



**“What Does the Community Value? Assessing Priorities for the Fairground Upgrades”.
Park County, Colorado**

AUTHORS

Sabina Regmi, PhD Student
Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
Colorado State University
sabina.regmi@colostate.edu

Willie Wilkins, MS
Mountain Regional Specialist Community and Economic Development
Colorado State University Extension
Willie.Wilkins@colostate.edu

Rebecca Hill, PhD
Extension Professor
Colorado State University Office of Engagement and Extension
rebec.hill@colostate.edu

Tim. Komarek, PhD
Associate Professor, Dept. of Economics, Colorado State University
Co-Director, Regional Economic Development Institute
Tim.komarek@colostate.edu

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Table of Contents

<i>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1. INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>2. WHAT WE DID: SURVEY METHODOLOGY.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>3. SURVEY FINDINGS.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>3.1 ORIGIN OF THE RESPONDENTS.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>3.2 FAIRGROUND VISITORS.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>3.3 NON-ATTENDEES BY ZIP-CODE</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>3.4 STAYED OVERNIGHT AMONG FAIR ATTENDEES.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>3.4.1 ACCOMODATIONS</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>3.5 VISITOR SPENDING DURING THE FAIR.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>3.6 FAIRGROUND STRUCTURE TO KEEP AS LONG AS POSSIBLE</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>3.7 COMMUNITY PRIORITIES FOR PRIMARY BULDINGS AND SECONDARY AMENIES </i>	<i>10</i>
<i>3.8. DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>4. OPEN FEEDBACK.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>5. REFERENCES</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>6. APPENDIX.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>6.1 APPENDIX A. UNIQUE CITIES REPRESENTED IN THE SURVEY RESPONSES</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>6.2. APPENDIX B. SAMPLE QESTIONNAIRE.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>6.3 APPENDIX C: SOME IMAGES FROM 2025 PARK COUNTY FAIR</i>	<i>17</i>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The survey shows which fairground structures and improvements matter most to the community. Respondents most often wanted to keep the Joe Lynch Arena and the Existing Barn as long as possible. For primary buildings, the Livestock Barn and Indoor Arena and the Horse Barn were the top priorities, while the Community Dining/Event Hall also received support. Other projects such as the Covered Grandstands, Business Incubator and Learning Center, Outdoor Amphitheater, and RV/Tiny Homes were rated as lower priorities. For secondary amenities, people placed the highest value on Restrooms and Greenhouse Classrooms, while the Teen Center, Café, and Childcare Facility were less important.

Average daily spending was about \$146 per group for overnight visitors and \$67 for day visitors, with lodging making up the largest share of costs for overnight stays, and food and gasoline being the main expenses for day visitors. These spending patterns suggest that external fair visitors not only support community activities but also bring important dollars into the local economy. Future investments in fairground facilities could strengthen this impact by encouraging more overnight stays and longer visits.

Open-ended comments supported these results, calling for better facilities, year-round use, and new features, while also raising concerns about overbuilding and competition with local businesses. These findings provide clear guidance for Park County as it moves forward with phased fairground improvements.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Park County Fairgrounds in Fairplay, Colorado, is a central gathering place for residents, visitors, and youth programs. It hosts a wide range of activities, including agricultural events, 4-H programs, rodeos, and community celebrations. The site currently includes two arenas, a barn, and a large multi-purpose building with a kitchen. While these facilities are heavily used, county officials and community members have recognized the need for improvements to better serve today’s needs and future growth. To plan for these improvements, the County developed a master plan outlining potential upgrade, as shown in Figure 1, which presents the digital image of the Park County Fairgrounds Master Plan (left) alongside the 2025 Park County Fair map (right). Because funding is limited, the upgrades must be completed in phases. This makes it important to understand which buildings and amenities the community values most, so that projects can be prioritized to have the greatest impact.



Figure 1: Digital Image of the Master Plan (on the left) and 2025 Park County Fair Map (on the right)

To help guide these phased improvements, a survey was conducted to collect feedback from fairground visitors and residents on which buildings and amenities should be prioritized. The survey used a Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) method, specifically Case 1 BWS which presents participants with small sets of possible improvement options and asks them to choose the most important and least important item in each set. The results reveal the relative importance of each option based on how often it was selected as “best” or “worst,” ensuring that final investment decisions align closely with the community’s highest priorities.

This report summarizes the findings from the survey. The results show that residents and visitors most want to maintain the Joe Lynch Arena and existing barn as long as possible. Looking ahead, the top priority for new or upgraded facilities is the livestock barn and indoor arena, followed by the horse barn and a community dining/event hall. For amenities, year-round restrooms ranked as the clear favorites. These findings provide clear guidance for Park County as it moves forward with phased fairground improvements.

2. WHAT WE DID: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

To guide the future improvements, we developed and tested two survey versions: a Case 3 Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) with attributes and levels, and a simpler Case 1 BWS with only attributes. A pilot survey conducted on July 13th, 2025, showed that most participants found Case 3 difficult to follow and preferred the Case 1 format, which also provided county officials with clear information on which buildings and amenities should be prioritized. Based on this feedback, the final survey used Case 1 BWS and was distributed both in-person during the 2025 Park County Fair (July 14th - 20th) and online via Qualtrics (July 22nd - 29th). To reduce bias and improve reliability, the question order was randomized across versions. This process ensured that the survey results reflect the community’s true priorities and can directly guide phased investments at the fairgrounds.

The survey used a “Best-Worst Scaling” approach, where participants were shown small sets of possible improvement projects and asked to choose the most important and least important in each set. The survey was structured using a Balanced Incomplete Block Design (BIBD). This design ensured that each building or amenity appeared the same number of times across all choice sets and was compared fairly against other options. In practice, this meant that no single project was shown more often than others, and every option had an equal chance of being evaluated as “most” or “least” preferred. Using a BIBD approach helped increase the reliability of the results while reducing bias in how the options were presented to respondent (Cohen, 2009; Flynn & Marley, 2014).

The survey focused on two groups of improvements:

- **Primary building projects** (livestock barn and indoor arena, horse barn, community dining/event hall, amphitheater, business incubator, RV/tiny homes, and covered grandstands).
- **Secondary amenities** (year-round restrooms, café, childcare, teen center, and greenhouse classrooms).

In total, each participant reviewed seven choice sets for primary buildings and five choice sets for secondary amenities. This design gave us clear, reliable results that reflect the community’s top priorities.

Data Cleaning: After collecting responses, we reviewed the data carefully to ensure consistency. Some respondents selected multiple options as both “most preferred” and “least preferred,” which does not align with the survey design. To address this:

- If a respondent selected one option as “most preferred” but multiple options as “least preferred,” we kept the “most preferred” choice and dropped the extra “least” responses.
- If a respondent selected one option as “least preferred” but multiple options as “most preferred,” we kept the “least preferred” choice and dropped the extra “most” responses.
- If a respondent selected more than one option for both “most preferred” and “least preferred” (e.g., two “most” and two “least”), we did not use that observation.

Importantly, we evaluated responses at the choice-set level rather than excluding entire surveys; when a respondent answered one choice set correctly but another incorrectly, we kept the valid choice set(s) and removed only the invalid set(s). This process ensured that only valid and

interpretable responses were included in the final dataset, while still making use of partial information when possible.

3. SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 ORIGIN OF THE RESPONDENTS

We received a total of 146 survey responses, collected both in-person during the 2025 Park County Fair and online the following week. As shown in the pie chart in **Figure 2 (right)**, most respondents (77%) were from Park County, while about one in five (20%) came from other Colorado counties. The county-level distribution in **Figure 3**, highlights this wider reach, with respondents from Jefferson, Teller, Fremont, El Paso, Pueblo, Boulder, Weld, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Summit, and Yuma. As represented in the U.S. map in the **Figure 2 (left)**, a small share of respondents (3%) came from outside Colorado, specifically from Nebraska (Buffalo County) and Virginia (Powhatan County). These results show that while the survey primarily reflects the views of Park County residents, the fairgrounds also attract interest and use from surrounding counties and even out-of-state visitors, reflecting their importance as both a local and regional resources.

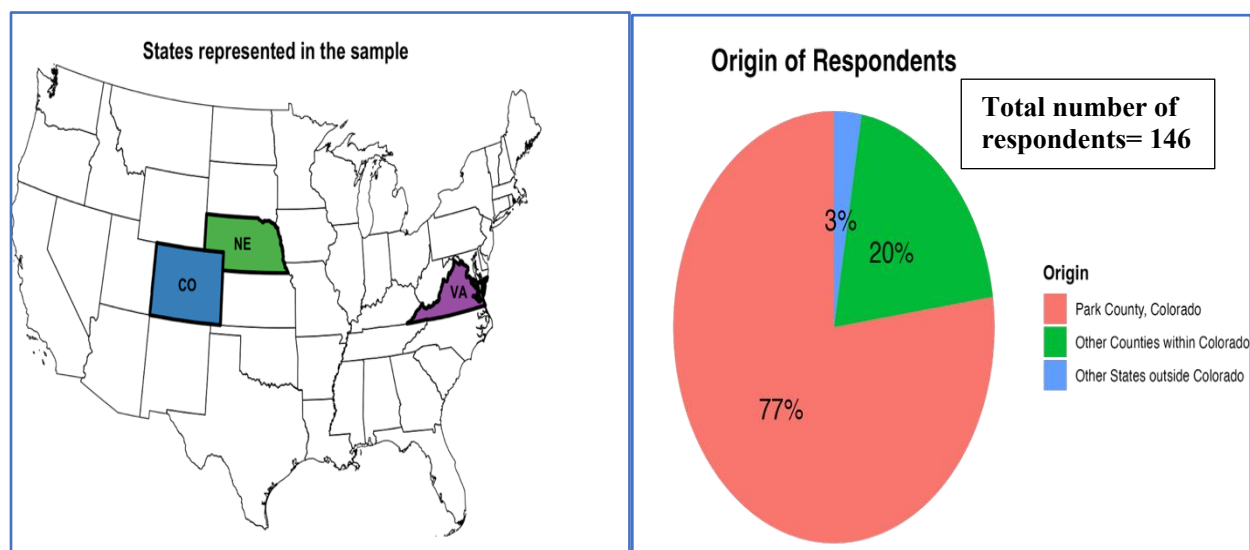


Figure 2: States represented in the sample (on the left) and origin of respondents (on the right)

The county-level distribution in **Figure 3**, highlights this wider reach, with respondents from Jefferson, Teller, Fremont, El Paso, Pueblo, Boulder, Weld, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Summit, and Yuma. As represented in the U.S. map in the **Figure 2 (left)**, a small share of respondents (3%) came from outside Colorado, specifically from Nebraska (Buffalo County) and Virginia (Powhatan County). These results show that while the survey primarily reflects the views of Park County residents, the fairgrounds also attract interest and use from surrounding counties and even out-of-state visitors, reflecting their importance as both a local and regional resources.

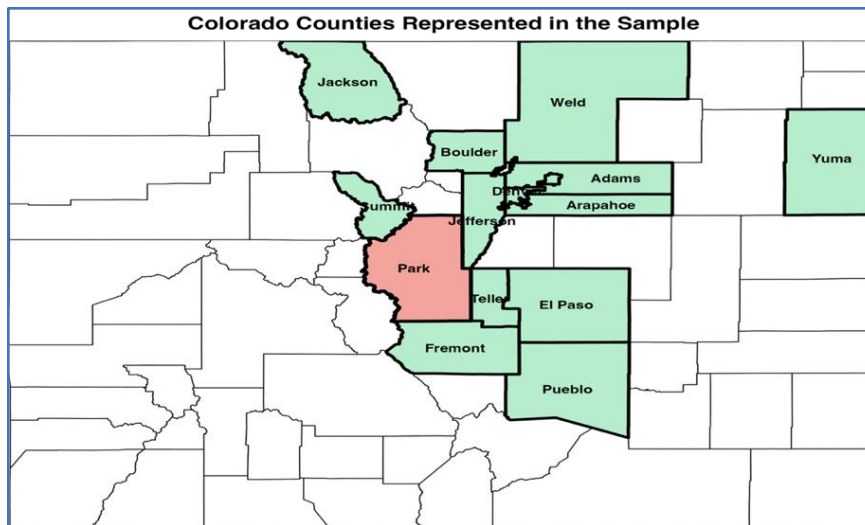


Figure 3: Colorado County map with counties represented in the sample

3.2 FAIRGROUND VISITORS

Figure 4 highlights that out of the 146 respondents, the vast majority (89%) reported attending the 2025 Park County Fair, while 11% did not attend. Because the survey was distributed both in person during the fair and online the following week, the respondent pool included a mix of fair attendees and non-attendees. All in-person responses came from individuals who were physically present at the fair, whereas the online survey reached both those who visited the fair and others from the wider community who did not attend. This mix ensured that the results reflect not only the experiences of fair visitors but also perspectives from residents who did not participate in the 2025 Park County Fair.

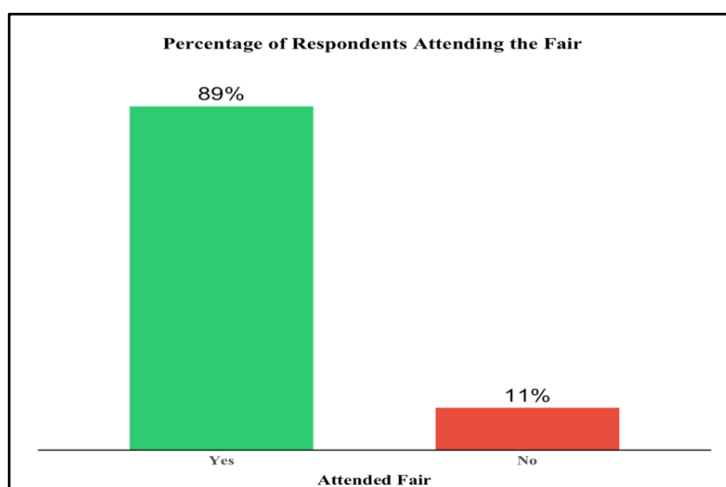


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents attending the fair

We also asked respondents what brought them to the fair. These reasons were not mutually exclusive, as participants could choose all that applied and are highlighted in **Figure 5**. The largest share of respondents (66%) came for 4-H shows and activities. Other strong draws included the

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rodeo and ranch rodeo events (34%), the junior livestock auction (28%), and the carnival or other entertainment (16%). About 13% attended for the open gymkhana, and roughly one-third (32%) cited other reasons such as Extension work, vendor booths, volunteering, organizational booths, and exhibitions.

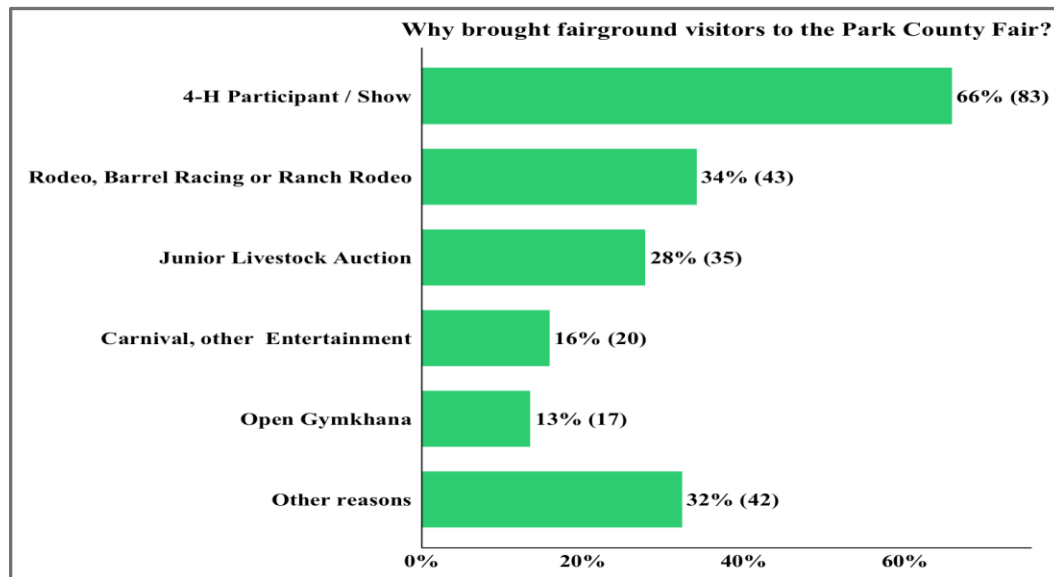


Figure 5: Reasons for attending the fair

Note: (1) Percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could select more than one option. (2) The number of respondents is shown in parentheses.

These included Extension and educational programs such as gardening and weed management workshops, Master Gardener presentations, and talks on local plants and grasses. Several participants attended as vendors, selling goods and food, while others came as volunteers helping with livestock shows, the shooting program, or fair security. A few respondents were present through their work or organizational booths, representing nonprofits, political groups, or local sponsors. Some mentioned participation in shooting sports and senior livestock auctions, while others highlighted community and social reasons, such as supporting local businesses, enjoying the fair atmosphere, or attending family-friendly events like Mutton Bustin' and the kids' Sunday activities. Finally, a few noted attending specifically for animal shows and exhibitions (including dog agility and obedience events) or simply because they make it a tradition to attend every year. So, while 4-H continues to be the biggest driver of fair attendance, the fair also serves as a hub for multiple community and entertainment activities.

3.3 NON-ATTENDEES BY ZIP-CODE

Out of all survey respondents, we had 16 individuals who did not attend the Park County Fair. Their home ZIP codes are shown in **Figure 6**, highlighting how non-attendees were distributed across different parts of the region. The largest group of non-attendees came from ZIP code 80421, with five respondents. Two each were from 80440 and 80449, and the remaining were single respondents across several other ZIP codes. These non-attendees represent four unique counties: Park, Jefferson, Boulder, and Denver. This provides a useful look at who in the surrounding communities did not attend, which could help us understand outreach or barriers to attend the fair.

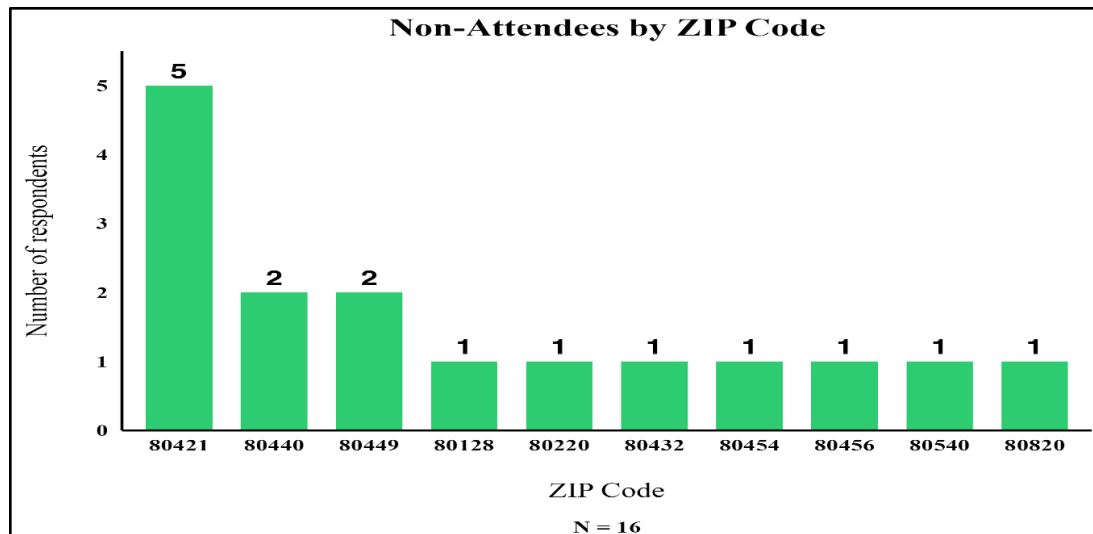


Figure 6: Non-attendees by Zip-Code

3.4 STAYED OVERNIGHT AMONG FAIR ATTENDEES

Among the 130 respondents who attended the fair, we asked whether they stayed overnight. As shown in **Figure 7**, The results were almost evenly split: 48% said yes, they stayed overnight, while 50% said no. A small share, about 2%, didn't specify if they stayed overnight. This tells us that nearly half of the fair visitors are overnight guests, which is an important insight because it points to additional economic contributions in areas like lodging, food, and fuel. It highlights the fair's role not just as a community event, but also as a potential driver of tourism-related spending.

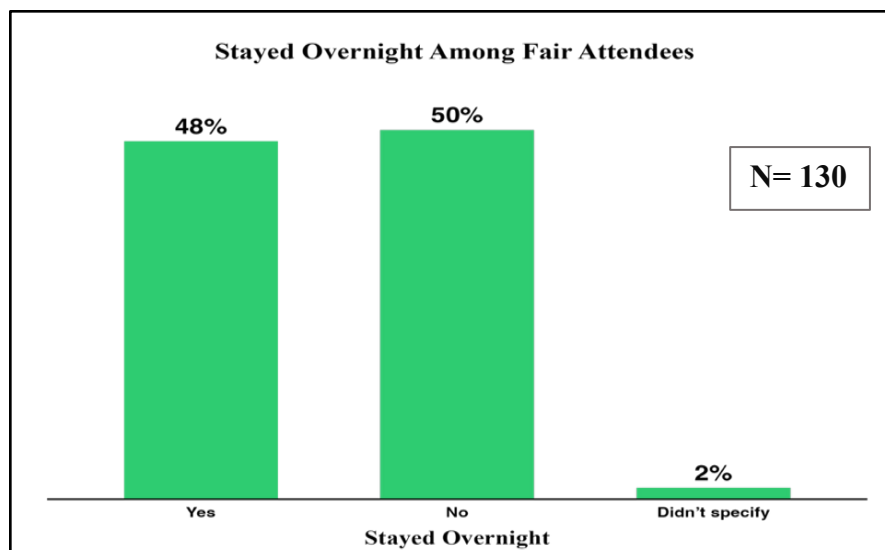


Figure 7: Percentage of fair attendees who stayed overnight

3.4.1 ACCOMMODATIONS

Looking more closely at the 62 respondents who stayed overnight, we asked where they stayed. **Figure 8** illustrates the distribution of accommodations chosen by these overnight visitors.

The majority, about two-thirds (64%), stayed in campgrounds or RV parks, showing the importance of these facilities for fair visitors. About 14% used Airbnb and another 13% stayed in hotels or motels. A smaller share (2%) stayed with friends or family, and 6% selected other options which included car camping, pike national forest and cabin, while around 2% did not specify.

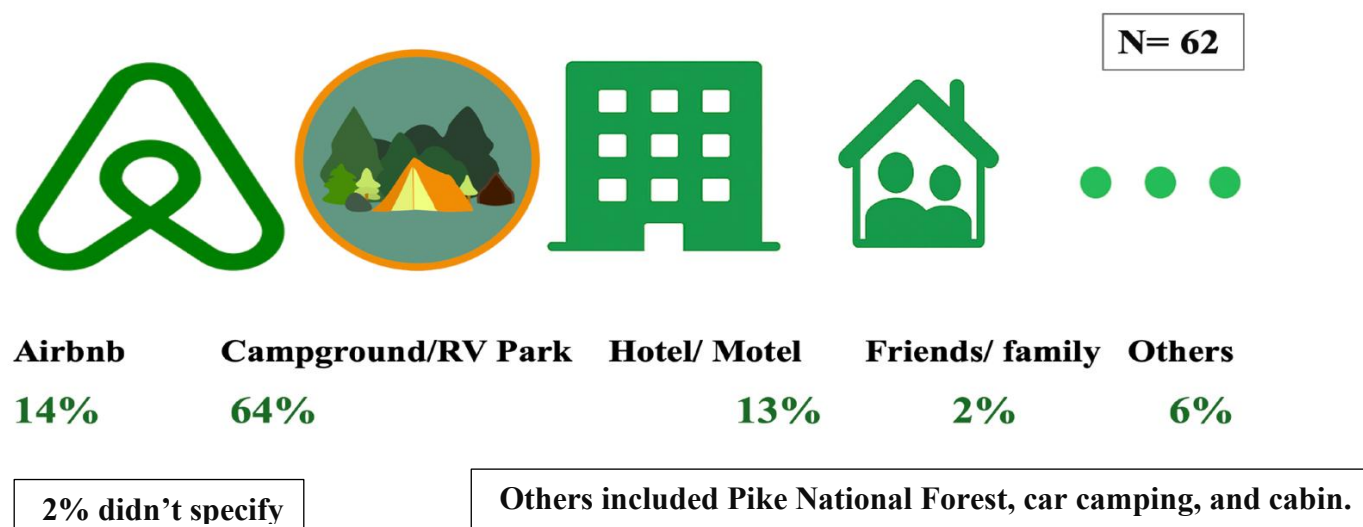


Figure 8: Accommodations of overnight visitors

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

3.5 VISITOR SPENDING DURING THE FAIR

Respondents were asked to report their group's average daily spending across five categories: food and beverages, gasoline/travel, recreation and activities, lodging/accommodation, and other expenses. Since survey responses were collected in ranges (e.g., \$0, \$1–\$10, \$11–\$20, \$21–\$30, and \$31 or more), we applied midpoints to calculate weighted averages. For lodging, we assigned typical nightly costs to each accommodation type reported in the survey. Based on regional price data and respondent input, we assumed \$242 for Airbnb rentals, \$100 for hotels or motels, \$40 for campgrounds or RV parks, and \$30 for other options (car camping, Pike National Forest stays, or cabins). Respondents staying with friends or family were assigned \$0. Each overnight respondent was matched to one of these values, and the mean was calculated across all overnight respondents. This approach allowed us to generate a weighted mean lodging cost that reflects both market conditions and the mix of accommodations selected by attendees.

Table 1 presents the average daily expenses (per group) during the fair. Average daily spending (per group) was \$22 on food and beverages, \$17 on gasoline, \$13 on recreation/amusement, \$79 on lodging, and \$15 on other miscellaneous expenses. When combined, these categories add up to a total spending of \$146 for overnight visitors (including lodging) and \$67 for day visitors (excluding lodging).

Table 1: Average Daily Expenses (per group) during the 2025 Park County Fair

Spending Category	Average Daily Spend (per group)
Food & Beverages	\$22
Gasoline/Travel	\$17
Recreation/Amusement Activities	\$13
Lodging/Accommodation	\$79
Other Expenses	\$15
Total for overnight-visitors (Including lodging)	\$146
Total for day -visitors (excluding lodging)	\$67

Note: (1) Respondents selected ranges (e.g., \$0, \$1–\$10, \$11–\$20, \$21–\$30, and \$31 and above), midpoints were used to calculate a weighted average. (2) Totals were calculated by summing category averages. For overnight visitors, the total (\$146) reflects the sum of food and beverages, gasoline, recreation/activities, other expenses, and lodging. For day visitors, the total (\$67) includes only food and beverages, gasoline, recreation/activities, and other expenses, excluding lodging.

Figure 9 shows how daily spending was distributed across categories for fair attendees who did not stay overnight versus those who did. Among overnight visitors, lodging accounted for the largest share of expenditures (54%), followed by food (15%), gasoline (12%), other expenses (10%), and recreation (9%). however, among day visitors, food accounted for the largest share (33%), followed by gasoline (25%), other expenses (22%), and recreation (20%). These shares highlight how lodging significantly shifts the spending profile for overnight visitors, while food and travel dominate among those who only attended for the day. These shares were calculated by dividing the average spending in each category by the total daily spend for each group, ensuring the percentages reflect how respondents allocated their spending across categories.

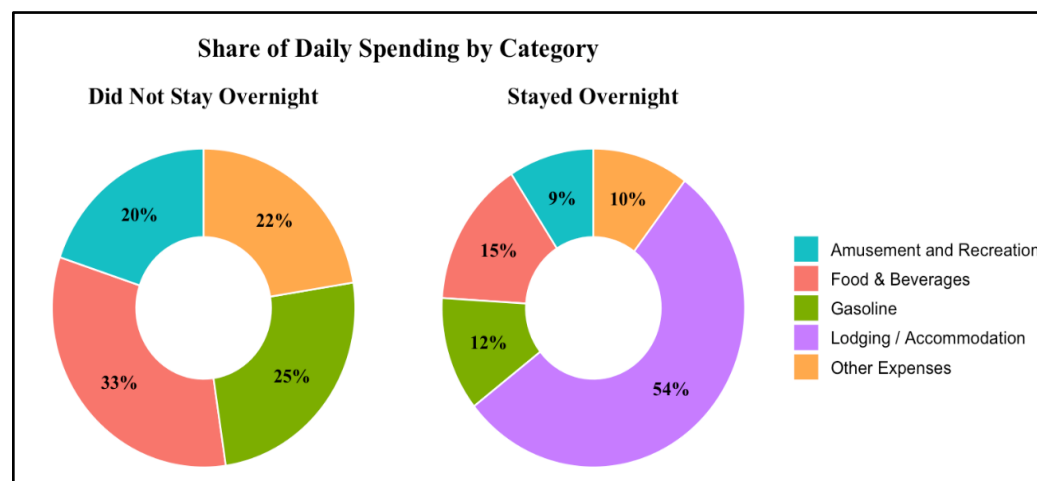


Figure 9: Share of daily spending by category

3.6 FAIRGROUND STRUCTURE TO KEEP AS LONG AS POSSIBLE

We asked respondents which current fairground structures they would like to see kept as long as possible and the result is presented in **Figure 10**. The Joe Lynch Arena stood out as the top choice, with nearly half (48%) of respondents selecting it. About 27% wanted to keep the existing barn, while 11% chose the existing grandstands. Another 14% mentioned other structures, including the office, event center, CSU Extension and fair exhibition building, or indicated they had no preference. This highlights that while multiple facilities are valued, the arena and barn are seen as the most important to retain as long as possible.

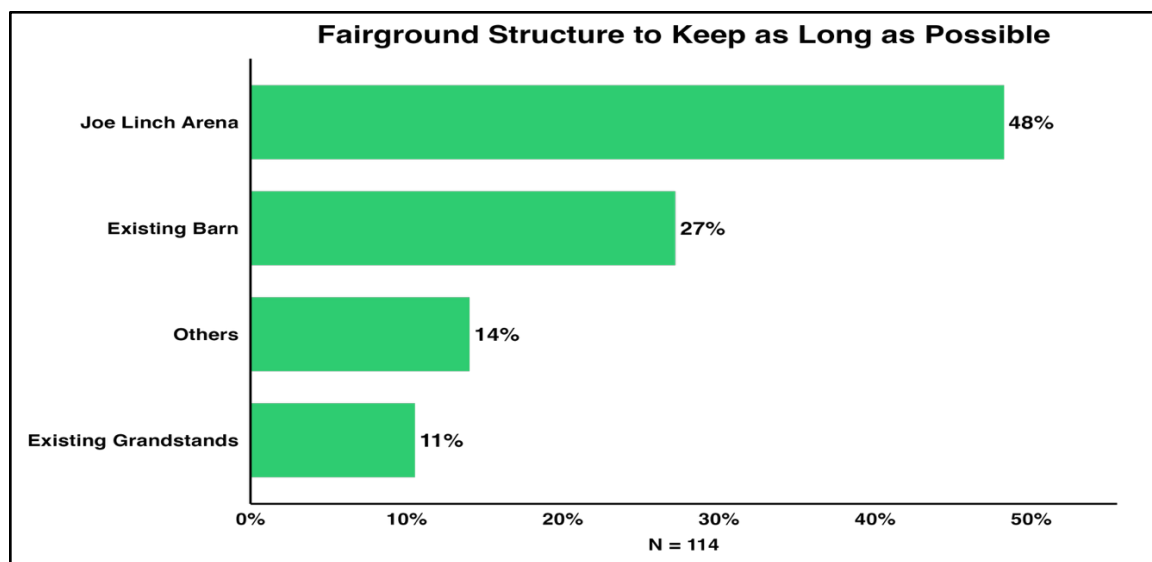


Figure 10: Fairground structure to keep as long as possible

Note: Others include the office, event center, CSU extension and fair exhibition building, no preference/not sure, and all of the options above

3.7 COMMUNITY PRIORITIES FOR PRIMARY BUILDINGS AND SECONDARY AMENITIES

To understand which fairground improvements the community values most, we used the Best-to-Worst Scaling (BWS) method. For each building or amenity, we counted the number of times it was selected as the most preferred option by all respondents and the number of times it was selected as the least preferred option. The net score was then calculated by subtracting the “worst” count from the “best” count. For example, the livestock barn and indoor arena was chosen as “most preferred” 296 times and as “least preferred” 17 times, resulting in a strong net score of +279 (296 – 17). We applied this same calculation to all other primary buildings and secondary amenities. The higher the net score, the higher the priority placed on that project by the community.

Table 2 presents the Case 1 Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) results for primary buildings. The livestock barn and indoor arena stood out clearly as the top priority, with the strongest positive score (+279). The horse barn also received strong support (+83), followed by the community dining and event hall (+38). In contrast, other options such as the covered grandstands (-12), business incubator and learning center (-73), outdoor amphitheater (-119), and RV/tiny homes (-129) received negative scores, indicating that respondents viewed them as lower priorities for upgrades. For secondary

amenities, the top choice was year-round restrooms, which scored a strong +139, showing broad agreement on the importance of this basic facility. The greenhouse classrooms also ranked positively (+55), suggesting support for educational improvements. The teen center was viewed more neutrally (+4), while the café (-23) and childcare facility (-96) received negative scores, meaning they were ranked lower priorities by respondents.

Table 2: Community Priorities for Primary Fairground Buildings (Case 1 BWS Results)

Attributes	Best (B)	Worst (W)	Net Score (B-W)
PRIMARY BUILDINGS			
Livestock barn and indoor arena	296	17	279
Horse Barn	122	39	83
Community dining/event hall	113	75	38
Covered grandstands	93	105	-12
Business incubator and learning center	75	148	-73
Outdoor amphitheater	44	163	-119
RV/ tiny homes	68	198	-129
SECONDARY AMENITIES			
Year-round restrooms	190	51	139
Greenhouse Classrooms	135	80	55
Teen center	83	79	4
Cafe	132	155	-23
Childcare facility	50	146	-96

Taken together, the results show that community members place the highest value on core agricultural and community-use facilities (livestock and horse barns, dining/event space) and essential amenities (year-round restrooms), while add-ons such as childcare or cafe services were viewed as less important.

3.8. DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Figure 11 presents the demographics of survey respondents, who represented a broad cross-section of households. Reported household incomes varied widely, with about one-third (32%) earning \$120,000 or more and another 20% between \$100,000 and \$119,999. About 12% reported incomes between \$70,000 and \$99,999, while smaller shares fell in the \$50,000–\$69,999 (7%) and \$30,000–\$49,999 (5%) ranges. Only 1% reported less than \$30,000, while nearly one-quarter (23%) preferred not to answer. The average reported household income was approximately \$99,777. In terms of gender, most respondents identified as female (59%), followed by male (37%). A small share identified as non-binary or third gender (1%) or preferred not to say (3%). The average age of respondents was 47 years, and the average group size attending the fair was four people. When asked about children in the household, nearly half (49%) reported having children under 18, while 39% reported no children in the household. About 12% chose not to answer. These results suggest that the fair draws a mix of family households and adult-only households, reinforcing its role as both a family-oriented and community-wide event.

“What Does the Community Value? Assessing Priorities for the Fairground Upgrades”. Park County, Colorado

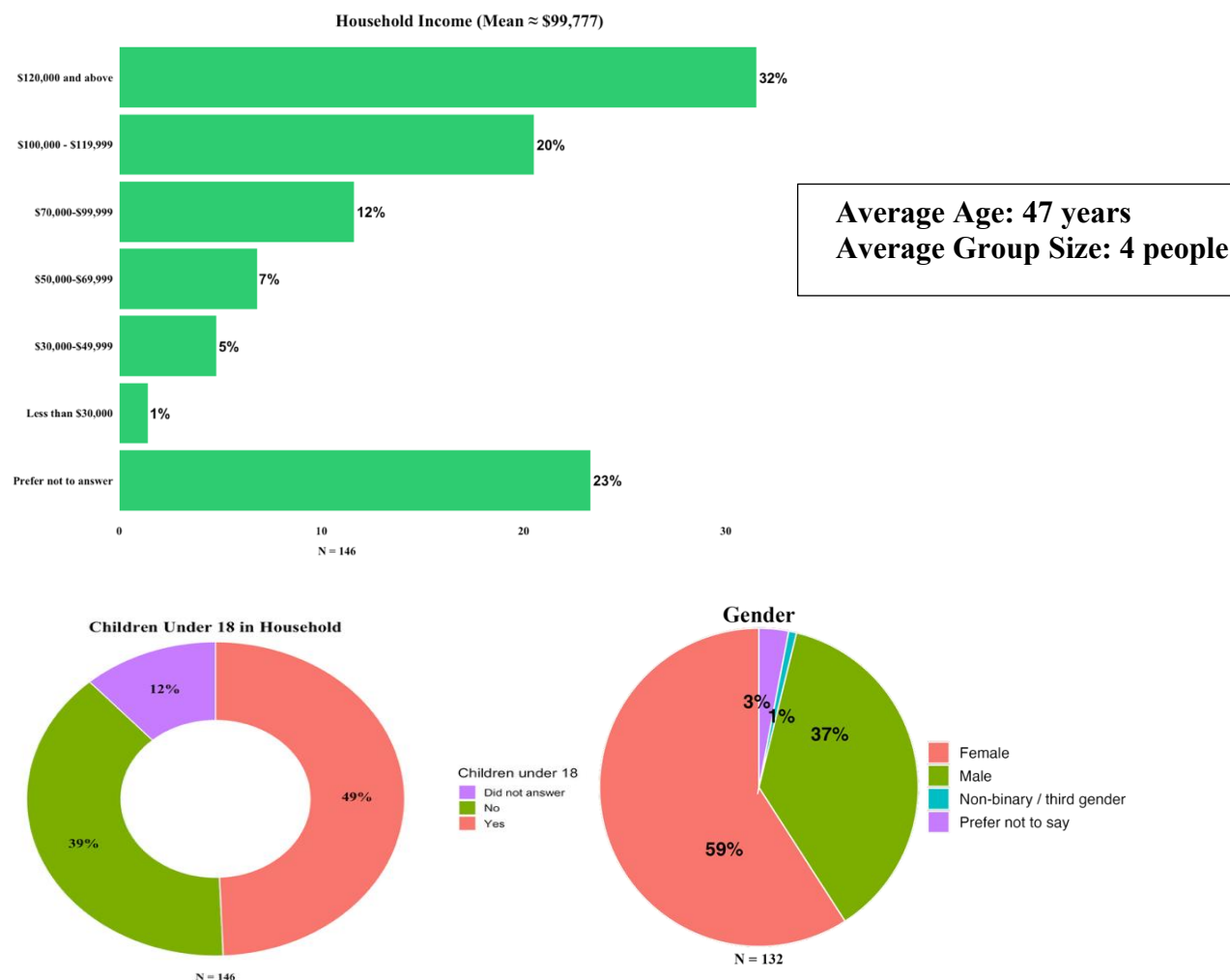


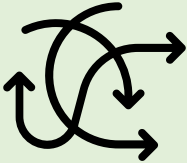
Figure 11: Demographics of the survey respondents

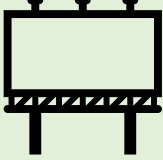
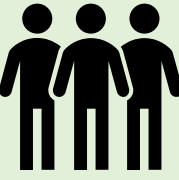
4. OPEN FEEDBACK

We also asked respondents to share any additional feedback they might have about the Park County Fairgrounds and future improvements. The open-ended comments as presented in **Table 4** reflected a wide range of perspectives, and we grouped them into five subsections: Facilities Improvement and Infrastructure, Expanded or Year-Round Use, Amenities & Features, Community & Economic Impact, and Concerns and Criticisms.

Table 4: Open feedback from respondents

Open Feedback	
	Facilities Improvement and Infrastructure
	Comments related to the physical condition or suggested upgrades of existing buildings and grounds:

	• Horse barn is important as a group leader • More livestock area and horse stall area. Also, somehow, we could do awards at the fairgrounds and hold large indoor events in the wintertime. • Would love to see RV hookups and more indoor stalls. • All buildings and features need to be built to high altitude rating with freeze protection • Improve road access and restrooms • Facilities for classes and lectures would be great • The livestock barn could be built separately from the indoor arena • Barn with bathrooms attached. Better drainage in barns. Better covered areas for livestock. • Drainage for sudden downpours. • More suitable wash racks for animals. A better scale house that us more consistent. More spacing of water/ electrical options by horses. • Limit outdoor lighting to reduce impact on the local community and benefit wildlife and night sky viewing; improve sound system so audience in the bleachers can hear the announcer in Joe Lynch arena, but the residents don't have to hear it all. • Keep the old fair barn it is iconic- improve on the existing space and improve - build off the barn to include new permanent stalls for animals so we don't have to build the tents each year. • The current livestock barn needs to be upgraded. The current bathroom situation needs major scrape off and redesign. • Childcare for children under 3 would be really nice.
	Expanded or Year-Round Use
	• Multi-use, indoor facility for year-round use would be the most beneficial to Park County. • Would love to see a year-round facility and growth for our youth and rural community. • Perhaps the fairground can be used year-round to generate cash to accomplish all the wishes for best fairgrounds. • I would love to have a year-round use dog park with amazing set up w/dog agility course and good signage and community involvement. • Improve the overall experience of the fair and make it a viable place for the community to use year-round in other ways. • Year-round activity potential. Education centers year-round. • These fairgrounds have been a central community gathering place year-round and can draw in a lot more than just the once-a-year

	fair. It can continue to serve as a community hub year-round, and I hope it does.
	Amenities & Features Requests for new amenities or enhancements for users:
	• “RV hookups and more indoor stalls” • Electricity in camper RV areas • “More suitable wash racks for animals” • “More livestock trailer parking” • “Compost or biochar facility” • “Signage out near 285. Billboards, signboards, banners” etc. to get more people's attention to come to the fair. • More games, rides, activities for kids and families. • Yes, to campground but no tiny homes. • We should have a demolition derby. • More space for livestock and horse areas (walkways are too small and crowded), and classrooms in a building to better support competitions and related activities.
	Community & Economic Impact Broader reflections on how the fairgrounds affect the county, community, and economy:
	• I'd like to see Park Co bring the amenities to gain income through the large body of travelers, not just relying on the residence of the county to tax for their needs to supply a better destination • I believe the fairground would be a major hub to not only Fairplay, Park County but also Summit County • Fairgrounds fair is a great asset to the community. All improvements will help Park County economically and become a destination as well as add to quality of life. • Park county is a small county, but our fair is well attended from statewide visitors. Improvement to all the fairground needs would certainly help. • Improvements should be based on long term needs, and other needs like evacuation facilities. • We desperately need this. This will provide a space and activities for our children to interact, learn, and stay involved with the community.

	Concerns & Criticism Skepticism or opposition to certain proposals or the project in general:
	• This entire project infuriates me... disgusting... abhorrent. • No teen center: this will create nothing but problems • To me the secondary amenities seem unnecessary. • The county should not compete with local businesses, such as a cafe, tiny homes, day care or any commercial activity. • Prioritize workforce housing. The young people who work as Police Officers, firefighters, teachers, etc. can't afford to buy homes. • Please don't turn away new business. • Try to keep the memory intact of how the fairground was built. • How to fund these ideas?? • The survey was very limiting, other options are out there. • This is all Bull Crap! Someone plans to make a personal killing... no need for improvements!

5. REFERENCES

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6. APPENDIX

6.1 APPENDIX A. UNIQUE CITIES REPRESENTED IN THE SURVEY RESPONSES

To complement the county- and state-level analysis in the main report, this table provides a full list of the unique cities and towns reported by survey participants. Including this detail helps illustrate the wide reach of the Park County Fairgrounds, showing that while most respondents were local, the fairgrounds also draw participants from across the Front Range, mountain communities, and even out-of-state locations.

Colorado Cities/Towns	Out-of-State Cities
Bailey, Fairplay, Pine, Como, Jefferson, Hartsel, Lake George, Guffey, Alma, Conifer, Florissant, Evergreen, Shawnee, Indian Hills, Littleton, Lyons, Aurora, Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Penrose, Frisco, Carr	Kearney (NE), Powhatan (VA)

6.2. APPENDIX B. SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Choice Scenario

Park County is exploring a range of potential improvements to the fairgrounds and is asking for your input.

These include larger, proposed projects such as:

- 1) Livestock barn and indoor arena (with wash stations, stage, and viewing stands)
- 2) Business incubator and learning center (with offices, classrooms, and educational spaces)
- 3) Community dining/event hall (with commercial kitchen)
- 4) HORSE BARN (accommodates 101 12 x 12 horse stalls)
- 5) Outdoor amphitheater
- 6) RV camping and tiny homes
- 7) Covered grandstands

As well as secondary improvements like:

- 1) Cafe
- 2) Childcare facility
- 3) Teen center
- 4) Greenhouse classrooms
- 5) Year-round restrooms

In the next sections, you’ll be shown small groups of these items. For each group, please select the most important and least important item to prioritize. Your input will help guide future investments in the fairgrounds.

Of the following improvement options, which one do you think is the most important to prioritize, and which one is the least important? Select one option as most important and one as least important.

Select the improvement		
	Most Preferred	Least Preferred
Business incubator and learning center (with offices, classrooms, and educational spaces)	☐	☐
Community dining/event hall (with commercial kitchen)	☐	☐
Horse barn (accommodates 101 12 X 12 horse stalls)	☐	☐
Outdoor Amphitheater	☐	☐

Thinking about smaller upgrades to the fairgrounds, which of the following do you think is the most important to prioritize, and which is the least important?

Select the improvement		
	Most Preferred	Least Preferred
Cafe	☐	☐
Childcare facility	☐	☐
Greenhouse classrooms	☐	☐
Year-round restrooms	☐	☐

6.3 APPENDIX C: SOME IMAGES FROM 2025 PARK COUNTY FAIR

