

Top Trends for 2050

Twenty-six teams played the Big Sort, November 8-9, 2023. The following table shows the aggregate results of the high impact and high certainty trends facing Kent County through 2050.

Total	FQ*	Trend	Variability in Readiness Ranking**																									
26	16. Rising Child Care Concerns	0 1 1 1 2 2 2 2 2 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 7 8																										
25	12. Increasing Pressure to Address Housing	1 1 1 2 2 3 3 3 4 4 4 5 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 7 7 7 8 9																										
25	3. Growing Diversity	1 1 1 2 2 2 3 3 3 4 4 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 7 7 7 7 8																										
24	6. Increasing Immigrant Role	2 2 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 6 6 7 7 8 8 8 8 9																										
22	8. Increasing Grid Capacity & Demand	0 1 2 2 2 2 3 3 4 4 4 5 5 6 6 6 7 7 7 7 7 8																										
22	10. Growing Automation & AI Applications	0 0 0 1 2 2 3 3 3 3 3 4 4 4 4 4 5 5 5 6 6 6																										
20	5. Rising Educational Attainment & Requirements	2 2 3 3 4 4 4 5 5 5 6 6 7 8 8 8 8 8 9 10																										
20	13. Growing Climate & Weather Impacts	0 0 1 1 1 1 2 2 2 3 3 4 4 4 4 5 5 5 6 7																										
19	1. Increasing Population	1 1 1 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 3 4 4 4 5 5 7 7 7																										
18	2. Increasingly Older Population	1 1 3 4 4 4 4 4 5 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 7 8 10																										
18	9. Rising Broadband Connectivity	0 3 5 5 6 6 6 6 7 7 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 9																										
18	18. Growing Employment	3 4 4 5 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 6 6 7 8 8 8 9 10																										
13	15. Increasing Pressure to Increase Water Sustainability	1 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 3 4 4 5 6																										
12	14. Growing Demand for Alternative Transportation	1 1 1 1 3 4 4 4 4 4 6 6																										
11	27. Increasing Public Support for Sustainability Policies	3 3 4 5 5 6 6 8 8 9 10																										
10	7. Growing Gap: Youth vs Adult Mental Health & Care Access	2 2 3 4 4 4 5 5 7 8																										
10	21. Falling Behind on Talent	2 2 3 4 5 6 7 7 7 10																										
9	22. Increasing Circular Economy	2 2 3 4 5 6 6 8 8																										
8	17. Increasing Industry Re-/On-Shoring	5 5 7 8 8 8 8 9																										
7	19. Shifting Top Industries	6 7 7 8 8 10 10																										
6	20. Growing Per Capita Income	4 5 6 8 9 9																										
6	25. Increasing Union Power & Assertiveness	3 3 3 4 5 6																										
4	24. Rising Minimum Wage	2 5 5 7																										
4	28. Growing Inclusive Civic Engagement	3 4 4 5																										
3	26. Decreasing Republican Dominance in Gubernatorial Elections	2 5 7																										
2	4. Improving Poverty & Income Inequality	2 5																										
2	11. Growing EV Infrastructure & Use	1 1																										
1	23. Decreasing Property Tax Burden	3																										

* Total FQ (Frequency) is the number of teams that selected the trend as a "high impact" and "high certainty" trend.

26 teams participated, so "26" means 100% of the teams said the trend was "high impact" and "high certainty."

Trends above the red line had an FQ of 50% or more, meaning at least half of the team agreed these items are "high impact" and "high certainty"

** Variability in Readiness Ranking uses a color scale to convey the diversity of ranks per trend per team.

This scale goes from white (equivalent to a rank of 0) to a solid pink (equivalent to a rank of 10).

In this scale, 0 refers to "not ready" and 10 refers to "totally ready" for the respective trend.

Feedback from the Big Sort

All feedback is available [here](#).

What does the Big Sort tell us?

That KC is not as ready as it probably should be. The county is being proactive with having this type of event. There are experts within KC doing the work already.

The Big Sort tells us there are a lot of challenges and opportunities and still more people to bring to the table of conversation. The future is uncertain but we can be proactive

We are more ready for economic and tech shifts, there is a gap between our diverse communities (green) and economic opportunities (gold)

What surprised you, or what new insights did you gain?

Kent Co has resources and infrastructure to take on these topics. We are starting from a better place than other counties may. This was not a daunting task as expected.

Learning thru the examples and having a good discussion with real data. Sometimes, we already see too much so wasn't surprised. We know what we need to do but we don't think about it from day to day.

There are trends outside of our experience that influence and impact the future. Plurality of voices still not equitably represented along racial, ethnic, geographic, and economic lines

What surprised you, or what new insights did you gain?

Matters to share diversity of thought. Lifting voices of the community to inform decisions. It will only matter if the leaders implement our comments.

Can't have vision and move forward if we don't discuss the hard issues. We can't create the future we want or need without direct conversations

It clearly showed the interconnectedness, the importance of gathering diverse perspectives and shows that siloed is not the way to move forward.

DELPHI SURVEY

What do local stakeholders consider most important for the future of the Kent County community by 2050? This report synthesizes insights from a two-part survey to guide Kent County's future. Gathering responses from 112-155 residents across 33 ZIP codes, notably 49503, 49506, and 49507, between September 18 and November 7, 2023, it offers strategic insights for community leaders. While these findings are insightful, they are not fully representative of the entire county due to the sample size. We also provide rankings for probability and impact where possible to help prioritize, but the sample size and statistical significance variations limit them. Complete results are [here](#).

These three themes deserve to be at the center of our community's attention:

Affordable Housing & Housing Availability – Includes addressing housing shortages, diverse types of housing, housing opportunities for all income levels, homelessness, availability and affordability of housing, suburban sprawl, and advocating for housing in urban areas and preservation of rural farmland. Respondents expect that substantial improvement or progress on this theme will generate the highest impact on this community by 2050.

Economic Growth & Sustainability – Includes addressing long-term economic sustainability, attracting new businesses, supporting existing ones, economic mobility for area residents, attracting and retaining talent, employment opportunities, economic disparities, and fostering pro-business policies and investments to differentiate Kent County from other economic regions. Respondents expect that the Kent County community will most likely see substantial improvement or progress on this theme by 2050.

Inclusive Community – Includes tackling disparities in health, education, housing, and employment; promoting transparent decision-making with diverse voices; nurturing community unity; and improving every resident's quality of life regardless of background, eliminating barriers rooted in bias or prejudice. Respondents expect that substantial improvement or progress on this theme will generate the highest impact on this community by 2050.

The three best things our community can achieve right now:

Housing & Affordable Living – Address affordable housing challenges, support struggling families, and ensure all residents have a place to live.

Economic Growth & Development – Stimulate economic growth, support entrepreneurs, and enhance infrastructure. Foster a robust economy, prioritize infrastructure projects, and develop key community assets. Respondents expect that the Kent County community will most likely see substantial improvement or progress on this theme by 2050.

Collaboration and Effective Resource Use – Optimize resource efficiency by collaborating with various groups like government, nonprofits, and community stakeholders. Foster fairness and effectiveness in allocating resources.

Vision: By 2050, the Kent County community shines at its absolute best because it reflects these:

Inclusive Community – At its absolute best, the Kent County community is a model of togetherness. Regardless of background or appearance, everyone feels welcomed and valued. Everyone has the opportunity to afford a home and grow roots. Every child receives a quality education that helps them thrive in the future. Strong community bonds connect everyone, and decisions are made with everyone's input in mind. Respondents expect that substantial improvement or progress on this theme will generate the highest impact on this community by 2050.

Flourishing Economic Hub – At its absolute best, the Kent County community is a top spot in the Midwest for businesses and talented people. Ideal for tech, healthcare, and entrepreneurs, it boasts a growing economy and modern infrastructure. Young professionals find it not just appealing but rewarding to establish their careers here. Kent County's success melds business and community, prioritizing purpose alongside prosperity. Respondents expect that the Kent County community will most likely see substantial improvement or progress on this theme by 2050.

Balancing Nature and Development – At its absolute best, the Kent County community balances modern infrastructure with nature's beauty. Public transportation links cities and serene parks, giving residents diverse experiences. The community prioritizes sustainable practices, from green architecture to renewable energy projects. This dedication to the environment, combined with smart urban growth, provides residents with an unmatched lifestyle while promoting sustainable progress.

These top three headwinds (opposing forces) that will make it challenging for the Kent County community to reach its potential:

Political & Governance Challenges – Includes local politics driven by personal agendas, transparency and accountability deficits, political instability, rising polarization, outdated governance structures, perception issues, and funding/resource allocation struggles, all hampering progress and collaboration.

Strategic Alignment & Planning Challenges – Includes challenges with misaligned goals among stakeholders, lack of visionary leadership, limited collaboration, inadequate resource allocation, community engagement, resistance to change, absence of regional planning, and insufficient inclusion considerations.

Economic & Financial Challenges – Includes challenges with lacking fiscal discipline, economic resilience, inclusive economic growth, diversification, and affordable housing. Also, insufficient long-term planning, regional competitiveness, access to capital, and safeguards against external economic shocks.



Use or strengthen these top three tailwinds (supporting forces) that will help the Kent County community reach its potential in the future:

Collaboration & Partnerships Strengths – Includes the community's notable strength in fostering diverse collaborations, uniting public, private, and non-profit sectors, and consistently engaging in joint efforts for the common good and key community projects. Respondents expect that the Kent County community will *most likely* see substantial improvement or progress on this theme by 2050.

Philanthropy & Community Support – Includes the community's unparalleled philanthropic spirit, significant contributions from individuals and foundations, and a rich tradition of generosity, collaboration, and commitment to investing in vital projects and long-term community well-being. Respondents expect that the Kent County community will *most likely* see substantial improvement or progress on this theme by 2050.

Leadership & Governance Strengths – Includes proactive and visionary leadership that is committed to forward-thinking, community engagement, and transparent governance. Collaborative efforts, both within and outside of government, demonstrate a dedication to fostering economic development and achieving transformative community impact.

The future requires the following of the Kent County community:

Inclusivity – The future requires that the Kent County community prioritizes inclusion, meaningful representation, diverse leadership, accessible opportunities, and intentional empathy to ensure all community members thrive harmoniously, without neglecting historically marginalized groups.

Collaboration & Leadership – The future requires proactive, visionary leadership that prioritizes collaboration across sectors. Sidestep petty politics and emphasize uniting resources, fostering public-private partnerships, and rallying community engagement for informed decision-making, transcending challenges, and ensuring systemic success.

Sustainability & Future Readiness – The future requires sustainable, forward-thinking practices encompassing housing, education, and transportation. Emphasizing environmental protection, economic inclusion, and innovative adaptability, the community must foster holistic growth, prioritize green initiatives, and ensure responsible budgeting for a resilient, inclusive future.