

CHAPTER

8

Economy

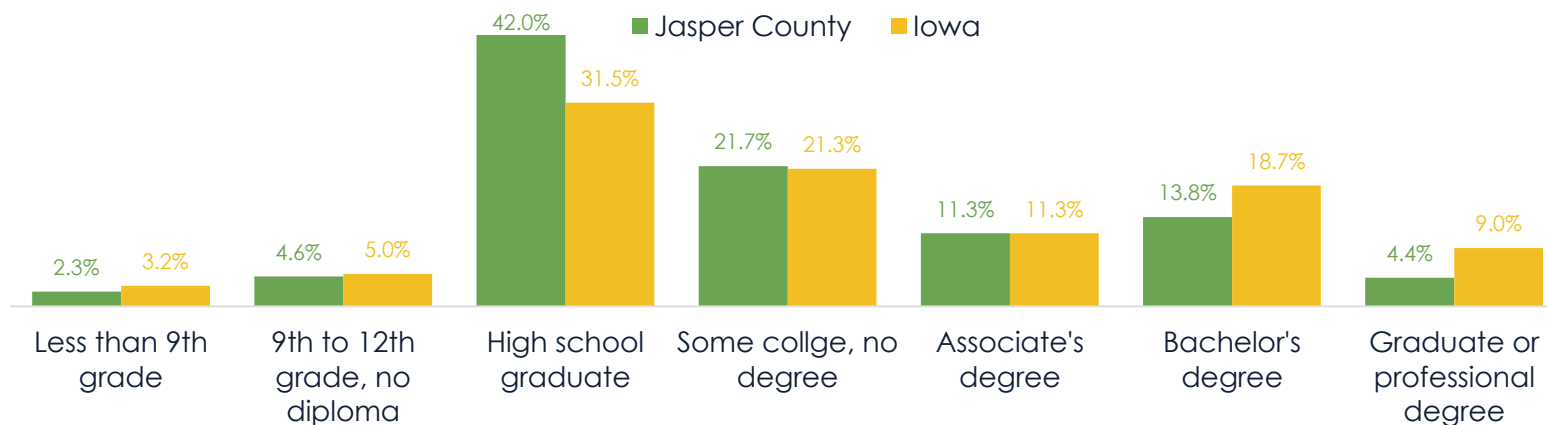
Introduction

When planning for economic development, the goal is to create and maintain a strong, vibrant local economy. The county strives to create a positive business climate by attracting and retaining a diversity of businesses and entrepreneurs. The economic chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the economy, sets policy recommendations for non-agricultural economic growth, and identifies strategies, programs and projects to improve the non-agricultural economy.

Economic Characteristics

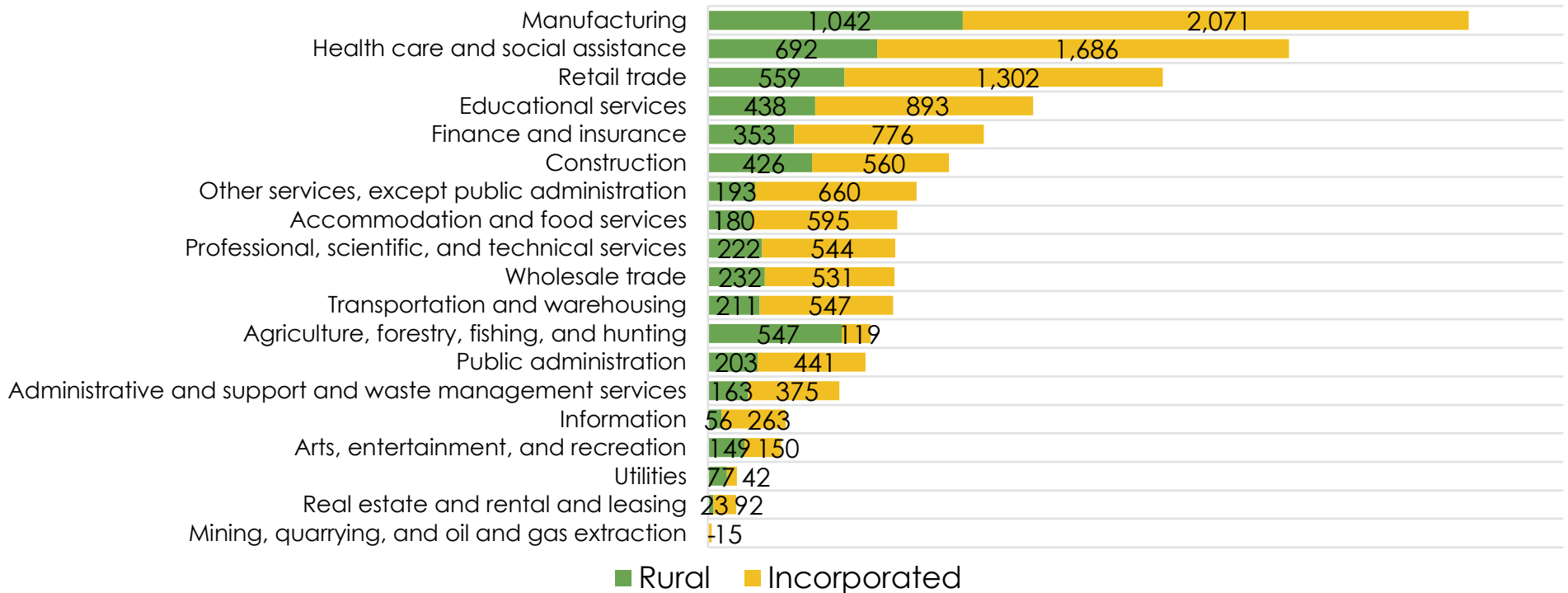
Educational Attainment

Understanding a community's education levels helps us to understand the community as a whole. The 2017 American Community Survey shows that 6.9% of the population aged 25 years and over have obtained less than a high school diploma, compared to 8.2% of Iowans in the same age bracket. A large proportion, 63.7%, of Jasper County residents over the age of 25 have attained a high school degree (or equivalent) but have not obtained any higher level degree. The proportion of Jasper County residents with this level of educational attainment is higher than that of Iowa at 52.8%. Finally, 29.5% of Jasper County residents have received some level of college degree compared to 39.0% of Iowans.



Industries

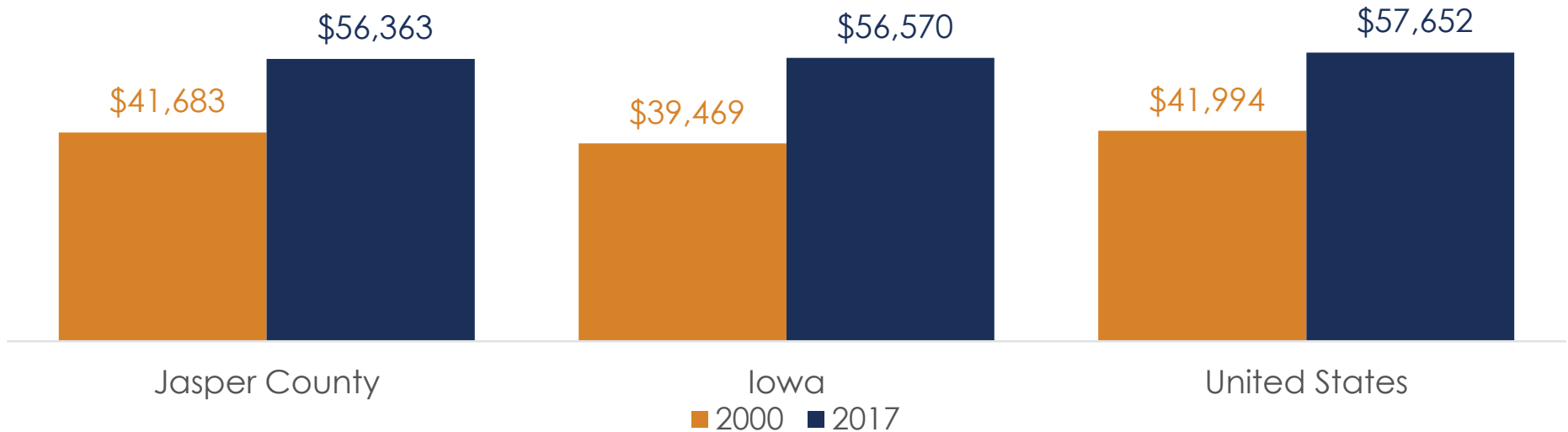
The main employment industry in Jasper County is manufacturing according to the 2017 American Community Survey, with roughly two-thirds of manufacturing jobs being located within incorporated city limits. The next three industries with the highest employment are health care and social assistance, retail trade, and educational services providing over 5,000 jobs in Jasper County. Roughly two-thirds of all jobs in Jasper County are located within cities.



Household Income

The median household income for Jasper County in 2000 was \$41,683, which was slightly more than that of Iowa but slightly less than that of the United States at \$39,469 and \$41,994 respectively. In 2017, the American Community Survey estimated that the median household income in Jasper County had grown to \$56,393, a 35.2% increase. During that same time, Iowa's median household income increased at a greater rate of 43.3% to \$56,570, surpassing the median household income of Jasper County. The United States median household income increased at a similar but slightly greater rate (37.3%) to Jasper County's, with an estimated 2017 median household income of \$57,652.

Median Household Income



Public Feedback + Best Practices

In the county-wide survey, Economic Development was chosen at the most important thing for the county to focus its attention. Because of the significance of this element, a Business Focus Group session was conducted. As one business focus group participant stated, “The lack of employment opportunities] is one of the main reasons that people leave small towns.” The focus group’s feedback revealed the county’s needs related to the workforce, business development resources, and infrastructure, which are reflected in the objectives on the next page and the actions identified in the Implementation Plan.

In several focus group sessions, the proximity to Des Moines was mentioned as a benefit due to the ease of access to the city’s many resources and amenities but also a challenge particularly for economic development since many businesses would choose to locate in Des Moines rather than in Jasper County.

When asked to distribute the hypothetical county budget, funding for economic development fell in the middle of five options. Transportation and public safety were the top two choices, which reflects that while economic development is seen as the area needing the most attention, residents feel that public dollars should be prioritized to basic governmental services before incentive programs. Respondents also recognize a connection between a safe and efficient transportation system and the ability to operate a business that relies upon that transportation system.

The need for a diversified economy was noted in the survey comments, along with the need to develop a quality workforce, attract high-paying jobs, and ensure that new industrial development is properly located in or near developed areas with compatible adjacent land uses. Respondents noted a need for more full-service restaurants and more retail shopping options.

For educational opportunities, the public comments noted the need to fund the library system and support the resources they provide to the communities. There was also support for the Des Moines Area Community College.

Economic best practices relate to occupational diversity and promote education, training, and access to employment areas. “Buy local” is a popular theme for maximizing the economic impact of one’s spending while reducing the negative environmental impacts of purchasing goods that are produced elsewhere and shipped.

Goals + Objectives

Goals

EC: Attract, retain, and expand a variety of businesses

Objectives

EC-1: Create and attract an educated and skilled workforce

EC-2: Establish a business-friendly environment

EC-3: Use county-wide marketing to promote tourism and local businesses

EC-4: Seek new businesses that will diversify and strengthen the local economy

EC-5: Encourage entrepreneurship and support of local business development