

Dickinson County Citizen Survey 2007

The citizen survey is a tool used to obtain the opinions, feelings and ideas of the people in the community. Community leaders and government personnel can use this type of information to gauge the collective mindset of the community. On behalf of Dickinson County, the Kansas State University Planning Team conducted such a survey for the 2007 Comprehensive Plan Update. The survey was approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

Based on issues raised by the public focus group meetings held in Herington and Chapman, the planning team developed a comprehensive set of questions. Due to extreme time constraints for development and tabulation, the survey cannot be considered as scientific research. However, the survey still paints a valuable picture of Dickinson County's people and their values.

The Dickinson County Citizen Opinion Survey was mailed in written form to 2,507 people in non-incorporated areas of Dickinson County. Another 400 were randomly distributed in towns and gatherings to 400 people within incorporated areas. A total of 3,907 surveys were made available.

Dickinson County's population in 2000 was 19,344. Based on that, the county needed a sample of 582 survey responses to obtain a standard confidence level of 95 percent with a confidence interval of 4. This would mean that we could be 95% sure that the level of response would be accurate within 4 percent (above or below) our findings.

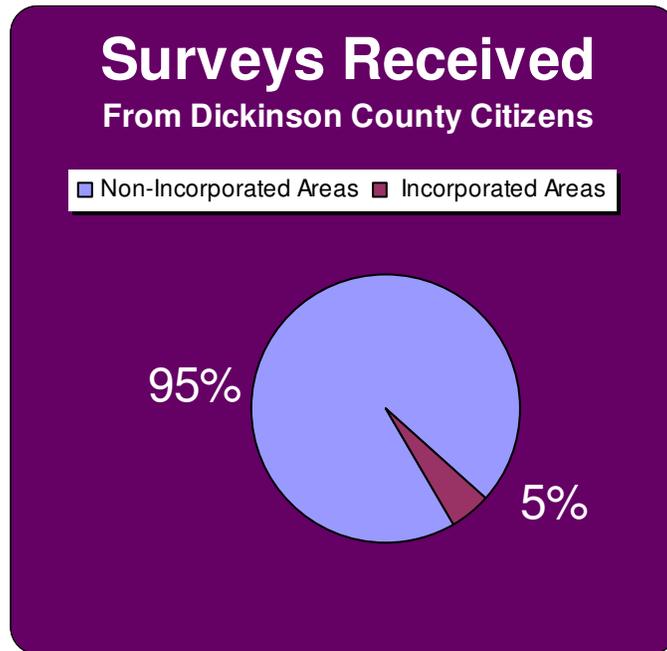
The county actually received 1,038 surveys back from its citizens. This is a 35.71 percent response. County officials and the planning team are incredibly grateful for this overwhelming participation. Thanks to Dickinson County's concerned citizens, this survey reached a 99 percent confidence level with a 2.12 confidence interval.

The five-page Dickinson County Citizen Opinion Survey included 12 demographic questions, nine citizen participation and background questions, 88 issue statements where citizens indicated their responses on a Likert scale, a 20-category distance table, four issue and preference rankings, four open-ended questions where citizens could write their own responses, and a priority ranking on which Dickinson County officials should base their attention and focus. A copy of the survey is included in **Appendix I**.

Survey Demographics

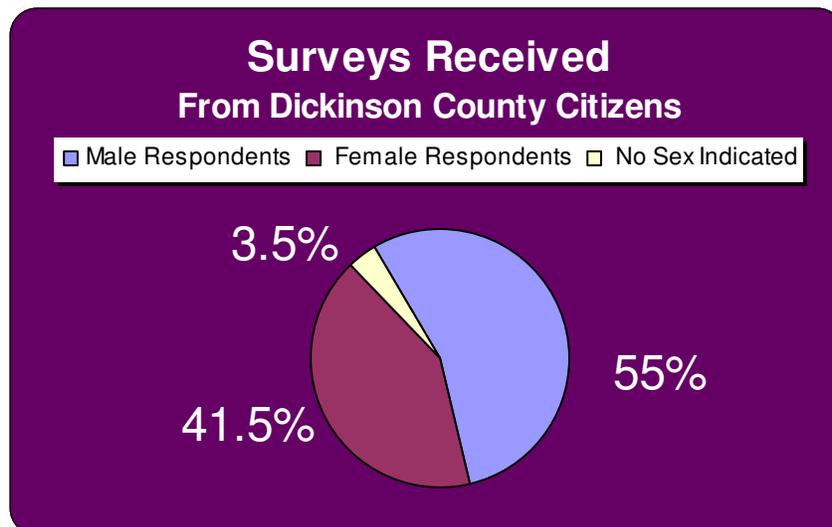
Of the 1,038 surveys returned to the County, 95 percent of respondents were from non-incorporated areas (**Graph 10.1**). This consideration is important because both elected and non-elected county officials need a strong understanding of the people's sentiment from all areas of the county, but especially rural, since they themselves generally work and or live in town. This is also important to the people as indicated by their political responses in the write-in portions of the survey.

Graph 10.1



It is also important for the survey to try to obtain a representative and potentially equal level of response by gender. Dickinson County's is nearly gender-balanced both currently and historically. This is also reflected by survey response as indicated in **Graph 10.2**.

Graph 10.2



It should be no surprise that finding a similar balance according to age group is difficult to obtain in Dickinson County. As generally known, and then verified by this comprehensive plan update, Dickinson County is aging. Due to the loss of youthful population as well as less participation by younger groups, it is impossible for a Dickinson County survey to have balance between age groups. However, it is likely that the survey responses are somewhat representative of population breakdown. Respondents indicated their age group according to the following categories in **Table 10.1** below.

Table 10.1 Dickinson County Survey Response By Age

<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Response</u>	<u>Age Group</u>
0	0.00%	Under 18
9	0.87%	18-24
44	4.24%	25-34
121	11.66%	35-44
498	47.98%	45-64
350	33.72%	65 or older
16	1.54%	No age indicated
1038	100.00%	TOTAL Responses
848	81.70%	45 or Older
174	16.76%	Under 45
1022	98.46%	

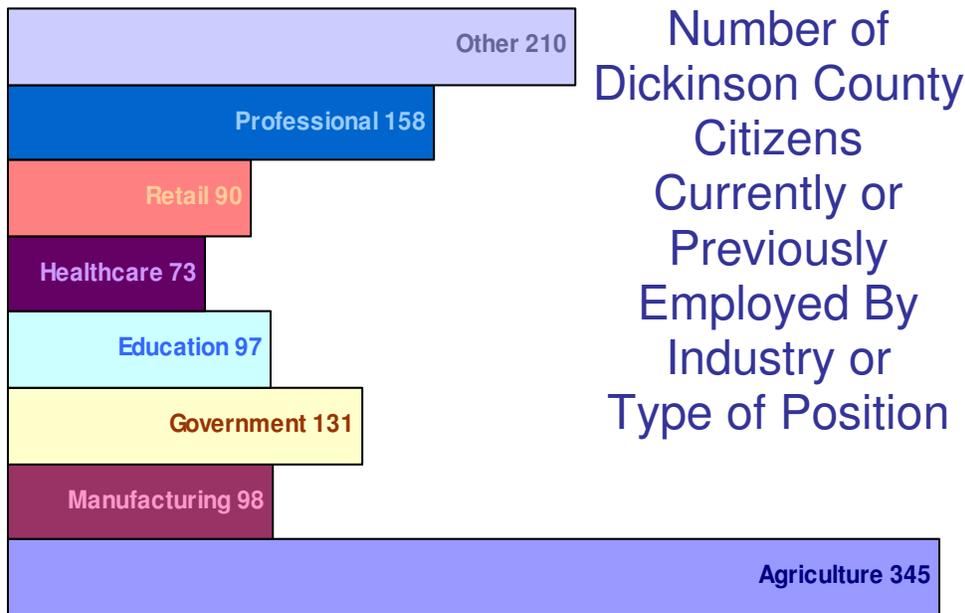
As shown above, the 45-64 age group represents nearly 50 percent of all responses. People of retirement age follow with about 34 percent. It is good to see that all adult age groups completed surveys even though the response level drops drastically in correlation to age.

The survey also requested information on employment status, industry and location. Although most details can be found in the Economic Development chapter of this plan, the survey provides some basic clues. Less than one percent of respondents indicated unemployment. Although slightly lower than what is indicated by the U.S. Census and State of Kansas, this falls accurately within the +/- 2 confidence interval.

About 36 percent of survey respondents have full-time employment; 8 percent listed part-time employment. Another 21 percent are self-employed. Other employment status categories include 27.4 percent retired and 6.3 percent homemakers.

The survey demonstrates a unitary understanding among Dickinson County citizens that agriculture is the traditional “backbone” for the county’s economy. This is also reflected by industry of employment. For both retirees and the 45-64 age group agriculture is the industry in which they are (were) employed. Although few, young respondents are also a part of this industry. With nearly 30 percent working in agriculture, it is still an important industry for the county.

Graph 10.3



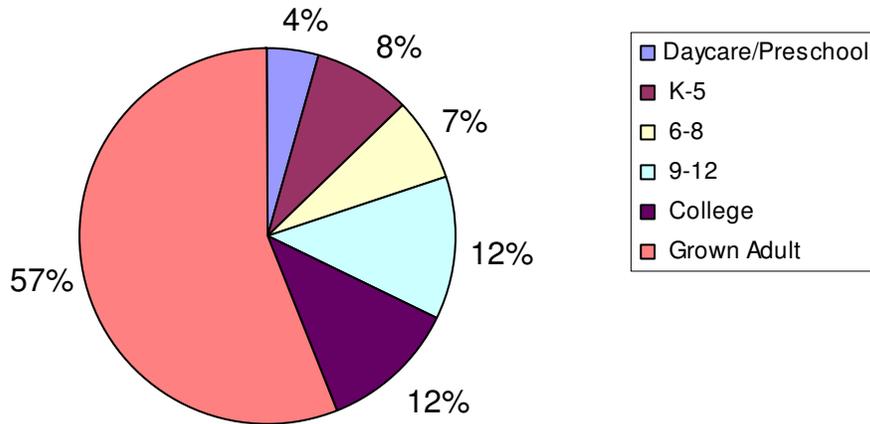
As delineated in **Graph 10.3**, nearly 131 respondents (about 11 percent) of Dickinson County citizens work in government. This is closely followed by manufacturing and education, each with about 8 percent of the workforce, as well as healthcare, with just over six percent. The levels of employment in retail (about 7.5 percent), professional (a bit over 13 percent), and “other” (about 17.5 percent) demonstrate a diversification in industry. This can be important for the county as agriculture has become an abated industry throughout the United States. Such diversification enables Dickinson County to absorb any significant hit to the “backbone” of its economy and to maintain the traditional lifestyle to which Dickinson County citizens have become accustomed.

About 63 percent of survey respondents said they work locally, in their homes (on farms), or with an online business. That means that nearly 40 percent work in a neighboring county or other locations as far away as Topeka and Hutchinson. This seems to agree with the Economic Development analysis of this plan update. (See also **Appendix J** for the complete survey analysis).

The last part of the survey’s demographic section inquired about respondents’ children. 896 respondents (more than 86 percent) report that they have children. Of those children, nearly 57 percent are grown adults. This again demonstrates how the county is aging.

Graph 10.4

Age of Respondents' Children



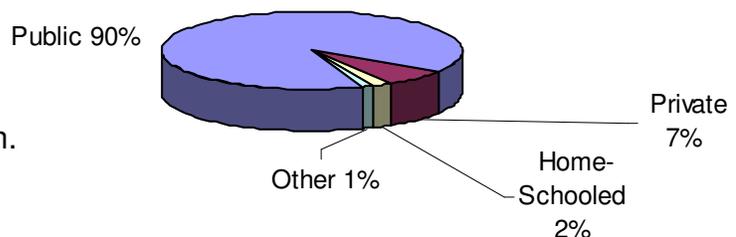
On the other hand, around 31 percent of children are still growing up which keeps Dickinson County family-oriented with potential future residents. Another 12 percent are off at college, and if possible, should be encouraged to return home after they graduate.

About 33 percent are two-child families and approximately 31 percent are three-child families. 15 percent say they have four children. About 11 percent responded with one child. And, another 11 percent reported having larger families with five or more children; this seems to be more common among older respondents which would be in line with how average family size has changed over time. Due to a lack of farming families, two- and three-child households are now most common.

According to their parents, most of Dickinson County's grown adult children have stayed within the county (19 percent) or live within the state of Kansas (33 percent). That means families tend to stay close. In contrast, about 25 percent of children move out-of-state. For the most part, underage children live at home.

Primarily, respondents choose to educate their children in the public school systems. About seven percent have sent their children to private schools for at least part of their education. This is fairly traditional for Kansas although private education and home-schooling is gradually increasing in popularity. However, the latter is not out of sync with other communities – both rural and urban.

Graph 10.5 Education Style



Issue Statements

The next section of the survey consists of 88 issue statements. Respondents rate each statement according to their level of agreement on the following Likert scale:

- 1 - Strongly Agree
- 2 - Agree
- 3 - No opinion / Not sure
- 4 - Disagree
- 5 - Strongly Disagree

The Planning Team then tabulates the answers by counting the number of responses for each Likert category. Percentages are figured by dividing the counted responses by the total number of responses. Other important statistics are the mean (average) and the mode, which is where, all responses considered, the group answer falls on the original Likert scale. For instance, if 20 respondents mark a two and 30 respondents mark a four, then the mode will be “4” since the balance falls on that score. Likewise, if 20 percent of respondents mark a one or two, 20 percent of respondents mark a four or five and 60 percent of respondents mark a three which is neutral, then the mode will also be a “3” and the group answer will be neutral.

Although a neutral response is used to indicate having no opinion or that a respondent isn’t sure, a community-neutral response can mean more. For instance, Dickinson County residents are community-neutral on whether there is enough outdoor recreation available and on the time spent in parks. These issues are still indicators. Sometimes recreational opportunities can be inappropriate for people who live in the community. Sometimes people are unaware that such opportunities exist. And, other times, people choose not to take advantage of recreational opportunities because they don’t appeal to them. This can occur for a variety of reasons. For example, parks and trails are no longer kept up with landscaping or updated with new equipment; or, the activities available just don’t interest people. In aging counties such as Dickinson, people just feel too old or physically can’t participate in outdoor recreation. The remedy is to periodically survey community needs and wants and to make appropriate changes.

Table 10.2 Issue Categories for the Dickinson County Citizen Opinion Survey

- Quality of Life
- Housing & Visual Appeal
- Government & Politics
- Development & Roads
- Economic Development
- Environment & Resources

The 88 issue statements of the survey are categorized according to the table above. The following sections highlight responses for each category.

Quality of Life

There are no statements disagreed upon by citizens as a group. However, Dickinson County only **agrees** to nine out of 21 quality-of-life issue statements. Community agreements are:

- Police and fire protection are adequate.
- More places are needed for kids to hang out.
- Good dental care is available.
- Quality education is available.
- Outdoor recreation is an important asset to Dickinson County.
- I receive good healthcare locally.
- I will support a county-wide effort to provide jobs and volunteer opportunities.
- Overall, Dickinson County is a good place to live.
- Dickinson County has a likable and small town rural atmosphere.

In the quality-of-life category, the remaining are **community-neutral** issues. However, for the statements below a more significant percent agree*:

- Middle school kids don't have anything to do with their free time.
- Adequate child care is available and affordable.
- There are plenty of extracurricular activities and events for kids.

For the following community-neutral issues, there is a significant percent of Dickinson County residents who disagree*:

- Public transportation is easily accessible in the county.
- I often use community centers and/or walk-n-bike paths, tracks or trails.
- There are not enough places to exercise, or they are too far away.
- Outdoor recreation is limited or non-existent in the county.

Finally, these statements are ones which show no significant percent of positive or negative feeling among the community. This means that overall, citizens really are undereducated on the issue, unaware of the issue, or are indifferent toward the issue:

- My kids participate in after-school programs.
- There are not enough teachers in Dickinson County.
- Adults and senior citizens don't have enough social interaction.
- I spend time at local or county parks on a regular basis.
- There are not enough cultural opportunities, events and activities.

* Note: These instances can occur because strong disagreement or agreement have stronger scores and can return balance to the mode.

Housing and Visual Appeal

As a group, Dickinson County residents **agree** with 10 statements focused on housing and visual appeal:

- Over 80% believe that history and architecture should be preserved.
- More affordable housing is needed for young families.
- The elderly need more housing / assisted living.
- More than half of citizens would participate in a program to keep the elderly in their homes longer.
- More than 60% say they would support a program to strengthen community pride and appearance.
- Dickinson County has a variety of housing options (rent v. own).
- New housing should be built within city limits or within close proximity.
- Overall, homes in Dickinson County have an above average appearance.
- Farmers should be allowed to sell and subdivide their land however they want.
- New housing developments should be spread throughout the county.

The Dickinson County citizenry **disagrees** with the following housing and visual statements:

- I would buy a condominium or town home if I could afford one.
- Agricultural land should be developed for business and housing.
- I would pay extra taxes for improvements to central business districts.
- The entrances to towns in Dickinson County are unattractive.
- Old housing and buildings should be torn down for new development.

The rest of the housing and visual issues are **community-neutral**. However, for the statements below a more significant percent agree*:

- Government officials need to ensure more housing options and variety.
- There need to be more apartments, town homes, and duplexes.
- I would support a program to repair / clean up homes and lawns.
- The overall appearance of Dickinson County and its towns needs improved.

For the following community-neutral issues, there is a significant percent of Dickinson County residents who disagree*:

- Real estate and rental rates are less expensive than in surrounding counties.
- Developers should build country estates next to or across from me.

Finally, these housing and visual appeal statements are ones which show no significant percent of positive or negative feeling among the community. This means that overall, citizens really are undereducated on the issue, unaware of the issue, or are indifferent toward the issue:

- Public housing is adequate for Dickinson County's needs.
- Code enforcement is inadequate throughout the county.
- Enough homes are for sale in the \$80,000 to \$120,000 price range.
- There is enough rental property in Dickinson County.

* Note: These instances can occur because strong disagreement or agreement have stronger scores and can return balance to the mode.

Economic Development

As a whole, Dickinson County **agrees** with 11 of the 23 statements discussing economic development:

- 60% say it's too hard for small businesses to survive.
- About half of the citizenry believe the County should offer tax incentives to fill downtown areas, but few would pay more taxes to do it.
- 65% believe the County should focus on technology and energy.
- 61% think high school kids travel too far for jobs and entertainment.
- 74% believe manufacturing jobs are needed, but only 13.5% would take a job on an assembly line
- 80% agree there should be efforts to retain current business.
- Dickinson County towns have nice downtowns for business opportunities.
- There is a strong available workforce in the county.
- 78% believe that retaining youth is the key to Dickinson County's future.
- 61% encourage the County to recruit new businesses.

The Dickinson County citizenry **disagrees** with the following statements related to economic development:

- The county should keep all new business development within city limits.
- New business should be along highway corridors instead of downtown.
- There are no healthy business districts within Dickinson County.

Other economic development issues are **community-neutral**. However, for the statements below a more significant percent agree*:

- 39% would start-up a local business if they had the means.
- Commercial real estate is over-priced in Dickinson County.
- Local farmers have a high need for employees but can't afford to hire them.

For the following community-neutral issues, there is a significant percent of Dickinson County residents who disagree*:

- There are enough part-time jobs for high school students.

Below are economic development statements that show no significant percent of positive or negative feeling among the community. This means that overall, citizens really are undereducated on the issue, unaware of the issue, or are indifferent toward the issue:

- The future of Dickinson County is more important than preserving its history.

* Note: These instances can occur because strong disagreement or agreement have stronger scores and can return balance to the mode.

Development and Roads

Dickinson County, as a group of citizens, **agrees** with 13 statements regarding roadway conditions and future development in the county:

- 46% say new housing should be built in / near city limits.
- 85% think it is important to preserve and share Dickinson County history.
- 80% believe that developers should pay for new infrastructure.
- 62% encourage the protection of farmland as the County's top priority.
- Wind farms will strengthen the economy, and they can be attractive.
- New housing developments should be spread throughout the county.
- Farmers should be allowed to sell and subdivide their land however they want.
- Rural water should be available to anyone that wants it.
- Depots and rails should be preserved in conjunction with modern endeavors.
- Growth and development should be carefully managed.

The Dickinson County citizenry **disagrees** with the following statements concerning roads and development:

- County roads are in good condition.
- I think large windmills would ruin my view of the landscape.
- Ag land should be developed for business and housing.
- Old buildings and housing should be torn down for newer construction.

Other issues connected to development and roads are **community-neutral**. There are no statements where a more significant percent agree*. However, for the following community-neutral issues, there is a significant percent of Dickinson County residents who disagree*:

- Developers should build country estates directly across from me.
- I would be willing to pay additional tax for county road improvements.
- Railroads should be used for business and industry only.

The following road and development issue statements show no significant percent of positive or negative feeling among the community. This means that overall, citizens really are undereducated on the issue, unaware of the issue, or are indifferent toward the issue:

- The future of Dickinson County is more important than preserving its history.

* Note: These instances can occur because strong disagreement or agreement have stronger scores and can return balance to the mode.

Environment and Resources

Dickinson County's citizens **agree** with 8 of the 17 statements discussing the environment and natural resources:

- 63% believe wind farms will strengthen Dickinson County's economy.
- 58% think wind farms can be attractive.
- 59% say rural water should be available to anyone that wants it.
- 62% want protecting farmland to be the County's top priority.
- More than half agree that wind energy will help protect other natural resources.
- Outdoor recreation is an important asset.
- The lakes, reservoirs and streambeds are the county's most important assets.
- The county should focus on technology and energy.

The Dickinson County citizenry **disagrees** with only two related statements:

- I think large windmills would ruin my view of the landscape.
- Ag land should be developed for business and housing.

Other economic development issues are **community-neutral**. However, for the statements below a more significant percent agree*:

- There are plenty of extracurricular activities and events for kids.

For the following community-neutral issues, there is a significant percent of Dickinson County residents who disagree*:

- There are not enough places to exercise or they are too far away.
- Outdoor recreation is limited or non-existent within the county.
- I often use community centers or walk-n-bike paths, tracks or trails.

Below are economic development statements that show no significant percent of positive or negative feeling among the community. This means that overall, citizens really are undereducated on the issue, unaware of the issue, or are indifferent toward the issue:

- I spend time at local or county parks on a regular basis.
- Adults and senior citizens don't have enough social interaction.

* Note: These instances can occur because strong disagreement or agreement have stronger scores and can return balance to the mode.

Government and Politics

Of the four government/political issues raised, citizens are torn, finding a community-neutral position on all counts. In this instance, there is plenty of disagreement and agreement on all counts. This identifies issues of political friction within Dickinson County. The hot-topic statements are:

- County and city government should be consolidated so more can be done.
- Local and county government officials are responsive to community needs.
- Change is slow or stagnant because our elected officials don't initiate it.
- Change is slow or stagnant because voters don't support it.

The County should take from this a realization that there is need for improvement. This involves listening, communicating and cooperation with other agencies / governments, as well as the public.

These factors also indicate that there is fear of change and growth among the community as a whole (the public and elected officials alike). To turn around any population and/or economic decline, the community's focus must be positive and cooperative. Individuals must genuinely work as a community group. Pessimistic attitudes and fears can deter progress.

Lastly, change is also prohibited by lack of support and lack of leadership. Potentially, this hinders growth and creates stagnancy. Dickinson County needs to be able to grow and change with the times. This enables economic progress and promotes community vitality.

Distance Table

Part three of the community survey is the distance table. Survey respondents choose a location nearest to the activity. Pre-determined “locations” include:

Local	Manhattan	Hutchinson
Abilene	Topeka	Wichita
Salina	Lawrence	Online
Junction City	Kansas City	Out-of-state

Other locations indicated by respondents primarily include Council Grove and Clay Center.

Survey participants could make responses for 20 activities which can be categorized in the following table.

Table 10.3

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| o Entertainment & Movies | o Indoor & Outdoor Exercise |
| o Dining & Fast Food | o Cultural Events, Festivals & Fairs |
| o Shopping | o Large Item Purchases |
| o Indoor & Outdoor Recreation | o Convenience Items |

Entertainment & Movies

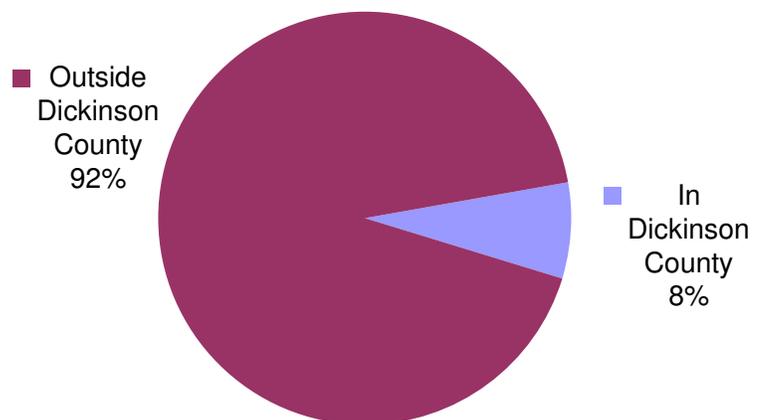
This category includes activities such as movie theaters and miniature golf. For the most part, Dickinson County residents say they travel to Salina, Junction City or Manhattan for these activities. This should be evident due to little availability locally. See **Graphs 10.6 and 10.7**.

A secondary entertainment activity is movie rentals. With the availability of quality cablevision and satellite service, this category is dissipating in importance. Still, most residents pick up videos in Salina or Junction City although movie rentals are available in Dickinson County. A small, growing percentage rent movies online through services such as NetFlix or Blockbuster Online.

Graph 10.6

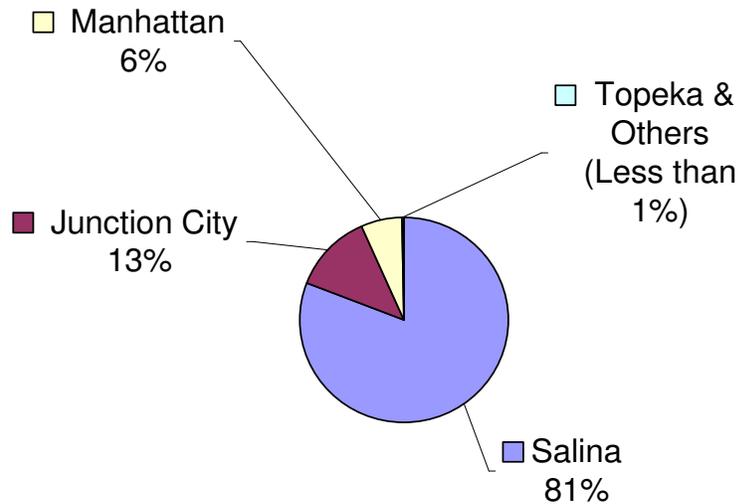
Entertainment

Includes activities such as movies, miniature golf, etc.



Graph 10.7

Where Dickinson County Citizens Go For Entertainment



Includes activities such movies, miniature golf, etc.

Dining & Fast Food

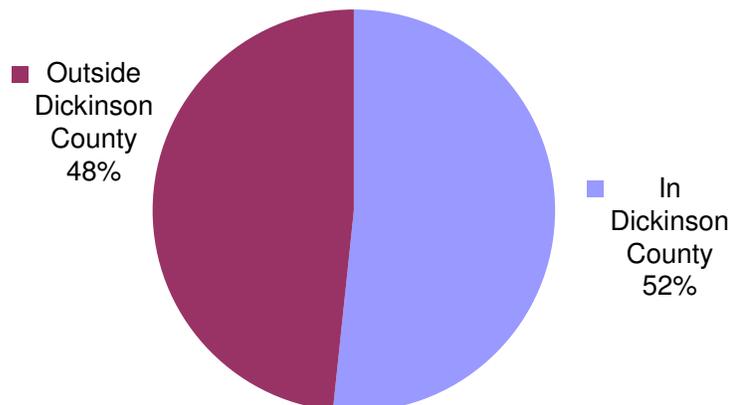
When it comes to sit-down dining, it's about a 50-50 split between staying in Dickinson County or leaving its boundaries (Graph 10.8). Thirty-three percent of Dickinson County residents travel to Salina on a regular basis for sit-down dining. In addition, another ten percent travel to Manhattan or Junction City. It can be assumed that this is due to lack of variety in restaurants on the local level although there are some establishments open. Also, many travel to Salina, Junction City and Manhattan for other activities and eat out while they are there.

In contrast, just over 73 percent stay in Dickinson County for fast food. Those that travel outside the county most likely do so for the same aforementioned reasons. At the same time, this means that about 27 percent of the fast food dollar still escapes Dickinson County.

Graph 10.8

Dining Out

Includes sit-down style only



Shopping

What pulls Dickinson County citizens to Salina and Junction City? Both towns have Wal-Mart stores. And, Salina has a shopping mall.

Eighty-three percent of survey respondents shop outside of Dickinson County for simple goods like clothing. More than seven percent drive on to Manhattan or a farther destination for this activity.

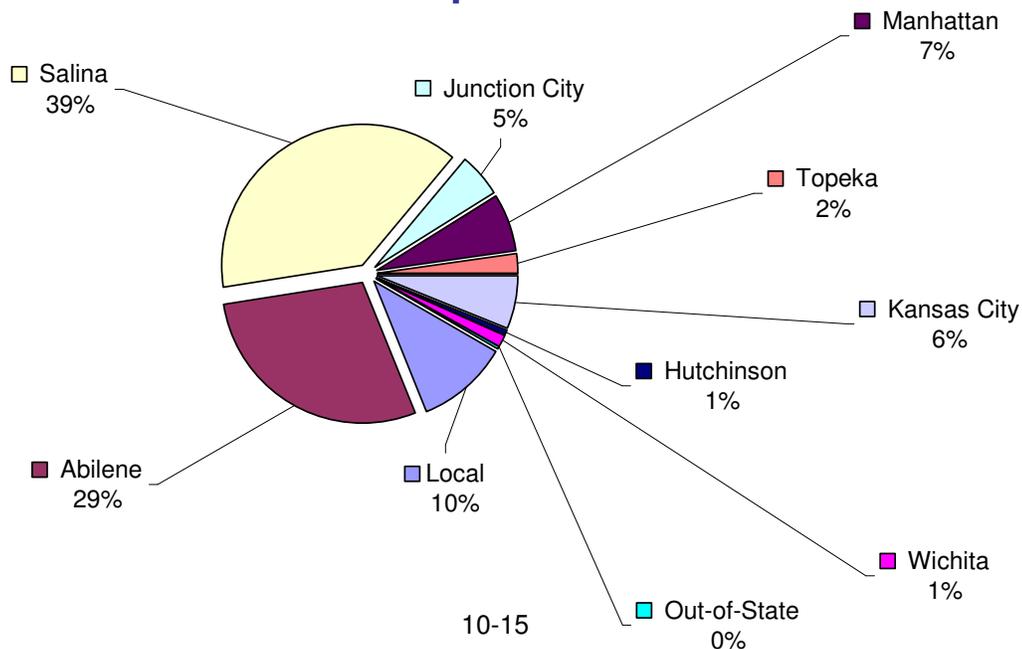
Although the majority of citizens say they do their grocery shopping within the county, an astounding 23 percent are still shopping beyond county boundaries. That most likely indicates Wal-Mart again and a long distance to travel with perishable items.

As a result local and independent stores are feeling the pressure. ALCO and Country Mart, as well as smaller stores, struggle in competition for their native shopping dollars.

The survey inquires about four large ticket items: furniture, vehicles, farm equipment and antiques. For the latter, most people shop locally since antiques are readily available. Farm equipment is primarily purchased in Dickinson County with 23 percent shopping elsewhere – even online or out-of-state. Vehicle shopping can be done in Dickinson County, but around 40 percent of residents are buying their cars, trucks and SUVs in other areas. Some travel as far as Wichita or Kansas City; some go to Manhattan or small cities; and, a few shop online. This usually indicates that shoppers are more interested in deal-seeking and are more willing to travel. Furniture is similar, and the arrival of Nebraska Furniture Mart on the western edge of Kansas City has undoubtedly had an effect on Dickinson County. Other furniture retailers such as Ashley are beginning to dominate small cities like Salina and Manhattan with affordable furniture retails.

Graph 10.11

Where Dickinson County Citizens Go To Shop For Furniture



On a more positive note, 90 percent of gas and convenience trips are within the county. Otherwise, most of these shopping dollars are primarily lost due to residents working in other communities. Another factor pulling citizens away from Dickinson County would be stopping for these items during out-of-county shopping or entertainment trips.

Recreation & Exercise

This area has five subcategories. Outdoor recreation involves activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, boating and water sports; whereas, outdoor exercise includes walking, running and biking. “Team sports” is its own category. And, indoor exercise involves walking, aerobics, weightlifting, and martial arts. The last category is swimming – both indoor and outdoor.

When it comes to outdoor recreation, 61 percent of Dickinson County residents stay within the county.

This leaves 39 percent who travel elsewhere including about 20 percent to Junction City, about three percent to Manhattan and about four percent who go out-of-state.

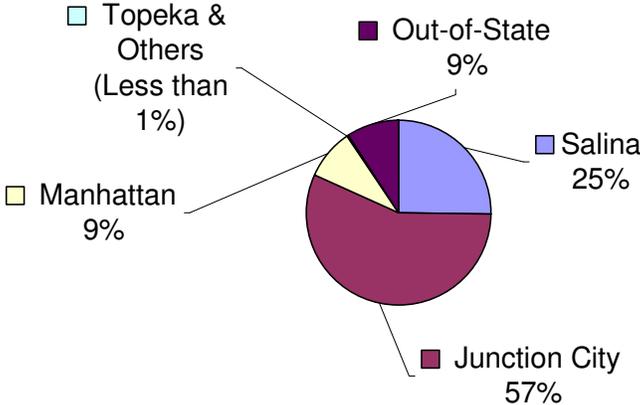
Outdoor exercise keeps 92 percent of Dickinson County home. This indicates that there should be ample opportunities for these activities locally.

Sports such as baseball, tennis and golf also seem to be available locally. Eighty-five percent of survey respondents say they participate in Dickinson County. Most others travel to Salina or Junction City for these activities.

Dickinson County residents take advantage of local indoor exercise when it exists. About 51 percent stay at the local level for this activity; while 31 percent say they actively exercise in Abilene. Again, others travel to Salina and Junction City for added amenities, as well as their convenient I-70 locations flanking Dickinson County. See **Graph 10.10**.

Graph 10.9 Where Dickinson County Citizens Go For Outdoor Recreation

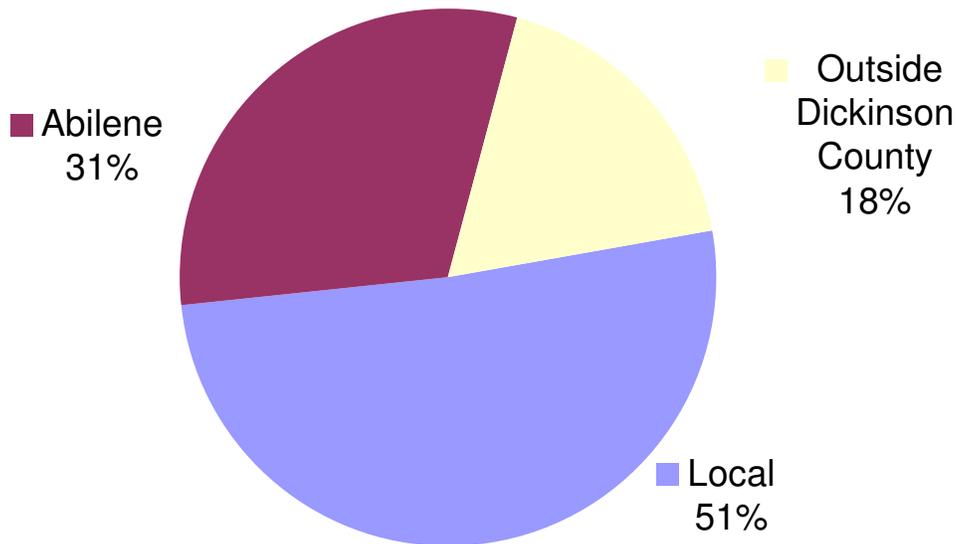
Includes activities such as hunting, hiking, boating, etc.



Graph 10.10

Indoor Exercise

Includes walking, aerobics, weightlifting, etc.



An interesting and somewhat surprising subcategory of Recreation & Exercise is swimming. Approximately 71 percent of survey responses indicate swimming participation within Dickinson County, while about 29 percent travel outside, mainly to Junction City for swimming activities. About 25 percent use newer, updated facilities in Salina and Junction City. Several people travel to use indoor swimming facilities in Lawrence, Kansas City and out-of-state. This may include organized competition.

All-in-all recreation and exercise is available at the local level. Dickinson County may need to update facilities and add new activities in conjunction with changing population as well as to attract new residents.

Culture – Culture – Culture

This includes three subcategories. Cultural events are theater performances, concerts, museum tours, and so on. Festivals and fairs include regional and community events held seasonally or for special occasions. Community clubs and groups are where citizens go for regular involvement, personal hobbies and social activities.

Generally, Dickinson County residents prefer to participate in local cultural events (47 percent) but about 31 percent also attend events in Salina regularly. Other communities along I-70 have attention-getters as well. Over six percent of survey respondents say they typically travel to Kansas City for these types of events.

Festivals and fairs are another story with 77 percent of Dickinson County usually staying local for these activities. However, big name festivals tend to pop up and pull residents away to other cities. These potentially include Wichita’s River Fest and Hutch Fest (Hutchinson), and Country Stampede in Manhattan. Local parades and community festivals in Salina, Junction City, and Manhattan also attract Dickinson County residents.

Preference Rankings

The next section of the survey is comprised of four boxes. In each box is a topic that should be ranked by the respondent. The ranking is based on personal preference. The Planning Team sums the personal rankings and creates a community preference ranking based on the scores, lowest being 1 and highest being 5.

The first topic is related to Dickinson County’s population decline. Each survey participant is to rank the related issues from 1-most important to 5-least important. The second topic is retirement preference. The respondent again ranks the options 1 (highest) through 5 (lowest). The third topic for this section is the most pressing environmental concern as Dickinson County sees it. The respondent chooses 1-most urgent through 5-least urgent. The last topic is industry preference for economic development, again 1-highest to 5-lowest. The table below summarizes the community’s preferences.

Table 10.11a

Declining Population Issues	Preference for Retirement
1 - More Jobs	1 - In Dickinson County
2 - Retaining Business	2 - Nearby Location
3 - Youth Retention	3 - In Kansas
4 - Healthcare	4 - Out-of-state
5 - Senior Housing	5 - Other
<i>* All five of these issues are important. They are ranked as Priority No. 1 as follows: 54% More Jobs, 33% Retaining Business, 18% Healthcare, and 7% Senior Housing</i>	<i>* Overall, this is the most common ranking among individuals. Some people indicated where their children live or traveling as primary options.</i>

Table 10.11b

Most Pressing Environmental Concern	Business and Industry Development
1 - Water	1 - Manufacturing
2 - Agricultural Land	2 - Agriculture
3 - Energy	3 - Energy
4 - Soils	4 - Technology
5 - Native Vegetation	5 - Other
<p><i>* Water is overwhelmingly preferred as the primary concern for Dickinson County. Agricultural Land and Energy were nearly tied for second place. There is little concern for soils and native vegetation.</i></p>	<p><i>* The race is very close between manufacturing and agriculture. Only number one rankings considered, then Ag wins. Here, both number one and number two rankings, along with overall score are taken into account. Energy is close behind.</i></p>

Open Response Questions

The fifth section of the Dickinson County Citizen Opinion Survey asks four open-ended questions where respondents write-in their own answers. The four questions are:

- What is the one most important quality of Dickinson County that must be preserved?
- What makes Dickinson County a comfortable place to live?
- What is the one most needed change for Dickinson County?
- What types of outdoor recreation are most important to you?

What to Preserve

- History, culture, heritage, museums, etc.
- Small town/rural atmosphere, people, friendliness, family lifestyle, slow pace, etc.
- Farmland and agri-business
- Water and other natural resources, wildlife or environmental factors
- Economics / development focus
- Intangibles such as work ethic, morality/values, community pride, and rights/freedom
- Low crime, law enforcement or safety
- Education or schools

Dickinson County – the Comfort Zone

The responses to these questions are very much synchronized with the previous question. Additional analysis is not necessary since Dickinson County citizens want to preserve what makes them comfortable.

What to Change about Dickinson County

- Lower taxes and real estate
- Better county and township roads
- Consolidate school districts
- Geographically-spread County Commission with 5 members
- Stronger business development and retention
- Youth retention
- Better code enforcement and law enforcement
- More doctors, more restaurants, more shopping
- Citizen / Leadership pessimistic attitudes
- Improved water resources, availability, and quality

Important Types of Outdoor Recreation

- Hunting, Fishing, Boating, Trapping, Camping, Water Sports
- Walking / Hiking / Running paths, parks, gardens, trails
- Swimming, Bicycling, Horseback Riding
- Team Sports – especially baseball/softball, football, soccer
- Motorcycling, ATV riding, dirt bike tracks
- Shooting / Archery
- Gardening
- Golf, Tennis, Horseshoes
- Recreational activities for kids and families
- Community events and picnics

Final Priority Ranking

The final part of the survey asks respondents to prioritize issues for Dickinson County so that government officials know where to focus their attention first. The ranking was 1-highest priority through 10-lowest priority. Many respondents indicated attachment to all of the listed issues as important. However, a final group ranking for the community is determined in **Table 10.12**. Remember, that the lowest ranking score is the top priority.

Table 10.12 Prioritized Issues as Ranked by Dickinson County Citizens

RankScore	Priority	
2947	1	Recruiting new business, industries, firms
3398	2	Retaining existing businesses
3547	3	Jobs and youth retention
3935	4	Increasing availability and supply of rural water
4725	5	Focusing on rural road improvement
4819	6	Wind energy programs and initiatives
4888	7	Housing, healthcare and support for the aging population
5489	8	Revitalizing existing business districts
5791	9	Requiring most new housing developments to locate within existing communities and connect to their services
8493	10	Other: (as indicated by respondent write-in; see Appendix I .)
<i>Note: Most people indicated that nearly all items on this list were important to them equally or near equally. This ranking is based on total community ranking scores.</i>		

Examples of respondent write-ins for the “Other” category are listed in **Appendix J**. For the most part, these write-in answers could be categorized into the broad issue categories used as the basis for this comprehensive plan.