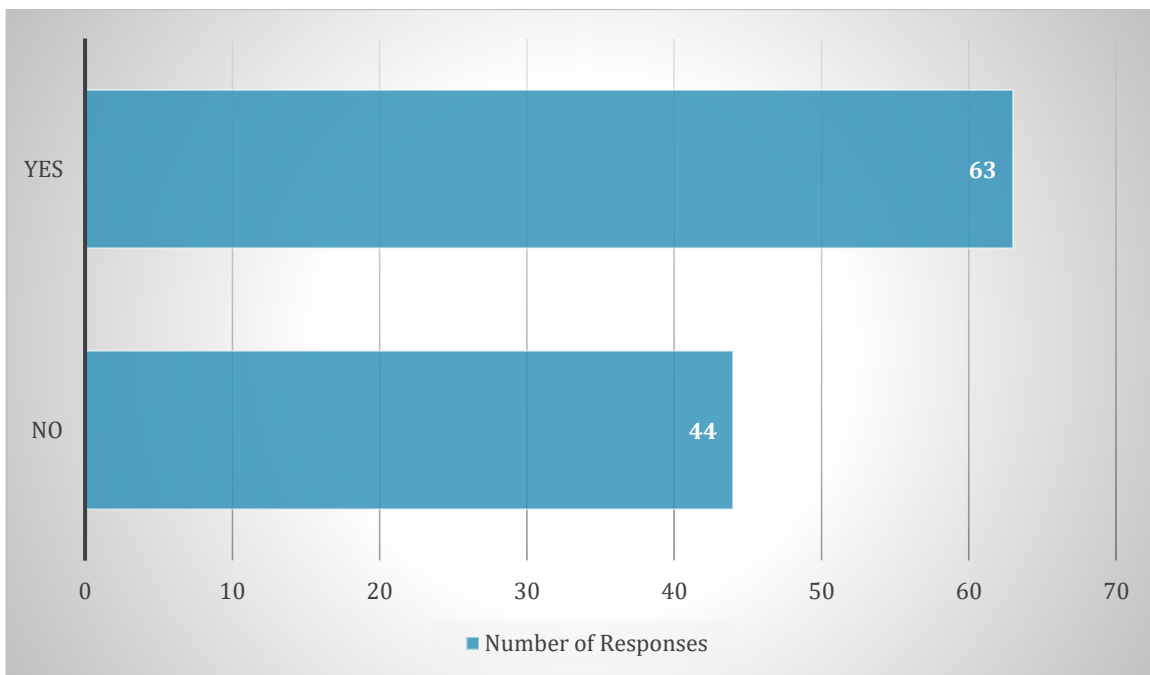
Quite a few respondents expressed outright (and less than civil) criticisms of local groups interested in community improvement and (presumably) the community review team:

Story is a unique mountain community. Leave it just the way it is! We don’t want your “improvements!”

Progress: phooey!

Others explained that they worry about the Community Fund’s efforts as they feel public input on their initiatives has been lacking and that some efforts reflect the interests of only a few residents.

Question: Have you been involved in a neighborhood or community project in the last 12 months? (For example, youth development, community beautification, fund raiser, etc.)



Question: Please tell us the type(s) of projects you have been involved in:

Lion's club

church projects youth and missions

youth programs @ school

fund raising for Story Days

food pantry

church

fire dept

judge for elections. on community fund board. woman's' club fundraisers--several annually. new kitchen was this year's focus. also garden club

Fund raiser--beautification--public service

women's clubs, garden club

recycling

church activities, food pantry, vacation bible school, women's bible study leader. The connection program, mentoring students at school, library summer program outreach to students.

park improvements, beautification, community connections

women's club, food pantry

food bank, women's club

coordinator for senior lunch in story story lions club fundraising raffle

food pantry, story days activities, youth group at church

Food bank, church fundraiser to benefit food bank

church/youth in comm.

Community food bank

park, lions club

Community outreach of story school. used to be more active but I got old.

Our neighborhood works to keep the area clear of undergrowth and fire hazards.

Story Lions Club does a yearly project to improve Story. Past projects are Install playground equipment at Story Park, Install Street Signs, Highway cleanup, etc.

Road up keep and irrigation project

Community park, trash pickup, trail maintenance.

Library and neighborhood events

Community gardens, Woman's Club, Garden Club, Food Pantry, Recycling, Church activities involving the community, Story Days

We donated funds to the Story Community Fund for a survey to create pathways in Story. Still waiting for the outcome. Also, I am involved in the community services provided by the Story Women's Club.

Raising funds to help the Women's Club with some much-needed renovations.

I have helped raise funds for our volunteer fire department for many years. I've written several grants to secure funding for community wide hazardous fuels reduction projects. And most recently worked on fundraising for the Story Park and several improvement and maintenance projects at the park.

The fire district and community fund boards.

Community Building projects

Raised money through selling my art and donating proceeds to women's club, donate coloring books I made to the school, donated a painting to the Story Fish Hatchery, donated color books to the Sheridan VA. etc.

Lions Club road clean up twice each year, Lions scholarship, assist with Story Days, help with maintenance of the Story Park, etc.

Story Food Pantry, Community Connections at the Story Library

Story School Community Connections Story Food Pantry

Helped facilitate public service announcement for local non-profit

The Story Woman's Club is always doing community projects and services. They are a very visible and very active group of woman and almost all of them are retired and continue to help even with health problems. Many of their activities help bring people into Story to enjoy our community. Our building is also a convenient meeting place when needed.

Donations of money and goods to charitable organizations.

Story Days Story Fish Fry Disc golf tournament

Woman's Club fundraisers and funeral dinners.

Story Woman's Club bereavement dinners and fund raising for building maintenance and science kits for school children.

fire department past officer, fund raisers

fund raising for the fire department. And giving money for ditch maintenance.

Recycling

Recycling, working with WDOT, Story entrance sign, community gardens, Story community Fund, Story Public Library

Clean-ups, community garden/beautification projects.

Work with the library.

Fire mitigation, property improvement, Fire Department recruiting

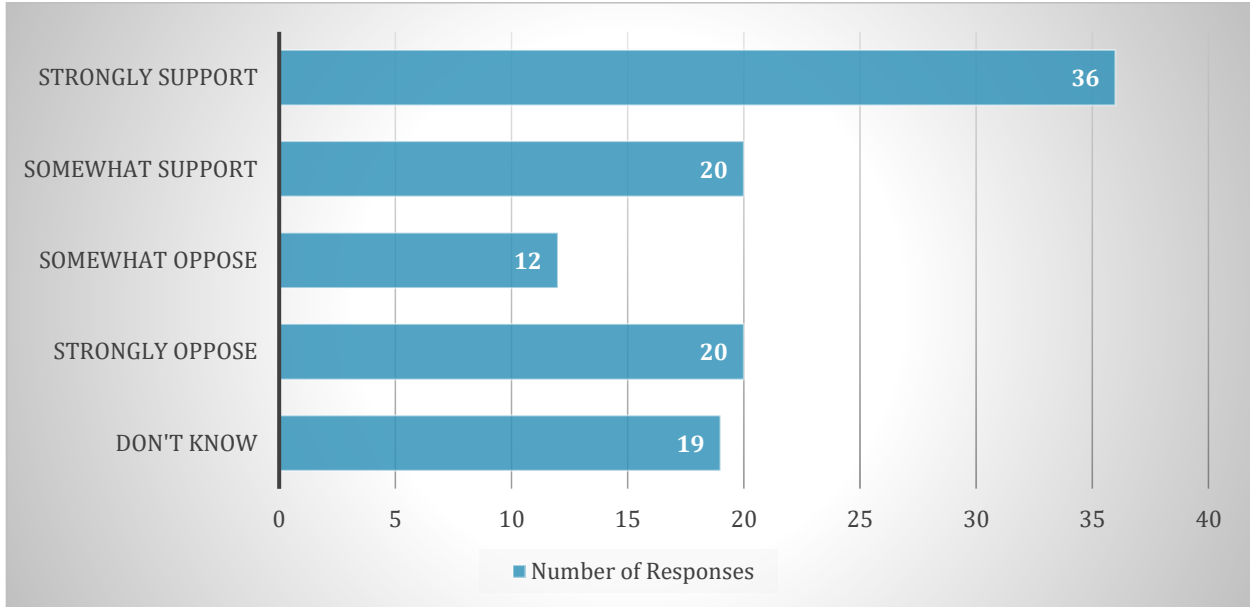
Park Cleanup, construction of Welcome sign, construction of park scheler, repair and staining of old fire hall, women's club and library, street cleanup

recycling, food bank, fire mitigation, voter registration, emergency communications

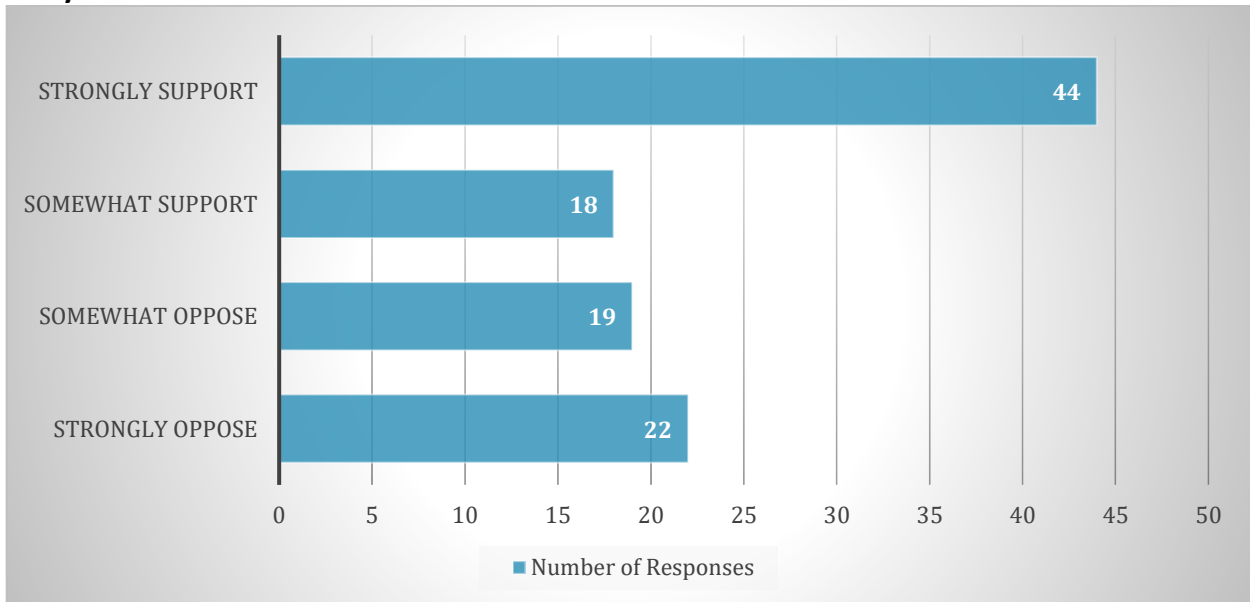
Question: Please complete this sentence: “I would be involved in more community projects if...”

In response to this question, the most frequent response had to do with availability. Many are working, often in another town, and volunteer where they work. Age, health issues and living elsewhere part of the year are other issues that prevent participation. Others would like to get more information about volunteer opportunities. Several also wanted to be sure that projects would benefit the community as a whole or children and families in particular.

Question: To what extent do you support or oppose the work of the Story Community Fund?



Question: To what extent do you support or oppose development of a trail system in the Story area?



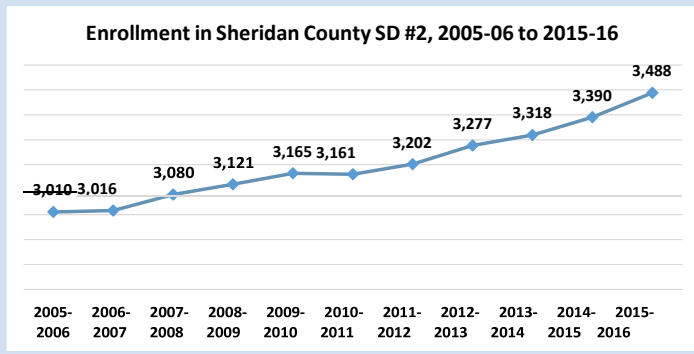
STORY, WYOMING

COMMUNITY PROFILE



POPULATION

	Story City	Sheridan County
Total population		
2012-2016, average number	1,000	29,924
2007-2011, average number	729	28,743
Change 2007-2011 to 2012-2016, percent	37.2	4.1
Population by race, 2012-2016 average, percent of total		
White	100	94
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	1
Other	0	4
Population by ethnicity, 2012-2016 average, percent of total		
Non-Hispanic	99	96
Hispanic	1	4
Population by age group, 2012-2016 average, percent of total		
Under age 18	17	22
Age 18-64	60	60
Age 65 and older	23	18
Median age, 2012-2016 average, years	53	42



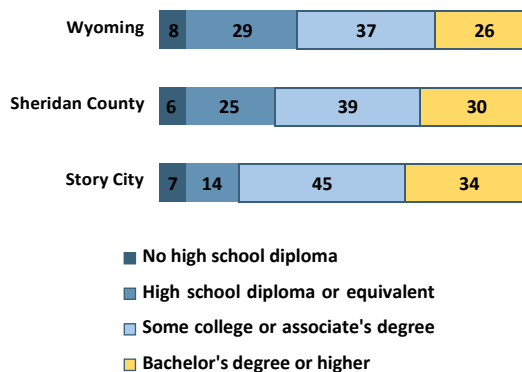
SOURCES: US Census Bureau, US Department of Education

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

	Story City	Sheridan County	Wyoming State
Income			
Per capita income, 2012-2016 average, dollars	24,380	29,630	30,139
Median household income, 2012-2016 average, dollars	44,138	53,914	59,143
Poverty			
Overall poverty, 2012-2016 average			
Number	104	2,378	65,762
Rate, percent	10.4	8.2	11.6
Children living in poverty, 2012-2016 average			
Number	0	681	18,908
Rate, percent	0.0	10.8	13.9
Food insecurity			
Overall rate, 2016, percent	---	12.3	16.2
Rate among children, 2016, percent	---	12.6	16.7

SOURCES: US Census Bureau, Feeding America

Highest level of education among those age 25 or older, 2012-2016 average

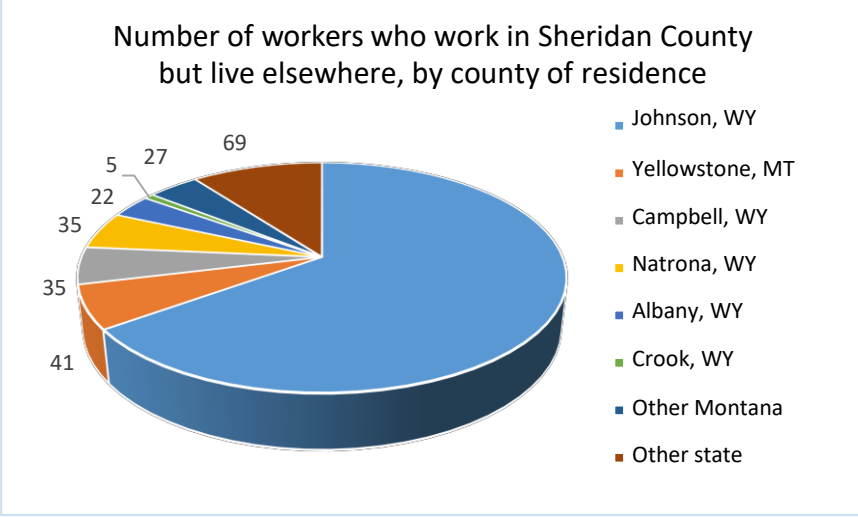
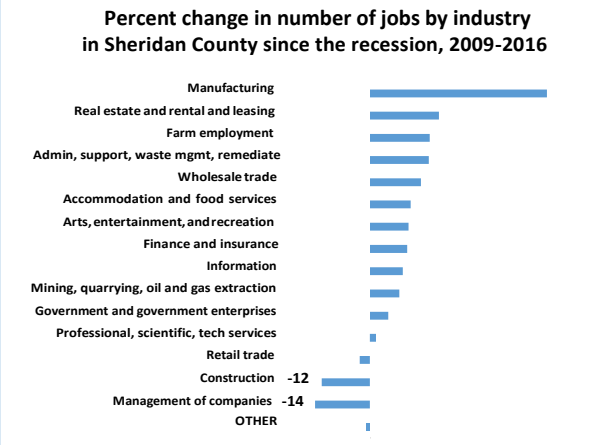
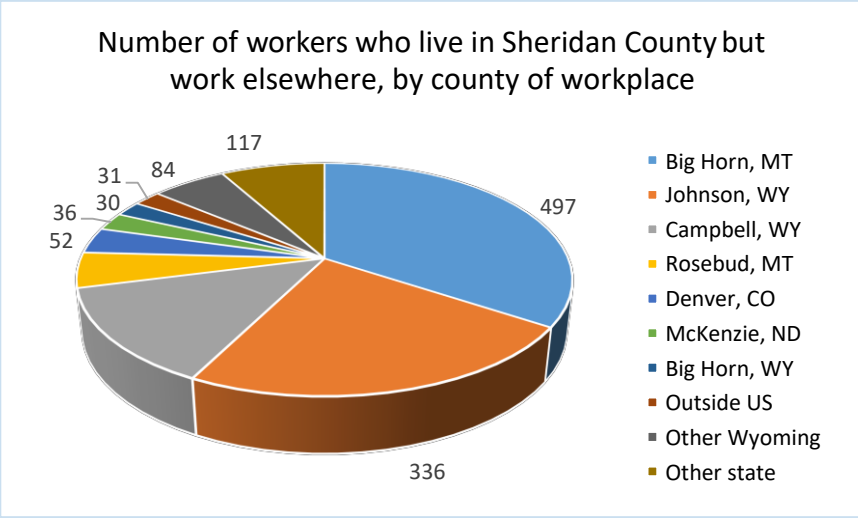
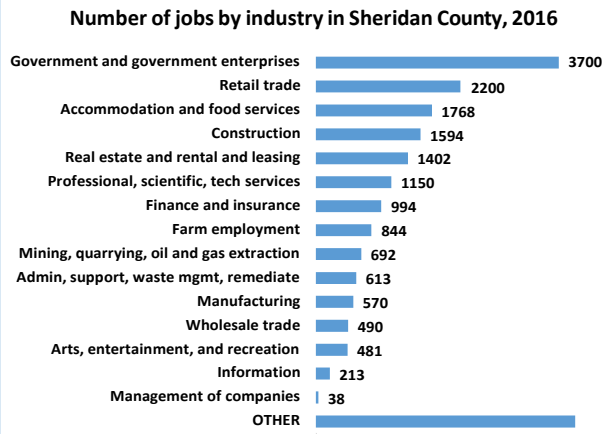
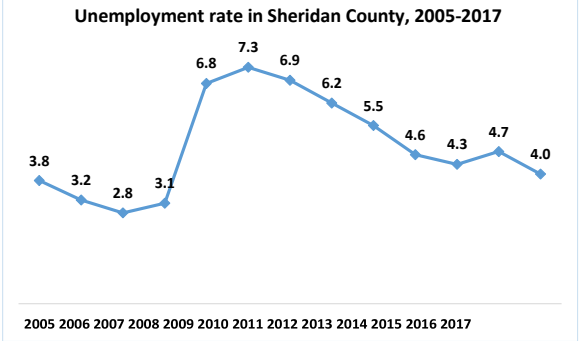
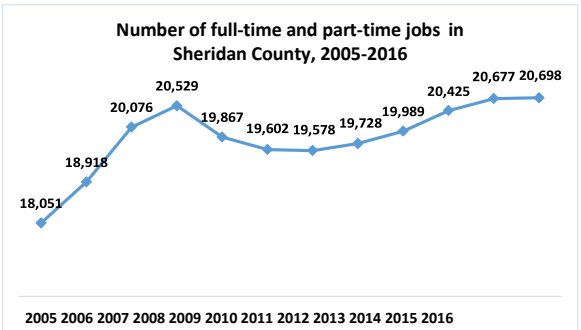


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ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

	Story City	Sheridan County
Full- and part-time jobs		
Total number, 2016	---	20,698
Total number, 2011	---	19,578
Total number, 2006	---	18,918
Change, 2011-2016, percent	---	5.7
Change, 2006-2011, percent	---	3.5
Employment characteristics		
Labor force participation rate, 2012-2016 average, percent	69.0	62.5
Unemployment rate, 2012-2016 average, percent	0.0	3.8
Self-employment rate, 2016, percent	---	31.0
Average annual pay, 2016, dollars	---	39,767
Business establishments with paid employees, by size, 2015		
All establishments, number	---	1,168
Establishments with 1-4 paid employees, number	---	675
Establishments with 5-9 paid employees, number	---	222
Establishments with 10-19 paid employees, number	---	162
Establishments with 20-49 paid employees, number	---	73
Establishments with 50 or more paid employees, number	---	36



NOTE: "Other" industries include utilities; transportation and warehousing; educational services, health care and social assistance; and other services.

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

	Story City	Sheridan County
Total housing units, 2012-2016 average		
Number of housing units	707	14,344
Housing tenure, 2012-2016 average, percent of housing units		
Owner-occupied units	68	68
Renter-occupied units	32	32
Housing type, 2012-2016 average, percent of housing units		
1 unit, attached or detached	92	76
2-4 units	0	5
5 or more units	6	10
Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	3	9
Housing affordability, 2012-2016 average		
Households spending 30% or more of income on housing costs		
Owner-occupied units, percent	33	23
Renter-occupied units, percent	27	37



SOURCES: US Census Bureau

RESOURCES

Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System
<https://headwaterseconomics.org/tools/economic-profile-system/>

- Story City – Demographics
- Sheridan County – Multiple topics
 - Demographics
 - Socioeconomic measures
 - Agriculture, timber, and mining, including oil & gas
 - Services and tourism
 - Government
 - Non-labor income
 - Public land amenities
 - Federal land payments
 - Wildland urban interface

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