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## **2025 Hernando County Citizen Survey**

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**March 2025**

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Hernando County

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# Introduction

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The 2025 Hernando County Citizen Survey was conducted as part of the county's strategic planning process in order to gather feedback from residents on a range of issues affecting the community. This survey provides insights into how residents perceive the quality of life in the county, their satisfaction with public services, and their thoughts on the county's future direction. In an era of rapid growth and development, it is crucial to understand the concerns and priorities of the residents to help guide decision-making and ensure that future growth aligns with the needs and expectations of the community.

As Hernando County continues to experience growth and plan for the future, the survey results serve as an important tool for understanding the strengths of the community, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring that public services and policies are responsive to the needs of all residents. This report presents the findings from the survey and offers a comprehensive analysis of the data, highlighting key themes and areas of concern that will inform the county's ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of life for its residents.

## Data and Methods

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The 2025 Hernando County Citizen Survey aimed to gather insights into residents' perceptions of their community, satisfaction with local services, and priorities for the future. Respondents were recruited through various channels, including local media, community events, and online platforms, aiming to reach a diverse cross-section of the population. A total of 959 completed responses were collected during the survey period. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the community, the survey incorporated both quantitative and qualitative questions, allowing for statistical analysis and thematic insights. Responses were analyzed using traditional statistical analysis techniques, as well as with the assistance of a generative AI platform (Chat GPT 4.0, *OpenAI*), particularly to conduct thematic content analysis of open-ended survey responses. The data collected was anonymized to protect respondent privacy and analyzed to identify trends and areas for potential improvement in county services and initiatives.

## *Summary of Respondents*

The demographic composition of the sample largely mirrors the county's population, though there are some notable differences when compared to U.S. Census data. The respondents were diverse, including a wide range of ages, genders, and income levels, though certain groups were over- or underrepresented. For example, the survey sample had a higher percentage of female respondents (72%) than the county's overall population, where women make up about 51%. Additionally, there

was a higher representation of seniors (33% aged 65+), while younger adults (18-34 years) were underrepresented compared to census data.

Regarding housing, the survey respondents overwhelmingly lived in single-family homes (88.3%), which aligns with the county's broader housing trends (Table 1). The vast majority of respondents (92.7%) owned their homes, with a smaller portion renting or using other housing arrangements. The income distribution was also skewed towards higher earners, with 30% reporting household incomes above \$100,000, which is significantly higher than the county's median household income of \$41,098 according to the most recent census data. While this provides valuable insight into the perspectives of higher-income residents, it does limit the generalizability of the findings for lower-income groups (as well as younger residents and renters).

**Table 1.**  
**Respondent Characteristics (Housing)**

	Frequency	Percentage of Total Respondents
<i>How long have you lived in Hernando County?</i>		
Less than 5 years	138	14.6
5- 10 years	193	20.4
11-20 years	187	19.8
More than 20 Years	428	45.2
<i>What type of home do you live in</i>		
Single Family Home	829	88.3
Townhouse/Condominium	7	0.8
Apartment	7	0.8
Manufactured Housing	87	9.3
Other	9	1.0
<i>Do you own or rent your home?</i>		
Own	868	92.7
Rent	36	3.9
Other	32	3.4

In terms of length of residency, the survey respondents were largely long-term residents, with 70% having lived in Hernando County for more than 10 years. This suggests that the responses may reflect the views of more established residents, potentially overlooking the perspectives of

newer residents who may have different opinions on issues like community growth and public services. While the sample provides a strong foundation for understanding the opinions of Hernando County residents, it is important to note that the demographics of the survey respondents do not perfectly align with the county's population as per the U.S. Census. The overrepresentation of women, older residents, and higher-income households could influence the survey results and may not fully reflect the diversity of the county's population (Table 2). These differences in the sample may limit the extent to which the survey results can be generalized to the entire county, especially regarding the perspectives of younger adults and low-income residents. Future surveys could improve the representativeness of the sample by targeting underrepresented groups more effectively.

**Table 2.**  
**Respondent Characteristics (Personal)**

	Frequency	Percentage of Total Respondents
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	256	28.0
Female	659	72.0
<i>Are you of Hispanic origin/descent?</i>		
Yes	34	3.8
No	860	96.2
<i>Which of the following best describes your race?</i>		
African American	10	1.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	9	1.0
Native American/Alask Native	11	1.2
White	826	92.8
Other	34	3.8
<i>Household Income</i>		
Less than \$15,000	20	2.3
\$15,000 – 29,999	52	6.1
\$30,000 – 49,999	103	12.0
\$50,000 – 74,999	181	21.1
\$75,000 – 99,999	158	18.4
\$100,000 – 150,000	205	23.9
More than \$150,000	139	16.2

# Key Themes and Takeaways

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The 2025 Hernando County Citizen Survey offers valuable insights into residents' opinions on key aspects of life in the county. The survey results reflect both strengths and areas for improvement that will guide future planning and policy decisions. A comprehensive summary of the responses is provided below, but first we provide an overview of the key themes and takeaways that emerged from the survey results:

1. **General Satisfaction:** The majority of residents reported a generally positive view of their quality of life in Hernando County, with 53% rating it as "Good" and 9.4% rating it as "Excellent." However, nearly 30% of respondents rated the quality of life as "Fair" or "Poor," indicating opportunities to improve residents' experience and perceptions of their quality of life in Hernando County.
2. **Traffic and Infrastructure:** A significant concern raised by respondents was traffic congestion, with 46.2% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with traffic flow. Many respondents indicated that the county's infrastructure, particularly roadways, has not kept pace with growth. The need for road improvements, public transportation, and better traffic management was consistently mentioned.
3. **Public Safety:** While fire/EMS services received high ratings, public safety remains a concern, with 29.2% of respondents indicating dissatisfaction with the overall safety of the community. Issues related to crime, such as drug-related offenses and reckless driving, were frequently raised in the open-ended survey responses, alongside requests for increased law enforcement presence.
4. **Economic Development:** The survey highlighted concerns about economic opportunities in the county, with only 1.2% of respondents rating the county as an "excellent" place to earn a good wage. Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of job opportunities and the county's approach to fostering business growth, emphasizing a need for economic development strategies that prioritize job creation.
5. **Growth Management:** Overdevelopment was one of the top concerns for residents, with 57.8% identifying unregulated growth and housing as a major challenge. Many respondents expressed fear that the county's rapid development could lead to overcrowding and a loss of its rural charm. Preservation of green spaces and balancing growth with environmental conservation were also identified as critical priorities.

6. **Community Services and Amenities:** Satisfaction with amenities such as parks, libraries, and nature preserves was relatively high, but there were concerns about the availability of public services like healthcare, recreational facilities, and affordable housing. Residents called for expanded services, particularly in response to the county's growing population.
7. **Communication and Citizen Engagement:** Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the county's communication and engagement efforts. While some respondents felt informed about county services, there was a clear demand for improved transparency, better access to information, and more opportunities for citizen participation in government.

These key findings provide a comprehensive overview of the concerns and priorities of Hernando County residents. The survey highlights the need for improvements in infrastructure, public safety, economic development, and communication while emphasizing the importance of preserving the county's rural character and managing growth responsibly.

## Survey Results

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The subsections that follow provide a detailed summary of responses to the 2025 Hernando County Citizen Survey. The results are organized around specific sections of the survey, including: (1) Quality of Life, (2) Community Amenities, (3) Public Service Delivery, (4) Communication and Citizen Participation in Government, and (5) Strategic Planning/Priorities. Each of these sections presents detailed data points and highlights key findings and analysis drawn from the survey data.

### *Quality of Life*

Respondents' attitudes regarding their quality of life questions reflect a general sense of satisfaction, though with some notable areas of concern (Table 3). When asked to rate their overall quality of life in Hernando County, 53% of respondents rated it as "Good," while 9.4% considered it "Excellent." However, 30.9% rated the quality of life as "Fair," and 6.4% gave it a "Poor" rating, suggesting that a significant portion of residents are experiencing some dissatisfaction.

**Table 3.****How would you rate your overall quality of life in Lakeland?**

	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	90	9.4
Good	509	53.3
Fair	295	30.9
Poor	61	6.4

These results were further broken down by key aspects of life in Hernando County, including perceptions of the county as a place to live, raise a family, retire, and work (Table 4). Respondents were generally positive about the county as a place to live, with 49.4% rating it as "Good" and 10.5% rating it as "Excellent." However, when it comes to opportunities for employment, only 1.2% felt the county was an excellent place to earn a good wage, with 45.7% rating it as "Poor"—a clear indication that economic opportunities remain a concern for many residents.

This data suggests that while Hernando County is valued for its residential quality, recreational opportunities, and natural beauty, there are challenges related to economic opportunity and the overall direction of the county's development. The lower satisfaction ratings related to employment and wage opportunities highlight a potential area for future improvement in the county's economic development strategies.

**Table 4.****Citizen Perceptions of Hernando County (reported as % of row total)**

<i>How would you rate Hernando County in each of the following areas?</i>	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unsure
As a Place to Live	10.5	49.4	32.1	7.7	0.3
As a Place to Raise a Family	8.9	37.2	34.4	12.8	6.9
As a Place to Retire	11.1	37.5	28.8	16.9	5.8
As a Place for Recreation	8.9	26.8	34.9	27.8	1.7
As a Place to Visit	7.1	30.0	38.1	22.6	2.3
As a Place to Earn a Good Wage	1.2	8.8	33.1	45.7	11.3



Table 5 reports respondents' satisfaction levels with several key characteristics of Hernando County, ranging from public safety to the flow of traffic. The results reflect a mix of positive and negative sentiments, with certain aspects of life in the county being highly rated, while others show significant room for improvement. The overall reputation of the community received relatively high satisfaction, with 49.2% of respondents indicating they were "Somewhat Satisfied" and 11.3% stating they were "Very Satisfied." However, 29.5% of respondents were "Somewhat Dissatisfied," and 10% were "Very Dissatisfied," indicating that while the majority are content with the county's reputation, there are notable concerns among a significant portion of the population.

The overall cleanliness of the community followed a similar pattern, with 48.9% "Somewhat Satisfied" and 9.2% "Very Satisfied." However, 28.8% of respondents were "Somewhat Dissatisfied," and 13.1% were "Very Dissatisfied." This suggests that cleanliness, while generally acceptable, may not be meeting many residents' expectations, and there may be areas where improvements could be made, particularly in higher-density areas.

**Table 5.**

**Citizen Satisfaction with Key Characteristics of Hernando County (reported as % of row total)**

Please rate your satisfaction with the following characteristics of Hernando County:				
	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Overall reputation of the community	11.3	49.2	29.5	10.0
Overall cleanliness of the community	9.2	48.9	28.8	13.1
Overall safety of the community	12.6	43.6	29.2	14.7
The flow of traffic and congestion	3.4	19.6	30.9	46.2
The availability of quality, affordable housing	8.6	31.9	26.8	32.7
Access to retail, dining, and entertainment	27.3	47.5	17.8	7.4
Your access to arts and community events.	14.2	47.5	24.9	13.4

When it comes to overall safety, respondents expressed relatively high satisfaction, with 43.6% "Somewhat Satisfied" and 12.6% "Very Satisfied." However, a significant 29.2% were

"Somewhat Dissatisfied" and 14.7% were "Very Dissatisfied," pointing to concerns about crime and public safety. While most residents appear to feel safe, a substantial portion of the population expresses dissatisfaction and concern.

The flow of traffic and congestion was rated particularly poorly, with 46.2% of respondents indicating they were "Very Dissatisfied" with traffic conditions in Hernando County. Only 3.4% of respondents were "Very Satisfied," and 19.6% were "Somewhat Satisfied." This dissatisfaction aligns with broader concerns about the county's infrastructure not keeping pace with growth. Traffic congestion was one of the most commonly mentioned concerns in the open-ended responses (below), with many residents expressing frustration over the lack of effective traffic management and the condition of major roads.

Regarding the availability of quality, affordable housing, responses were split, with 31.9% of respondents "Somewhat Satisfied," 8.6% "Very Satisfied," and 26.8% "Somewhat Dissatisfied." Lastly, satisfaction with access to retail, dining, and entertainment was relatively positive, with 47.5% of respondents being "Somewhat Satisfied" and 27.3% "Very Satisfied." A smaller portion of respondents (7.4%) were "Very Dissatisfied".

These findings highlight both strengths and areas for improvement in Hernando County. While public safety, cleanliness, and the county's reputation are relatively well-regarded, issues such as traffic congestion, housing affordability, and access to amenities remain pressing concerns. Addressing these challenges will be crucial in maintaining or improving overall resident satisfaction, especially as the county continues to grow and develop.

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Respondents were also provided an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback on their quality of life in Hernando County. A significant number of respondents (44.0%) expressed concerns about traffic and infrastructure, citing increasing traffic congestion, poorly maintained roads, and the need for improved traffic management (Table 6). Many residents specifically mentioned the lack of streetlights and public transportation options, as well as dangerous intersections. These concerns align with the quantitative survey results (above), where traffic congestion was a significant source of dissatisfaction.

A notable portion of respondents (22.8%) also focused on community services and amenities, requesting more recreational facilities, parks, libraries, and healthcare services. As the county grows, many residents expressed the need for more community centers, better-maintained parks, and expanded shopping and dining options. The call for enhanced healthcare and educational facilities reflects a broader desire for services that support both the growing population and the county's aging demographic.

**Table 6.**

**Content Analysis of Open-Ended Responses (Quality of Life)**

Frequency	Percentage
<b>Traffic and Infrastructure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A significant number of respondents expressed concerns about increasing traffic congestion, road conditions, and the county's infrastructure failing to keep up with rapid development.</li><li>Issues raised include the need for road widening, better traffic management, more streetlights, improved public transportation, and concerns about dangerous intersections.</li></ul>	44.0%
<b>Community Services and Amenities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Many comments focused on the lack of recreational facilities, parks, libraries, entertainment options, and medical services.</li><li>Residents requested more public amenities, such as community centers, better-maintained parks, expanded shopping and dining options, and improved healthcare and educational facilities.</li></ul>	22.8%
<b>Public Safety and Crime</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Concerns about increasing crime, the need for more police presence, and the perceived lack of accountability in law enforcement were common themes.</li><li>Respondents specifically mentioned reckless driving, drug-related crime, homelessness, and a desire for body cameras on law enforcement officers.</li></ul>	21.1%
<b>Environmental Concerns</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Many residents voiced frustration about the loss of green spaces, wildlife displacement, and environmental degradation due to overdevelopment.</li><li>Topics included deforestation, water quality concerns, flooding risks, and a desire to preserve the rural and natural character of the county.</li></ul>	19.3%

<b>Government and Taxes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents criticized local government for rezoning decisions, excessive taxation, and perceived corruption or favoritism toward developers.</li> <li>Concerns about rising property taxes, the use of impact fees, and the lack of transparency in decision-making were frequently mentioned.</li> </ul>	17.2%
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Public safety and environmental concerns also emerged as major themes. Approximately 21.1% of respondents expressed concerns about crime, specifically rising crime rates, reckless driving, and homelessness, and called for more law enforcement presence and accountability. Environmental concerns (19.3%) focused on the loss of green spaces, water quality, and flooding risks, with residents urging the preservation of Hernando County's rural character. Additionally, 17.2% of comments critiqued local government decisions related to development, zoning, and taxes, reflecting frustration over perceived influence and the prioritization of developers over residents' needs.

## Community Amenities

Residents were generally familiar and satisfied with the amenities offered in Hernando County (Table 7). In terms of familiarity with county amenities, a significant percentage of respondents were familiar with parks (92.8%), libraries (84.2%), and nature preserves (88.6%). Notably, only 24.8% of respondents were "Very Familiar" with the county airport, which indicates room for improvement in public awareness of certain facilities.

**Table 7.**

**Familiarity with County Amenities (reported as % of row total)**

<i>How familiar are you with of the following Hernando County amenities?</i>	<b>Very Familiar</b>	<b>Somewhat Familiar</b>	<b>Not Very Familiar</b>	<b>Not at All Familiar</b>
Airport	24.8	41.4	20.6	13.1
Parks	47.5	45.3	6.4	0.8
Nature Preserves	44.7	43.9	9.7	1.7
Libraries	45.1	39.1	12.2	3.7
Arts and Tourism	19.9	47.3	25.6	7.3
Water Quality and Supply	28.1	44.1	20.8	7.0
Public Transportation	14.5	30.8	33.7	21.0

When asked about their satisfaction with these same county amenities, residents were most satisfied with parks and nature preserves, with 16.7% indicating "Very Satisfied" and 50.8% rating parks as "Somewhat Satisfied" (Table 8). However, satisfaction was notably lower for the county's airport (63.2% "Somewhat Satisfied" and 5.0% "Very Dissatisfied") and public transportation (60.1% "Somewhat Satisfied"). These findings indicate that while residents appreciate the county's natural amenities, there may be a disconnect between expectations and services related to transportation infrastructure and certain public services.

While residents are largely satisfied with amenities such as parks and libraries, the relatively low satisfaction with public transportation and the airport suggests that future investment in transportation infrastructure and accessibility may be needed to meet the expectations of a growing and diverse population. Addressing these concerns could improve the overall quality of life for residents.

**Table 8.**

**Satisfaction with County Amenities (reported as % of row total)**

<i>How satisfied are you with of the following Hernando County amenities?</i>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>
Airport	16.9	63.2	15.0	5.0
Parks	16.7	50.8	22.8	9.8
Nature Preserves	26.2	54.0	14.0	5.8
Libraries	31.4	56.8	9.1	2.6
Arts and Tourism	13.6	55.0	22.0	9.3
Water Quality and Supply	14.3	52.6	23.6	9.5
Public Transportation	10.5	60.1	18.9	10.5

## *Public Service Delivery*

The survey results on public service delivery revealed a range of opinions, with residents generally satisfied with emergency services but expressing concerns about other areas of county administration (Table 9). For example, Fire/EMS services received high ratings, with 51.6% of respondents reporting they were "Very Satisfied," and another 31.1% "Somewhat Satisfied." This indicates strong public approval of emergency services in the county.

On the other hand, satisfaction with services like general county administration (31.2% "Very Dissatisfied") and economic development (31.3% "Very Dissatisfied") was notably lower. These results suggest that while core services like Fire/EMS are highly valued, other county services

may require more attention, particularly in areas related to economic development and general administration. Drawing from the open-ended comments, dissatisfaction expressed in these areas may point to a need for improved transparency, efficiency, and responsiveness from local government entities.

**Table 9.**  
**Citizen Satisfaction with County Services (reported as % of row total)**

<i>Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the quality of the following services provided by Hernando County:</i>					
	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
Fire/EMS Services	51.6	31.1	4.2	2.6	10.4
Emergency Management and Preparedness	30.3	40.5	12.0	9.3	7.9
General County Administration	6.3	25.7	28.9	31.2	8.0
Economic Development	6.0	26.2	27.4	31.3	9.2
Health and Human Services	3.3	17.5	27.2	40.3	11.8

The low satisfaction with economic development services also highlights the importance of addressing concerns about job opportunities, business growth, and overall economic policy in the county. Improvements in these areas could have a substantial impact on overall resident satisfaction and economic wellbeing.

Satisfaction levels for other public services were more mixed, with maintenance of streets and sidewalks receiving the lowest satisfaction scores (Table 10). Only 5.6% of respondents were "Very Satisfied," and 36.9% were "Very Dissatisfied," indicating widespread dissatisfaction with the state of infrastructure. Similarly, trash and recycling services were rated somewhat positively, with 23.3% "Very Satisfied" and 40.7% "Somewhat Satisfied." However, 14.5% of respondents were "Very Dissatisfied," suggesting that while the service is generally functional, there is room for improvement in waste management.

**Table 10.****Citizen Satisfaction with County Services (reported as % of row total)**

*Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the quality of the following services provided by Hernando County:*

	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
Maintenance of Streets and Sidewalks	5.6	28.9	27.6	36.9	1.1
Trash and Recycling	23.3	40.7	19.6	14.5	1.9
Water and Wastewater Utilities	17.7	41.5	15.2	10.1	15.6
Quality of Lakes and Waterways	10.9	40.3	22.6	13.9	12.4
Permitting	3.5	17.4	21.1	40.4	17.7
Code Enforcement	5.1	25.3	22.2	29.7	17.7

For water and wastewater utilities, satisfaction was relatively high, with 17.7% of respondents "Very Satisfied" and 41.5% "Somewhat Satisfied." However, 15.2% were "Somewhat Dissatisfied," and 10.1% were "Very Dissatisfied," indicating some concerns about the quality or accessibility of these services. Quality of lakes and waterways also had a mixed response, with 40.3% of respondents "Somewhat Satisfied" but only 10.9% "Very Satisfied," suggesting that while water quality is a positive aspect for some, there may be some room for improvement in management of the county's water resources. The lowest satisfaction scores in this table were for permitting (40.4% "Very Dissatisfied"), reflecting frustration with the permitting process, which may be seen as slow, complex, or overly bureaucratic.

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Among the survey respondent, 430 reported contacting the county for assistance in the past six months. Table 11 highlights the methods used by residents to contact county staff. The most common method of contact was phone (46.5%), with email (25.2%) and walk-in (18.9%) also being frequently used. This indicates that residents prefer more direct, personal forms of communication when reaching out to county departments. Only a small percentage of respondents used the county

website (4.8%) or social media (4.6%) for their inquiries, suggesting that while digital channels are available, they are not the primary means through which residents engage with county staff.

**Table 11.**

**Common Methods of Contacting the City**

<i>How did you first contact the county for your most recent inquiry?</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Phone	194	46.5
Email	105	25.2
Walk-In	79	18.9
Website	20	4.8
Social Media	19	4.6

Regarding their experiences with county staff, most respondents were satisfied with the professionalism of county employees (Table 12). The majority agreed that county employees were courteous and respectful (42.3% "Strongly Agree," 39.7% "Somewhat Agree"). However, concerns remained about responsiveness, with only 22.1% of respondents "strongly" agreeing that their concerns were addressed in a reasonable time, and 27.7% expressing "strong" disagreement. Additionally, while many felt that county employees were knowledgeable (68.8% agreed), 31.3% of respondents disagreed. This suggests that while county staff are generally viewed positively in terms of demeanor, there are potential opportunities to improve timeliness and the quality of services provided.

**Table 12.**

**Citizen Experiences with County Staff (reported as % of row total)**

<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements (as they pertain to your most recent contact with a County official or department):</i>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
It was easy to contact the appropriate official/department	24.8	41.7	17.6	15.9
My concern was addressed in a reasonable time	22.1	28.9	21.4	27.7
County employees were courteous and respectful	42.3	39.7	10.8	7.2
County employees were knowledgeable	27.9	40.9	19.5	11.8
I was satisfied with my experience	22.2	34.1	21.0	22.7



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## Communication and Citizen Participation in Government

The survey results indicate that while there is some satisfaction with county communication efforts, significant gaps remain, particularly in ensuring that residents feel informed and involved in government decision-making (Table 13). When asked about the quality of information available regarding county services, only 13.2% of respondents were "Very Satisfied," while 42.8% were "Somewhat Satisfied." This suggests an opportunity for more effective communication strategies, particularly in keeping residents well-informed about county services and initiatives.

**Table 13.**  
**Citizen Satisfaction with County Communication Efforts (reported as % of row total)**

<i>Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the quality of the following:</i>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
Access to information about County services	13.2	42.8	24.5	10.5	9.0
County efforts to keep citizens informed	9.6	32.4	27.9	25.8	4.2
Opportunities to participate in County government	8.1	29.2	25.5	20.4	16.7
The County's website	9.4	43.8	22.2	10.2	14.3
The County's social media sites	10.1	40.6	20.4	11.0	17.9

In terms of citizen participation, a large portion of respondents were unsatisfied with the opportunities to engage with county government. Only 8.1% of respondents were "Very Satisfied" with opportunities for participation, and 25.5% were "Somewhat Dissatisfied." This highlights a gap in the perceived accessibility of the county government to its citizens, suggesting that efforts to increase civic engagement, such as town hall meetings, surveys, or other participatory platforms, could be beneficial. Table 14 summarizes the most common methods that residents use to stay informed about county issues, services, and events. Facebook and the County Website stood out as the most common methods of information seeking.

**Table 14.**  
**Methods of Staying Informed**

*Which of the following sources do you use to stay informed about County issues, services, and events?*

	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	772	80.5
County Website	571	59.5
Citizen Organized Community Groups	260	27.1
Elected Officials	195	20.3
Home Owners Association (HOA)	113	11.8
Engage Hernando	53	5.5
Twitter	39	4.1

## Strategic Planning/Priorities

To better inform the county's strategic planning efforts, respondents were asked to identify the Hernando County's greatest strengths and weaknesses through a SWOT analysis (Table 15). Key strengths included the county's natural resources (37.3%) and its small-town feel (36.4%), which reflect a shared appreciation for the rural and scenic aspects of the area. These elements were highly valued by residents who see them as integral to the county's identity and desirability as a place to live.

**Table 15.**  
**SWOT Analysis**

*From the list below, what would you consider to be the three greatest strengths and greatest areas for improvement for Hernando County?*

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Strengths</b>		
Natural Resources	373	38.9
Rural Character and Agricultural Life	364	37.9
Small-Town Feel	275	28.7
Proximity to Major Urban Areas	210	21.9
Access to Gulf Waters for Recreation	208	21.7
Limited Development	154	16.1
Friendly and Welcoming Community	93	9.7
Undeveloped Beaches/Waterfront	92	9.6
Public Safety	69	7.2
Growing Community	63	6.6

**Areas for Improvement**

Maintaining the Rural County Characters	514	53.6
Protecting Greenspaces	418	43.6
Balancing Preservation of Natural Resources with Growth	387	40.4
Transportation Infrastructure	188	19.6
Promoting Affordable Housing Growth	139	14.5
Improving/Expanding Access to Mental Health Services	111	11.6
Investing in Workforce Development	94	9.8
Improving/Expanding Access to Medical Services	87	9.1
Expanding Business Support Services	44	4.6

Conversely, the most significant areas for improvement included maintaining the rural character of the county (53.4%) and protecting green spaces (43.7%). These concerns point to challenges posed by rapid development, which residents fear may erode the very qualities they cherish about the county. Another major concern was transportation infrastructure, which was highlighted by 18.7% of respondents as an area in need of improvement. This feedback reflects the ongoing challenge of balancing growth with preservation and infrastructure development.

Collectively, the survey results underscore the need for the county to prioritize sustainable development practices that protect its natural resources while addressing the demands of a growing population. This includes investing in infrastructure that supports growth without compromising the rural charm and environmental integrity that define Hernando County.

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Table 16 provides an analysis of the most frequently mentioned challenges facing Hernando County, as identified by respondents in the open-ended section of the survey. The primary concern, highlighted by 57.8% of respondents, was overdevelopment and housing. Many residents expressed frustration with unregulated growth, excessive residential construction, and the loss of the county's rural character. Concerns about overcrowding and the strain on local resources, including water and public services, were frequently raised. Many respondents feared that the county's rapid development would result in a decline in quality of life, similar to what neighboring counties have experienced.

**Table 16.**

**Content Analysis of Open-Ended Responses (Most Important Challenges Facing Hernando County)**

Frequency	Percentage
<b>Overdevelopment and Housing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The most frequently mentioned challenge was unregulated growth and overdevelopment.</li><li>• Concerns include excessive residential construction, loss of rural character, overcrowding, and the strain on resources such as water and public services.</li><li>• Many residents fear Hernando County will become overbuilt like neighboring counties, leading to a decline in quality of life.</li></ul>	57.8%
<b>Traffic and Infrastructure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many respondents are concerned about increasing traffic congestion and the county's inability to keep up with road infrastructure.</li><li>• Issues raised include inadequate road expansions, worsening congestion, and a lack of public transportation options.</li><li>• Several mentioned the need for better traffic management and safety improvements at major intersections.</li></ul>	39.0%
<b>Public Safety and Crime</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crime and public safety concerns are growing alongside population increases.</li><li>• Residents expressed worries about rising crime rates, reckless driving, drug-related offenses, and a lack of law enforcement resources.</li><li>• Some mentioned a need for better emergency response and more funding for police and fire departments.</li></ul>	15.1%

<b>Education and Public Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid population growth is straining schools and public services.</li> <li>• Complaints include overcrowded schools, underfunded education, and teacher shortages.</li> <li>• Some fear that the county is not planning for the necessary expansion of schools and libraries to accommodate growth.</li> </ul>	14.4%
<b>Government and Taxes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many believe local government is prioritizing development over residents' needs.</li> <li>• There is strong criticism of county commissioners and concerns over tax increases without corresponding improvements in services.</li> <li>• Residents expressed frustration over zoning changes, impact fees, and perceived corruption or favoritism toward developers.</li> </ul>	11.0%

Traffic and infrastructure was the second most cited challenge (39.0%), with respondents highlighting worsening traffic congestion and the county's inability to keep up with road infrastructure. Issues raised included inadequate road expansion, lack of public transportation, and the need for better traffic management. Some respondents also pointed to the dangers posed by certain intersections, which they felt were unsafe. These concerns about infrastructure align with the dissatisfaction expressed in the quantitative results on traffic congestion.

Other important challenges included public safety and crime (15.1%), education and public services (14.4%), and government and taxes (11.0%). Respondents were particularly concerned about rising crime rates, drug-related offenses, and a lack of law enforcement resources. Education-related concerns focused on overcrowded schools and the underfunding of public education, while frustration with local government decisions, taxes, and perceived favoritism toward developers was another common theme.

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Table 17 shows respondents' satisfaction with the overall direction that Hernando County is taking. The results reveal that a majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the county's current trajectory. Only 2.1% of respondents were "Very Satisfied" with the direction, and 23.8% were "Somewhat Satisfied." In contrast, 39.7% of respondents were "Somewhat Dissatisfied," and 34.4%

were "Dissatisfied." In the context of the previous findings, these data suggest that many residents are concerned about the county's management and decision-making, with dissatisfaction stemming from issues like rapid development, public safety, and infrastructure inadequacies. The low satisfaction with the county's direction may indicate a need for more community engagement and a reevaluation of current policies to address residents' concerns.

**Table 17.**  
**Satisfaction with Direction of the County**

*How satisfied are you with the overall direction that Hernando County is taking?*

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Satisfied	20	2.1
Somewhat Satisfied	225	23.8
Somewhat Dissatisfied	376	39.7
Dissatisfied	325	34.4

In Table 18, respondents were asked about their satisfaction with how Hernando County has balanced growth and preservation of its natural resources. A significant portion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, with 53.2% rating the balance as "Dissatisfied" and 29.3% as "Somewhat Dissatisfied." Only 15.3% were "Somewhat Satisfied," and 2.1% were "Very Satisfied." These results echo concerns about the county's rapid development and its impact on natural resources. Many residents feel that the preservation of the county's rural and natural character has not been adequately prioritized in the face of growth. The dissatisfaction expressed in this table underscores the need for better planning and policies that balance development with environmental conservation.

**Table 18.**  
**Satisfaction with Balance Between Growth and Preservation**

*How satisfied are you with how the County has balanced recent growth/development with preservation of Hernando County's natural resources?*

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Satisfied	20	2.1
Somewhat Satisfied	145	15.3
Somewhat Dissatisfied	277	29.3
Dissatisfied	503	53.2

Finally, Table 19 asked residents about their support for additional passive recreation along the county’s waterfront areas, such as boardwalks, wildlife viewing, kayaking, and trails. The results indicate strong support for such initiatives, with 36.6% of respondents "Strongly Supporting" and 37.1% "Somewhat Supporting" the development of more passive recreational spaces. Only 12.1% "Somewhat Opposed," and 14.2% "Strongly Opposed" the idea. This suggests that many residents value the county’s waterfront areas and want to see more opportunities for passive recreation that allow them to enjoy the natural beauty of the county. Based on these responses, expanding recreational spaces along the waterfront could be an important priority for future development.

**Table 19.**  
**Waterfront Recreation**

*Would you support or oppose additional passive recreation along the County’s waterfront areas (i.e. boardwalks, wildlife viewing, kayaking, trails)*

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Support	346	36.6
Somewhat Support	351	37.1
Somewhat Oppose	114	12.1
Strongly Oppose	134	14.2

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The 2025 Hernando County Citizen Survey provides valuable insights into the priorities, concerns, and satisfaction levels of the county’s residents. The survey revealed a strong sense of appreciation for Hernando County’s natural resources, small-town feel, and overall quality of life, particularly in relation to its parks and recreational areas. However, concerns about traffic congestion, overdevelopment, and the balance between growth and environmental preservation emerged as major issues that could be addressed to ensure that the county's future development aligns with the needs of its residents.

A significant portion of the respondents expressed concern with the direction of the county, with over 70% indicating some level of dissatisfaction. The primary areas of concern were traffic and infrastructure, affordable housing, and public safety. Traffic congestion, in particular, stood out as a top concern, with respondents indicating a need for improved road infrastructure, expanded public transportation options, and better traffic management. Additionally, while the county has experienced substantial growth, residents have expressed concerns about the impact this growth is having on the county’s rural and environmental character, with a strong desire for better planning and policies that balance development with the preservation of natural resources.

Based on the findings outlined above, it's recommended that Hernando County consider the following recommendations:

1. **Address Infrastructure Challenges:** To alleviate growing concerns about traffic congestion, it is crucial to prioritize infrastructure improvements. The county should consider investing in road expansions, better traffic management systems, and explore potential public transportation options. Improved infrastructure will not only enhance residents' daily commutes but also support sustainable development as the county continues to grow.
2. **Focus on Housing Affordability:** Given the concerns about housing affordability, the county might consider policies aimed at increasing the availability of affordable housing. This could include incentivizing the development of affordable housing units, revising zoning regulations, and creating partnerships with private developers to ensure housing options are accessible to a wider range of income levels.
3. **Enhance Public Safety:** While emergency services received high marks, public safety remains a concern for many residents. The county may consider increasing funding for law enforcement, expanding police presence in high-traffic areas, and addressing concerns about drug-related offenses and homelessness. Additionally, increased community policing efforts could foster better relations between residents and law enforcement.
4. **Improve Communication and Citizen Engagement:** The survey results showed a potential gap in communication between the county government and its residents. To improve civic engagement, the county should consider enhancing its communication strategies, particularly through digital platforms like the county website and social media. Additionally, creating more opportunities for public participation, such as town halls and community meetings, will ensure that residents feel their voices are heard and that they have a role in shaping the county's future.
5. **Preserve the Rural Character of the County:** Residents strongly value the rural nature of Hernando County and its natural resources. Based on the collective survey responses, the county should prioritize efforts to protect green spaces, preserve wildlife habitats, and implement sustainable development practices that balance growth with environmental conservation. This may include revising development plans to include green building standards and environmental protections.



In conclusion, while Hernando County is well-regarded for its natural beauty and small-town charm, significant concerns about growth management, infrastructure, and public services should be addressed to ensure the county remains a desirable place to live for all residents. The recommendations provided are aimed at improving the quality of life for current and future residents, fostering a balanced and sustainable approach to growth, and ensuring that Hernando County continues to thrive in the years to come.