

**Community Needs Assessment completed by
Chambers County in collaboration with
Chambers Health**



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Table of Contents

3	Introduction
3	Purpose of Community Needs Assessment
3	Objectives of Community Needs Assessment
4	Methodology
4	Community Participation
4	Community Stakeholder Survey
5	Strengths and Weaknesses of Assessment
5	Characteristics of Survey Respondents
6	Employment, Income and Workforce
6	Employment Characteristics of Respondents
7	Income Characteristics
8	Barriers to Employment
8	Housing
9	Housing Needs
9	Childcare and Adult Care Needs
9	Childcare and Family Trends
10	Adult Dependents
11	Education and Training
11	Career Development Programs
11	Health and Healthcare
11	Mental Health and Social Support
12	Common Healthcare Needs in Chambers County
12	Insurance Trends
13	Access to Healthcare
13	Food and Nutrition
13	Senior and Veteran Needs
13	Veteran Assistance
13	Access to Infrastructure
14	Economic Development
14	Small Business
15	Business Support Organizations
16	Works Cited

Introduction

In November 2020, William Kiefer, CEO of Chambers Health, reached out to Chambers County Judge Jimmy Sylvia with an invitation to collaborate on a Community Needs Assessment. The Chambers Health system includes a critical access hospital, a wellness center, and two federally qualified health centers (FQHCs).

After a brief discussion, it was determined that this Assessment would be beneficial to both parties – as well as other community organizations.

The project included planning sessions with an interagency team, input from a variety of community organizations, businesses and individuals and a survey of key community stakeholders and clients.

Purpose of Community Needs Assessment:

The purpose of this assessment is to collect and interpret data, which will assist the County, Chambers Health and other entities in mapping out a course for community development and improvement by creating strategies to make positive and sustainable changes throughout Chambers County.

Objectives of the Community Needs Assessment:

- Conduct a local assessment of needs by compiling county-level data
- Collect and analyze primary data by gathering community feedback through surveys
- Collect and analyze secondary data by researching national, state and local data sets that inform the characteristics and needs of Chambers County communities
- Provide a data set to Chambers County, Chambers Health and other entities that will drive meaningful improvements in the lives of Chambers County residents.

Community needs assessments can and should be more than just a gathering and analyzing of data; they can also be a basis for creating change. A comprehensive community-based needs assessment can help an agency address community and family needs by providing a snapshot of the service area and the characteristics for families residing in the area, including their economic well-being, educational status, health and welfare. A comprehensive assessment can provide important community information as to what other agencies and organizations may be working to address particular issues, and where gaps in community services may be found. In addition, the process provides a means to meet and develop partnerships with other community groups interested in strengthening services to citizens in the service area.

Finally, a comprehensive community needs assessment helps an agency in its planning process by providing the foundation for strategic and operational planning, assessing the agency's impact on meeting the needs of the community, determining what programs or strategies may no longer be needed and deciding what strategies may provide new opportunities for the agency and the community.

Methodology

An Assessment Committee was convened to provide general oversight and assistance for the project. This Committee was in no way representative of the community as a whole, but provided a starting point from which the Assessment was developed.

Assessment Community Membership

Name	Agency
Samantha Humphrey	Chambers County, Texas
William Keifer	Chambers Health
Robbie King	Chambers County, Texas
Nellie Lunsford	Chambers Health
Kaley Smith	Chambers Health

A nine-domain typology was utilized to organize all assessment data collected. For purposes of the assessment, a domain is defined as an area of influence affecting local community conditions and the quality of life of people residing in the service area. The community assessment is comprehensive as it describes general community conditions in Chambers County while also being targeted to local conditions contributing to poverty and the needs of low-income residents in the County.

The nine domains examined include:

- Employment, Income and Workforce
- Housing
- Nutrition and Food
- Children and Family Needs
- Education and Training
- Health and Healthcare
- Access to Infrastructure
- Senior and Veteran Needs
- Economic Trends

The Community Needs Assessment is based on a comprehensive review of quantitative data including: (1) quantitative data from relevant secondary data sources, (2) survey data collected from both key informants and service recipients and (3) review of current Chambers County data.

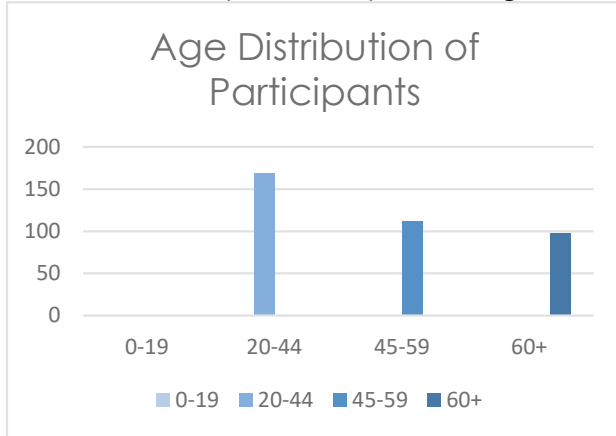
Community Stakeholders Survey

An online survey was designed to collect information from key informants in Chambers County. The community survey could be completed online from any computer or mobile device with Internet access. Team members were provided with instructions for accessing and completing the survey and encouraged to disseminate information about the survey as widely as possible within the survey area.

Survey links and directions were distributed via the following methods:

- Facebook: Chambers County and Chambers Health Facebook pages, community groups

- Email: Internally to all Chambers County and Chambers Health employees, externally to other partner agencies



A total of 418 responses to the online survey were received from key informants in Chambers County.

Findings from the survey reflect the opinions of the key informants responding. Given the variety of community sectors represented in survey responses, the survey results may be reasonably considered informative about local conditions and needs in Chambers County.

Strengths and Limitations of Needs Assessment

When preparing the Community Needs Assessment, the planning committee understood that there would be limitations to the data that was collected.

The primary limitation is associated with the distribution method. By distributing via email and social media only, we are limiting responses to those within our networks and communities and to those who have reliable internet access. While this is a flaw, we also determined that the immediate need for a baseline dataset outweighed the potential impact from a limited response.

An additional challenge that we faced – but did not expect – was the general mistrust of government and other authoritative organizations caused by the current political climate. When posting the survey link and purpose to key Community Forums on social media, we received several responses that expressed concern about data collection, usage and privacy violations (despite regular notices that the survey was anonymous).

Some respondents chose not to answer question related to the “why” of circumstances because of this mistrust. When asked why they were disabled, one anonymous respondent stated that it was “none of [our] business.” This created a challenge as we do not have the justifying data associated with that respondent’s unemployment and cannot accurately assess which programs might need to be expanded to meet their needs.

Contrarily, the strong partnership between Chambers County and Chambers Health and the combined social capital held by both organization was a strength that was leveraged in order to ensure that this assessment was functional.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

The majority of persons completing the survey ranged in age from 20 to over 60 years of age. The age of key informants completing the survey was essentially normally distributed over the different age groups.

The survey received a representative response from all ethnicities and/or races. However, the majority of responses were from individuals who identified as non-Hispanic white or European. This majority should be recognized and considered when reviewing data.

Residents from nearly all areas of the County participated in this Assessment; however, the vast majority of respondents were from the Anahuac area. This should be considered during any decision-making processes as answers and/or access to infrastructure, services and resources could be skewed by the respondent's area of residence.

The highest portion of citizens who responded to the survey indicated (70 percent) that they were married, however responses were received from several other household types. These included single (the second most common respondent type at 10 percent), widowed, divorced, separated and living with partner.

The majority of respondents do not currently have minor children (87 percent). Of the 44 percent of respondents who reported having minor children, 75 percent live in two parent homes. Single parent homes were the second most common family type with 11 percent, followed by shared custody homes.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Quick Facts about Chambers County, the median household income is \$91,141. While a wide variety of household incomes were reported, just over 52 percent of respondents reported that their gross income exceeded the County average.

Survey participants reported education levels consistent with County averages reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. All respondents reported earning at least a GED or High School Diploma and 51 percent stated that they held a Bachelor Degree or higher certification. An additional 108 respondents (28 percent) indicated that they had completed at least some college and 44 respondents (14 percent) indicated that they had received an Associate Degree.

Employment, Income and Workforce

One of the major areas investigated through this survey was the Chambers County workforce – those of working age and trends in education, careers and barriers to employment.

Employment Characteristics of Respondents

Just over 68 percent of respondents indicated that they are employed either full time or part time. Five people indicated that they are seasonal workers. Retired persons make up 20 percent of survey respondents. Finally, 10 percent of respondents indicated that they were unemployed or laid off.

If this data is assumed representative of the entirety of Chambers County's population, then it makes sense that the majority of the population is gainfully employed. This assumption has multiple implications.

First, we can assume that the 68 percent of working residents plus (at least) the majority of the 21 percent of retired residents – for 89 percent – are utilizing their income and putting money back into the economic system of the County.

At the most basic level, this keeps money in Chambers County communities and encourages financial stability for additional residents.

According to a 2021 Time Magazine article, twice the money stays in a community when money is spent at small businesses compared to large chain stores. Per David Boyle, a New Economics Foundation researcher, “this means that those purchases are twice as efficient in terms of keeping the local economy alive.”

The ripple effect of this is exponential. More money spent at local businesses creates more jobs, more tax revenue and more purchasing power. (Schwartz, 2009)

Secondly, with only a small percentage of residents reporting their unemployment or laid off status, we can assume that our potential workforce is minimal. This could lead to labor shortages that jeopardize economic expansion.

When surveying expansion opportunities in rural locations – like Chambers County – one of the most important factors that businesses consider is the availability of skilled labor. A lack of skilled labor could lead to a decrease in business expansion in Chambers County.

Income Characteristics

As stated above, the majority of survey respondents reported income greater than the Census average for the County. While just over half of participants indicated that their total household income was greater than \$100 thousand, the remaining respondents were evenly distributed among income brackets.

When asked that type of income they earned, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they were paid employer wages. Other common types of income included:

- Social Security
- Pension/Retirement
- Child Support

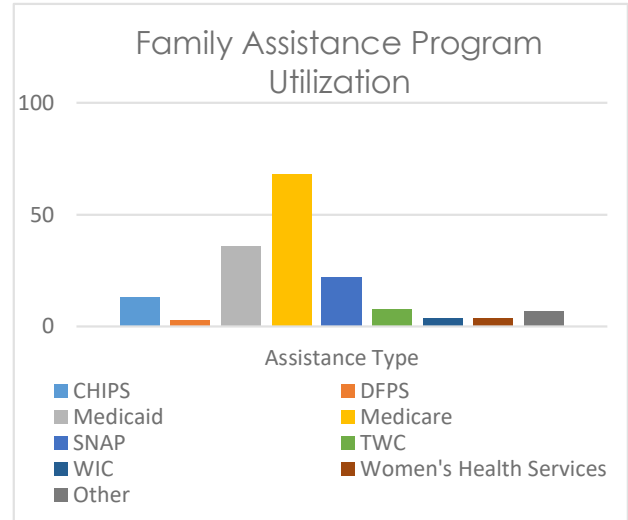
Many households indicated that they receive various types of assistance including CHIPS, Department of Family and Protective Service and Medicare or Medicaid benefits.

Barriers to Employment

A total of 43 survey respondents indicated that they either were unemployed or had been laid off. Of these 43, 23 indicated that they were looking for work.

Respondents were asked to select all of the reasons that contributed to their unemployment status. The most commonly selected were:

- Other, including:
 - Caring for disabled children or family members
 - Being a full time single parent
 - Recently moving to the area/state
 - Being a full time student
- Layoff or downsizing
- Domestic violence or sexual assault victim
- Lack of available childcare
- Permanent physical disability
- Lack of proper clothing
- Lack of skills/education
- Temporary health issues
- Criminal background



While it seems that telephone access is not a challenge for the majority of respondents (all except two respondents indicated that they had access to reliable telephone service), a marginally greater portion of residents responded that they did not have access to internet. In total, 14 respondents indicated that they had no way to access the web. Those who did have access to the internet utilized it at a wide variety of locations including at home, work, the library and at friend and family members' homes.

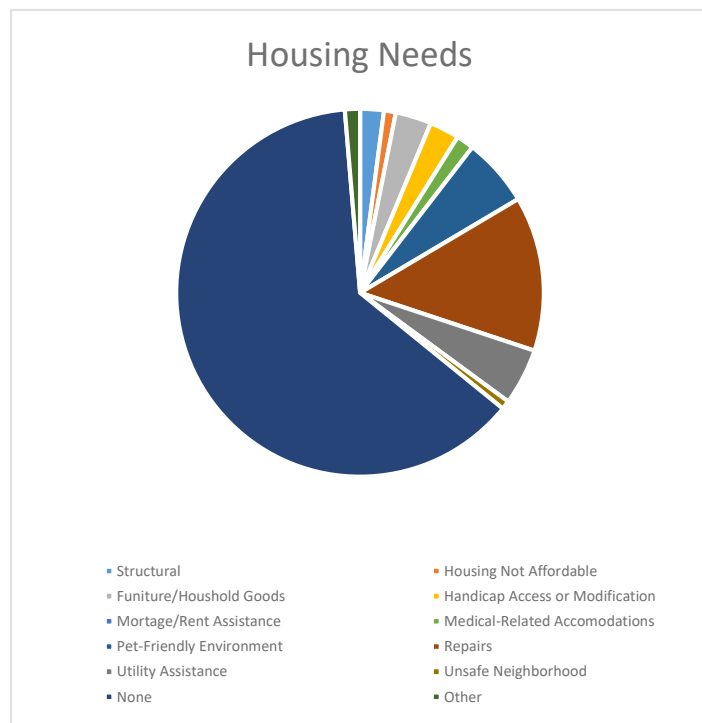
This lack of access to reliable internet – and even the two respondents who faced challenges accessing telephone service – could be a barrier to employment as most job postings are now published online.

Housing

The vast majority (85 percent) of respondents were homeowners and just under 10 percent rent their place of residence. This is consistent with Census data that, from 2015 to 2019, estimated that the owner-occupied housing rate for Chambers County was just under 83 percent.

According to the same Census data, as of July 1, 2019 there were 16, 823 housing units in Chambers County and the median value of owner-occupied units was \$200,400.

These trends are expected to increase, however, as the County population rate has grown at a rate of 24.9 percent over the last 10 years. New housing developments throughout the County will only further this trend of growth in the next several years (792 building permits were issued by Chambers County in 2019 alone).



Small housing units seem to be the norm in Chambers County, with just over 32 percent of survey respondents indicating that only two people reside in their home. Three and four person homes are the next most common responses, followed by one person and then five person homes.

Housing Needs

Just over 40 percent of survey respondents indicated that they need some sort of housing assistance. The most common type of assistance needed is related to home repairs and structural issues, followed by pet-friendliness and mortgage or rent assistance.

Child and Adult Care Needs

Childcare and Family Trends

Of the 185 respondents who indicated that they had minor children at home, 98 percent stated that they were their child(ren)'s primary custodial guardian.

Respondents who indicated that there were children or other dependents in their care, indicated a variety of family situations including:

- Two Parent Homes – 80 percent
- Single Parent Home – 12 percent
- Raising Children of Other Family Members – 2 Percent
- Shared Custody – 2 Percent
- Raising Own Children and Children of Others – 1 percent

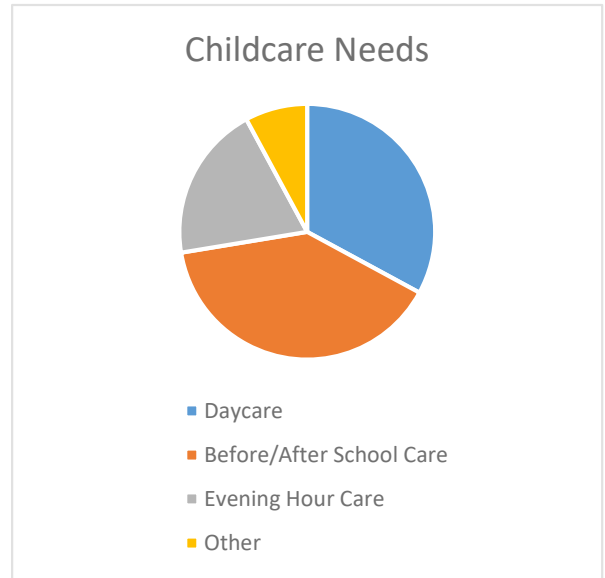
The majority (72 percent) of homes with children have access to dependable childcare and approximately 24 percent of respondents indicated that they stay at home with their minor children.

Interestingly, 15 percent of respondents indicated that they need help with childcare in some capacity. The main areas of need were:

- Before or after school care
- Daycare centers
- Evening hour care due to work

In fact, seven percent of respondents indicated that they had previously lost a job due to undependable child or dependent care.

Based on this data, we can assume that daytime childcare is reasonably accessible throughout the County. However, residents need more varied care options for before and after school and evening hours due to work.



Adult Dependents

Approximately 6 percent of respondents indicated that they are currently caring for adult dependents due to mental or physical disability (including senior citizens).

Dependent care proved to be a larger issue than childcare in Chambers County, with the majority of respondents indicating that they leave their adult charges unattended during the day.

The most common care providers for adult dependents included:

- Dependent Cares for Themselves – 54 Percent
- Family – 25 Percent
- Friends – 2 Percent

According to the Texas Association of County's Texas County Information Program, 13.1 percent of Chambers County residents are over the age of 65 (Chambers County Profile).

The Population Reference Bureau's "Aging in the United States" bulletin states that "the number of Americans ages 65 and older is projected to nearly double... by 2060, and the 65-and-older age group's share of the total population will rise from 16 percent to 23 percent." ("Fact Sheet: Aging in the United States")

While Chambers County is slightly below the national average (13.1 percent versus the 16 percent reported by the Population Reference Bureau), the population of those over 65 will most likely increase in a proportional fashion.

As such, Chambers County should take notice of this trend and begin preparing for an aging population.

Education and Training

Parents who responded to the survey indicated that they need assistance with ARD/special education programs, that their children struggle with homework, schoolwork and standardized exams and that guidance is needed regarding their child's behavioral issues.

Additionally, respondents indicated that tutorial assistance and expanded youth services and programs are needed.

Career Development Programs

Based on survey results, Chambers County residents are in desperate need of career development programs.

When asked to rank the importance of the following services, the majority of respondents indicated that they were necessary:

- Internships/On-the-Job Training: 79.1 Percent
- Job Placement Services: 75.6 Percent
- Job Creation Services: 69.4 Percent

The vast majority of respondents (68 percent) indicated that they would be interested in attending educational or job training classes if it meant a better job.

Health and Healthcare

Mental Health and Social Support

Many survey respondents indicated that they needed assistance with a variety of mental health issues including:

- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Anger control
- Depression
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Self-esteem
- Thoughts of suicide
- Trauma

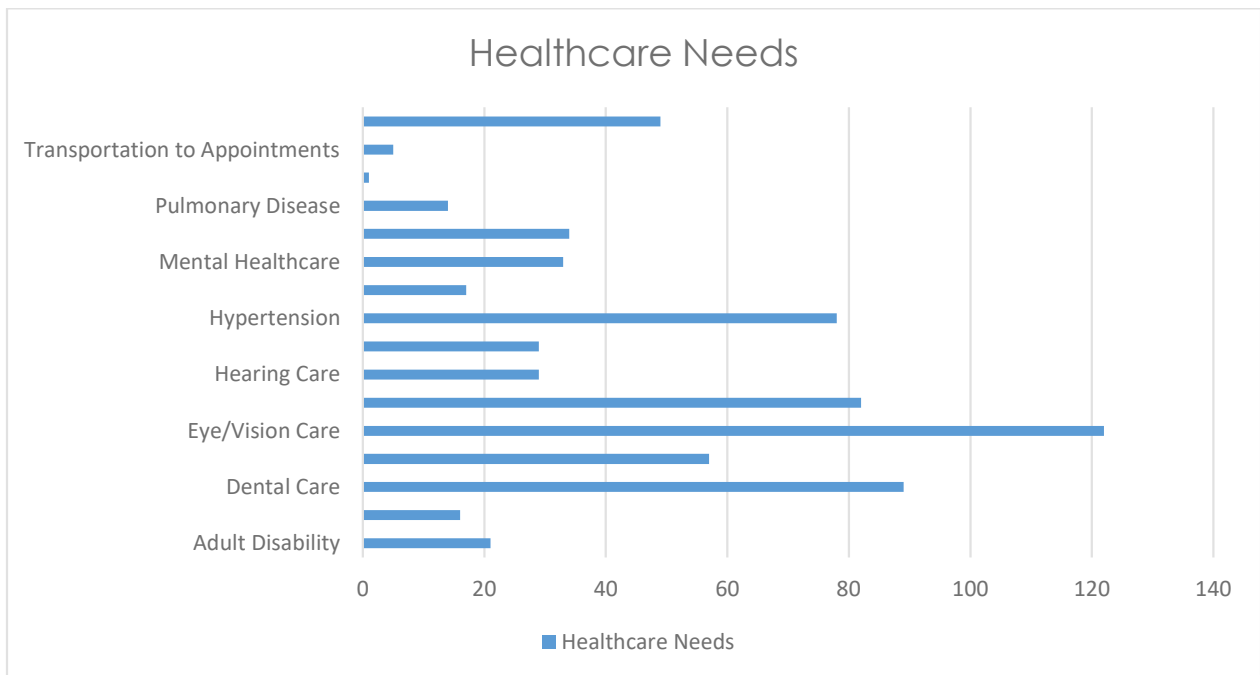
Additionally, survey respondents indicated a need for social support services and programs such as:

- Caregiver support
- Couples communication
- Disability counseling
- Elder abuse
- Family conflicts
- Making decisions and problem solving
- Parenting classes
- Planning for the future and goal setting

Common Healthcare Needs in Chambers County

Many Chambers County residents who participated in the Community Needs Assessment indicated that members of their household were experiencing a variety of healthcare needs including:

- Adult disability
- Child disability
- Dental care
- Diabetes
- Eye/vision care
- General medical care
- Hearing care
- Heart disease
- Hypertension
- Medical equipment
- Mental healthcare
- Prescription medication assistance
- Pulmonary disease
- STD's
- Transportation to appointments
- Sleep problems



Insurance Trends

Ninety percent of survey respondents indicate that they have healthcare coverage. Of those who indicated that they have health insurance, 72 percent are covered by insurance provided by their employer. The remaining percentage of insured residents are covered by self-pay policies (14 percent) or government assisted policies (10 percent).

In some cases, insurance did not cover the entire household, though. Eight percent of those who indicated that they have healthcare coverage reported that there were others in their household who were uninsured.

Access to Healthcare

Based on survey results, we can assume that for the most part Chambers County residents have reasonably easy access to healthcare. Just over 93 percent of Assessment participants indicated that they travel less than 50 miles one way for healthcare services.

The largest subgroup of respondents (36 percent) indicated, however, that they travel just 15 miles to access healthcare.

Food and Nutrition

The majority of survey respondents purchase food at local or chain grocery stores, however a few grow their own produce or purchase items from local farmer's markets or get their food from local food banks and trucks.

In total, 10 percent of survey respondents indicated that they needed information on food nutrition, especially related to these special diets:

- Diabetes
- Heart Disease
- Gluten Free
- Hypertension

Additionally, 14 percent of respondents stated that they would like more information on how to store food so that it will last longer.

Senior and Veteran Needs

Veteran Assistance

Thirty-two survey respondents indicated that they were United States Veterans. Of that 32, less than half indicated that they are receiving veteran's benefits. However, only four of those who do not currently receive veteran's benefits indicated that they need assistance applying.

Additional areas of need for veterans and their dependents include:

- Connecting to a veteran organizations
- Disability
- Employment
- Healthcare
- VA Claim Appeals
- Women Veteran Health Services

Access to Infrastructure

Chambers County remains largely rural, even as industrial and home development burgeons in the western portions of the county. Access to infrastructure such as water,

wastewater treatment and even waste transport can be limited in many areas of the County. This is represented in survey responses.

While 94 percent of respondents have access to clean, running water in their home, a surprising six percent report that they do not.

The majority of respondents indicated that a water company or provider services them; however, 20 percent stated that they receive water via either a private or community-access well.

What is perhaps most interesting, however, is the six percent of respondents who indicated that they did not have access to clean, running water.

Further investigation into responses shows that some of these respondents answered not simply based on their own definition of "clean." One homeowner stated that the city-provided water that services their home has bad quality with "high amount[s] of rust" that "[ruin] clothes, washing machine[s] and fridge water line[s]." Another states that while water provided by a local utility company is clean most of the time, "other times [they] have to buy water at the store."

These answers do not account for all of those who indicate a lack of access to water, however. More investigation is needed to discover why there are lapses in coverage.

Access to wastewater treatment is another area in which a disparity between developed areas and more rural areas of the County is evident. Based on survey results, just over half of respondents remove sewer waste from their homes via lines owned by a municipality or privately owned company. The remaining population utilize septic tanks or aerobic treatment systems that service their own property.

Economic Development

Based on their own observation, 64 percent of respondents indicated that they feel that local and new businesses are expanding in their communities. With a growing population, this is expected and will likely continue.

Small Business

In total 31 survey respondents indicated that they owned a business that operates in Chambers County. These businesses employ 60 full time employees and 16 part time employees.

The most common type of Chambers County-owned business were services, followed by retail and restaurants.

Many business owners operate their businesses as sole proprietorships and Limited Liability Companies. Other, less common, business types include C-Corps, S-Corps, Partnerships and Limited Partnerships.

Most businesses own the space in which they operate, but 10 respondents indicated that they either rent or sublet their work area. There is no standard lease period among those who indicated that they rent their spaces.

Despite the outside perspective from respondents that businesses are growing, only six business owners indicated that they intended to expand within the next three years. This is likely linked to the fact that 63 percent of business owners reported that their gross revenue decreased during 2020.

Some of the major issues faced by business owners in Chambers County include:

- Financial challenges
- Credit restrictions
- Lack of business/patronage
- Competition
- Fluctuating economy
- Cost increases
- Space limitations

Business Support Organizations

Only 43 percent of respondents indicated that they belong to a Chamber of Commerce or similar organization.

When asked what concerns they have regarding joining an organization like a Chamber, respondents indicated that they had a hard time leveraging the cost versus benefit, effectiveness of their investment in the organization and even concerns regarding favoritism in promotion of businesses.

When asked what they hope to gain from joining a business association answers included:

- Expanded customer base
- Marketing support
- Business contacts
- Fellowship; learning about other businesses so that they can forward customers to them
- Support
- Networking

Works Cited

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