

What Does the Community Value? Assessing Priorities for the Fairground Upgrades in Park County, Colorado

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- **Top Priorities for upgrades:** The livestock barn and indoor arena ranked as the highest priorities, followed by the horse barn and community dining/event hall.
- **Amenities that Matter Most:** Year-round restrooms were strongly supported, while other options like cafés and childcare were ranked lower.
- **Visitor Profile:** Nearly half of fair attendees stayed overnight, with most choosing campgrounds or RV parks underscoring the fair's role in local tourism and visitor spending.
- **Preserving Current Structures:** Respondents indicated a strong preference for keeping the current Joe Linch Arena as long as possible.

Introduction

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

What We Did: Survey Methodology

To help guide these phased improvements, a survey was conducted to collect feedback from fairground visitors and residents on which buildings and amenities should be prioritized. The survey was distributed both in-person during the 2025 Park County Fair (July 14th - 20th) and online via Qualtrics (July 22nd - 29th). The survey used a "Best-Worst Scaling" approach, where participants were shown small sets of possible improvement projects and asked to choose the most important and least important in each set. The results reveal the relative importance of each option based on how often it was selected as "best" or "worst," ensuring that final investment decisions align closely with the community's highest priorities. The survey focused on two groups of improvements: 1) **Primary building projects** (livestock barn and indoor arena, horse barn, community dining/event hall, amphitheater, business incubator, RV/tiny homes, and covered grandstands) and 2) **Secondary amenities** (year-round restrooms, café, childcare, teen center, and greenhouse classrooms). In total, each participant reviewed seven choice sets for primary buildings and five choice sets for secondary amenities. This design gave us clear, reliable results that reflect the community's top priorities (See full report for details on survey methodology and data cleaning).

¹The full report, "What Does the Community Value? Assessing Priorities for the Fairground Upgrades". PARK COUNTY, COLORADO, is available [here](#) or upon request from CSU Extension, and includes additional details about methodology as well as secondary findings.

Origin of Survey Respondents and Demographics

We received a total of 146 survey responses, collected both in-person during the 2025 Park County Fair and online the following week. As shown in the pie chart in Figure 1 (right), most respondents (77%) were from Park County, while about one in five (20%) came from other Colorado counties. The county-level distribution in Figure 1 (left), highlights this wider reach, with respondents from Jefferson, Teller, Fremont, El Paso, Pueblo, Boulder, Weld, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Summit, and Yuma. A small share of respondents (3%) came from outside Colorado, specifically from Nebraska (Buffalo County) and Virginia (Powhatan County). These results show that while the survey primarily reflects the views of Park County residents, the fairgrounds also attract interest and use from surrounding counties and even out-of-state visitors, reflecting their importance as both a local and regional resources.

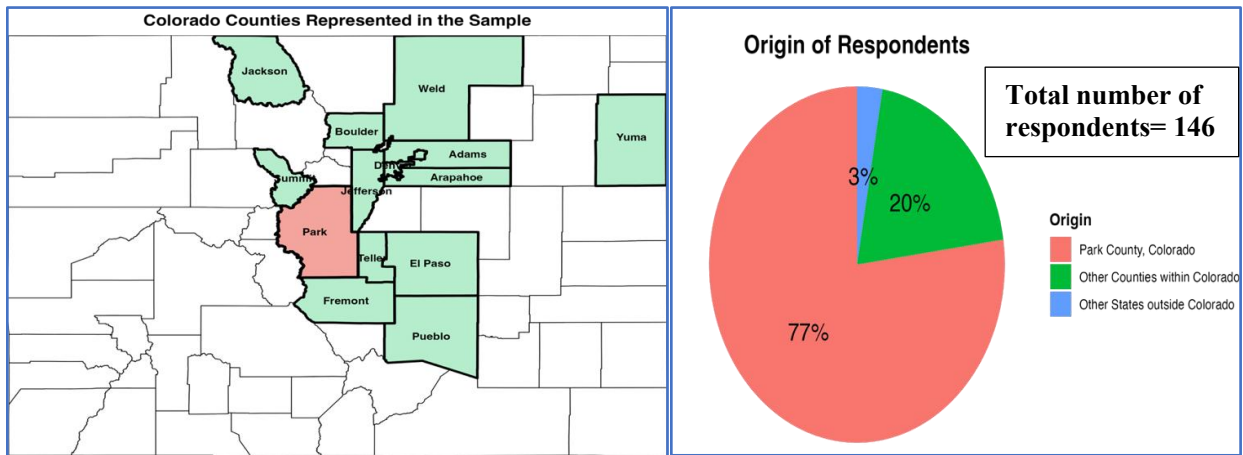


Figure 1: Colorado County map with counties represented in the sample (on the left) and origin of respondents (on the right)

In total, 89% of survey respondents attended the 2025 Park County Fair, reflecting strong community participation. Visitors were drawn to the fair for a variety of reasons, with the largest share (66%) attending for 4-H shows and activities, followed by the rodeo and ranch rodeo (34%), the junior livestock auction (28%), and the carnival or other entertainment (16%). Additional reasons included open gymkhana (13%) and other activities such as Extension work, vendor booths, volunteering, and exhibitions.

Nearly half of attendees (48%) reported staying overnight, with most choosing campgrounds or RV parks, while others stayed in Airbnb rentals, hotels, or with friends and family. Visitor spending also contributed to the local economy: on average, overnight groups spent about \$146 per day, including lodging, food, gasoline, recreation, and other expenses, while day visitors spent about \$67 per group per day, mainly on food and travel. Demographically, respondents were primarily female (59%), with an average age of 47, an average group size of four, and household incomes averaging around \$99,700. Nearly half (49%) reported having children under 18 in their households. (See the [full report](#) for more details on visitor profiles, accommodations, spending patterns, and demographics.)

Community Priorities for Primary Buildings and Secondary Amenities

To understand which fairground improvements the community values most, we used the Best-to-Worst Scaling (BWS) method. For each building or amenity, we counted the number of times it was selected as the most preferred option by all respondents and the number of times it was selected as the least preferred option. The net score was then calculated by subtracting the “worst” count from the “best”

count. For example, the livestock barn and indoor arena was chosen as “most preferred” 296 times and as “least preferred” 17 times, resulting in a strong net score of +279 (296 – 17). We applied this same calculation to all other primary buildings and secondary amenities. The higher the net score, the higher the priority placed on that project by the community.

Table 1 presents the Case 1 Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) results for primary buildings and secondary amenities. The livestock barn and indoor arena stood out clearly as the top priority, with the strongest positive score (+279). The horse barn also received strong support (+83), followed by the community dining and event hall (+38). In contrast, other options such as the covered grandstands (-12), business incubator and learning center (-73), outdoor amphitheater (-119), and RV/tiny homes (-129) received negative scores, indicating that respondents viewed them as lower priorities for upgrades. For secondary amenities, the top choice was year-round restrooms, which scored a strong +139, showing broad agreement on the importance of this basic facility. The greenhouse classrooms also ranked positively (+55), suggesting support for educational improvements. The teen center was viewed more neutrally (+4), while the café (-23) and childcare facility (-96) received negative scores, meaning they were ranked lower priorities by respondents.

Table 1: Community Priorities for Primary Buildings & Secondary Amenities (Case 1 BWS Results)

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

We further asked respondents which current fairground structures they would like to see kept as long as possible. The Joe Linch Arena stood out as the top choice, with nearly half (48%) of respondents selecting it. About 27% wanted to keep the existing barn, while 11% chose the existing grandstands. Another 14% mentioned other structures, including the office, event center, CSU Extension and fair exhibition building, or indicated they had no preference.

References

Flynn, T. N., & Marley, A. A. (2014). Best-worst scaling: theory and methods. In *Handbook of choice modelling* (pp. 178-201). Edward Elgar Publishing.