

# Fairfield Bay

# 2035

**A Strategic Vision for our Community**

***Community-wide Survey and Research Report***

Prepared by:

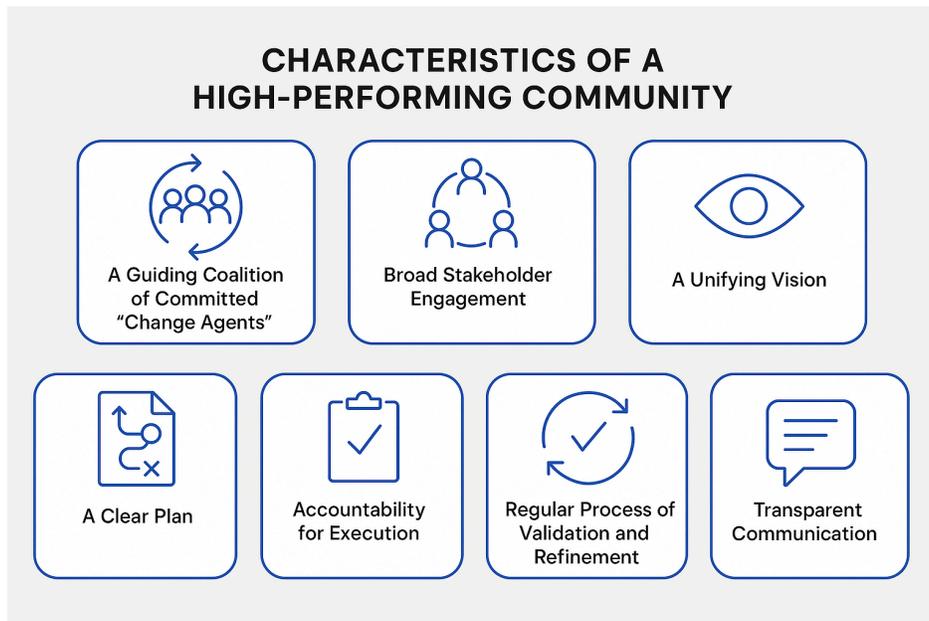
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# Executive Summary

*Fairfield Bay 2035: A Vision for Our Future* is a strategic planning initiative designed to guide the city's transformation into a thriving and future-ready community over the next decade. Anchored by a deep commitment to broad community engagement, data-informed decision-making, and collaborative and unified leadership, the desire is that the resulting plan represents the collective voice and aspirations of our citizens, coupled with strong financial stewardship of our assets. The entire process is designed to answer three big questions.



In pursuit of these objectives, it is critical that we emulate the characteristics of high performing communities and that we adopt and diligently employ a structured process and timeline to drive the plan development.



To that end, the following describes the process and phases of the *Fairfield Bay 2035* planning initiative.

- **Phase 1: Formation of the Fairfield Bay 2035 Steering Committee, Planning Process, and Public Announcement. (March 28 - May 6<sup>th</sup>)**
  - **Phase 2: Community Engagement and Data Collection (May 6<sup>th</sup> - June 16<sup>th</sup>)**
  - **Phase 3: Data Analysis and Priority Identification (June 17<sup>th</sup> - July 9<sup>th</sup>)**
  - **Phase 4: Strategic Visioning and Plan Development (July 10<sup>th</sup> - July 31<sup>st</sup>)**
  - **Phase 5: Implementation and Progress Monitoring (August 1<sup>st</sup> - 2035)**
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## Research Summary

Over the past 25 years, Fairfield Bay's population has declined approximately 10% from 2,460 in 2000 to about 2,204 (est.) in 2025, yet most residents remain proud, hopeful, and eager for progress.

Extensive community input was gathered through a community-wide survey (n=381 respondents), multiple public forums, and individual interviews and conversations via email, telephone, and face-to-face meetings (n=101 individuals). Candid community feedback—expressing both *optimism* and *skepticism*—helped shape the planning process into a transparent, inclusive initiative.

### Key Findings:

- Declining tourism and population highlight the urgency for bold action.
- Community survey (381 respondents), public forums, and interviews (101 conversations) surfaced consistent priorities: Governance Reform, Economic Revitalization, Infrastructure Improvements, Healthcare Access, Expanded Amenities, and Year-round Activities.
- Benchmarking of similar communities demonstrates how leveraging natural assets for tourism, fostering cultural events, and attracting active retirees and remote workers can drive growth.

### Strategic Insights:

- Reaching an “effective population” of 3,000+ is critical for sustaining essential services and small businesses.
- Five focus pillars emerged: Quality of Place, Sustainable Infrastructure, Resident Recruitment & Retention, Tourism & Year-Round Visitor Growth, and Civic Engagement.
- The intention behind the resulting Strategic Plan is that it be designed as a living document, to be reviewed annually, refined continuously, and built on community-wide collaboration.

## Top Recommended Key Actions:

1. Build transparent governance structures and consistent communication channels.
2. Modernize city codes, enforce property standards, and launch beautification efforts.
3. Develop coordinated marketing campaigns targeting active retirees, remote workers, and tourists.
4. Invest in infrastructure—especially the sewer system, streets/roads, improved city buildings, and broadband.
5. Engage residents through volunteer hubs and regular progress reporting.

The 2035 Strategic Planning Process must harness both the *optimism* **and** *skepticism* to address the challenges of an aging population, seasonal residency patterns, infrastructure needs, and limited economic diversification. Through shared leadership, clear priorities, and community energy, Fairfield Bay can ensure a vibrant, resilient future that honors its past while creating new opportunities for generations to come. The details in this Research Report are organized into 6 major sections:

1. Population Trends
2. Tourist/Visitor Trends
3. Increasing Effective Population
4. Survey Research & Public Engagement
5. Benchmarking Research
6. Community Vision & Strategic Pillars

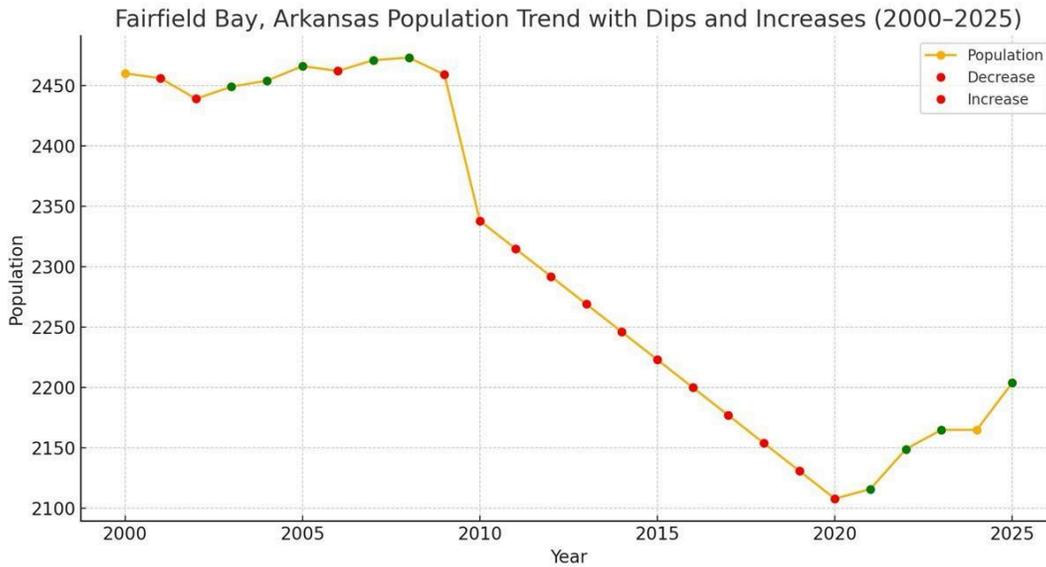
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## Population Trends

As previously mentioned, the population trend of Fairfield Bay has fluctuated, but has been predominantly downward over the past 25 years, declining 9.6% from 2000 to the present. However, there have been some bright spots as well. Trends over the past five years have been predominantly up and to the right. While this spurs optimism, it also serves as a challenge to community leaders to not only continue, but to find ways to escalate this positive momentum.

## Trend Summary

- **2000 – 2010:** Decline of ~5% (2,460 – 2,388). The majority of that decline (4.92%) came in a single one-year period (2009 – 2010)
- **2010 – 2020:** A steady further decline of ~9.9% (2,338 – 2,108)
- **2020 – 2023:** Modest rebound, gaining ~57 residents (+2.7%), reaching 2,165
- **2025 Projection:** foresees continued, but slow growth (~2,204 estimated).



### Detailed Population Data

Year	Population	AGR %	Year	Population	AGR %
2000	2460	0	2013	2269	-1.0
2001	2456	-0.16	2014	2246	-1.01
2002	2439	-0.69	2015	2223	-1.02
2003	2449	+0.41	2016	2200	-1.03
2004	2454	+0.2	2017	2177	-1.05
2005	2466	+0.49	2018	2154	-1.06
2006	2462	-0.16	2019	2131	-1.07
2007	2471	+0.37	2020	2108	-1.08
2008	2473	+0.08	2021	2116	+0.38
2009	2459	-0.57	2022	2149	+1.56
2010	2338	-4.92	2023	2165	+0.75
2011	2315	-0.98	2024	2165	0
2012	2292	-0.99	2025	2204 (est.)	+1.8

Sources for this information located in Appendix A.

### Tourist/Visitor Trends

We received the year-over-year occupancy data from Wyndham for the years 2021-2024. The occupancy rates included Check-ins, Estimated Guest counts, and the number of Room Nights. Most of these metrics appear to be in a steady decline. After reviewing and exploring these trends with Mr. Reedy of Wyndham, the most alarming trend is the decline in the number of

room nights, meaning guests are not staying as long as in years past. Mr. Reedy explained that many guests, who were originally booked for four (4) or more nights, are leaving early.

## Trend Summary

### Check-ins

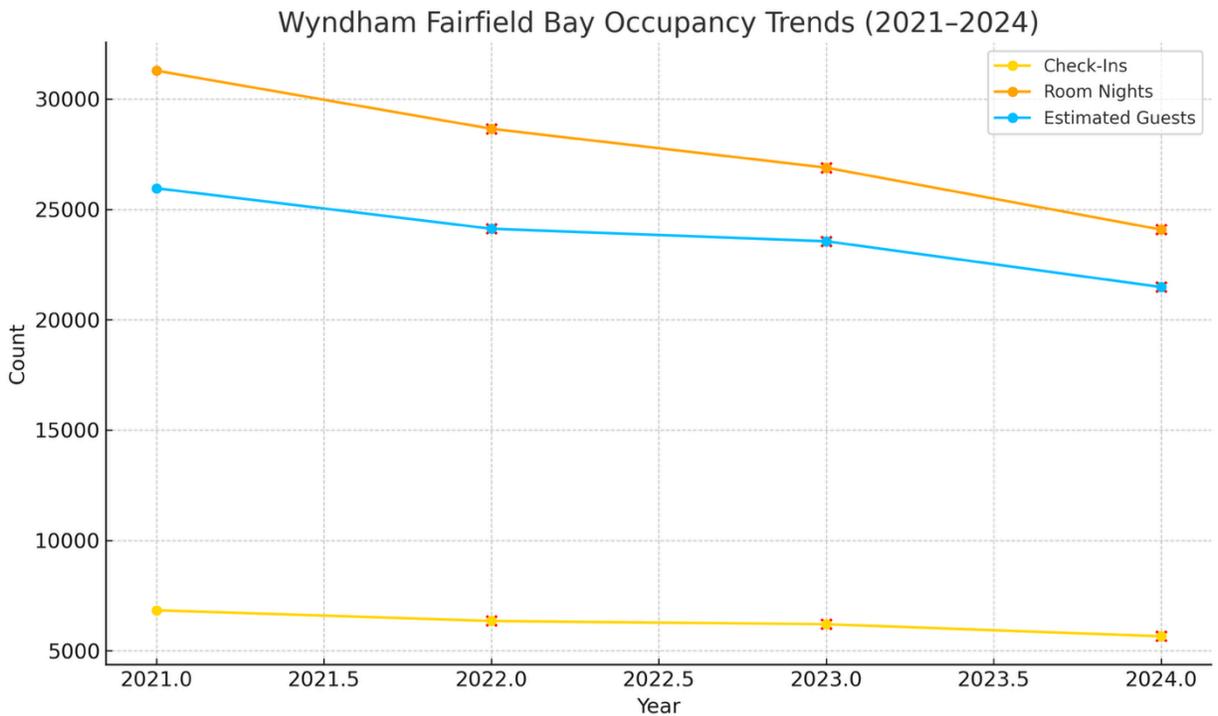
- Check-ins have declined steadily over 4 years, with an overall 17.2% drop.
- The data reflect fewer groups/families visiting Fairfield Bay through Wyndham.

### Estimated Guests

- The number of guests dropped in parallel with check-ins, again down 17.2%.
- This indicates that the average group size remained fairly stable for the period.

### Room Nights

- Room nights fell by 23% for the same period, the steepest decline among all metrics.
- This implies shorter stays, fewer room bookings, or lower occupancy rates.



## Detailed Tourism/Visitor Data

Year	Check-ins	Room Nights	Guests (est.)
2021	6,831	31,286	25,958
2022	6,348	28,654	24,122
2023	6,199	26,892	23,556
2024	5,653	24,084	21,481
% Change	-17.2	-23.0	-17.2

## Strategic Takeaways

- All three metrics have consistently declined over the 4-year span.
  - The number of check-ins is dropping, on average approximately 7-9% per year.
  - **More alarming**, is the decline in the number of room nights, meaning guests are not staying as long as in years past. Wyndham leadership reports that many guests, who were originally booked for four (4) or more nights, leave early due to lack of quality local recreational and/or social amenities.
  - A continued decline in Wyndham's tourism contribution to Fairfield Bay will impact:
    - Sales tax and hospitality revenue
    - Local jobs and tourism-based business survival
  - **Findings suggest a need for Community + Wyndham collaboration to:**
    - **Reverse decline through marketing or promotional offers**
    - **Package lodging with local experiences to drive longer stays**
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## Increasing the Effective Population

Many rural development experts now use effective population as a better metric than raw census numbers. This is especially useful for:

- Tourism-based communities like Fairfield Bay
- Resort towns with part-time residents
- Places attracting remote workers or digital nomads'

The minimum effective population needed to make a small, rural community economically viable depends on multiple factors—including geography, infrastructure, cost of living, and desired quality of life—but economic development research and rural planning experience suggest a few practical benchmarks.

While there is no single universally accepted “minimum effective population” standard, the 2,500–3,000 threshold is supported by multiple sources in rural development literature, USDA research, planning best practices, and practical experience from rural economic development experts.

This is generally considered the lowest threshold where a rural community can begin to sustain:

- A grocery store or general store with adequate foot traffic
- A few full-service restaurants or cafes
- Healthcare access, such as a primary care clinic or pharmacy
- A viable school district
- Basic trades (plumbers, electricians, contractors)
- Community assets like a library, parks, and civic groups

Communities below this threshold typically struggle to maintain even one or two of these pillars without outside subsidies or volunteers.

## What constitutes an “Effective (Service) Population?”

Effective Population = Permanent Residents + (Visitors × Average Stay / 365)

This concept matters because visitors who stay overnight contribute economically much like residents.

For example (with annual visitors having a 3-night average length of stay):

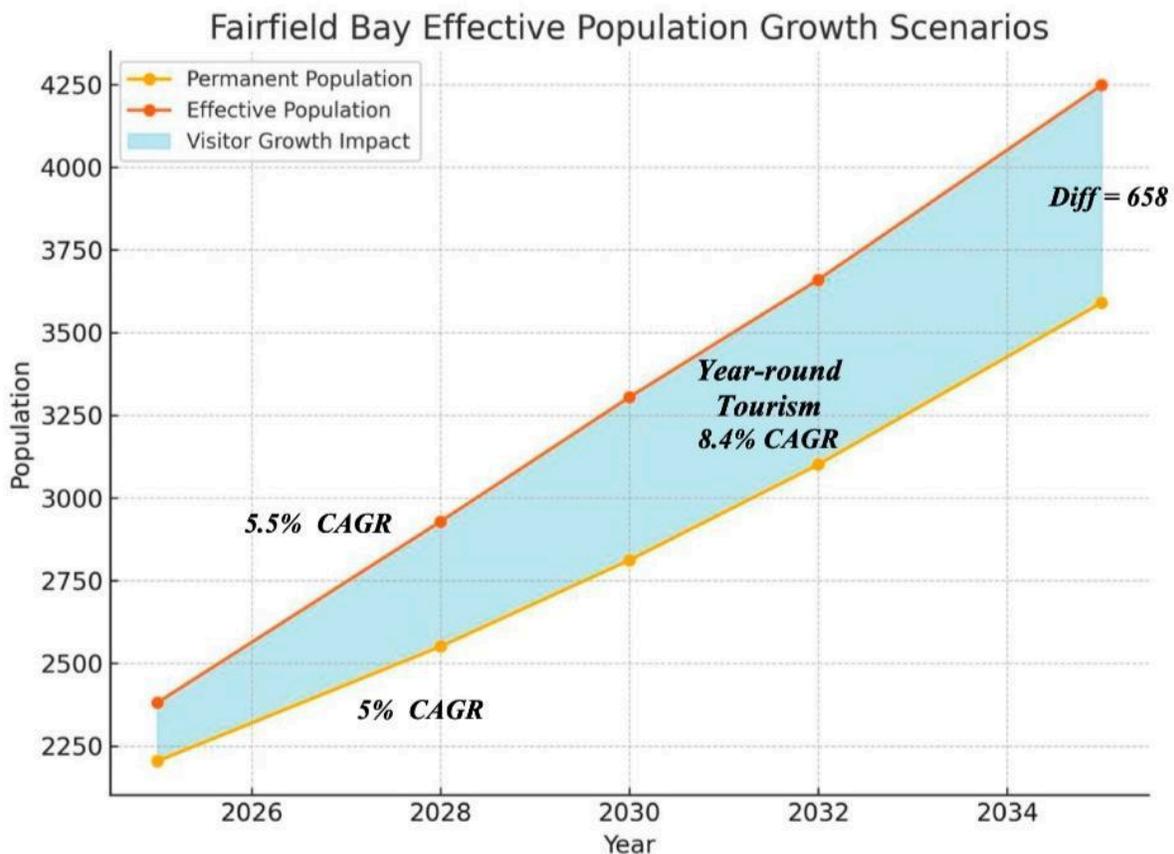
- A town with 2,200 residents and 25,000 annual overnight visitors = 2,406 effective population
- A town with 2,200 residents and 50,000 annual overnight visitors = 2,610 effective population

## Why is 3,000 a Critical Mass?

Once a rural community approaches or surpasses 3,000 effective population, it can typically:

- Support multiple small businesses
- Justify investment in fiber/broadband, housing, and tourism infrastructure
- Offer a minimum level of services that help retain families, retirees, and others
- Begin to attract remote workers or entrepreneurs

## Growth Scenarios for Fairfield Bay



Reviewing the data below, with a 5% compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) in permanent population only, it would take ten years for Fairfield Bay to reach the 3,500 population threshold. However, by increasing the number of annual visitors, that threshold in *effective population* could be achieved in less than five years.

Years	Permanent Population (5% CAGR)	Peak Season Visitors: Jun-Aug (6.4% CAGR)	Off-peak Season Visitor: (Sep-May) (10.4% CAGR)	Effective Population (5.5% CAGR)
2025	2,204	21,500	*	2,381
2028	2,551	26,000	20,000	2,929
2030	2,812	33,000	30,000	3,305
2032	3,101	34,000	34,000	3,660
2035	3,590	40,000	40,000	4,248

Sources for the Effective Population information is located in Appendix A.

## Survey Research & Public Engagement

As mentioned, the foundation of the *Fairfield Bay 2035* planning process was extensive community input. The research efforts included:

- Community-Wide Resident Survey:** A comprehensive online survey was distributed to full-time and part-time residents, yielding 381 responses. The survey included both scalar (quantitative, defined-response) and open response, opinion-based (qualitative) questions. Question topics included economic development, infrastructure, amenities, services, environmental issues, future aspirations, and recommended changes. The survey was distributed via social media, QR Codes posted in local businesses and Club amenity locations, and direct outreach via email and text message. Survey anonymity helped encourage candid participation.
- Public Forums & Community Conversations:** The City hosted three public engagement events—two virtual town halls and one in-person forum—designed to provide deeper, facilitated dialogue. In addition, approximately 100 residents and stakeholders were engaged through direct communication channels such as email feedback, phone conversations, and face-to-face discussions.
- Stakeholder Engagement:** Structured outreach was conducted with key stakeholders, including business owners, retirees, second homeowners, civic leaders, and elected officials.

## Survey Participation Rates & Demographics

Participant Type	Percent
Full-time Resident	69.02%
Part-time Resident	21.24%
Local Business Owner	7.34%
Community Leader (Elected Official, Clergy, etc.)	4.62%
Frequent Visitor	6.25%
Other	8.42%

Age Range	Percent
Age 65 or Older	48.10%
Age 45-65	38.86%
Age 25-44	9.51%
Under Age 25	0.27%
Rather not Say	3.26%

Fairfield Bay Tenure	Percent
More than 10 Years	45.50%
6-10 Years	16.89%
1-5 Years	33.79%
Less than 1 Year	3.81%

## Statistical Significance and Generalizability of Survey

**Validity of the Instrument** - Refers to whether the survey accurately measures what it intends to measure. The inclusion of both defined-response and open-ended questions enhances content validity and helps mitigate instrument bias. Broad distribution across multiple communication channels reduces the risk of rater bias and self-selection bias.

**Reliability of the Responses** - Refers to the consistency of results if the survey were repeated. With 381 responses from an estimated population of 2,204, the survey achieves a 95% confidence level with a  $\pm 4.57\%$  margin of error, indicating strong reliability.

**Generalizability of the Results** - When both validity and reliability are present, the survey findings can be reasonably assumed to reflect the views of the broader community population. Taken together, the survey data, public forum insights, and individual stakeholder feedback provide a triangulated and highly generalizable view of the community's priorities, challenges, and aspirations.

## Sentiment Analysis Summary

Sentiment Analysis (also called opinion mining) is a method used in qualitative research, data science, and natural language processing to determine the emotional tone behind a body of text. The goal is to identify whether the expressed opinion in a piece of writing is:

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral
- ... or somewhere on a spectrum between those.

In community and economic development, sentiment analysis helps leaders and planners understand *how people feel*—not just what they think—about specific topics, policies, or priorities.

## Overall Survey Sentiment

The general tone of the community’s feedback demonstrates a balanced yet impassioned sentiment, shaped by a mix of frustration with current governance structures, perceived lack of transparency, hope for economic revitalization, and love for and pride in the natural beauty and potential of Fairfield Bay. Most feedback sits between constructive criticism and hopeful ambition, with a small but intense degree of overt hostility or disengagement.

- **Positive Sentiment (~45%):** Respondents express pride in Fairfield Bay’s setting, optimism about its future, and enthusiasm for expanding tourism, improving infrastructure, and attracting new residents and businesses. Many comments suggested “tremendous potential” and reflected a belief that “we can do better together.”
- **Neutral/Constructive Sentiment (~40%):** A substantial portion of responses were practical or diagnostic in tone—focused on specific issues (roads, escalating dues, vacant businesses) or suggestions (improve leadership transparency and collaboration, bring in more healthcare). These weren’t overtly positive or negative, but rather **solution-seeking**.
- **Negative Sentiment (~15%):** A minority of comments voiced strong criticism—often directed at governance (e.g., “Club is a shadow government,” unaccountable leadership, lack of transparency). Some language was emotionally charged but often coupled with positive and constructive suggestions for improvement.

## Common Emotional Themes

- **Hope and Vision** for revitalization, community pride, and innovation.
- **Frustration and Fatigue** with historical leadership challenges and “infighting.”
- **Desire for Inclusion** in decision-making, transparency, and communication.
- **Commitment to Growth** through tourism, family-friendliness, and infrastructure.

## Engagement & Willingness to Participate

- **Volunteerism Indicator:** Roughly 35% (n=111) of the 381 respondents answered “Yes” when asked if they were willing to volunteer to help move Fairfield Bay forward.
- **Committed Contacts:** Almost 25% (n=91) of total respondents voluntarily provided their name, contact info, and specific areas of interest for engagement, such as marketing and events/festivals, infrastructure, landscaping, and “anywhere I am needed.”

Category	Volunteers
Small Business & Economic Development	21
Marketing & Public Relations	21
General Volunteer / Flexible / Anywhere I’m Needed	18
Beautification & Cleanup	17
Tourism & Hospitality	15
Infrastructure & Planning	15

Parks & Recreation	14
Festivals & Events	13
Arts & Culture	12
Finance & Governance	7
Public Safety	7
Healthcare & Seniors	6
Animal Services	4
Community Engagement	4
Education & Library	2
<i>Uncategorized or Other Comments</i>	93

## Interpretation

This high level of engagement—especially among a rural or retirement-heavy population—is a clear sign of readiness for change and active participation. It implies that community-based initiatives have strong potential to gain traction if they are well-organized and transparent.

- Sentiment is largely **constructive and hopeful**, despite underlying frustration.
- Top concerns are governance, economic development, and infrastructure—but many respondents pair those concerns with a **willingness to help**.
- The community displays **latent energy and capacity**, evidenced by the 35% volunteer willingness and 25% actual engagement submissions.
- *Assuming the 25% number is generalized to the broader population, if volunteer opportunities are well-organized and impactful, there could be a few hundred volunteers ready to move Fairfield Bay forward.*

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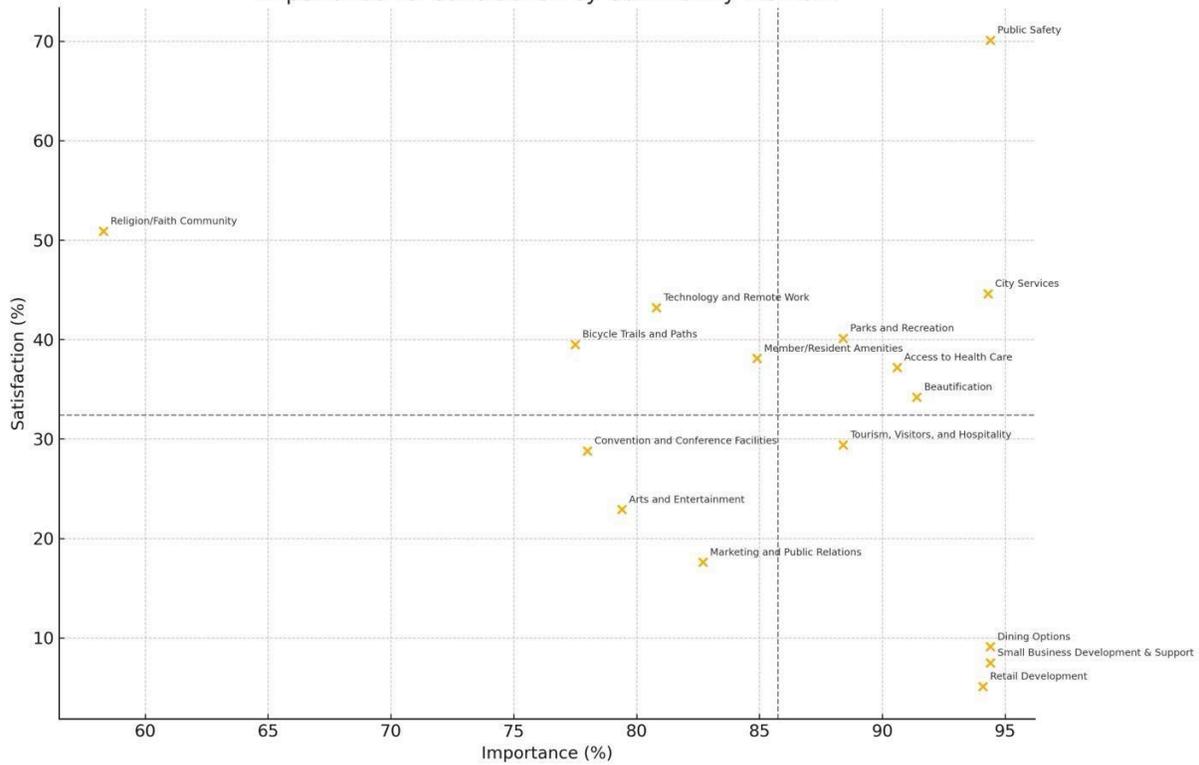
## Survey Research Results

### ***Defined Response Survey Questions***

The survey contained several defined-response (quantitative) questions. Analysis of these defined-response questions is presented in the following table.

***How important is each factor and how satisfied are you with it?***

Importance vs. Satisfaction by Community Element



Element	Score	Importance	Satisfaction
Small Business Development & Support (1)	4.67	94.4%	7.5%
Dining Options (2)	4.62	94.4%	9.1%
Public Safety (Police, Fire, EMS)	4.70	94.4%	70.1%
City Services	4.66	94.3%	44.6%
Retail Development (2)	4.56	94.1%	5.1%
Beautification	4.46	91.4%	34.2%
Access to Health Care	4.49	90.6%	37.2%
Tourism, Visitors, and Hospitality (3)	4.49	88.4%	29.4%
Parks and Recreation	4.35	88.4%	40.1%
Member/Resident Amenities	4.32	84.9%	38.1%
Marketing and Public Relations (5)	4.28	82.7%	17.6%
Technology and Remote Work	4.24	80.8%	43.2%
Arts and Entertainment (4)	4.11	79.4%	22.9%
Convention and Conference Facilities (6)	4.13	78.0%	28.8%
Bicycle Trails and Paths	3.99	77.5%	39.5%
Religion/Faith Community	3.74	58.3%	50.9%

Community Priorities	High Priority	Medium Priority	Lower Priority
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**Note:** The (1-6) represents the collective ranking of the six common Economic Development activities by survey respondents.

## How would you rate the overall quality of life in Fairfield Bay?

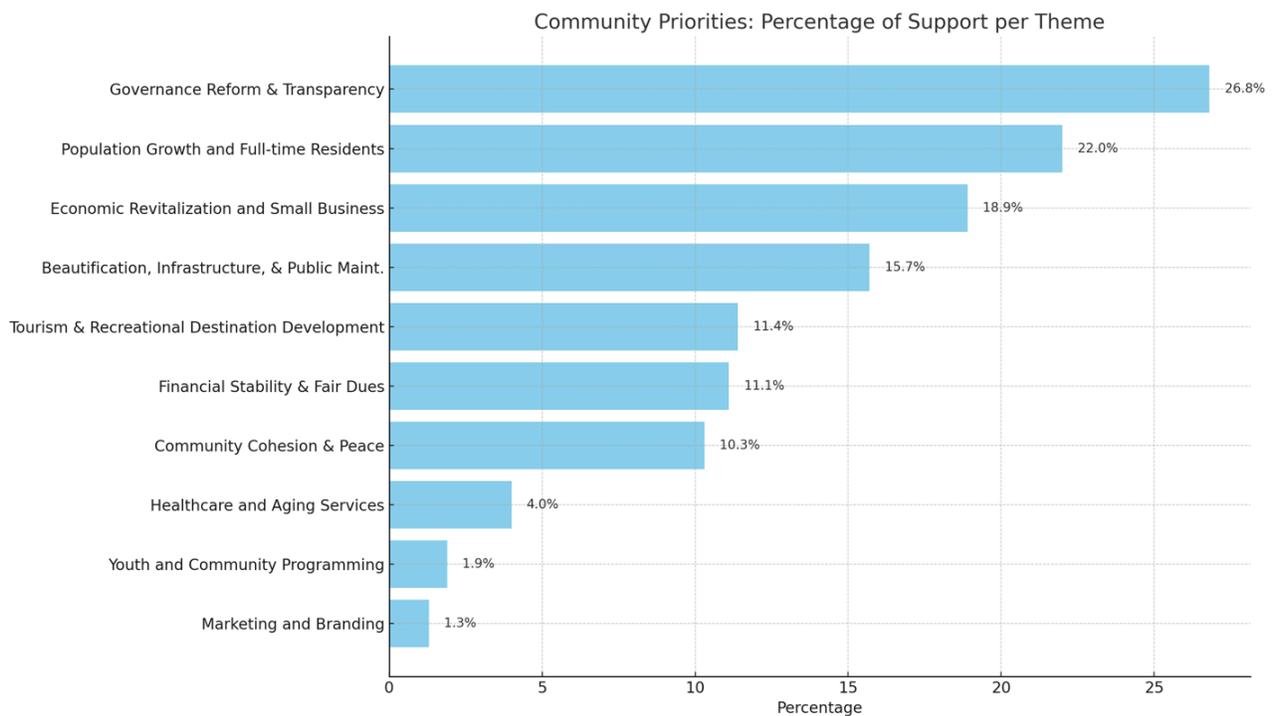
**Average Score** = 3.17 (out of 5.00) with only 44.2% giving it a “favorable” rating.

(8.6% = Excellent \* 35.6% = Good \* 23.6% = Fair \* 29.2% = Needs Improvement \* 3.0% = Poor)

## Open Response Survey Questions

The Survey also included two open-response, opinion-based (qualitative) questions. Analysis of the open-response, opinion-based questions is presented below.

### What is your personal vision for FFB and what “one change” would be most beneficial?



Rank	Priority	Percentage	Extrapolated
1	Governance Reform & Transparency	26.8%	591
2	Population Growth and Full-time Residents	22.0%	485
3	Economic Revitalization and Small Business	18.9%	417
4	Beautification, Infrastructure, & Public Maintenance	15.7%	346
5	Tourism & Recreational Destination Development	11.4%	251
6	Financial Stability & Fair Dues	11.1%	245
7	Community Cohesion & Peace	10.3%	227
8	Healthcare and Aging Services	4.0%	88
9	Youth and Community Programming	1.9%	42
10	Marketing and Branding	1.3%	29

**Note:** Total slightly exceeds 100% due to responses being coded into multiple themes.

## 1. Governance Reform & Transparency (~26.8% of responses)

**Summary:** This was the most dominant and emotionally charged theme. A large segment of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current state and called for greater communication, greater transparency in financial decisions and other matters, possible consolidation of leadership with the Club and City, and an end to perceived self-dealing, secrecy, and banning of members from communications channels, meetings, etc.

### Illustrative Comments:

- "Provide absolute transparency in club spending."
- "Merge the City and the Community Club."
- "Transparency from the Club and City."
- "We need a Community Club that represents the people."
- "Ending the childish sibling rivalry between the 'Club' and the City."

## 2. Population Growth & Full-time Residents (~22.0% of responses)

**Summary:** Many envision Fairfield Bay as a family-friendly community with more growth in full-time residents needed. The desire is to create a place not just for retirees, but for younger families, remote workers, and entrepreneurs, as well as for frequent visitors and tourists. Some respondents suggested that we adopt the perspective that, rather than being a Retirement Community & Resort, we brand ourselves as a **"Residential and Resort Community."** This branding is similar to Innsbrook, Missouri ([Wikipedia Info](#)) a resort and residential community located west of St. Louis and southeast of Columbia, Missouri ([www.Innsbrook-Resort.com](http://www.Innsbrook-Resort.com)).

If heavily promoted in this manner, it could make our community more appealing to retirees, families, remote workers, etc.

### Illustrative Comments:

- "Attracting more full-time residents."
- "Make Fairfield Bay more family-friendly."
- "Bring in younger residents that can work remotely."
- "We plan to stay and hope for the best."

## 3. Economic Revitalization & Small Business (~18.9% of responses)

**Summary:** Residents frequently called for the revitalization of the town center, more local businesses (especially dining and retail), and support for entrepreneurs. Respondents view a thriving small business ecosystem as essential for long-term sustainability and vibrancy.

### Illustrative Comments:

- "More restaurants and stores in town square, paint the buildings, add murals, add landscaping."
- "Support small businesses to increase tax revenue and benefit tourism."
- "Fill the empty buildings."
- "Create an economic development council."

#### **4. Beautification, Infrastructure & Public Maintenance (~15.7% of responses)**

**Summary:** Numerous responses emphasized improving roads, sewers, trails, signage, and beautification/enhancing aesthetics of public spaces. This theme reflects both pride in place and concern over first impressions for residents and visitors.

##### **Illustrative Comments:**

- "Improve the quality of our infrastructure – roads and sewers."
- "Beautify store fronts, build a farmers market, widen sidewalks."
- "Clean it up and make it desirable."
- "Fix the roads and drainage."
- "Beautify the main entrance and town center."

#### **5. Tourism & Recreational Destination Development (~11.4% of responses)**

**Summary:** Respondents want Fairfield Bay to reclaim or enhance its reputation as a top-tier vacation and recreation destination. Tourism was seen as a catalyst for revitalization through better lake amenities and promotional events. Suggested strategies include festivals, marina amenities, lake access improvements, and outdoor adventure infrastructure like biking and hiking trails.

##### **Illustrative Comments:**

- "Become the resort destination of choice on Greers Ferry Lake and in North Central Arkansas."
- "A thriving resort town full of restaurants, retail, outdoor activities, festivals."
- "More winter activities and UTV promotional events."
- "Become a destination for mountain-biking, similar to NWA."

#### **6. Financial Sustainability & Fair Dues (~11.1% of responses)**

**Summary:** Many residents are concerned about affordability, particularly the level and transparency of dues. Several respondents noted they or others may be forced to move away if the cost of living continues to increase.

##### **Illustrative Comments:**

- "Lower HOA dues."
- "Too many fees for too few amenities."
- "Reduce or eliminate community club dues."

#### **7. Community Cohesion & Peace (~10.3% of responses)**

**Summary:** A small group focused on ending local conflict and promoting unity and cooperation. Some respondents focused on reducing social and political division. They expressed a desire for cooperation, peace, and a return to civility among neighbors and leaders.

##### **Illustrative Comments:**

- "Stop the bickering, bring back a sense of community."

- “More harmony, less public negativity.”
- “I want a peaceful, united community.”
- “Stop the infighting in local government.”
- “Focus on peace and unity.”

## 8. Healthcare Access & Senior Services (~5% of responses)

**Summary:** A smaller but important group mentioned the need for better healthcare, senior-friendly services, and aging-in-place infrastructure. This reflects the aging demographic of many residents.

### Illustrative Comments:

- “Access to medical and dental services.”
- “Add healthcare services locally.”
- “More ambulance services, senior programs.”
- “Health forward – grow organic food and community wellness programs.”

## 9. Community Programming (~3% of responses)

**Summary:** There were calls to develop more activities and infrastructure for families and youth. A few residents see remote work as a growth strategy, suggesting improvements in broadband infrastructure and technology access as a way to attract younger residents.

### Illustrative Comments:

- “Attract remote workers.”
- “Discounts on high-speed internet to attract tech-savvy residents.”
- “Improve connectivity for remote work.”

## 10. Branding, Promotion & Public Relations (~3% of responses)

**Summary:** A small but strategic subset called for professional marketing and destination branding to elevate Fairfield Bay’s image, differentiate it from competitors, and drive tourism.

### Illustrative Comments:

- “Rebrand Fairfield Bay as a healthy, vibrant lake town.”
- “Invest in a marketing campaign beyond Facebook.”

## Strategic Insights

The most critical takeaway from the open-ended responses is the urgency around governance reform and transparency. Residents want a clear, unified, and trustworthy leadership structure, along with tangible quality-of-life improvements like business revitalization and infrastructure upgrades, while keeping club dues as reasonable as possible.

The responses also indicate a community that cares deeply and has a strong desire to improve, but is grappling with internal division. As such, the top priorities for Fairfield Bay residents seem to be:

- Reforming governance and transparency
- Attracting new residents and businesses of all kinds
- Becoming a high-quality year-round destination

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## Benchmarking Research

An effort was made to benchmark numerous communities around the state and country that might have some similarities to Fairfield Bay and/or might have specific things we can learn about how to better position our community for the future. Of course, none of these communities are exactly like Fairfield Bay, but each might have a nugget or two we could use or apply as we plan for Fairfield Bay's future. A summary of that benchmarking information on each referenced community is provided below:

### Benchmark Community Information

#### 1. Mountain Home, Arkansas

- Population: 12,825 (2020 Census)
- Website: [City of Mountain Home](#)

##### Growth Strategies:

- Tourism Development: Leveraged proximity to Norfolk and Bull Shoals Lakes, and the White and North Fork Rivers, making it a premier freshwater fishing destination.
- Economic Diversification: Hosts over 30 manufacturers employing more than 4,500 workers, drawing from a regional population of over 250,000 within a 55-mile radius.
- Downtown Revitalization: Implemented a downtown development program to boost tourism and support small businesses.

#### 2. Hot Springs Village, Arkansas

- Population: 15,861 (2020 Census)
- Website: [Hot Springs Village](#)

##### Growth Strategies:

- Master-Planned Community: Developed as a gated community with extensive amenities, attracting retirees and remote workers.
- Economic Impact: Contributed approximately \$397 million annually to the state's economy.

- Population Growth: Experienced a 15.4% population increase from 2010 to 2020, outpacing state and national averages.

### 3. Eureka Springs, Arkansas

- Population: 2,269 (2023)
- Website: [City of Eureka Springs](#)

#### Growth Strategies:

- Historic Preservation: Maintained Victorian architecture and natural springs, creating a unique tourist attraction.
- Tourism Economy: Hosts over 750,000 visitors annually, supporting more than 2,600 jobs in Carroll County.
- Cultural Events: Offers a variety of festivals and arts events, enhancing its appeal as a cultural destination.

### 4. Bella Vista, Arkansas

- Population: 30,808 (2020 Census); estimated 32,368 (2023)
- Website: [City of Bella Vista](#)

#### Growth Strategies:

- Retirement and Resort Community: Originally developed as a retirement community, now attracting a diverse population.
- Population Growth: Experienced a 71% increase between 2000 and 2010, with projections exceeding 42,000 by 2030.
- Economic Integration: Part of the rapidly growing Northwest Arkansas region, benefiting from regional economic development.

### 5. Heber Springs, Arkansas

- Population: 7,332 (2025 estimate)
- Website: [City of Heber Springs](#)

#### Growth Strategies:

- Natural Attractions: Capitalized on Greers Ferry Lake and Sugarloaf Mountain to promote outdoor recreation and tourism.
- Recognition: Named a 2024 Trendsetter City by Arkansas Business for innovative community development.
- Quality of Life: Offers a high quality of life with amenities that attract both retirees and families.

## 6. Fredericksburg, Texas

- Population: 11,889 (2025 estimate)
- Website: [City of Fredericksburg](#)

### Growth Strategies:

- Heritage Tourism: Capitalized on its German roots with historic architecture, cuisine, and festivals.
- Wine Industry Expansion: Developed over 75 wineries, making it a premier wine destination in Texas.
- Luxury Developments: Attracted high-end projects like the upcoming Waldorf Astoria resort, enhancing its appeal to affluent tourists.
- Economic Diversification: Balanced tourism with sectors like agriculture and specialty food production.

## 7. Sedona, Arizona

- Population: 9,903 (2025 estimate)
- Website: [City of Sedona](#)

### Growth Strategies:

- Spiritual and Wellness Tourism: Promoted its red rock formations and vortex sites, attracting wellness seekers.
- Sustainable Tourism Plan: Implemented initiatives to manage tourism's impact on the environment and community.
- Economic Impact: Tourism supports over 10,000 jobs and contributes significantly to the local economy.

## 8. Roswell, New Mexico

- Population: 46,229 (2025 estimate)
- Website: [City of Roswell](#)

### Growth Strategies:

- Alien and UFO Tourism: Leveraged the 1947 UFO incident to create attractions like the International UFO Museum.
- Cultural Events: Hosts the annual UFO Festival, drawing visitors worldwide.
- Economic Development: Focused on diversifying the economy with initiatives in aerospace and education.

## 9. Marfa, Texas

- Population: 1,600 (2025 estimate)
- Website: [City of Marfa](#)

**Growth Strategies:**

- Artistic Hub: Transformed into a contemporary art destination with institutions like The Chinati Foundation.
- Cultural Tourism: Attracts visitors with unique installations like the Prada Marfa and events like the Marfa Lights Festival.

**10. Stowe, Vermont**

- Population: 5,223 (2020 Census)
- Website: [Town of Stowe](#)

**Growth Strategies:**

- Year-Round Tourism: Expanded from a winter ski destination to a four-season resort town.
- Outdoor Recreation: Invested in trails, events, and facilities to attract visitors beyond the ski season.
- Economic Development: Focused on sustainable tourism and community vibrancy through initiatives like the Stowe Vibrancy program.

*Sources for the Community Benchmarking information is located in Appendix A.*

## Benchmarking Insights

Communities like Mountain Home, Eureka Springs, and Fredericksburg show the power of leveraging natural assets, unique culture, and targeted tourism to drive growth. Others, like Bella Vista and Hot Springs Village, illustrate how combining retiree attraction with amenity development spurs sustained population and economic expansion.

For Fairfield Bay, these insights suggest focusing on:

- boosting year-round tourism with signature events and outdoor recreation;
- attracting remote workers and active retirees through targeted marketing and improved amenities;
- revitalizing the town center with small business support and aesthetic enhancements.

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## Community Vision and Strategic Pillars

A vision statement outlines a community's aspirations for the future, painting a picture of what it hopes to achieve or become. All other elements of a strategic plan are developed to bring about that desired future state.

## Key Characteristics of Vision Statement:

- **Future-oriented:** It describes what the community aspires to be in the future, not what it is doing now within a very specific timeframe (an actual “date” in 3 years, 5 years, etc.).
- **Inspirational and aspirational:** It can be used to motivate residents, employees, and other stakeholders by painting a compelling picture of the future.
- **Clear and concise:** It is easy to understand and remember, often expressed in a single, impactful sentence.
- **Ambitious:** It sets high goals, pushing the community to strive for excellence.

## Fairfield Bay 2035 Vision Statement (**Proposed DRAFT**)

***By 2035, Fairfield Bay will be a premier residential and resort community, known for its natural beauty, unmatched quality of life, and welcoming spirit that attracts new residents, visitors, and entrepreneurs alike.***

For a rural community like Fairfield Bay—with a strong recreational/tourism base, a high percentage of retirees, and a desire to attract both full-time residents and visitors—the key to driving sustained population growth and economic viability (and thus realizing the above Vision) lies in strategically focusing on five interrelated pillars:

- **Quality of Place:** The overall attractiveness, livability, and character of Fairfield Bay — including aesthetics, amenities, public spaces, arts, culture, and the general sense of pride and identity that makes people want to live, visit, relocate, or invest.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure:** The foundational systems and physical assets — such as roads, sewer, water, signage, broadband, and community facilities — that support current needs while enabling future growth and adaptability.
- **Resident Recruitment & Retention:** Strategies and efforts aimed at attracting new full-time residents (especially families, active retirees, and remote workers) and ensuring current residents feel valued, supported, and motivated to stay long-term.
- **Tourism & Year-round Visitor Recruitment:** Efforts to grow seasonal and year-round visitation by promoting Fairfield Bay’s amenities, hosting events, developing partnerships for recreational packages, and positioning the community as a vibrant destination — thereby increasing the effective population and local revenue streams.
- **Civic Engagement & Volunteer Capacity:** Building and sustaining resident involvement in community improvement efforts, leadership roles, and volunteer initiatives — this is essential for fostering shared ownership, trust, and the capacity to deliver on the plan’s goals.

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### Pillar #1 – Quality of Place

**Aspiration:** *To make Fairfield Bay more livable, lovable, and investable for both residents and visitors.*

### **Key Focus Areas:**

- **Transparent Governance and Communication:** Take steps, as the combined leadership of Fairfield Bay, to address concerns and perceptions, to operate collaboratively, to communicate clearly, thereby reducing friction, and improving overall community spirit.
- **Beautification & Code Enforcement:** Improve curb appeal by addressing blight, unsightly signage, and junk vehicles.
- **Education Options:** Support area schools to provide high quality education options for families.
- **Outdoor Amenities:** Maintain and enhance trails, lakefront, golf courses, and public parks.
- **Arts & Culture:** Support local events, music, festivals, and the arts to increase community vitality.

**Why It Matters:** *"Sticky places" with charm, character, and community pride attract both visitors and new residents.*

### **Other Potential Ideas:**

#### **Establish Regular and Consistent Communication Process, Channels, and Cadence:**

Acknowledge that there are opportunities to do a better job of communicating and fostering trust among the community. Develop multiple channels of communication, a consistent communication process, and a regular cadence of communication to foster trust and transparency.

- **Importance:** A significant percentage of residents are not likely active Facebook users. In fact, approximately 88% of respondents are 45 or older, and over 48% are 65 or older. Data suggests that the active use of Facebook drops drastically as age increases. This would likely put active Facebook users at about 50-55% among the largest age group in Fairfield Bay and less than 70% among the second largest.
- **Key Actions:** Develop and document multiple channels of communication. Decide what needs to be communicated, the frequency of that communication, and establish a regular cadence of coordinated City & Club updates. Establish a joint-policy that all "official City or Club communications" will follow these channels, process & cadence.

**Revise, Update, and Enforce City Codes on Property Aesthetics:** Modernize and consistently enforce city codes regarding property maintenance, derelict buildings, overgrown lots, and inappropriate vehicle/RV storage.

- **Importance:** Improves curb appeal, increases property values, and creates a more welcoming atmosphere for potential residents and visitors.
- **Key Actions:** Engage legal counsel to update ordinances, educate residents on new standards, establish a code enforcement process, and apply consistent follow-up.

**Cultivate Beautification Through Community Pride Days:** Host monthly cleanup and flower planting days led by volunteers and garden clubs.

- **Importance:** Low-cost way to improve visual appeal and build community bonds.
- **Key Actions:** Promote via newsletter, offer simple incentives (T-shirts, recognition).

**Launch a Community Beautification Blitz:** Invest in landscaping, signage, trash removal, and facade improvements across key public and commercial areas.

- Importance: Enhances visual appeal and pride of place for residents and visitors.
- Key Actions: Launch public-private initiative, create a beautification plan, secure funding and volunteer support.

**Establish a Low-Cost Arts & Culture Walk:** Start volunteer-led effort to install murals, outdoor sculpture, and pop-up art in a central corridor using donated or repurposed space.

- Importance: Low-cost beautification project that fosters local pride and attracts visitors
- Key Actions: Identify corridors, partner with local artists, hold community paint days, apply for small arts grants.

**Launch a Community Co-Working Space:** Repurpose a vacant room in a city or club facility into a shared working space with Wi-Fi and basic furniture.

- Importance: Supports remote workers and digital entrepreneurs affordably.
- Key Actions: Secure location, add desks, promote via Chamber and online forums.

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## Pillar #2 – Sustainable Infrastructure

**Aspiration:** *To ensure the foundational systems are in place to support population growth and visitor capacity.*

### Key Focus Areas:

- **Water, Sewer, and Roads:** Maintain quality utilities and streetscapes.
- **Signage & Wayfinding:** Improve first impressions and visitor navigation.
- **Broadband Access:** Essential for remote workers, entrepreneurs, and digital nomads.
- **Community Facilities:** Upgrade libraries, co-working spaces, and community centers.

**Why It Matters:** *Without strong infrastructure, Quality of Place and economic development cannot scale effectively.*

### Other Potential Ideas:

**Build Income-Based Housing Units for Retirees:** Develop a small number of income-based senior living units that offer affordable, low-maintenance housing for retirees on fixed incomes.

- Importance: Addresses housing affordability and enables older residents to downsize without leaving the community.
- Key Actions: Partner with a nonprofit or public housing agency, apply for USDA rural housing grants, secure suitable land, and involve local contractors for cost-effective development.

## **Pillar #3 – Resident Recruitment and Retention**

**Aspiration:** *To grow the year-round resident base through strategic attraction and retention of new full-time residents and homeowners.*

### **Key Focus Areas:**

- **Remote Worker Campaigns:** Market Fairfield Bay as an ideal “work-from-anywhere” location.
- **Active Retiree Marketing:** Focus on affordability, safety, scenery, and healthcare access.
- **Entrepreneur Attraction:** Highlight low cost of doing business, local incentives, and high quality of life.

**Why It Matters:** *Permanent residents boost long-term economic stability and volunteerism.*

### **Other Potential Ideas:**

**Develop a Comprehensive, Unified Marketing Plan (City + Club + Chamber):** A unified marketing strategy targeting potential residents, businesses, tourists, conference planners, and remote workers could have a significant impact on the power of our messaging. Ensure the comprehensive plan extends beyond social media.

- Importance: Amplifies messaging, eliminates duplication, increases visibility.
- Key Actions: Consolidate platforms, develop a single, unified message, cross-promote events and businesses.

**Create a Remote Work/Digital Nomad Attraction Program:** Promote FFB’s fiber internet, natural amenities, and low cost of living to attract remote workers and digital nomads. Use testimonials from residents who work remotely to attract others, using highly targeted digital marketing.

- Importance: Attracts new full-time residents with income sources not dependent on local jobs, bringing economic diversity.
- Key Actions: Develop a relocation landing page, provide incentives, and create co-working space in underutilized buildings. Film resident stories on phones, share online, and build a referral-based relocation guide.

**Launch a Retiree & Second-Act Living Campaign:** Position FFB as a perfect 'second-act' lifestyle community for retirees who want to stay active.

- Importance: Taps into the national trend of active retirement with purpose.
- Key Actions: Develop testimonials, highlight volunteer opportunities, promote arts, nature, and affordability.

**Highlight Purpose-Driven Retirement:** Brand Fairfield Bay as a place to live with purpose—through volunteering, arts, and nature.

- Importance: Appeals to retirees seeking meaning and contribution in retirement.
- Key Actions: Promote stories in newsletters and magazines, host community orientation events.

**Start a Local Business Challenge:** Hold an annual contest with a small prize (e.g. \$1,000 grant, 6 months rent discount) to encourage new microbusinesses.

- Importance: Drives entrepreneurial interest and revitalizes vacant properties.
- Key Actions: Partner with landlords, local banks, and the city for funding and mentorship.

**Launch a Bay Business Accelerator:** Establish an accelerator program with mentoring, micro-grants, and co-working space for entrepreneurs.

- Importance: Supports local job creation and revitalizes Town Center with new activity.
- Key Actions: Recruit mentors, fund incentives, run workshops, and provide technical assistance.

**Create a Culinary & Retail Incubator:** Support aspiring chefs and boutique entrepreneurs through shared kitchens and rotating popup shops.

- Importance: Enhances dining and retail offerings, fosters innovation.
- Key Actions: Convert part of Town Center, offer grants, host food truck nights and retail showcases.

## Pillar #4 – Tourism and Year-round Visitor Recruitment

**Aspiration:** *To expand visitor traffic and part-time residency, especially during the non-summer months.*

### Key Focus Areas:

- **Event-Based Tourism:** Host spring/fall festivals, sports tournaments, and niche events pickleball, fishing, gravel cycling and mountain biking, arts, and etc.
- **Package Development:** Promote “weekend getaway” and “seasonal rental” packages for golf, fishing, hiking, Buffalo River floating, etc.
- **Marketing & Branding:** Refine Fairfield Bay’s identity as a vibrant, affordable mountain/lake town, perhaps leading with “*Residential and Resort Community.*”
- **Repeat Visitor Incentives:** Build loyalty programs or return-visitor discounts.

**Why It Matters:** *Visitors increase retail, restaurant, and lodging revenues—essential in communities with limited population density.*

### Other Potential Ideas:

**Eco-Adventure Tourism Branding:** Position FFB as Arkansas's outdoor playground with trails, biking, glamping, and birding.

- Importance: Captures tourism market year-round and aligns with outdoor lifestyle trends.
- Key Actions: Branding campaign, signage, partner with Arkansas Tourism, develop experiences and trails.

**Launch Signature Events & Festivals:** Establish marquee events such as The Bay Blues Festival or an ongoing Concert & Music Series that draw recurring visitation.

- Importance: Builds regional brand recognition and provides economic uplift to local businesses.
- Key Actions: Create an event committee, secure sponsorships, and build an annual calendar marketed regionally.

**Bundle Lodging + Activity Packages:** Encourage local lodging providers to offer packages with hiking, golf, or lake activities at a discount.

- Importance: Drives overnight stays and boosts local activity vendors.
- Key Actions: Coordinate among tourism businesses, promote on city/chamber websites.

**Develop a Year-Round Event Strategy:** Host seasonal events (e.g. winter lighting displays, spring music series, fall trail fest) to smooth tourism.

- Importance: Increases off-season traffic and maintains economic vitality year-round.
- Key Actions: Create seasonal calendar, partner with local orgs, market regionally.

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## **Pillar #5 – Civic Engagement and Volunteer Capacity**

**Aspiration:** *To sustain community momentum and execution capacity with engaged citizens.*

### **Key Focus Areas:**

- Foster leadership development and local ambassador programs
- Coordinate volunteer opportunities via digital or community communication hubs
- Recognize and celebrate civic contributors to reinforce involvement

**Why It Matters:** *Engaged citizens have pride in their community, take more ownership in its improvement, and volunteer their time and efforts make it better.*

### **Other Potential Ideas:**

**Establish a Volunteer Talent Directory:** Catalog community members willing to volunteer time or skills—tech support, grant writing, music, etc.

- Importance: Taps into retiree and part-time resident knowledge base.
- Key Actions: Appoint a Use a Google Form or paper signup, distribute through churches and clubs.

**Host a Volunteer-Run Seasonal Festival Series:** Start simple community-run events (like a bluegrass night, chili cook-off, or lantern walk) that can grow over time.

- Importance: Encourages community participation and boosts tourism without high startup costs.
- Key Actions: Form festival committee, leverage local talent, seek sponsorships and in-kind donations.

**Hospitality Certification & Local Storytelling:** Train local employees and volunteers to improve guest experience and share local culture.

- Importance: Improves visitor satisfaction, ratings, and return visits.
- Key Actions: Partner with tourism educators, design hospitality courses, promote through Chamber & City.

**Create a Local Hospitality Ambassador Team:** Train 10–15 friendly volunteers to greet visitors and share local tips during key weekends or events.

- Importance: Improves visitor satisfaction without financial burden.
- Key Actions: Recruit retirees, provide training, give branded name tags or shirt

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### About Conductor ([www.ARConductor.org](http://www.ARConductor.org))

Established in 2016, Conductor is a public private partnership between the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC), and Startup Junkie Consulting. Based out of Conway, Arkansas, Conductor's mission is to empower innovators, entrepreneurs, and small business leaders throughout a statewide service area, including rural communities and underserved entrepreneurs. Conductor provides no-cost coaching, consulting, and technical assistance to current and aspiring business owners, along with a cadence of programs and events designed to inspire, empower, and educate entrepreneurs, innovators, and small business leaders.

Startup Junkie/Conductor also lead multiple programs to drive economic growth in Arkansas, including, but not limited to ARise ([www.ARIseArkansas.org](http://www.ARIseArkansas.org)), 75Strong ([www.75StrongArkansas.com](http://www.75StrongArkansas.com)), the 10x Growth Accelerator ([www.10xArkansas.com](http://www.10xArkansas.com)), and the Lithium Regional Innovation Cluster ([www.LithiumRIC.org](http://www.LithiumRIC.org)).

## Appendix A

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