

PUBLIC SURVEY SEPTEMBER 2022 - JANUARY, 2023 SUMMARY



HARDIN COUNTY

A survey was conducted from September 20, 2022 through January 13, 2023, and 432 people took the survey. The survey consisted of nine questions and included demographic questions as well as questions to elicit what people love about Hardin County and how Hardin County could become a better place to live and work.

The survey respondents were equally distributed between the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Hardin County. About 54% (232 respondents) of the respondents lived within one of the incorporated areas, 41% (177 respondents) lived in the unincorporated areas, and 5% of the respondents lived outside of Hardin County (23 respondents).

One of the first questions asked was “What makes Hardin County great today?” Freeman Lake was the most frequently listed amenity that makes Hardin County a great place to live. Other responses that were provided included the downtown area, the small-town feel, the rural character, good family opportunities, and the strong sense of community.

The next question asked how can Hardin County become an even better place to live in the future. One popular amenity that was listed was an indoor sports facility that could be utilized year-round. Other issues and concerns that were provided included attracting better quality development to the county, protecting farms and farmland, improving infrastructure county-wide (including sidewalks), developing better amenities and family activities, providing broader access to clean drinking water, and providing access to affordable housing.

Infrastructure improvements and affordable housing were identified as two of the biggest issues and priorities for Hardin County over the next 10 years. The citizens of Hardin County know that exponential growth will be coming their way over the next 10 years, and the responses to this question focused on this growth. In addition to infrastructure and housing, other priorities were the desire for new amenities and activities, as well as controlling and managing growth. Many responses felt that planning growth would maintain the small town feel so many appreciate which, in turn, would protect farmland, drinking water, and other invaluable resources.

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents recognize the significant growth that is on the horizon for Hardin County, and supporting that growth by adequately expanding the necessary infrastructure is the number one issue facing the county in the next 10 years.

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Housing affordability and the cost of living were also recognized as very important issues that need to be addressed, as well as limiting the sprawl and protecting the county's farmland. These issues are likely being intensified because of the BlueOval SK Battery Park project.

The survey also included a question about the different types of development respondents would like to see in the future in Hardin County. Entertainment options (76.5%), retail and dining options (69%), and more single-family housing (59%) were the three types of development respondents said they wanted to see more of going forward. Other notable types of development residents wanted to see more of were increased healthcare options (43%), multi-family housing options (30%) and remote/co-working spaces (25%).

The survey also looked at what types of different infrastructure and amenities were desired. New parks and recreation facilities (82%) was the most popular amenity desired by the respondents. This preference likely builds upon the previous response where Freeman Lake was listed as one of the most important places that makes Hardin County a great place to live. Additionally, 76% of respondents wanted better road conditions, 71% felt increased broadband activity was important, and 68% wanted to see increased sidewalk connections in the county.

Community programs and cultural attractions can really help shape a community's identity, and they are often reflective of a community's shared values. More community-wide events were wanted by 67% of the survey respondents. Many also wanted an increase in public art (46%) and a better county identity and branding (49%). Increases in recreational programming (61%) and workforce training programs (62%) were also desired.