



Phelps County Community IMPACT REPORT



PHELPS COUNTY
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Marla Stevenson
Board President
Phelps County Community
Foundation Member

Dear Phelps County Residents,

We are thrilled to present to you the inaugural Phelps County Community Impact Report. More than just pages filled with information, this report embodies our shared values, achievements, and challenges. It's a mirror reflecting where we shine and where there's room for growth. Our ultimate aspiration is clear: by leveraging our collective resources and dedication, we want Phelps County to be an inclusive haven for all its residents.

Creating the Phelps County Community Impact Report has been a journey spanning over a year. It took root with the sustained efforts of the Funders' Roundtable, leading to the establishment of the Phelps County Community Foundation. We further solidified our foundation through valuable collaborations with the Meramec Regional Planning Commission, the Meramec Regional Community Foundation, the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, and Missouri S&T.

However, it's crucial to recognize that this report, like any other, has its limitations. Elements such as the "Red Flags" and "Blue Ribbons" are subjective and might stir conversations. The structure and content could see changes in subsequent versions, but that is the nature of a community in reflection — always evolving, always striving. We hope that this report serves as a reminder that introspection is our path to continuous improvement.

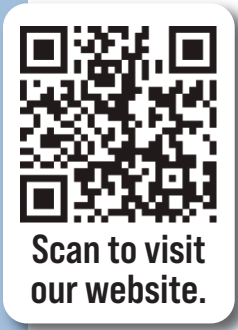
On a personal note, my gratitude knows no bounds. To every contributor, organization, and committee member, thank you. Your unwavering dedication and belief in the promise of Phelps County have been instrumental in bringing this vision to life.

As you navigate the Phelps County Community Impact Report, remember it's not just an account of our current state, but a guiding light towards a future filled with promise, inclusivity, and prosperity for Phelps County.

With warm regards,
Marla Stevenson,
Board President, Phelps County Community Foundation

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What is the Phelps County Community Impact Report

In Phelps County, we employ three symbolic terms to provide insight into our community's current state: "Blue Ribbons," "Red Flags," and "Caution Lights." These markers guide our understanding of where our community excels, where it needs immediate attention, and areas of potential concern for the future.

Blue Ribbons symbolize the outstanding successes or attributes in our community. They represent areas where Phelps County has made significant strides or stands out for its excellence.

On the other hand, Red Flags are clear indicators pointing toward pressing issues or problems in the community. They highlight areas that demand our immediate focus and collective efforts for positive change.

Caution Lights are part of the symbolic language. They signify areas where, based on current data and trends, we see potential challenges or shifts on the horizon. Just because a focus area receives a Blue Ribbon today does not guarantee it will remain so in the future. Caution Lights serve as a reminder that situations evolve, and vigilance is essential.

For instance, while Phelps County boasts nationally recognized health facilities, programs, and services—a potential Blue Ribbon—we also face a Red Flag with an increasing number of children living in poverty. And if there's a rise in children nearing the poverty threshold but not yet in it, that could be where a Caution Light shines, signaling the need to monitor the situation closely.

These markers are not unique to our county, but they offer a framework to help us channel our efforts effectively. By celebrating our Blue Ribbons, addressing our Red Flags, and being vigilant about our Caution Lights, we are positioning Phelps County for a brighter, more informed future.

Community at a Glance

Phelps County is located in the central part of Missouri, with a population of about 45,000 people. It is home to the Missouri University of Science and Technology, one of the nation's top engineering schools. The county seat is Rolla, a city of about 20,000 people that offers a variety of cultural and recreational opportunities. Some of the attractions in Rolla include the Stonehenge replica, the Ozark Actors Theatre, and the Mark Twain National Forest.

Living in Phelps County can be a rewarding experience for people who enjoy a rural lifestyle with access to urban amenities. The county has a low cost of living, with a median household income of \$41,942 and a median home price of \$171,200. The county also has a low unemployment rate of 3.7% and a high educational attainment rate of 31.2% for bachelor's degree or higher. The county has a mild climate, with an average annual temperature of 56.8°F and an average annual precipitation of 43.6 inches.

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Phelps County, Missouri
Best Places to Live in Phelps County, Missouri



Business and Economic Development



Ben Tipton

*Steering Committee
Leader of Business &
Economic
Development*

**Phelps County Community
Foundation Board Member**

Phelps County is home to a variety of employers consisting of government, education, health care/ social assistance, retail trade, food services, transportation/ warehousing, manufacturing, construction, and finance/ insurance. Of these categories government/ public education and health care/ social assistance are the top two employers employing 8,668 of the 20,450 jobs in the county. Source: Light-cast (Supplied by Missouri DED)

In 2000, the population of Phelps County was 39,945. As of 2022 the population is at 45,313 which is a growth of 5,368 or 13.43% over the 22-year period. The census bureau population count can fluctuate depending on where the students at Missouri S&T record their primary residence. <https://www.ednc.org/perspective-where-are-college-students-counted-for-the-2020-census/>

The unemployment rate in Phelps County as of June of 2023 was at 3.5%, represented by a labor force of 20,450 with 19,410 people employed. You have to go back to August of 2021 before you have an unemployment rate above 3.5% for Phelps County. The unemployment rate from April of 2020 to August of 2021 saw a spike as high as 7.1%, which could be related to COVID issues. Prior to this time frame the unemployment rate has held at 5.7% or less back to April of 2015. The highest unemployment rate on the scale dates back to January of 2013 at 7.9%. (ref: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS))

The census bureau currently lists a total of 11,148 families with children and 6,425 families with no children under the age of 18 in Phelps County. Out of the 11,148 families, 4,723 have children under the age of 18 in the household. Out of the 4,723 families there are a total of 2,952 opposite-sex married families. A total of 2,708 families has a husband in the labor force and 1,972 of the families have a wife in the labor force. There are a total of 1,166 female householders that do not have a spouse present, of which 1,061 are employed. There are a total of 605 male householders that do not have a spouse present of which 598 are employed.

The US Census Bureau is currently tracking the current wage of 16,973 jobs in Phelps County. The breakdown of those positions is:

1. \$1,250 per month or less- 4,387
2. \$1,251 to \$3,333 per month- 6,669
3. More than \$3,333 per month- 5,917

In 2022 the average pay of employees in Phelps County was \$46,461 in comparison to the average for the State of Missouri of \$59,225. In looking at the average pay comparison from 2012 to 2022 it looks as though Phelps County has lagged behind the average for the State of Missouri by as much as 21% in pay comparison. (ref: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW))

In 2020 the US Census Bureau tracked a total of 15,517 workers available to work that live in Phelps County. Out of the 15,517 workers, 8,249 of them stayed in Phelps County for employment and 7,268 left the county for employment. Out of these workers the employees travel the following distance for their employment in and out of Phelps County:

1. Less than 10 miles- 7,127 jobs
2. 10 to 24 miles- 2,164 jobs
3. 25 to 50 miles- 1,359 jobs
4. Greater than 50 miles- 4,867 jobs

This represents that 46% of Phelps County workers have short commutes of less than 10 miles. It also reflects that 31.4% of the commutes are over 50 miles with the majority of those commuters are going to northwest and northeast St. Louis areas.

The US Census Bureau reflects a total of 16,973 workers in Phelps County. Those positions are filled by 8,249 workers from within the county and 8,724 workers from outside of the county commuting for work. The following is the traveling distance of the workers:

1. Less than 10 miles- 7,204 jobs
2. 10 to 24 miles- 2,951 jobs
3. 25 to 50 miles- 1,924 jobs
4. Greater than 50 miles- 4,894 jobs

In 2020 US Census Bureau reflected a total of 16,973 jobs they are tracking by wage and earnings. Currently the age demographic of the worker population is:

1. Age 29 or younger- 4,301 jobs

2. Age 30 to 54- 8,688 jobs

3. Age 55 or older- 3,984

The breakdown of worker race in Phelps County is:

1. White – 15,698

2. Black or African American- 583

3. American Indian or Alaska Native- 89

4. Asian- 317

5. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander- 19

6. Two or More Race Groups- 267

The breakdown of the worker sex in Phelps County is:

[ref :U.S. Census Bureau “On the Map”]

1. Male – 7,624

2. Female- 9,349



Prior to 2023 the cost of living overall in Phelps County in relation to Missouri and the US is more favorable. The overall cost of living for Phelps County is 6.4% cheaper than Missouri and 20.8% cheaper than the US. The median home cost in Phelps County is \$171,200 in relation to \$212,300 for Missouri and \$338,100 for the US. The cost to rent in Phelps County in comparison to Missouri and the US is anywhere from 11.7% to 81.5% less expensive depending on the size of unit being rented. (ref: Cost of Living in Phelps County, Missouri (bestplaces.net)

In October of 2020 Missouri S&T received the \$300 million donation from June and Fred Kummer to be applied towards the growth of Missouri S&T's new college of innovation and entrepreneurship. Since the donation S&T has broken ground on a number of projects on campus for a total of \$325 million dollars. The new construction will require more than 300 full-time construction workers for 5 years. The University currently has a need for 3,041 full-time, part-time, and student workers. Between present time and 2028 Missouri S&T will have an additional need of 229 to fill the positions created for the Kummer Institute. Taking into consideration the current positions that need to be filled, there will be a total need of 402 positions between 2023 and 2028. (ref Alysha O'Neil CFO Missouri S&T)

Phelps Health, being the second largest employer in Phelps County, has a number of capital projects going on at any given time. They currently are averaging \$7.8 million a year from 2020 through 2026 in completed and proposed capital improvement projects. Per conversation, finding qualified work force for open positions continues to be a struggle at Phelps Health. Phelps Health has a total need of 2,100 full-time and part-time employees to fill the total of 1,983 full-time positions. Phelps Health currently has 144 open positions that need to be filled. (ref Jana Cook CFO Phelps Health)



BLUE RIBBONS

1. Cost of Living: The cost of living in Phelps County is comparatively lower than the rest of Missouri and the US, making it an attractive location for potential residents and businesses.

2. The \$300 million donation to Missouri S&T and ongoing capital projects at Phelps Health are expected to boost economic activity, job creation, and generate numerous employment opportunities.

3. Low Unemployment Rate: Aside from the COVID-related spike, the unemployment rate in Phelps County has been relatively stable and is currently at 3.5%.



RED FLAGS

1. Wage Disparity: Phelps County lags behind Missouri's average pay by 21%.

2. Difficulty Filling Positions: Both Missouri S&T and Phelps Health have reported difficulties in filling positions, which could signal a shortage in skilled labor or misalignment between job requirements and candidate qualifications.

3. Flat Sales Tax Growth: With inflation considered, the annualized pace of county sales tax growth being 5% to 6% could be considered flat, indicating stagnant economic activity.



CAUTION LIGHT

1. Housing and Renting Affordability: While the cost of living is generally lower, ensuring that housing and renting remain affordable for lower-income households is crucial for maintaining social equilibrium.

PHELPS COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY SAYS...

When surveyed, 15.14% of the respondents said they felt the economic conditions were getting better, 51.76% said things were staying about the same, and 33.10% said they felt things were getting worse.

The majority of respondents said that they see the community about the same or better than where it is in the next 5 years.

• Positive Views on Economic Performance:

The highest-rated statement in the survey was related to economic performance.

o This indicates a general satisfaction among residents with the overall economic situation in Phelps County.

• Support for Local Businesses:

> Supporting small businesses received a high rating from residents.

> This suggests that the community values and appreciates the presence and contributions of local businesses.

• Concerns About Residents' Needs:

• The statement "putting residents' needs first" received the lowest rating.

> This reflects a concern among residents that their needs are not being adequately prioritized in the county's economic development efforts.

• Desire for Inclusive Planning:

> The statement "including residents in the planning process" also received a low rating.

> Residents feel a sense of exclusion from decision-making processes in economic development.

• Need for Better Representation and Focus:

> The survey results highlight the need for improved representation of residents in economic development planning. There is a clear call for a focus on addressing the needs and concerns of the community to promote effective economic development.

• Age and Income: The over-65 age group showed slightly higher satisfaction with economic development, possibly due to being closer to retirement age and having fewer stressors. Respondents with an income of \$100,000 or more also expressed higher satisfaction compared to those with incomes below \$100,000.

Community Health

Community health improvement efforts are most successful when they are grounded in collective impact, where structured collaborative efforts yield substantial impact on a large-scale social problem. Collective impact focuses on cooperation, collaboration and partnership to help achieve common priorities and ensure all people have opportunities for optimal health.



BLUE RIBBONS

- ToRCH Pilot Program
- Delbert Day Cancer Institute and Affiliation with Siteman Cancer Network
- Collaborative Community Partnerships

Transformation of Rural Community Health (ToRCH)

The ToRCH project is a Missouri-based pilot initiative (headed by the MO HealthNet division) that aims to enhance healthcare access, promote health equity, and improve overall community health by fostering partnerships between rural hospitals and community organizations. By achieving successful healthcare and community collaborations, the project expects to reduce unnecessary emergency department visits and admissions, resulting in cost savings.

MO HealthNet acknowledges the difficulty for rural hospitals to fund the administrative costs required to invest in care coordination efforts. Therefore, the pilot program includes six hospitals chosen by MO HealthNet from across the state, including Phelps Health, as part of the initial cohort. The ToRCH pilot project will provide funding for administrative positions to coordinate the community benefit office, care coordination and technology requirements. Additionally, the program supports the implementation of software to track referrals for care coordination between participating hospitals and community partners.

There is upfront funding for the community benefit office to authorize funding for population health improvement. Providers in the community will receive reimbursement for conducting social determinants of health screenings to identify social needs early on and reduce healthcare disparities. There also will be funding for temporary healthcare assistance under the CMS-defined 1915(b)(3) services.

Finally, the community benefit office can earn incentives for meeting up to five local priorities for population health improvement. While subject to change, currently, Phelps Health and its community partners are looking at identifying innovative ways to improve the following five priorities: dental care, behavioral health, healthy behaviors, screening and vaccinations.

Delbert Day Cancer Institute and Affiliation with Siteman Cancer Network

The nationally accredited Delbert Day Cancer Institute (DDCI) at Phelps Health provides all cancer care services under one roof for convenience and continuity of care for patients and their families.

The DDCI includes designated areas for radiation oncology, medical oncology, laboratory and imaging services, infusion, pharmacy services and a café. All cancer treatment and support services are centrally located in the DDCI in order to ensure the best possible patient experience and to ease the burden of having to travel to multiple locations for treatment.

The DDCI is also affiliated with the Siteman Cancer Network, which includes Siteman Cancer Center at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

Collaborative Community Opportunities

Phelps County offers health systems that promote and improve community-based health including Phelps Health, Four Rivers Community Health Center, Compass Health, Mercy, local health departments, and other community-based organizations. Goals for community-based care include:

- Expand and enhance community awareness about available resources and access to healthcare services for vulnerable and at-risk community residents.
- Increase community efforts and collaborations to address social determinants of health (SDOH), with a focus on health equity, access to care and community health.
- Work with community-based health organizations to coordinate and integrate approaches to address SDOH for vulnerable and underserved community members.



John Money

*Steering Committee
Leader of
Community Health*

**Phelps County Community
Foundation Board Member**

RED FLAGS

- Poverty and Food Insecurity
- Lack of Healthcare Insurance
- Physician Supply and Accessibility

Poverty and Food Insecurity

Poverty creates barriers to accessing health services and healthy food, leading to poor health. In Phelps County, 19.59% of the population lives in households with income below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), compared to 13.01% for Missouri and 12.84% for the US. Also, 10.8% of the Phelps County community receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, a federal program that provides nutrition benefits to low-income individuals and families that are used in stores to purchase food.

Access to healthy food is important for maintaining community health, but in Phelps County, the number of places where you can find healthy food is lower than in both the state of Missouri and the entire US. For every 100,000 people in Phelps County, there are approximately 13 such places, whereas in the state of Missouri, this number is closer to 16. In the US, there are about 21 establishments for the same population.

The food environment index is used to evaluate how convenient it is to locate nutritious food. In Phelps County, this index was previously 7.2 but has decreased to 6.7. In comparison, Missouri also has a rating of 6.7, while the US has a higher score of 8.8. This suggests that finding healthy food in Phelps County is relatively more challenging than in the United States as a whole.

Lack of Healthcare Insurance

Lack of insurance is a major obstacle to healthcare access, leading to poor health outcomes and limited access to preventive and specialty care. Uninsured adults experience worse health outcomes compared to those with insurance, due to the lack of access to essential healthcare services such as primary care, specialty care, and other health services.

In Phelps County, 13.96% of the population is without health insurance coverage. The rate of uninsured persons in this area is higher than the state average of 9.4%.

Physician Supply and Accessibility

A limited supply of available resources, such as physicians, can have a detrimental impact on the overall health of a community. With fewer physicians available, individuals and families may face barriers to accessing timely and quality care, leading to delayed diagnoses, inadequate management of chronic conditions and increased healthcare costs.

To determine health professional shortage areas, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) measures the population within two designated areas. One is the FTE Shortage – the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) practitioners needed within an area to achieve the population-to-practitioner target ratio. The second is the Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) Score developed by the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) in determining priorities for the assignment of clinicians. The HPSA Score range is 0-26; a higher score equals greater priority.

For Phelps County, the HPSA FTE shows a shortage of 3.44 practitioners with a HPSA Score of 16.

PHELPS COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY SAYS...

According to the survey results, the average rating for the availability of quality health care was 3.27 out of 5. The average rating for the availability of affordable health care was 3.00 out of 5. These scores indicate that respondents had a moderate level of satisfaction with the access to health care in Phelps County.



Early Childhood

The early years, from prenatal stages to eight years old, are pivotal for a child's development. Between birth and age five, unmatched brain development occurs, requiring a specialized educational approach. Decades of research underscore the wisdom in investing in high-quality early learning programs. The subsequent healthy development forms the solid foundation for educational success, economic productivity, responsible citizenship, lifelong well-being, community strength, and effective parenting. Prioritizing this phase enriches present experiences and establishes the foundation for a thriving and prosperous future.



BLUE RIBBONS

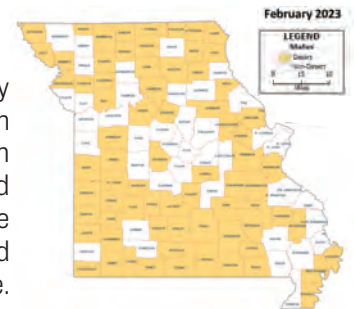
- Phelps County: Not Classified as a Child Care Desert
- Office of Childhood
- Federal and State Funding/Grant Availability

Phelps County: Not Classified as a Child Care Desert

In the domain of early childhood development, a "child care desert" denotes a census tract lacking accessible child care options, whether in the form of centers or available spaces. Recent assessments by ChildCare Aware of Missouri confirm that Phelps County is not classified as a desert, ensuring families in the county have viable child-care options. This classification highlights the community's dedication to providing essential resources and supporting the early developmental needs of its children. In addition, there has been a recent growth in infant care services, reflecting an increased focus on early childhood development. However, a critical gap remains in off-hours care.

ChildCare Aware of Missouri / Office of Childhood -

On Jan. 28, 2021, a significant move was made to enhance early childhood programs in Missouri. Governor Mike Parson, in collaboration with the Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Health and Senior Services, and Social Services, announced the consolidation of almost all state early childhood programs into the unified Office of Childhood. This strategic shift aims to streamline and improve the effectiveness of early childhood initiatives statewide. Hosted by DESE, the Office of Childhood is designed to provide a cohesive and efficient framework, centralizing efforts for improved access to consistent, high-quality programs and services for children and families. This consolidation represents a pivotal stride in creating a unified and impactful early childhood framework, emphasizing the commitment to the safety, health, and success of Missouri's children.



Federal and State Funding/Grant Availability

Amid the pandemic's challenges, bipartisan consensus emerged in supporting federal relief funding for the child care sector. This unified acknowledgment emphasized the sector's pivotal role in communities. The provided funds empowered states to demonstrate transformative possibilities, strategically addressing various sector needs. Key investments covered training, paycheck protection, staff retention, program enhancements, personnel recruitment, and technical/business assistance. These funds also facilitated the expansion of child care services, ensuring wider access for families. This collaborative effort not only commits to securing sector stability but showcases adaptability and resilience in creating a robust and responsive child care infrastructure, thanks to bipartisan support and additional resources.

Lastly, recent grants in early childhood have empowered local nonprofits to offer training and support to childcare providers, fostering a stronger foundation for quality care in our community.

Missouri's Early Care & Education Connections COVID Federal Relief Funds



RED FLAGS

- Poverty
- Lack of Accredited Child Care Facilities
- Subsidy Challenges
- Affordability
- Low Compensation for Early Educators



Kim Day

*Steering Committee
Leader of Early Childhood*

**Phelps County Community
Foundation Board Member**

Poverty

Growing up in poverty poses a paramount challenge to healthy child development, extending beyond economic concerns to impede cognitive development and hinder learning capacity. The repercussions manifest in behavioral, social, emotional issues, and adverse effects on overall health. Examining 2021 statistics for children under 6 reveals concerning poverty rates:

- > Phelps County: 22.6%
- > Missouri: 15.6%
- > United States: 18%

These figures underscore the prevalence of childhood poverty in Phelps County compared to state and national averages. Addressing the multifaceted impacts of poverty on early childhood development is crucial for fostering a supportive environment enabling every child to thrive.

Collaborative efforts involving community stakeholders, policy-makers, and educators are essential to implement targeted interventions for comprehensive development and brighter pathways for economically vulnerable children.

Lack of Accredited Child Care Facilities

Missouri Accreditation exceeds state licensing for early childhood and school age programs, emphasizing standards beyond minimum requirements. This accreditation process assesses qualitative dimensions, focusing on comprehensive child development in physical, social, emotional, and intellectual domains. Its distinctive feature lies in evaluating overall growth opportunities, showcasing a commitment to enriched environments surpassing basic regulatory benchmarks. This approach prioritizes not only fundamental safety standards but also the quality of experiences contributing to well-rounded development. Missouri Accreditation serves as a beacon for excellence, elevating standards in early childhood and school age programming across diverse settings.

Subsidy Challenges

The Missouri Subsidy Assistance System supports families in affording child care, with eligibility based on family size and income. The sliding fee, determined by these factors, is the portion families are responsible for, and the copayment covers any remaining costs after subsidy and sliding fee application. Governor Parson's approval of the Fiscal Year 2024 budget includes an increase in the child care subsidy rate, effective July 1, 2023, elevating Missouri's rates to the 58th percentile. In Phelps County, as per the 2023 Child Care Needs Assessment, 18 programs exist, with eight accepting subsidies. However, accepting subsidies does not guarantee available slots, as each program independently determines the allocation for children receiving subsidies, emphasizing the need for careful consideration of available subsidized care for families in need. This understanding is vital for stakeholders and families, fostering realistic expectations and ongoing efforts to bridge gaps in accessible, affordable child care for Missouri's families.

Affordability

The cost of child care poses a significant challenge for families, with infant and toddler care often surpassing the figures below. Understanding the financial landscape is crucial for addressing barriers faced by working families:

- Median Monthly Price of Child Care:
 - > Missouri - \$629
 - > Phelps County - \$482

- Median Monthly Income for a Family
 - > Missouri - \$4,775
 - > Phelps County - \$4,167
- Child Care Price Percentage of Median Household Income:
 - > Missouri - 13%
 - > Phelps County - 12%

Despite these figures, recent data underscores that child care remains unaffordable for many working families, particularly single-parent families. Addressing child care affordability is not only an economic concern but also critical for supporting the workforce and fostering thriving communities. Initiatives for accessible and affordable child care are essential, ensuring all families, regardless of financial circumstances, can access quality care. Recognizing specific challenges, like those faced by single-parent families, is crucial for targeted interventions, alleviating the financial strain associated with child care expenses. Advocating for affordable child care is an investment in children's well-being and the economic stability and productivity of our communities.

Low Compensation for Early Educators

Despite their crucial role in shaping the future, early educators are among the most underpaid workers in the nation. Compensation figures for Missouri in 2020 highlight this reality:

- Median Hourly Wage – Missouri (2020):
 - > Child Care Workers - \$11.58
 - > Preschool Teachers - \$15.27
 - > Preschool/Child Care Center Directors - \$26.47

While Missouri's minimum wage increased to \$12.00/hour in 2023, the median wages for early educators underscore an ongoing disparity between the value of their work and the financial recognition they receive. Addressing this wage gap is not only an economic equity issue but also a strategic investment in the quality of early childhood education. Competitive and fair compensation is crucial for attracting and retaining skilled professionals, enhancing the overall quality of education and care for our youngest learners. Acknowledging the critical nature of early educators' work, advocating for improved compensation becomes essential for fostering a dedicated and adequately supported workforce in early childhood development.



CAUTION LIGHT - Office of Childhood

The consolidation of nearly all early childhood programs across Missouri poses a challenging endeavor. Efficient operation will require patient cooperation in light of the significant change.

PHELPS COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY SAYS...

Childcare Concerns: Dissatisfaction with availability and quality of childcare, especially among long-time residents and women, indicating a need for improvement in early childhood services.

The survey revealed that childcare problems have negative effects on work productivity and job prospects. Parents reported experiencing these impacts since the birth of their young child. The consequences of inadequate childcare include lower incomes for parents, decreased workplace productivity, and reduced economic activity.

The survey sample consisted of 812 working parents, which is representative of the national population of working parents with children under the age of 3. The sample included both mothers and fathers, and it was evenly split between males and females.

The participants were full-time workers, not limited to mothers only.

Housing



Mike Woessner
Steering Committee
Leader of Housing
Phelps County Community
Foundation Board Member

Housing Market Analysis

In this comprehensive housing overview, we embark on a journey to gain a profound understanding of the housing landscape within Phelps County. A community's housing situation is a powerful barometer, reflecting not only its economic vitality but also the quality of life it offers to its residents. Through an intricate analysis of data sourced from the South-Central Board of Realtors Multi-Listing System, the United States Census Bureau, and interviews with key executives possessing first-hand knowledge, we delve into the intricate fabric of this region's housing trends. Our aim is to uncover key insights, identify challenges, and highlight strengths that collectively shape the present and future of Phelps County's housing ecosystem. As we navigate through the data, trends, and observations, our goal is to equip policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions that will ultimately contribute to the betterment of this vibrant community.

1. The average number of homes sold per year since 2018 has increased 33 percent.

2. The average price for a home has increased 48.7 percent for the past 5 years.

3. Since 2022 the Rolla area has sold twice the volume of home prices since 2018.

4. The average number of listings of homes on the market has drastically dropped to a level not seen in the past 40 years. Historically the City of Rolla market has seen 150 - 200 homes for sale at any one time in the past 5 years. Since 2022 that level has dropped to an average of 50 homes on the market at any one time.

BASED ON THE DATA PROVIDED FROM THE SOUTH-CENTRAL BOARD OF REALTORS MULTI LISTING SYSTEM IN THE ROLLA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Year	Total Sold	Average Sold Price	Total Volume
2018	331	\$151,042.00	\$49,994,871.00
2019	414	\$160,132.00	\$66,294,754.00
2020	437	\$187,570.00	\$81,967,959.00
2021	499	\$208,359.00	\$103,970,961.00
2022	439	\$226,676.00	\$99,510,831.00
Jan - Nov 2023	403	\$226,475.00	\$102,592,000.00

National and Phelps County Housing Trends

Building Permits:

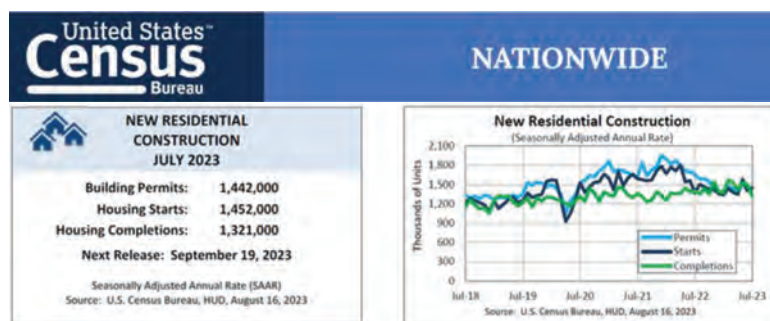
- Nationally - 1,442,000 permits were issued in July, a slight 0.1% increase from June.

- Nationally - Notably down by 13.0% compared to July 2022.

- Nationally - Single-family authorizations: 930,000, up 0.6% from June.

- Nationally - Units in buildings with five or more: 464,000.

- Rolla - So far only 8 single-family home permits have been issued within Rolla city limits in 2023. It's challenging to estimate the number of homes built outside city limits due to the absence of county building codes. Below is a chart supplied by the City of Rolla showing all the residential permits issued for the different categories from 2003-2022.



	Single-family Detached	SF Attached and Duplex	Multi-family	Total Units
2003	60	35	59	154
2004	67	20	51	138
2005	76	12	44	132
2006	70	72	128	270
2007	24	84	40	148
2008	18	26	87	131
2009	6	13	28	47
2010	17	41	73	131
2011	8	32	108	148
2012	3	31	37	71
2013	11	49	7	67
2014	18	73	55	146
2015	14	57	79	150
2016	11	53	64	128
2017	16	38	144	198
2018	9	20	102	131
2019	14	14	43	71
2020	12	8	16	36
2021	16	6	36	58
2022	9	2	94	105

PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF ROLLA BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Housing Starts:

- Nationally - 1,452,000 housing starts in July, up 3.9% from June.
- Nationally - 5.9% higher than July 2022.
- Nationally - Single-family starts: 983,000, a substantial 6.7% increase from June.
- Nationally - Units in buildings with five or more: 460,000.

Housing Completions:

- Nationally - 1,321,000 housing completions in July, down 11.8% from June.
- Nationally - Single-family completions: 1,018,000, up 1.3% from June.
- Nationally - Units in buildings with five or more: 297,000.

Note: Despite promising national trends, Phelps County encounters hurdles stemming from a shortage of local builders and tradespeople. Obtaining unbiased data specifically for Phelps County has proven challenging. Our approach strictly adheres to a standard that excludes any information lacking verifiable sources from the report.

PHELPS COUNTY COMMUNITY 2023 SURVEY SAYS...

Below are just a couple of the highlights from the housing portion of the survey.

- Housing Availability Issues: Dissatisfaction with housing options, suggesting a potential shortage or limited choices in housing.
- Adequate and affordable housing is essential for the well-being and stability of the community.

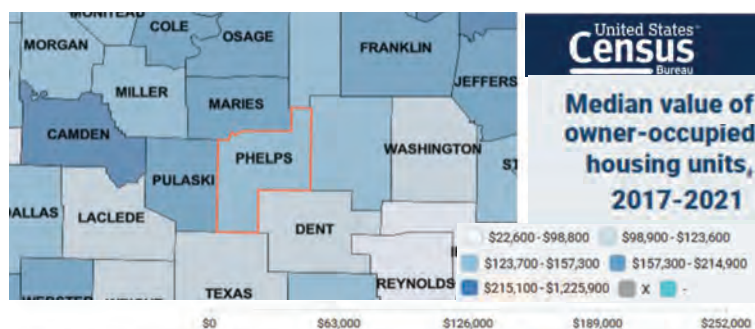
Phelps County Housing Overview



BLUE RIBBONS

1. Established Neighborhoods: Phelps County boasts well-planned neighborhoods developed over the past 50 years, providing a stable and attractive environment for residents.

2. Affordable Housing: The average sales price of homes in Phelps County at \$224,652.00 is notably lower than the national average of \$495,100.00 making it an appealing option for potential homebuyers according to the Census Bureau and HUD.



Housing	
Housing units, July 1, 2022, (V2022)	20,273
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2017-2021	60.9%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2017-2021	\$154,400
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2017-2021	\$1,212
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2017-2021	\$388
Median gross rent, 2017-2021	\$739
Building permits, 2022	106

Emergency Shelters and Homeless Support:

- The Rolla Housing Authority: Manages 150-165 Section 8 housing units in Phelps County, providing subsidized housing for eligible individuals and families.

• **MRPC:** Donald Keeney, the housing director for MRPC, reports that they have 91 subsidized housing units occupied in Phelps County. Additionally, there are 29 families with vouchers waiting for housing. Many of these families have been on a waiting list for several months, underscoring the pressing need for housing in the area.

• **The Mission:** According to Ashely Brooks, the Director of The Mission, they currently serve 42 homeless individuals on a daily basis and are actively working to place an average of 15 homeless individuals in permanent housing every month.

• **Great Circle (KVC):** Kathy Anderson at Great Circle (KVC) manages 43 foster homes in Phelps County, specifically designed to provide housing for youth in need of support.

• **Bridges House:** Joe Dalton, involved with the Bridges House, offers housing for four women who would otherwise be homeless. Additionally, through the Pregnancy Resource Center, they serve approximately 20 homeless individuals yearly in their clinic.

• **CASA and the Russell House:** CASA and the Russell House are also vital contributors to the support system for the homeless population in the area.



RED FLAGS

1. Declining New Home Construction: The number of new homes being built in Phelps County has seen a significant drop over the years, with no apparent plans to address this issue, leading to a housing shortage.

2. Reduced Housing Listings: The availability of homes for sale within Rolla City limits and across Phelps County has been on the decline. This challenges the county's growth and the ability for new residents to find housing.

3. Low Rental Vacancy Rates: The low rental vacancy rates in Phelps County, particularly in Rolla, Missouri, indicate a high demand for housing. While the exact number of rental units in Phelps County is challenging to pinpoint, estimates suggest there are over 6,000 housing units in the area. Mike Woessner at Investment Realty, Inc., manages over 2,000 units and has maintained a 1-2% vacancy rate over the past few years. This demonstrates a housing shortage in the region, with limited new construction efforts, such as only 31 duplexes and townhomes built to date in Rolla. The vacancy rates and the construction of multi-family units have been relatively consistent over the past 4 years.

National Housing Trends:

Phelps County's housing challenges align with a broader national context:

- Recent analysis suggests a substantial housing shortage in the United States, driven by under-building relative to population growth.
- The gap between single-family home constructions and household formations in the U.S. has grown, indicating a lack of supply.
- While multi-family construction options exist, the housing shortage persists.

Homelessness in Phelps County: While accurate statistics on homelessness in Phelps County are unavailable, an estimate suggests a homeless population of 150-200 in the area. This indicates the need for local attention and support in addressing homelessness alongside housing challenges.

Conclusion: Phelps County's housing situation presents a mix of positive aspects and challenges. While established neighborhoods and affordable housing are strengths, the declining construction of new homes and housing shortages pose significant challenges. Additionally, addressing homelessness is a crucial concern that requires community support and action.

Public Safety



Tracy Jenkins

*Steering Committee
Leader of Public Safety*

**Phelps County Community
Foundation Board Member**

Public safety is a multifaceted endeavor in Phelps County, dedicated to the welfare and protection of its communities. Public Safety encompasses crime prevention, emergency response, and ensuring the general safety of its citizens. The residents of Phelps County exhibit responsible citizenship and take pride in supporting emergency response personnel, a partnership that enhances the effectiveness of public safety measures. However, while there are notable achievements, specific challenges persist that require community attention and action.



BLUE RIBBONS

• **Unified Emergency Communications System:** Central Communications in Phelps County is a testament to effective emergency response coordination, handling all 911 calls and ensuring they're addressed promptly and appropriately by the relevant city and county organizations.

Fire Chief Breen praised this system, stating, Phelps County has a unified emergency communications system. Further endorsement comes from Chief Doug Roberts, who observed that the teamwork between all emergency responders in Phelps County is very cohesive; they work seamlessly together. I have never witnessed this type of collaboration; this community is a law enforcement-supportive community, he said.

• **Low Violent Crime Rates:** Phelps County boasts low violent crime rates, including serious assaults, gun violence, and murder. Det. Derrick Dillon highlighted, this is significant considering we are sandwiched between St. Louis and Springfield, both communities experiencing issues with violent crime. He credited the fully functional Crisis Negotiation Team's effectiveness, even in high-stakes situations like hostage scenarios, and their assistance to surrounding jurisdictions upon request. Additionally, the availability of the Rolla Homeland Security command post bolsters the county's preparedness for emergencies.

• **Phelps Health: A Level III STEMI and Stroke Center:** Phelps Health is recognized as one of the nine Level III STEMI and Stroke centers in Missouri. It plays a crucial role in patient assessment and directing them to appropriate care, thus providing essential access to the healthcare system. Its partnership with Air Methods provides residents with lifesaving emergency air medical services. The notable feature of Phelps Air is its 24/7 availability on hospital property, with in-flight blood products that significantly enhance patient survival and recovery rates.



CAUTION LIGHTS

• **Need for Advanced Public Safety Technology:** Phelps County's law enforcement professionals express a pressing need for advanced technology, specifically in surveillance. Camera systems that expedite investigations and help solve crimes are instrumental in reducing the time gap in jurisdiction proceedings, potentially lowering crime rates due to their deterrent effect. These systems, prevalent in other towns and college campuses, could be a significant asset to public safety in Phelps County.



RED FLAGS

• **Opioid Crisis:** Despite the strides in public safety, Phelps County faces a daunting challenge with the opioid crisis, ranking 15th in the state of Missouri for opioid-related deaths per capita. This unpleasant reality underscores the need for robust public health initiatives and substance abuse treatment programs tailored to the community's needs.

• **Inadequate Fire Departments and Firefighters:** Phelps County's firefighting resources are spread thin, with only six fire departments serving over 45,000 people across 672 square miles. The county's fire departments, mostly volunteer-run, are as follows:

Fire Department	Chief	Firefighters	Command Staff	Paid/volunteer	Headcount total
Doolittle Rural Fire Protection District	Brandon Williams	23	3	All volunteer	26
Duke Rural Fire Department	Ron Wyatt	6	1	All Volunteer	7
Edgar Springs Fire Protection District	Ernie Coverdell	6	1	All volunteer	7
Rolla Fire & Rescue	Jeff Breen	28	2	All paid	30
Rolla Rural Fire Protection District	Roger Hayes	32	4	9pd, remainder volunteer	36
St. James Fire Protection District	John Douglas 2nd	18	3	Chief pd/volunteer	21

RED FLAGS CONT.

•**Inadequate Law Enforcement:** Based on national averages, Phelps County faces a shortage of law enforcement personnel. The ideal number of officers for the county is approximately 109, considering a ratio of 2.4 officers per 1,000 residents. However, the county currently employs 91.5 officers, indicating a deficit of 17.5 positions.

2022 SRS Crime Rates by County (Ranked by Population)

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Number of police officers</i>		<i>Number of actual offenses</i>	<i>Summary Offense rate(per 1,000)</i>	<i>Estimated Population</i>
Rolla Police Department	31		1,294	63.68	20,321
Phelps County Sheriff's Dept.	35		363	18.25	19,880
St James Police Department	9		193	48.13	4,010
Doolittle Police Depart	3.5				570
Newburg Police Depart	1				330
Edgar Springs Police Dept	2				202
Missouri S&T police	10	3 reserves	53		
Missouri State Highway Patrol Troop I	90				

Phelps County's public safety landscape presents both blue ribbons and red flags. Significant achievements include the unified emergency communications system, low violent crime rates, and advanced health facilities. Conversely, the ongoing opioid crisis, limited fire services, and law enforcement personnel shortage are critical concerns. Strategic investments in public health, fire services, law enforcement, and technology are imperative to navigate these challenges, coupled with community engagement initiatives. Resolving these issues will address the current deficits and fortify the county's commitment to a safer, more secure future for its residents.

Sources:

"Air Methods Program", Air Methods, 2023.

"Missouri STEMI Designation", Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services, 2023.

"Census QuickFacts: Phelps County," United States Census Bureau, 2023.

"Missouri Fire Department Directory," Missouri Division of Fire Safety, 2023.

"County Fire Department Listings", County Office, 2023.

"Show Me Crime Rates", Missouri State Highway Patrol, 2023.

"Police Scorecard for Rolla", Campaign Zero, 2023.

Interviews and direct statements provided by local public safety officials (Fire Chief Jeff Breen, Detective Derrick Dillon, and Chief Doug Roberts).

PHELPS COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY SAYS...

Phelps county has a Good Living Environment:

- Phelps County was viewed positively as a place to live, raise children, and retire, which can be partly attributed to the perceived safety in the area.

Transportation in Phelps County



Bonnie Prigge

*Steering Committee
Leader of Transportation*

**Phelps County Community
Foundation Board Member**

Over the past several years, the transportation system in Phelps County has focused on integrating various modes of transportation such as vehicular traffic, pedestrians, and cyclists. Increases in funding levels from the FAST Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), as well as funding from Rolla's Transportation Development District (TDD), have also allowed for greater investment in Phelps County's infrastructure. Integral to the transportation system in the county, Interstate 44 runs through the heart of the region. Rolla is about the midpoint in Interstate 44's St. Louis to Springfield stretch. Supporting Interstate 44 is U.S. 63, running north and south, which acts as an integral corridor and connection to Interstate 70.

Aviation is another important transportation option for Phelps County. Mile-long runways can be found at Rolla National Airport, located at Vichy, and owned by the city of Rolla. A former World War II training base, this airport sits on 1,300 acres of prairie and is bordered by three highways, making it a prime industrial site. Rolla National Airport is defined as a B-2 airport and is used primarily by airplanes with approach speeds up to 120 knots and wingspans up to 79 feet. The city of Rolla also has a privately owned helipad at the Phelps Health Hospital for emergency air access. For businesses requiring rail service, Burlington Northern Santa Fe operates the most miles of track in the region and generally follows Interstate 44 throughout the county.

Countywide planning occurs through the Meramec Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), a voluntary council of government that coordinates transportation decision-making between the state and counties/cities within the Meramec region. MRPC is charged with providing uniform planning services that reflect local needs and priorities. MRPC includes local elected and appointed officials from eight counties and over 30 cities. It also includes technical staff members that provide support in transportation, community planning, housing, emergency management, environmental, etc. Staff from local governments, county elected officials and other representatives serve on MRPC's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), which provides review, comments and recommendations on transportation needs in the region. The Phelps County study area has a population of more than 44,692 (2021 ACS 5-year estimates) covering 674 square miles. By the year 2030, the population of Phelps County is projected to increase to 47,635 (Missouri Census Data Center), growing by almost 3,000 people over the next decade.



BLUE RIBBONS

• Over the last several years, Phelps County has focused on the multimodal needs of its residents. There is a growing awareness of the value of having communities where people who walk and ride bicycles are healthier, and more safely integrated with vehicles. Rolla and St. James have a strong sidewalk/trails network that encourages walking and biking, with Rolla tripling the size of its sidewalk network (76 miles) in the last 20 years. These communities plan and pursue opportunities to make their communities more mobile and accessible and there are ongoing discussions of how the two cities can be connected beyond the highway system. As a part of MoDOT's High Priority Unfunded Needs (HPUN) discussion, a connection between St. James and Rolla has been identified as one of the top regional needs, along with runway and hangar improvements at Rolla National Airport.

• Additional multimodal projects have included ADA accessibility improvements throughout Rolla and along state routes in other cities in the county. Communities also can apply for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) or Regional Trails Program (RTP) funds to complete sidewalk, trail and intersection improvements. In 2021, MRPC completed a deviated fixed-route feasibility study for Southeast Missouri Transportation Services (SMTS) in Rolla and Phelps County. The results of the plan outlined a public transit service that will loop around Rolla with possible connections to St. James. Services recently began in September 2023.

• Phelps County is also taking a proactive approach to transportation needs; specifically, the city of Rolla's focus on addressing infrastructure needs. Several years ago, leadership within the city of Rolla recognized that MoDOT would not be able to address all the priorities within the city in a timely manner, including unique needs resulting from the presence of a state university with thousands of enrolled students. A Transportation Development District (TDD) was formed by local businesses agreeing to higher tax rates to cover the costs of transportation infrastructure on both the state and local system, including multimodal solutions to better and more safely serve students.

- As noted above, the county also excels at bringing stakeholders together to identify transportation needs. Local governments and MoDOT, working through MRPC and its TAC, meet every other month to discuss, prioritize and rank various transportation projects. The group also advocates for increased funding and projects at a state and federal level.
- One of the last and most important blue ribbons for Phelps County is the access to major transportation networks. Interstate 44 and Highway 63 connect in Phelps County, creating an important transportation connection, east-west, north-south, that economically benefits the county and its cities. Route 66, the Mother Road, also draws transportation enthusiasts and tourists to the county. The economic vitality of the county is dependent, to some degree, on the upkeep and expansion of this transportation infrastructure.

RED FLAGS

- One of the Red Flags in Phelps County is the need for more consistent transportation funding at a local and state level, as well as identifying non-traditional sources to support taking care of the system and expansion. Funding continues to be inadequate to address all of the identified transportation needs within the county. With the increase of electric vehicles, monies accrued from the gas tax will continue to decline, even with the recent gas tax increase. MoDOT and the county need to be innovative and look for consistent local (city/county/state) funding sources dedicated to transportation.

Phelps County Bridges (per MoDOT)	
53 State Bridges	24 State Culverts
62 Local Bridges	16 Local Culverts
115 Total Bridges	40 Total Culverts
3 Poor Condition Bridges	1 Weight Restricted Bridge

- Benchmarks identified to track improvements on funding include increases to transportation funding annually for cities, county, and MoDOT.
- Greater investment in public transit services and the need for expanded services (per public survey and SMTS) is another Red Flag in the county. Public transit services improve the quality of life by providing mobility to those who need or choose to use them. For public transit to appeal to residents and become a staple in their lifestyle choices, the service must be well-designed, overcome physical and socioeconomic barriers and meet the needs of the transit dependent residents who may rely on public transportation due to age, disability, income, or other related circumstances. The lack of reliable public transit has contributed to an increase in the number of residents that drove alone to work (79.6%) in 2021. The following table provides a summary of transportation modes for those residents traveling to work utilizing US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates.

Transportation Modes to Work	2011 (%)	2021 (%)	% Change
Drove Alone	77.7	79.6	2.5
Carpool	11.8	11.2	-5.1
Public Transit	0.3	0.1	-66.7
Walk	4.2	3.6	-14.3
Bike	0.1	0.2	100
Taxi, Motorcycle	1.9	0.5	-50
Work from Home	4.0	4.9	22.5
Mean Travel Time to Work	17.9 minutes	20.1 minutes	12.3
*ACS 5-Year Estimates, US Census			

- While SMTS recently started its deviated-fix route operation, which operates similar to a bus service within the city of Rolla, it still needs to build awareness and increase ridership in the community. Public transit is also subject to the availability of drivers and new vehicles. New vehicles continue to be delayed by over two years due to a lack of supply and transit agencies have difficulties hiring drivers. Without workforce and bus improvements, public transit struggles to meet all of the needs of the public, including after-hours and weekend services. Benchmarks for transit needs include increases in state transit spending in the Central District, increases in SMTS ridership in Phelps County/census numbers, and an increase in the number of routes.
- The need for more private transit services, such as Uber and Lyft, as well as access to cross country bus service continues to be a Red Flag for the county. Currently Lyft and Greyhound do not serve Phelps County and taxi services are limited. Benchmarks include the establishment of Lyft service, the expansion of Uber service, and the establishment of a Greyhound stop in Phelps County. Currently, the closest bus stops are in St. Louis, Jefferson City, and Springfield, MO.

- While the county does a great job at bringing people together to discuss transportation needs, stakeholders need to improve on consensus building and advocacy for priority needs and projects in more areas than just state-maintained roadways. In order to present a unified front to state and federal elected officials, as well as MoDOT, to advocate for funding, Phelps County needs to establish a broader list of needs that include off-system projects for all areas (cities, county, multimodal needs, etc.). Benchmark capable of tracking improved consensus building may include improve attendance/participation by all local governments in the annual county transportation needs discussion (based on attendance sign-in sheet), and creation of a county-wide priority list of off-system needs.
- Traffic safety, especially for pedestrians and motorcyclists, continues to be a Red Flag for Phelps County and the surrounding region. The Central Region Coalition for Roadway Safety tracks accidents and fatalities by cities and counties. While fatalities began to trend down by 2020 (4 total), the number of casualties increased by 200% in 2022. Phelps County ended 2023 with 11 fatalities. Individuals in the transportation industry believe that increased speeds and distracted driving contribute heavily to fatalities in Phelps County. Aggressive drivers (speeding) played a part in 38 of the 46 fatalities between 2017-2021.
- Regarding pedestrians and motorcyclists, the county has experienced seven total fatalities over the past five years. Though Missouri's helmet law has been repealed, three motorcycle fatalities occurred prior to the change in law. The following table depicts the significant changes in fatalities for just the past two fully reported years.

Accidents in Phelps County (State Hwy Patrol Crash Map)			
	2021	2022	% Change
Injury Crashes	376	391	4%
Fatalities	5	12	140%
Total Crashes	1,379	1,417	2.8%

Benchmarks used to measure improvements in traffic safety should review annual MODOT statewide fatality reports, by county, number of pedestrian-involved crashes, and increase in use of seatbelts/safety devices(helmets).

PHELPS COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY SAYS... Transportation Need: Expressed need for improved public transportation.

Phelps County Community Survey Overview

Introduction

The Phelps County Community Survey, a comprehensive assessment of the county's strengths and challenges, has provided valuable insights into the community's perception of various aspects of life in Phelps County. This report summarizes the key findings and recommendations from the survey, offering a roadmap for future community development initiatives.

Positive Findings

1. Public Services Satisfaction: Over 64% of respondents expressed satisfaction with public services, indicating a generally positive opinion towards these services in Phelps County.

2. Specific Public Services: The majority of specific public services received satisfaction ratings above 50%, reflecting overall contentment with these services.

3. Safety Ratings: Personal safety, property crimes, and violent crimes were positively rated, with variations based on age and education level, yet all within positive parameters.

4. Quality of Life: Phelps County was highly regarded as a place to live, raise children, and retire, with positive ratings ranging from 54% to 68%.

These findings suggest a generally positive perception of public services and quality of life among the residents of Phelps County.

Areas of Concern

Despite the positive aspects, the survey also highlighted several areas of concern:

- **Housing:** There was notable dissatisfaction regarding housing availability and options, indicating potential shortages or limited choices.

- **Child Care:** Access to childcare was a concern, particularly for long-time residents and women, suggesting a need for improvement.

- **Transportation:** A desire for better public transportation options was expressed, although this may not be a primary focus in a rural area like Phelps County.

- **Economic Inclusion:** Residents showed a preference for greater involvement in economic planning, with a lack of development potentially leading to relocation.

Conclusion

The Phelps County Community Survey has effectively identified both the strengths and areas needing improvement within the county. These insights are crucial for guiding strategic community development initiatives, ensuring that Phelps County continues to be a vibrant and thriving community.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER:

Conclusion: Uniting the Threads of Phelps County's Future

As we draw the Phelps County Community Impact Report to a close, it's essential to reflect on the intricate interplay of the six focus areas that form the backbone of our community's fabric. Business and economic development, community health, early childhood care, housing, public safety, and transportation each represents a vital thread in the tapestry of Phelps County's life. These areas do not operate in isolation; rather, they are deeply interwoven, with the strength of each contributing to the resilience and vitality of the whole.

Business Growth: Interconnected Pathways to Progress

The report explained the reality that economic strength is more than just businesses flourishing; it's about creating an ecosystem where every member of Phelps County can thrive. Economic development touches every aspect of community life, from the quality of early childhood care to the robustness of our public safety measures. It influences our ability to provide affordable housing and shapes the health services we can sustain. With the large amount of economic spend from the Kummer donation (over \$300 million to Missouri S&T) and expansion of existing businesses it will put additional strain on the resources that are essential to having a stable vibrant community.

Early Childhood Care: The Foundation of Prosperity

Our insights have shown that the cornerstone of long-term economic prosperity lies in the in-



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our website.

vestment in our youngest citizens. Quality early childhood care ensures a strong start for our future workforce and leaders. However, the Community Needs Survey has highlighted this as an area needing urgent attention, reflecting a gap that we must bridge to secure our children's future and, by extension, our community's.

Housing and Transportation: Pillars of Stability

Housing has emerged as a critical concern, with affordability and availability being central challenges. The Community Needs Survey echoes this, underscoring the need for concerted efforts to ensure that every resident has access to a safe and affordable home. Transportation, too, is a linchpin of daily life, affecting access to jobs, schools, and healthcare. Our focus must be on creating a transportation network that supports economic mobility for all residents.

Public Safety and Community Health: The Heartbeat of Phelps County

Public safety is confirmed as a foundational element for community confidence and growth. It is intrinsically linked to the health of our residents—without a sense of security, both physical and mental health can suffer. The community needs survey responses have reinforced the importance of these areas, reminding us that the feeling of safety and well-being is a barometer of our community's health.

A Call to Action

The Phelps County Community Impact Report is not just a reflection of where we are; it is a call to action. It challenges us to look beyond individual sectors to the broader picture of how these areas interact. It is a blueprint for building a stronger, more cohesive community—a community that supports its businesses, nurtures its children, provides for its residents, protects its vulnerable, and connects its people.

Forging Ahead Together

As we forge ahead, let's carry with us the understanding that the strength of Phelps County lies in our collective efforts. Let's commit to a future where economic opportunities are abundant and accessible, where our children grow up in nurturing environments, where every resident has a place to call home, where our streets are safe, and where health and well-being are not just ideals but realities for all.

In conclusion, the Phelps County Community Impact Report is more than a document—it's a roadmap for collaborative action. By working together across all six focus areas, we can ensure that Phelps County is not only a place to live but a place to thrive. Let's move forward with the shared vision of a prosperous, inclusive, and healthy community for all.





PHELPS COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Phelps County Community Foundation Impact Report is available online:
phelpscountycommunityfoundation.org



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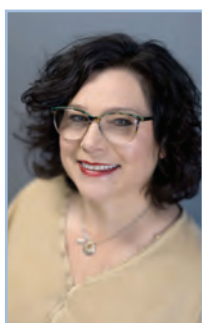
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