



Understanding and Building Support for Affordable Housing in Narragansett

Summary Report of Municipal Technical Assistance Project

April 2025

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Cover Images (clockwise): Beachwood Apartments; Clarke Point; South Winds Apartments

Introduction

Faced with an ever-growing crisis of housing affordability, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of Rhode Island appropriated \$25M to capitalize the Housing Production Fund, of which \$4M was made available for a program for municipal technical assistance. RIHousing was designated to administer what was called the Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP) according to guidelines approved by the RI Housing Resources Commission's Coordinating Committee and in collaboration with the state Department of Housing.

Municipalities were eligible to apply for funds to support a number of planning and analysis activities to increase housing production, particularly for households of low- and moderate-incomes. Eligible activities included needs analysis, updating land use and permitting requirements, developing model ordinances, infrastructure capacity assessment, and public engagement and education. Municipalities that were awarded were able to choose from a list of approved consultants.

In August 2023, the Town of Narragansett's pre-application for MTAP funding was approved "to conduct a public engagement and education program for deploying techniques and tools that will respond to resident opposition in an effort to educate the public and fully engage the community in supporting much needed affordable housing." The objective, as stated in the Town's RFP, was "to coalesce the results of the various studies and zoning regulatory changes into a manageable and understandable series of public workshops targeted at alleviating public misunderstanding of the circumstances of housing need in Town and allay fear or confusion of how development of affordable housing may affect the Town and/or its individual neighborhoods."

As one of the approved consultants, HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University (HWRI) responded to the Town's proposal offering a multi-pronged approach that included a Townwide survey, focus groups with local officials, and outreach to stakeholders and residents that sought to identify and tell "stories" of need and belonging. The work would culminate in a series of six workshops, and all would be made available through a dedicated project website.

The overall project was led by HWRI Research and Policy Director Annette Bourne, and supported by HWRI Staff Toby Arment, Research Analyst; HWRI consultant Dr. Per Fjelstad; and HWRI Brown University intern Kylee Hong. HWRI Executive Director Brenda Clement oversaw the project. The HWRI team was hired through a competitive process by the Town's Department of Community Development. Michael DeLuca was Director of Community Development at the outset, but retired during the program. Ms. Jill Sabo, appointed Director in July 2024, has overseen the HWRI team from May 2024 until its completion.

Summary of Work

Titled “Understanding and Building Support for Affordable Housing in Narragansett,” work began with planning for the website and scheduling of focus groups in fall 2023 and wrapped up with workshops held in September 2024. All materials related to the project are attached to this report.

Focus Groups

HWRI conducted a series of four focus groups with elected and appointed Town officials. Invitations were sent to all members of the Town Council, Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Affordable Housing Trust Collaborative, which constituted 22 invitations. Of those, 17 were able to participate (two outside the group setting). The discussions were conducted by Annette Bourne (Research and Policy Director), with notetaking and assistance by Toby Arment (Research Analyst). Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes and was recorded for transcription purposes only. The summary was devised using both written notes and verbatim transcriptions, especially when citing direct quotes. The Focus Group report was completed in February 2024, and is attached to this report. Any factual misstatements regarding local ordinances, regulations, or organizations were reflective of local knowledge and understanding. The questions used to structure the focus groups sought to gain insight into the perceptions of affordable housing, the need for affordable housing, and the challenges that come with meeting those needs.

A synopsis of the common themes that emerged includes the desirability of the Town, and the residential composition influenced by long-standing family ties, a large student population attending the nearby University of Rhode Island, and a substantial seasonal population from Memorial Day through Labor Day. While the Town has a history of school-year and summer rentals, the modern-day factor of the “short-term rental” industry has had a profound effect on the Town’s real estate market. The growing demand for rentals and consequent rise in home prices has drastically increased home values and rent prices, resulting in a steadily shrinking permanent population. The effects of this shrinkage are particularly pronounced for young, low- and moderate-income wage earners, and some older residents. Due to the loss of population in these categories, the Town has experienced a sharp decline in the school-aged population and the number of entry-level workers in a wide range of business types.

In addition to challenges with increasing housing costs, participants expressed challenges with creating affordable housing. A prevailing sentiment is that a large share of the community does not know what affordable housing looks like and does not know who needs it. Community members are generally apprehensive about the idea of affordable housing given their fears about the types of populations it may enable to live in the Town. Another related challenge with creating affordable housing is the concern that new construction will change the physical character of the neighborhoods in which it is built. The final challenges impeding the creation of affordable housing are logistical, including environmental conditions and the lack of public infrastructure necessary to support higher-density developments.

Website

After months of planning and design work, the project website became operational in spring 2024 and was linked from the Town's website's main page. The website included the foundational documents already commissioned by the Town, including its Comprehensive Plan and the housing needs assessment by Crane Associates. As additional aspects of the project were scheduled the website continued to be updated. Those updates included the final report of the focus groups, link to the Townwide survey, and the schedule of workshops. As the project wraps up, it will be updated to include the workshop presentations and this final report.

Townwide Survey

The Townwide survey was designed over a number of weeks in close consultation with Michael DeLuca. The prototype was based on other surveys HWRI has conducted in Little Compton and Warren, and then customized based on themes that emerged in the focus groups. A working draft was shared with several Town staff. It was launched in early April 2024 and was accessible on the Town's website that linked to the project webpage and by QR code that was advertised on flyers. By late May the survey already garnered nearly 700 responses; when it closed on June 30, the final tally of responses was 775.

Although 775 people participated in the survey, not all questions were required to be answered, so responses to various questions did not necessarily tally to 775. The logic to the sequence of some questions directed respondents to sub-questions. There were also questions specifically for those who only worked in Town and for landlords.

The final output of the survey responses resulted in a 115-page pdf, which is attached to this report. What follows are some of the highlights.

Overall, respondents were older (48% were 60-75), of higher annual income (41% over \$120K), and represented more homeowners (88%) than the Census estimate for the Town (71%). The majority of respondents were year-round residents, and more than 80 percent of them have been "regularly spending time in Narragansett" for more than 10 years (63% for more than 20 years). A good portion of respondents noted no housing cost, which suggests owners with mortgages paid off. There are other Rhode Island municipalities with similar demographics.

Thirty-six percent of respondents (260) noted owning property in Town that they rented out. Landlords were asked specifically about the number of properties and units they owned, as well as about rents per bedroom as opposed to weekly rentals, which is most common in the summertime. The significant majority of landlords responding only owned one property (75%) and/or only one rental unit (67%). Though the number of respondents to the questions about rents per bedroom ranged from 44 to 115, the difference for summer rents was quite apparent. For both school year and year-round rentals, the majority of rent charged is approximately \$1,000 per bedroom. Of 76 summer landlord survey responses, monthly rents per bedroom ranged from \$1000 to \$3,000 or more with 27% charging about \$1,000 or less, 23% charging \$1,000-\$2,000, 22% charging \$2,000-\$3,000, and 28% charging \$3,000 or more.

Beyond the quantitative questions, qualitative ones sought to gauge the attitudes of participants toward affordable housing, including its importance and how it gets created. There was one specific question related to the willingness to build an “accessory dwelling unit” (ADU), which was answered negatively by a substantial majority of respondents. For respondents who answered yes, they were asked a second question regarding who they would be willing to rent to. The majority answer was to a family member or friend. At the workshops in September, one participant noted that the first question garnered negative responses because they weren’t aware of a second part to the question.

The qualitative questions received substantial comments that were analyzed and categorized to simplify reporting. When respondents were asked what topics came up in conversations about housing, the most dominant response was about housing being too expensive (61%), the next most common response was about the loss of families and children (20%). Nearly 350 respondents answered the question regarding what kind of support they anticipate as they age, housing costs (28%) and rising expenses (25%) were the top two responses, with in-home care (14%) and maintenance (11%) following. Of the nearly 150 responses to a question about experiencing current needs or difficulties, 31 percent said housing costs, followed by “downsizing” at 15 percent. (It may be helpful to note that a cross-tabulation of 440 responses to a household size and house size, 78 percent two-person households live in a home with three or more bedrooms.) In a series of agree-disagree statements, nearly three-quarters of respondents agreed that there are “housing needs in Town” and 70% agreeing with “the Town needs to find more ways to facilitate the creation of more homes.”

Results of Workshops

A key piece of HWRI’s workplan was to convene a series of workshops for residents to help them better understand the facts about “affordable housing.” In as much as the Town hoped the work would aim to “allay fear or confusion” about such development, HWRI sought to frame the workshops as conversational as well as educational. Two important plans already existed regarding the Town’s housing needs—the Town’s Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 2017) and a very recent housing needs analysis by Crane Associates (finalized in January 2024).

In creating the workshops, HWRI sought to engage residents in ‘telling the story of Narragansett’ by understanding the evolution of the Town historically; thereby, putting themselves in the space of its present conditions to guide its future. Three workshops were envisioned as a series titled “Housing & Livability in Narragansett: Community, Affordability, and Resilience.” The first workshop would cover the Town’s history through 1970; the second workshop covered current conditions from 1970 to present; and the third workshop looked at the challenges and sought to build a cohesive idea for the future in facing those challenges.

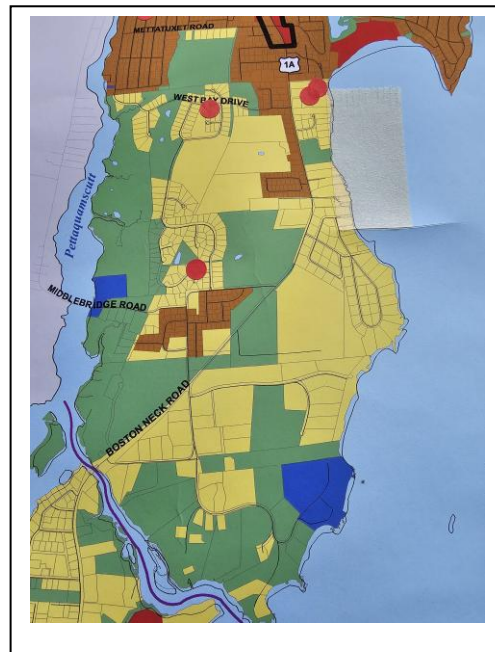
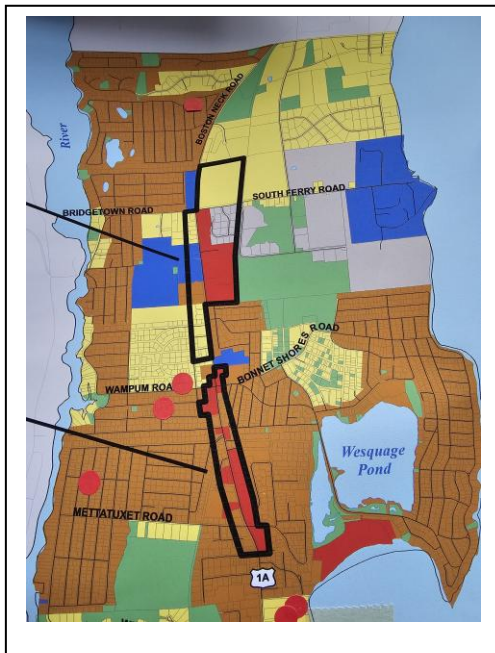
HWRI’s contract anticipated the delivery of six workshops. Once it was agreed that there were three workshops, it was decided to deliver the series of three twice. A flyer was created, which was posted on the Town’s website and the webpage HWRI was hosting. It was also emailed to various community groups and advertised on the Town’s social media.

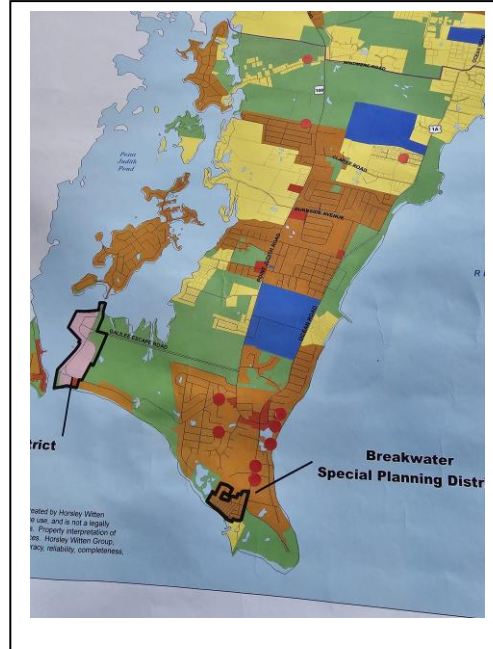
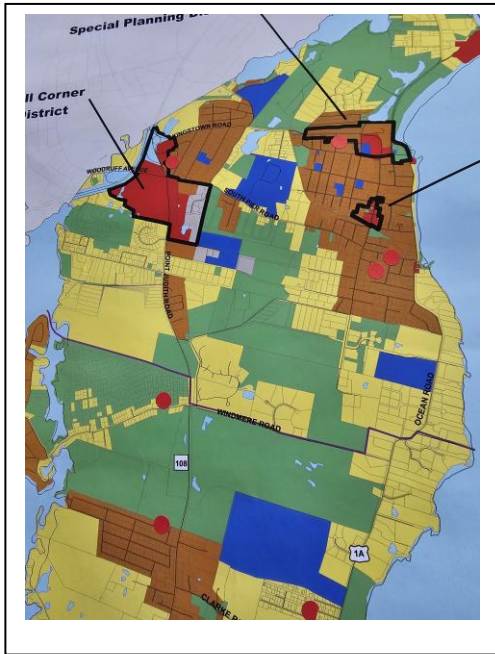
Unfortunately, the arrival of summer activities likely seriously impacted attendance, and it was agreed to reschedule the second series to September.

The workshops were ultimately held in the evenings of September 5th, 12th, and 26th at the Community Center on Clarke Road. Across the three workshops 22 residents and current/retired officials and Staff participated. Of the resident participants, three of them attended two workshops and one attended all three in the series.

Participants were asked to place a dot on a large map to indicate where they lived (addresses were not asked). As noted in the images below, the resulting geography of the participants indicated a reasonable coverage of the entire Town from north to south, including:

- North end of Town near Winterberry Rd. (1)
- Near Narrow (Pettaquamscutt) River, due west of Bonnet Shores, near Wampus Road and Mettatuxet Road (3)
- Near West Bay Drive (1 west of 1A; 2 east of 1A)
- North of Old Boston Neck Drive (1)
- Southerly border of Pier Area Special Planning District, near Atlantic Ave. (1)
- Easterly border of Dillon Rotary / Caswell Corner Special Planning District, to the north, near Lambert St. (1)
- Near South Pier Road, towards the east (2)
- Near Foddering Farm Rd, just west of 108 (1)
- Near Daytona Rd, just west of 108 (1)
- Neighborhood north of Clarke Rd, near Baltimore Ave. (1)
- Point Judith Area (5 north to south from 3rd and 4th Avenues to Louise Ave; 2 west of 108, from Sand Hill Cove Rd. to Birch St.)





Each workshop featured images and timelines to frame the discussion and included two breaks for resident discussion. The first break was relevant to the topic of the workshop and the second asked about what insights the presentation offered into the topics of housing, transit, economy, and the environment.

The full presentations are attached to this report and have been edited to post to the Town's website, which links to the HWRI webpage for the project. Below are brief summaries of the workshops along with the notes from the resident discussions.

Workshop 1: From Village Life to Suburbanization (7 participants)

The first workshop set the stage from Narragansett's earliest beginnings to the mid-twentieth century. The first half covered "Early Communities and the Rise of the Resort (1700-1900)" and included the history of the Town as a Native American settlement and early colonial village to a center of entertainment for high society that rivaled Newport. This part of the presentation also gave brief consideration to the establishment of human civilization and early laws that questioned who belonged, such as "Warning Out" laws and the "Ugly Laws."

An interactive exercise on Mentimeter, a web-based, interactive participation tool, created the following "word cloud" when participants were asked "What comes to mind when you think of Narragansett's history?"



During the first discussion of the materials presented, participants suggested that the Town's history as a casino destination for tourists and the many hotels was already known to a number of participants. Some noted new information as the translation of "Narragansett" to "People of the Point" and the rail spur to Narragansett that connected to the Kingston station to reach parts elsewhere. Historic locations that were identified for future presentations included:

- Hazard Castle / Property (Middlebridge School)
- Kinney Bungalow
- Kentara Green
- Earles Court Water Tower
- Windmill (Clarke Rd)
- Galilee Port/Mission
- URI Bay Campus (watch for submarines)
- Fisherman's Park
- Camp Varnum

The importance of the Town's history, though, was made clear in the notes made about how the Town's desirability was evident in its beginning as a beach and entertainment destination for the wealthy and tourists. This attractiveness remains a core part of Narragansett's identity as it evolved into neighborhoods/communities where people would like to remain into retirement, but also creates a tension between the economic and seasonal reality that exacerbates costs—both financially and environmentally. One specific mention was made of how the "commercial use of housing has changed drastically."

Growing, Zoning, and Driving (1900-1970)

The second facilitated discussion among the participants asked “How does the history of Narragansett inform (housing, transit, economic development, environment)?” The discussion notes from the participants reflect the interconnectedness of these topics from throughout the Town’s history, and the particular impact of post-WWII transportation trends.

Participants fully recognized the early impact of tourism and seasonal housing driven by the Town’s oceanfront location, including the observation that most of the “first summer people” were from northern Rhode Island who rented or owned summer homes in Narragansett. (Not transcribed, but a discussion from June noted the presence of “lots” that were camped on and then built on.) This dual identity was captured by one participant who wrestled with “What are we? A tourism Town or ...?”

However, the decades immediately post-WWII seemed to also be characterized as much more modest in nature. The homes around the pier in the 1950s were described as “summer cottages” that were not heated, and therefore went unoccupied during the winter. In the 1970s, the rental population included local workers and fishermen, who rented year-round (though seasonal rentals existed). One resident noted that the circumstances around housing has changed the “denominator” for demand by those who have not historically sought housing there. An acute situation mentioned by participants concerned the replacement of traditional renters by URI students especially, which the university should help solve.

The overall suburbanization of Rhode Island was a point made in one of the slides, but two substantial drivers of that growth in the Town were observed as the creation of Route 4 (from 1965-1972), which made commuting back to Providence easier, and the excellent school system. The redevelopment of Narragansett Pier begun in 1969 appeared as a deciding factor in the rest of the Town’s development. One participant described it as a “scar.”

Those same highway improvements also provided an increase in overall tourism, which was acknowledged as the main economic driver of the Town. Beyond tourism, fishing was mentioned as important to the Town’s economy, and government (URI) and military workers were acknowledged as residents. The Town’s natural assets were considered as an opportunity for future economic growth, as in environmental tourism, and included mentions of biking, hiking, use of waterways, birding sanctuary, surf, kayaking, etc. At least one participant noted the positives of tourism in its opportunity to market the Town to families overall.

The history of the Town’s use of a rail spur prompted discussion of the lack of meaningful public transportation throughout the Town. Public transportation, in general, across Washington County is known as lacking, specifically east-west routes that would allow transit across the towns rather than only to Providence or points north. The senior bus was mentioned as an asset, but some residents missed or wished to reinvigorate “Ted Wright’s trolley to get around the Town instead of just going to Providence via RIPTA. One participant related a joke about “don’t go past the Tower” because it is too far.

The improvements that came with suburbanization also coincided with recognition of environmental protection, which was noted both with pride and with some acknowledgement of the complexity it brings to housing development. The 1986 protection of wetlands—enacted as

overlays in response to the fast pace of development that had occurred in the previous decade—seemed to be considered positively overall. Other discussions included the presence of sewer and water, and whether or not one or both are at capacity; the water restrictions that occur regularly during the summer months; groundwater tests; and the updating of wastewater treatment.

In recollecting the past, discussion regarding the current housing situation arose that included numerous comments regarding the loss of families with young children. Two participants noted this loss is to such an extent that the only early education (daycare) center in Town closed, and whereby there used to be as many as six incoming kindergarten classes there are now two.

For many participants, Narragansett is the place where they chose to raise their own children and experience a high quality of life. It was clear they want that for others as well, but in examining the challenges of “affordable” housing—even for middle-class families—they observed the stigma attached to the concept, including that the children who live in affordable homes get “labeled.” They referenced what many people, particularly older adults, remember as “affordable housing,” and programs like “Section 8.” Mention was made that “we still imagine the projects of the old days [and their] bad reputation.” It was observed that “you shouldn’t know” what is affordable housing—integrating it into community context should be routine and not segregated. Points were made that housing relates to all aspects of a community, including its schools and businesses. It was considered that clarification and better informing residents would help.

Workshop 2: Modern Day Challenges: 1970s to the Present (14 participants)

Each of the subsequent workshops began with the same introduction of the work and brief reviews from the one(s) before. The second workshop was most similar to public education workshops that HousingWorks RI is typically asked to do, though it went a bit deeper into perceptions in order to address the attitudinal barriers that were identified in the RFP.

To address some of those perceptions regarding challenges, the second workshop began with a question asking participants what came to mind when they thought of the challenges Narragansett faces today. The responses were:

- URI heavily dependent
- New leadership
- Cost
- Unique and interesting
- Crowds / traffic
- Lack of land
- Income and families
- Ocean impact

The first half of the second workshop “Framing the Present: 1970s to Present” began with the redevelopment of Narragansett Pier and offered data on the growth of the Town’s population, median age, and housing units. It noted the pressures of the real estate market through the decline

Contemporary Challenges: Housing Affordability

This part of the workshop began with two word cloud images of frequent words that emerged from questions out of the survey that was conducted for the Town, in which 775 responses were recorded. Those images related to what respondents were hearing when they spoke to others about housing and their own perceived needs:



From there, the topics were framed within the context of the Social Determinants of Health, which HWRI has been doing for years now as it acknowledges housing's wider impact on most life outcomes in health, education, community, environment, and economic stability.

Before launching into the statutory and programmatic details of long-term affordable housing, participants were asked what they thought of when they heard the term. The resulting words and terms included: families, affordable, basic, challenging, community, functional, future, helpful, impossible, income-based, location, needed, nonexistent, realistic rent, Section 8, unattainable, workforce, and younger families.

The discussion prompt for the workshop was "*What does a livable community mean for [housing, transit, economy, environment] in the context of Narragansett?*" and a robust discussion ensued.

The remarks captured regarding housing fell into five categories: market/affordability; housing ideas; public education/attitudes; schools and children; and student rentals.

Participants reflected on the unique pressures on the Narragansett market related to the seasonality of the stock, including the ability to rent to students and vacationers, which has "monetized" the number of bedrooms in homes and made for lucrative investments for "absentee" landlords, some of whom are "out-of-state." The emphasis being on "return on investment."

The lack of land itself contributes to a supply/demand imbalance, including seasonal vacancies and an inflexibility in the housing stock whereby older residents who are "over housed" but unable to move to some place smaller in the community they know and love.

Relative to housing types themselves, developments like Clarke Point were considered positively; and there was discussion of mixed-use housing and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), though it was acknowledged that there have been complaints in the Boon Street area related to parking and noise, and there is controversy regarding the state's new ADU law.

In discussing ideas to overcome some of these obstacles, one participant commented that they thought Narragansett was the only South County Town that South County Habitat for Humanity has not built in and surmised it was an acquisition issue related to the cost of land. Other participants noted that the Town has not contributed to the affordable housing trust since its establishment and wondered if there are tax policies that could help contribute, similar to programs in Vermont and Block Island. Overall, it was recognized that residents benefit from a low tax rate.

Participants recognized the stigma and lack of education regarding affordable housing. Remarking on terms like "community character" and NIMBY-ism, they felt there is a misconception that "affordable housing is not Section 8" and eligibility and programs need to be explained. One participant noted that the older community (in particular) is resistant to change, but that affordability is decreasing as costs continue to increase. The terms "workforce housing" and "YIMBY" were mentioned, and perhaps can be employed to change the dialogue.

Similar to comments heard in the first workshop, the loss of young children in the community overall and within the schools was lamented. Mention was again made of the closing of the daycare center and the decline in after-school activities and school enrollment—this time referencing a graduating high school class of 50-60, down from 100+ in past decades. In an ironic comment, one

participant mentioned “no kids” but in the same vein said it is “very quiet” or “very loud” referencing the replacement of school-aged children with college students.

The debate over student rentals took up quite a bit of discussion, with participants stating they do not want to become an all-rental community and that student rentals used to be concentrated, but are now “scattered all over.” There was concern regarding the competition for housing between students and older adults, and a belief that the limit of how many students can rent together being limited to three was raising rents. The lack of housing on campus at URI as well as the growing number of out-of-state students were both mentioned. One participant thought the state had a role to play in providing the land for URI student housing, and thereby help the Town with its affordability problem. There was an acknowledgement, however, that the URI students are also part of the Town’s community and a key part of its workforce. It was considered that 90-95 percent are “good,” and it was suggested that URI could help both by its police aiding the local force and by ensuring students are “accountable” for any community disruption.

In moving on to the related topics of transit, economic development, and environment, one participant noted that all are inter-related, and another expressed frustration with the state over these issues. Transportation was considered “awful” and that it doesn’t meet the needs of either the students or older adults, though one participant noted an improvement in bus service in the URI-Galilee route. It was considered that the MBTA commuter train out of Wickford does not run frequently enough to be useful overall. Ideas related to improvements included a trolley, like the one that use to run (also mentioned in the discussion from the first workshop), and smaller buses that could run more frequently. There was a mention of the program in Boston that pays for ride-sharing vouchers to help workers who have schedules outside of a 9-5 workday, such as healthcare workers; and another participant suggested collaborating with the neighboring Town of South Kingstown.

Participants were particularly discouraged regarding economic development, with one participant going so far to say “we don’t have a local economy; it’s seasonal,” and another observing that profits from corporations do not stay in Town (e.g., Amazon and Shaw’s). Frustration was expressed in the state’s reputation in not being “business friendly” and that businesses “need help.” There was also an extended discussion regarding the role of local regulations in being a hindrance to the success of some businesses. Examples that were given regarding two businesses in town, however, commentary was misinformed about the details of both situations.

The implications to environment were quite evident, even in these examples to economic development. Participants discussed water and sewer constraints generally, and whether there is sewer capacity to support increased residential density. Some also noted that half of the Town’s land is wetlands and not buildable.

Workshop 3: Facing the Future: Ensuring a Livable Narragansett (9 participants)

The third and final workshop asked participants to look to the future using the existing Town Comprehensive Plan as well as the new housing assessment report done by Crane Associates. The workshop concluded with a mapping exercise whereby participants identified areas of Town for possible development or preservation.

At the outset, participants were asked what future challenges they saw the Town facing. Their answers were:

- Increasing demand for coastal property
- Transportation
- Families, schools, housing, year-round residents
- Aging population
- Climate
- URI enrollment
- Renters
- Wages relative to property prices

The first half of the workshop sought to set the stage for “Planning/Goals for Narragansett’s Future” and provided a high-level overview of planning using a quote from British urban planner Patsy Healy that defines planning as “managing our co-existence in a shared space.” It was emphasized that community members are key to the process. *Land Use 2025* was noted as the state’s existing guide plan and the concept of smart growth was reviewed. The new state housing and zoning laws were mentioned briefly, and the state’s award of new grant from HUD called “Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing” (PRO)—which will focus its work on South and Bristol counties through their Health Equity Zones—was introduced. The first half concluded by providing organizations that offer tools to measure a place’s “livability” by referencing housing, neighborhoods, education, health, transportation/mobility, economy/opportunity/labor, environment, and civic engagement—similar to those “Social Determinants of Health” criteria mentioned in the second workshop.

Planning Ahead

The second half of this concluding workshop reviewed the formative issues detailed in the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, and the observations made in the recently published Crane report, including their gap analysis for affordable rental and homeownership units. Crane’s analysis suggested the need for an additional 404 more rental homes and 1,263 more homes for ownership. The remainder of the presentation included information about the American Planning Association’s [Housing Accelerator Playbook](#), published in conjunction with the National League of Cities and Towns, based on the growing need for housing nationally; as well as housing styles that have been defined as “missing middle” that seek to diversify housing stock to include more than just single-family homes; visuals of housing those housing types; and ways to accommodate ADUs—noting them as “gentle” density, which some communities are more comfortable with including. The participants were reminded that there are two types of housing affordability—one that comes from the private market and the other with government subsidies, but acknowledged the human tendency to resist change and confuse ourselves with terminology to assuage our fears, particularly in the area of housing, where even the term “affordable” can trigger vastly different images and discussions.

As the participants broke into groups for discussion, different tables took different approaches to discuss the possible future. One table identified concerns/aspirations; pragmatics/constraints of policy; and problem dimensions, while the other analyzed conditions and recommendations in a rank ordered way. The results are below:

Concerns/Aspirations

- Schools
- Cost of land (affordable)
- Families
- Access/proximity to health care
- Villages—collaboration
- People—leaving/staying
- Transportation
- Environment, water & water quality

Pragmatics / Constraints of Policy

- Available rental goals / % of rentals
- Practicality / enforceability of rental rate rules
- Trolley was fun (tourism feature)

Problem Dimensions

- Livability dimensions: affordability, resident-focus, collaboration (villages), preserve environment
- Investors vs. Residents
- Obscenely expensive homes

	Conditions	Recommendations
Strengths	Environment (in regards to protected open space, conservation, etc.	Sunset Farm & Kinney Bungalow—NO BUILDING PLEASE (luckily federal restraints)
	Quality of life / Beautiful environment	Housing & mixed use development in Bonnet Shores
	Great neighborhoods	Do something in Narragansett Pier (Town center)
	Opportunities for mixed use development (4-5 commercial areas)	Building up the Pier village area; library property; urban renewal zone can be changed
		Redevelopment could also be investment potential for the state (areas suggested near library, other state-owned property); housing can be for rent/sale
Areas to Improve	Limited transportation options	
	Limited Civic Engagement	
	High cost and poor access to social services	
	Noise and firepits, neighborhood disturbances	
	Rowdy tourists and students	Can students have more integrated role/partnership with the Town? Community service, civil service

		internships, etc.: Participants emphasized it would help alleviate the animosity between residents and students— mentions of increased community service opportunities for students
		Town can leverage students to do planning / engineering / etc.; study, bring down cost
	Limited Local Jobs	
	Limited local economic opportunities & businesses	Attainable housing for students/young families to stay in RI—a necessary workforce for development of RI industries: Participants cited students who stay as necessary workforce in developing RI economy/industries (responding to lack of local economies)
	Large seasonal population	URI needs to build more housing
	Out-of-state owners and high volume of investment properties	Let's maintain good relations with URI and be "partners at the table"
	Short Term Rentals (less than a week)	URI Bay Campus can be location for "missing middle" (village) for students, faculty, staff
	High cost of living	
	High cost of real estate, especially for families	
	Housing prices inaccessible for even upper middle-income families	
	Lack of starter homes	Study capacities and weaknesses of sewer/water infrastructure beyond the pier as an important first step, more comprehensive study to follow; Funding needed for this
	Lack of housing diversity (size and price); especially in the south	Scarborough waste treatment has capacity, but Westmoreland plant, Narragansett maxed our lease
	Lack of housing options for local workers; cannot retain staff	Long-term: plan to expand sewer & water infrastructure
	Limited transportation options	

The final exercise involved participants indicating on maps at their tables where they would promote development versus preservation (see images below). They were provided with green, yellow, and red dots. Green denoting areas to consider growth; yellow cautionary; and red to preserve. The resulting areas are described below, and actual maps are included with this report.

Green

- Eastern end of South Ferry Road (2 maps)
- Boston Neck Rd/Bonnet Shores Special Planning District (1 map)

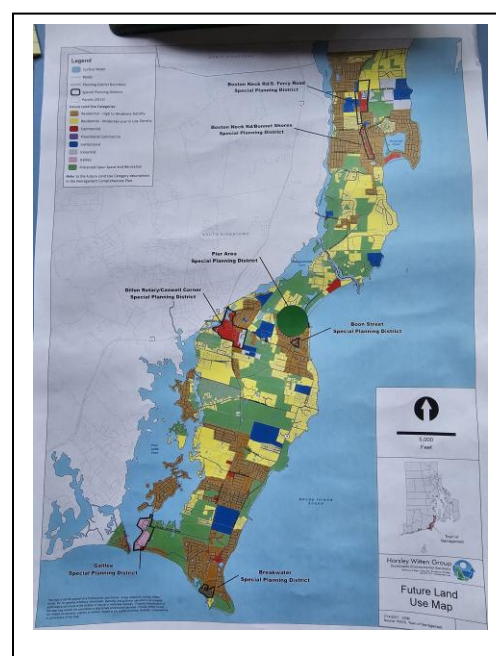
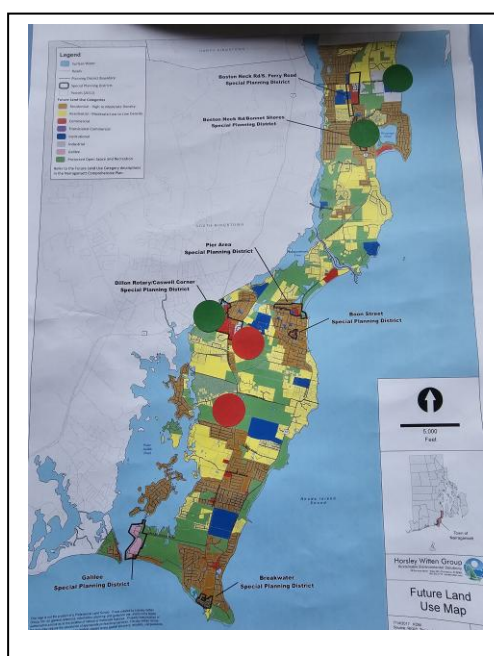
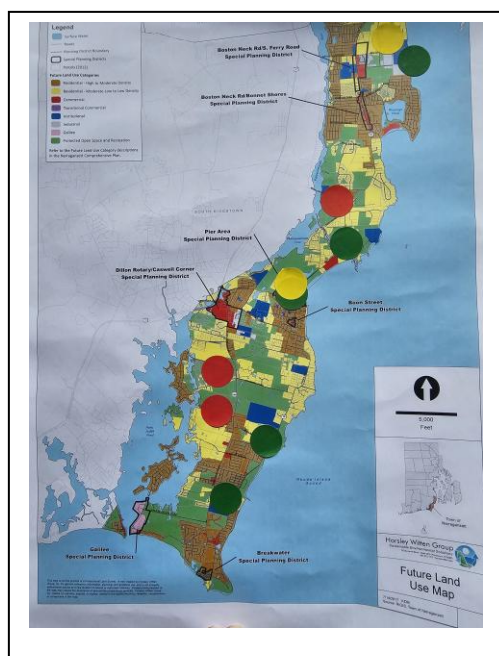
- Pier Area Special Planning District (2 maps)—and yellow on 1 of the same!
- Dillon Rotary/Caswell Corner Special Planning District (1 map)
- Eastern end of Clarke Road (1 map)
- Eastern Galilee (north of Admirals Way, between 108 & Ocean Road) (1 map)

Yellow

- NW of URI Bay Campus (1 map)
- Pier Area Special Planning District (1 map—also green on same map)

Red

- East side of Narrow River near Middlebridge Rd. (1 map)
- Western areas south of South Pier Road & north of Daytona Ave (2 maps with 2 dots each that seem to be roughly referencing the same area)



Workshop Summary

The workshops created a hands-on opportunity for residents to share stories, acknowledge housing challenges, and tentatively propose paths forward. Participants were a broad mixture: long-term residents and more recent arrivals, a father and grown son, who hoped to house the son's family too in Town, a few who differed on how best to regulate student and short-term rentals, and several who were active in city government and other planning bodies. Although early turnout was light, it gradually grew by the last workshop to three separate tables of collaborating citizen planners.

Most remarkable for those who attended throughout was the engaged participation and practical considerations of those who came and contributed. Despite the shared concern about entry price points and long-term demographic shifts, there also was a shimmer of optimism, perhaps even prospective relief, when individuals and groups proposed green development stickers here and there on the Town map: imagining how a mixed-use neighborhood might be anchored or multi-family density integrated and developed. In acknowledging the economic realities of a vacation destination, together with layers of historical and political complexity, these discussions applied lived experience and first-hand knowledge to the present challenge of keeping Narragansett economically viable while also a home for families and neighbors. The discussions in these workshops showed faith in and support for the project of integrating and developing affordable housing in the Town.

Final Observations & Next Steps

Both the Town's RFP and focus group discussions mentioned "fear" and "confusion" as barriers to the creation of affordable housing. However, perhaps due to the self-selection of those who participated in the survey and workshops, no overt statements truly characterized such sentiments in HWRI's work with the public. In fact, there is an overwhelming acknowledgement that the Town could use more housing affordability overall and even subsidized affordable homes. Nearly everyone who participated in one or more aspects of this work wants the Town to attract younger households, particularly families. While there appears to be a definite preference for home ownership and a maintenance of "community character", including in the Town's legal actions to state laws that sought to override local zoning ordinances, it is unclear that there is an understanding that these preferences may also be factors in the lack of affordable housing.

The technical aspects of the second workshop particularly enabled participants to understand the gaps between what income levels constitute income eligibility for long-term affordable homes and the current costs of homes and/or developing new affordable homes. There was substantial agreement that more resources are needed to fill these gaps, and participants seemed open to discussing a range of options, including the local and state housing bonds as well as tax policy. The complexities of the Town's real estate market and, especially its year-round seasonality with two distinct markets for the school year and summer, were discussed at every workshop. The sense of "community loss" of even just the last two decades was palpable.

Some of Narragansett's challenges may be different than Rhode Island's other 38 municipalities, but all the cities and towns across the state are experiencing what is justifiably termed a crisis in housing affordability. Beyond the state's borders, this crisis can be seen across New England, the Northeast, and the United States.

The tensions among housing markets, wages, land use, and governments are real and difficult. They also represent conflicting ideas even within each person, where someone who very much wants to contribute to more housing affordability can still choose to sell their home for a very high price to leave an inheritance for their children and grandchildren; or where a town that wants to encourage housing affordability may still protect large swaths of land due to environmental constraints or access to nature for residents and tourists. While facing and feeling these tensions

and conflicts is disruptive, it can also be seen as awe-inspiring when we understand that it is within our realm and power to be in charge of this management of change.

The Crane Housing Study and Needs Assessment noted a net shortage of 404 rental homes and 1,263 owner-occupied housing units in Narragansett. Of these net shortages, the greatest need in both categories should address households up to 60% area median income (AMI); both calculations also include an oversupply of rentals and ownership units that serve the highest incomes from 101-120%. As noted in the report, looking at through the lens of the state's Low- and Moderate-Income Housing law, the Town's gap of 451 to serve long-term affordable needs is very close to the rental gap determined by the consultants.

The Town's Comprehensive Plan Baseline Report from 2017 suggests a range of build out under current zoning from a low of 578 to a high of 1,598, including the identification of 1,020 underutilized (where current zoning would allow for a lot to be subdivided and additional unit(s) could be construction). State un-merger provisions from 2023 legislation which are currently enacted and incorporated into the Town Zoning Ordinance, allow for lot un-mergers. So, the question truly becomes how and where to produce these homes, and how a significant portion of them could be made affordable for the long-term. There are two recent opportunities that may help answer this question, and a third that may be built upon.

Passage of State and Local Housing Bonds

The passage of both the state and local housing bonds in November 2024 is encouraging for the State, however it is also highly competitive and the land acquisition costs in the Town may make it very difficult for developers to put together proposals that are cost-competitive. The Town may want to consider parcels it has control over, similar to the Clarke Point development in the early 2000s, which resulted in a very attractive condominium development of all affordable homes. In addition, the Town recently passed a \$3M from the passage of the local housing bond which may be an alternative option for funding affordable housing in Town.

Pathways to Removing Obstacles (PRO) Housing Grant and Engagement with Washington County Health Equity Zone

The second opportunity is for more exploration of ways to remove obstacles to housing development through a \$3.8M grant the state received from U.S. HUD to work with local "health equity zone" (HEZ). Titled the Pathways to Removing Obstacles (PRO), the intent is to provide capacity building to the Washington County HEZ and the two HEZs operating in Bristol County. The Washington County HEZ has already created some synergy among certain stakeholders, and its project coordinator is a Narragansett resident and attended two of the three workshops. Given its geography over the nine towns, it also has the benefit of discussing housing affordability collectively. This is already happening between Narragansett and South Kingstown in the form of the South County Housing Coalition, which hosted a public meeting on January 16, 2025, and included speakers from both Towns as well as University of Rhode Island, which fielded a number of questions about student housing. HWRI and RIHousing also participated.

Organizing Advocates as Advisory Group

Given the apparent support that was expressed during the workshops and the existence of the South County Housing Coalition mentioned above, there appears to be significant momentum toward establishing an advisory group that could assist the Planning Board and Town Council on budgeting for continued infrastructure analysis and analysis of town land usage for affordable housing. This advisory group could convene key investment stakeholders, such as landlords, real estate agents, and developers, to establish an understanding of the key sticking points among private market forces, the provision of affordable homes, and the town's environmental limitations. The advisory group could include (as ex-officio) members of the town's appointed bodies as well as the already-established South County Housing Coalition, and should have access to tax assessment and other relevant town data that would help inform quantitative questions regarding land values, costs, available financing and subsidies, and existing or potential housing densities.

In closing, HousingWorks RI saw great promise in the attitudes of the participants across all the work performed—from the elected and appointed officials to survey respondents to workshop participants. The harder work ahead involves the reality of how to ameliorate the private market forces that have pushed Narragansett's single family 2024 home price to \$875,000—13.64 percent increase from 2023. Research suggests that an increase in the development and diversity of the kinds of housing stock, along with subsidies to provide affordability to lower incomes, will help some. Combined with the suggestions heard at the workshops regarding tax policies and exploration of state and town lands may help further these approaches. Given the significant challenges the town faces to foster housing affordability, it needs to remain open to a wide variety of ideas, including some that may strain the comfort level of officials and many residents. Building trust across groups and stakeholders, along with continued diligence and research, could help bridge some of the difficulties in reaching the town's goals.



Understanding & Building Support for Housing Affordability in Narragansett

Presentation of MTAP work
Narragansett Town Council
June 16, 2025

Annette Mann Bourne
HousingWorks RI at RWU

2024 HOUSING FACT BOOK



Who We Are

- Community partner of Roger Williams University.
- Clearinghouse of information about housing in Rhode Island.
- Conduct research and analysis to inform public policy.
- Promote dialogue about the relationship between housing and the state's economic future and residents' well-being.
- Publish an annual Housing Fact Book as well as periodic briefs, Scholar Series, infographics.
- Provide municipal technical assistance and public presentations to numerous organizations and at conferences.

HousingWorks RI Team

Annette Bourne, Research & Policy Director

Toby Arment, Research Analyst

Per Fjelstad, Consultant

Kylee Hong, Brown University Intern

Brenda Clement, Director



Request for Proposals



- **Public engagement and education:** Share techniques and tools to respond to resident opposition that is preventing residential development and engage the community in support of proposed affordable developments or proposed zoning/land use changes that would facilitate housing development.



Project Scope of Work

1. Focus Groups
2. Website
3. Townwide Survey
4. Public Workshops



Focus Groups: Details & Questions

- Four mixed groups of elected & appointed officials (plus two single interviews)
 - Town Council; Planning Board; Zoning Board; Affordable Housing Trust Collaborative
- 22 invitations in all; 17 participated (Director of Community Development Michael DeLuca participated as staff)
- 90 minutes each; Conducted by Annette Bourne; assisted and note taking by Toby Arment; recorded for transcription purposes only
- 2023: November 30 (2 sessions); December 6 and 7; December 15 (one person); 2024: January 2 (one person)

Questions asked:

1. What is your favorite place or community event in Narragansett?
2. What do you and residents hope to learn/outcome from this entire process?
3. What is the value of offering a range of opportunities for different kinds of homes here in Narragansett?
4. In the current role you serve, what do you hear from others in the community about (a) the need for more opportunities for housing, and (b) their concerns/fears about more housing, particularly that is affordable?
5. What do you see as the role of any municipality in relationship to its region or the state?
6. How do you envision Narragansett in 20 years or more?



Focus Groups: Common Themes

- Recognition of town's desirability
- Residential composition historically:
 - long-standing family ties
 - large student population from URI
 - substantial seasonal population from Memorial Day through Labor Day
- Factors recognized:
 - state's overall shortage of affordable homes
 - advent of the "short-term rental" industry, growing profitability and diversity from seasonal to overnights and special events
- Drastically increased home values and rent prices
- Steadily shrinking permanent population, particularly pronounced for young, low- and moderate-income wage earners, and some older residents
- Sharp decline in the school-aged population and entry-level workers in a wide range of business types; e.g., nearby South County Hospital has increasingly turned to visiting medical professionals

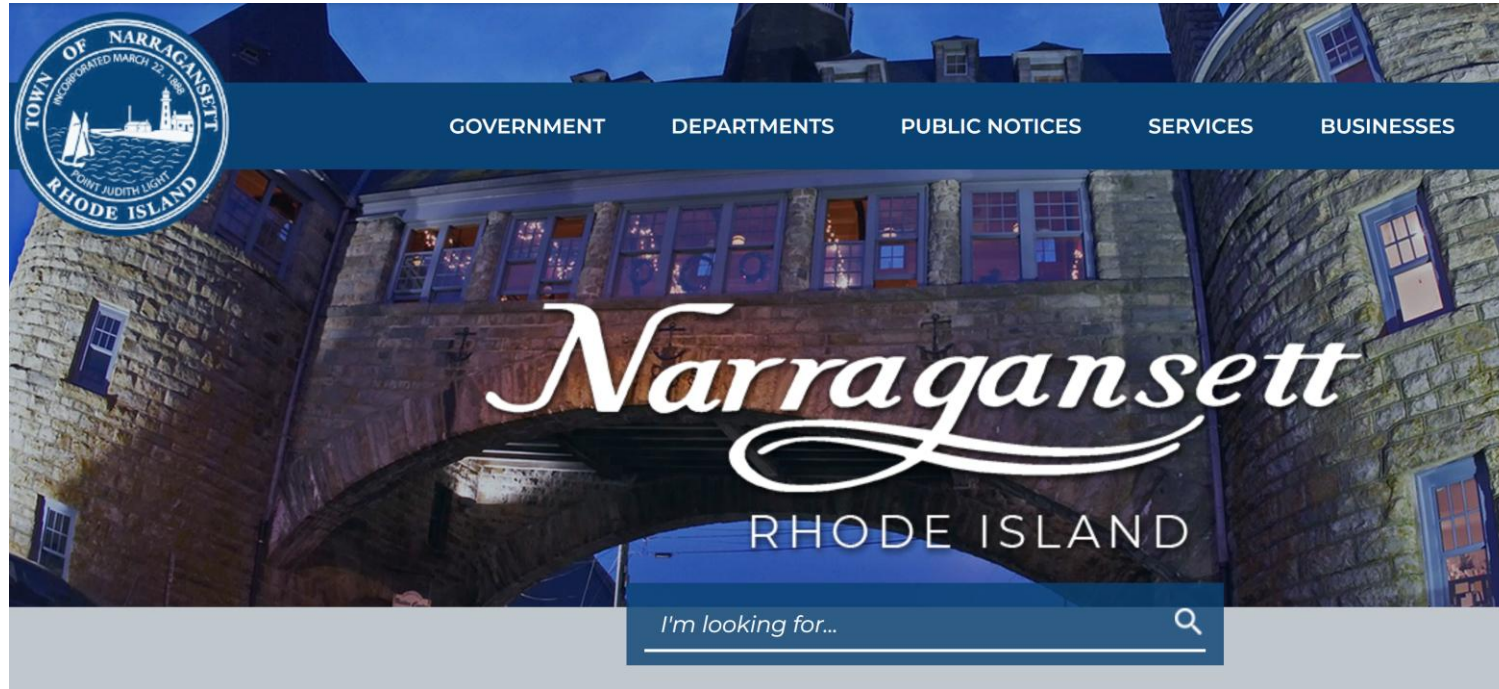


Focus Groups: Common Themes

- General apprehension: community does not know what affordable housing looks like and does not know who needs it
 - Fears about the types of populations it may enable to live in the town
 - Concern that new construction will change the physical character of the neighborhoods
- Practical difficulties
 - High percentage of the town that is not suitable for construction due to environmental conditions; relatively small amount of land available to support the development of denser housing
 - Lack of infrastructure necessary to support higher-density developments or an increase in population, including the significant number of additional individuals who reside in the town during the summer



Website: From Town Page



NARRAGANSETT HOUSING AND LIVABILITY WEBSITE & SURVEY

HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University is working with the Town of Narragansett to support its public engagement efforts surrounding the topic of affordable housing. The survey is for those who live, work, or own property in Narragansett

[Website Link](#)

Website: Dedicated Page & Content



[ABOUT](#) [HOUSING AFFORDABILITY](#) [LOCAL HOUSING FACTS](#) [RESEARCH](#)

SHARE  /  / 

Town of Narragansett: Understanding and Building Support for Housing Affordability

Welcome to the Town of Narragansett's housing affordability and public engagement website. Since November 2023, the Town has been engaged with HousingWorks RI to develop an

1. The adoption of a **Comprehensive Plan** in 2017, with support from Horsley Witten Group, which includes an affordable housing chapter.
2. The formation of an **Affordable Housing Trust Collaborative** in 2021 to identify opportunities for affordable housing development.
3. The Town Council engaged **Crane Associates** of Burlington, Vermont, to conduct a housing inventory study and needs assessment. Their executive summary can be viewed [here](#).
4. The Town Administration has implemented zoning and subdivision regulations to comply with the various housing-related bills passed by the General Assembly in 2023. The Town is also anticipating future regulatory amendments to address pending General Assembly initiatives.

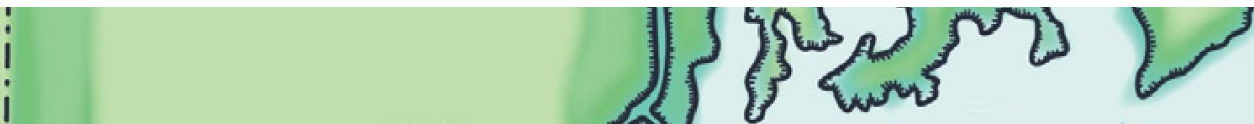


Survey

Narragansett Housing & Livability Survey.

We want to hear from you! Take our survey [here](#). HousingWorks RI, in collaboration with the Town of Narragansett, has developed a survey to support its public engagement efforts surrounding the topic of affordable housing. The survey is for those who live, work, or own property in Narragansett.

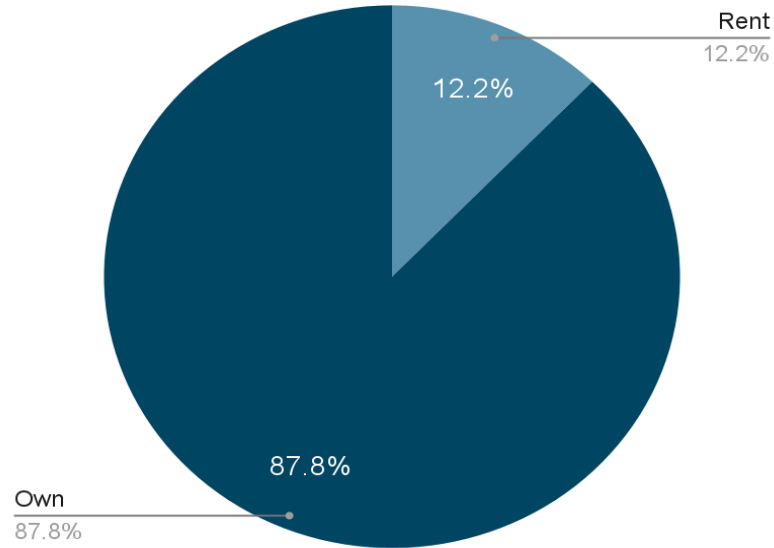
775 RESPONSES!



Survey Results: Tenure & Season

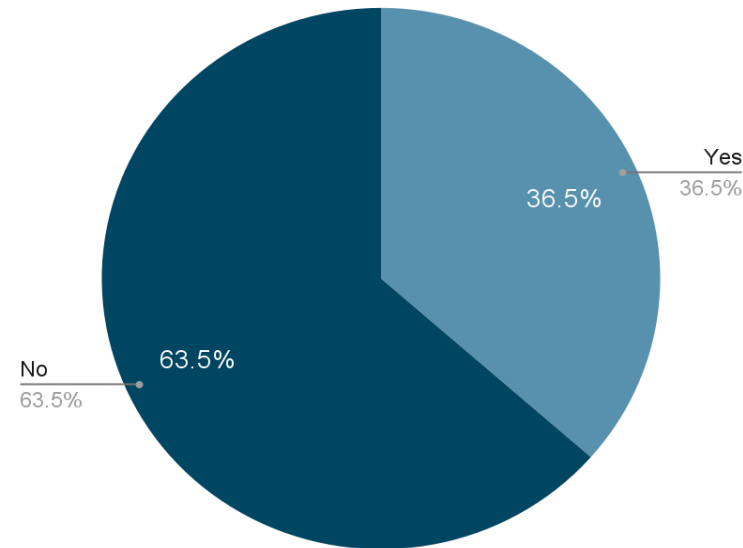
- 775 responses
- >5% of the town population

Housing Tenure



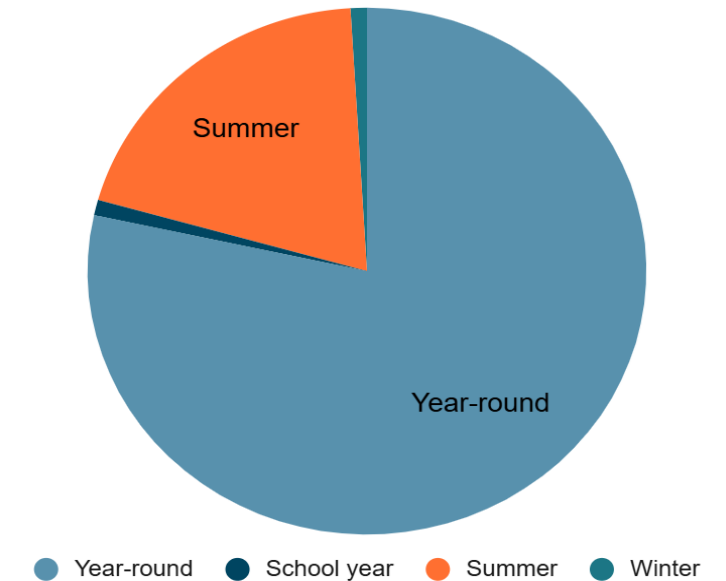
Responses: 523

I Rent Property to Others



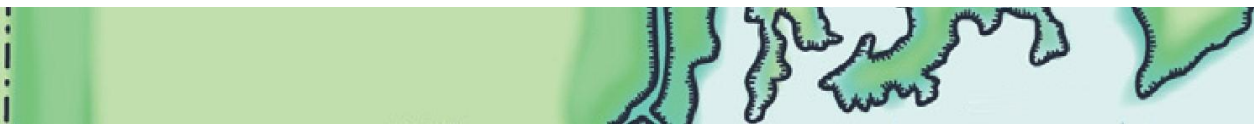
Responses: 528

When living in Narragansett



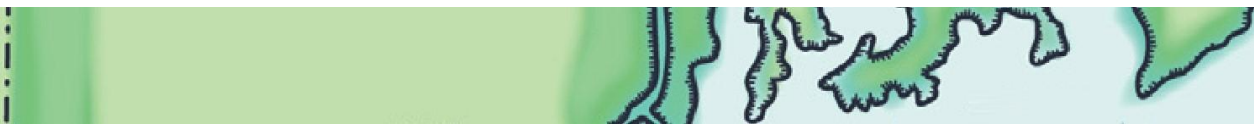
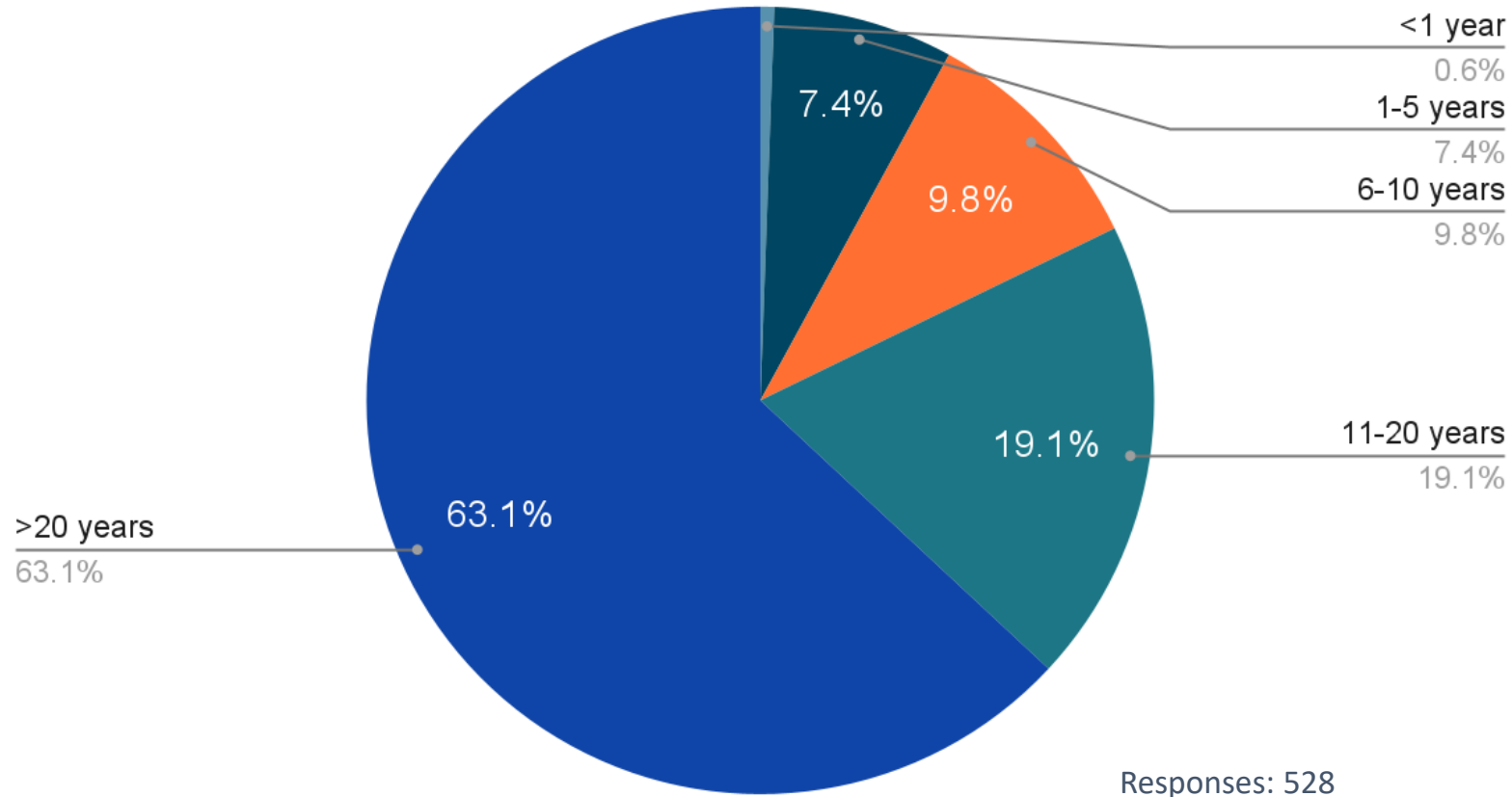
Responses: 713

ACS Estimates 71% of residents own their homes



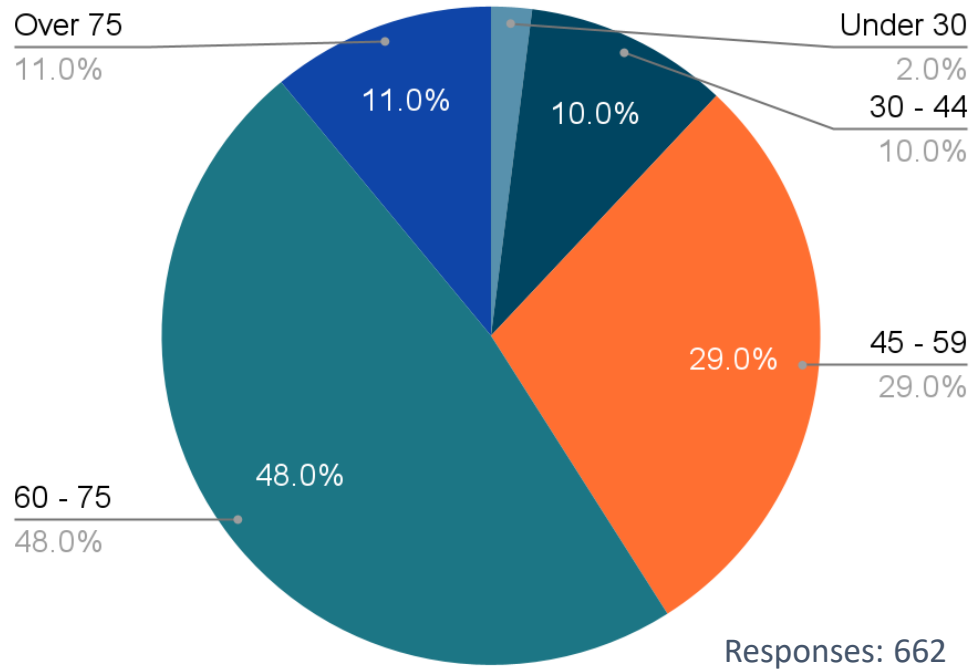
Survey Results: Longevity in Town

Length of time spending time in Narragansett



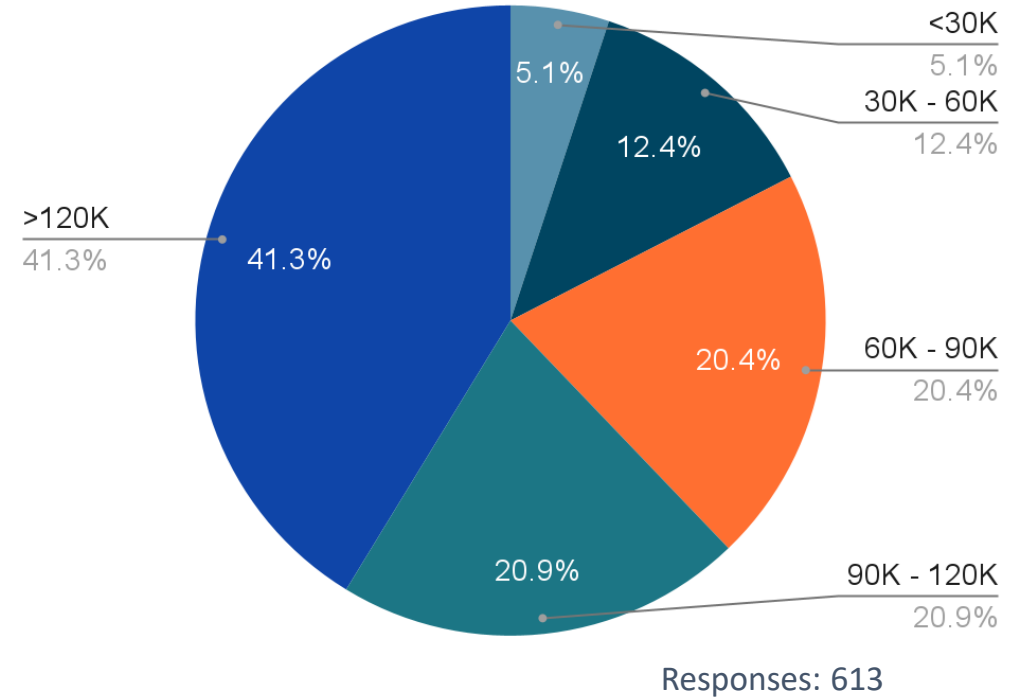
Survey Results: Age & Income

Age of Respondents



ACS Estimates 24% of town residents ≥ 65

Personal Annual Income

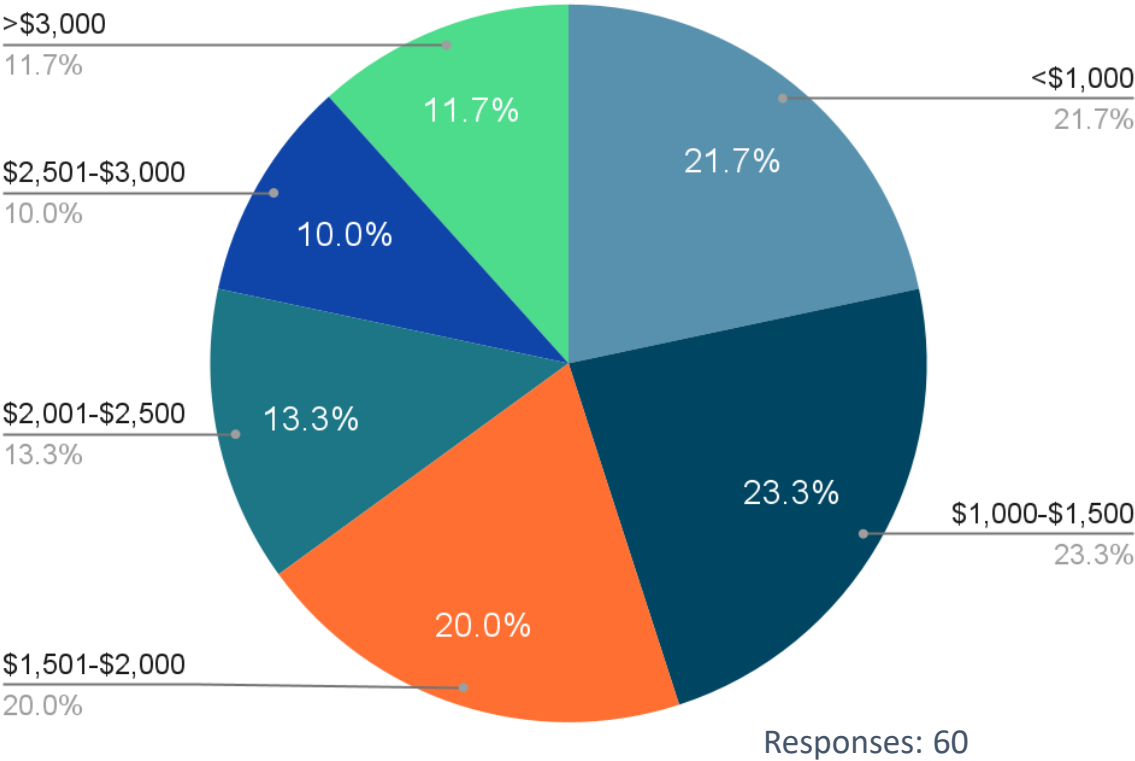


ACS Median Household Income is \$95k
Survey median personal income is \$90K to 120K

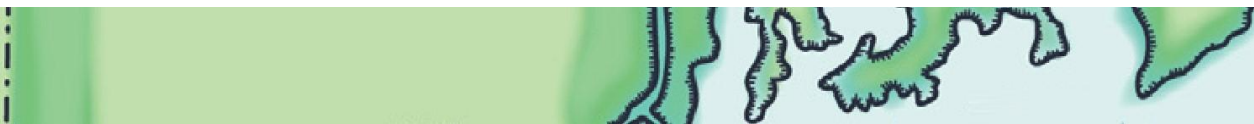
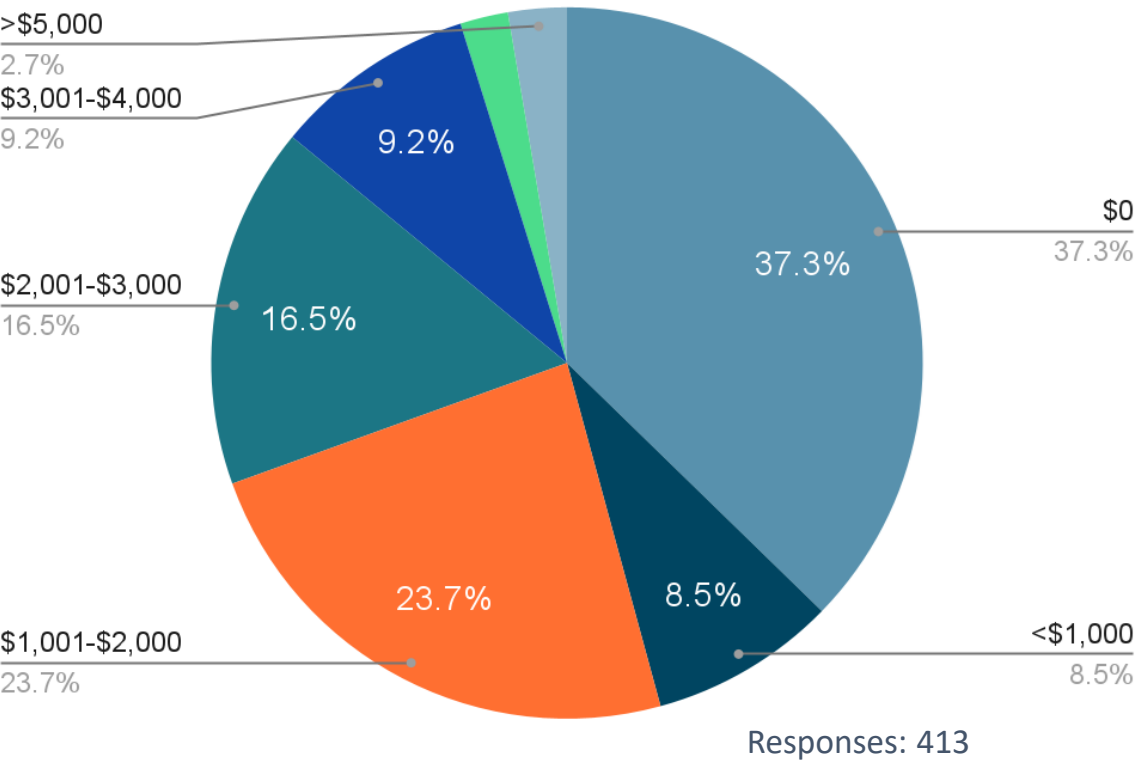


Survey Results: Housing Costs

Monthly Rent



Monthly Housing Payment

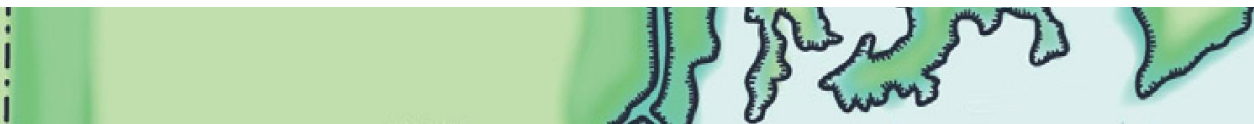


Survey Results: Household Size vs House Size

Household Size

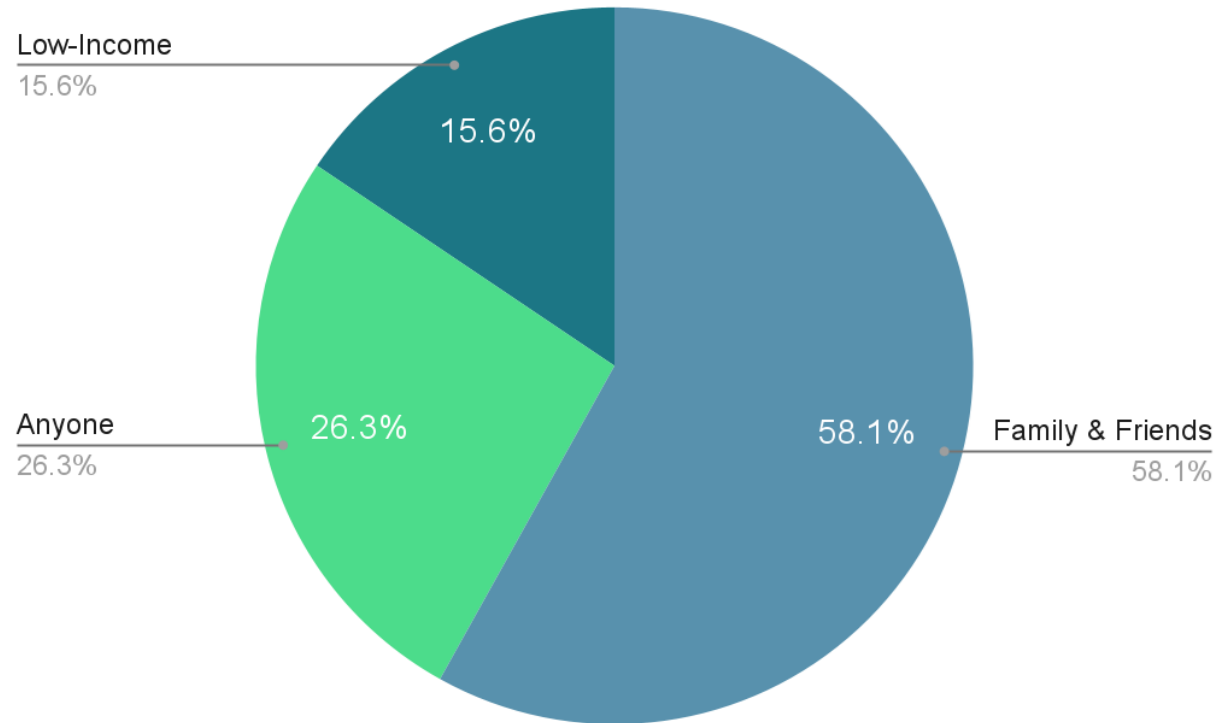
House Bedrooms		1 (18%)	2 (51%)	3 (13%)	4 (13%)	5+ (6%)
	1 (<1%)	2	1	0	0	0
	2 (19%)	23	49	5	4	1
	3 (44%)	33	104	29	20	8
	4+ (37%)	19	70	21	35	16

Numbers indicate observations from 440 responses



Survey Results: Potential ADU Occupants

Who would you be willing to rent an ADU to?

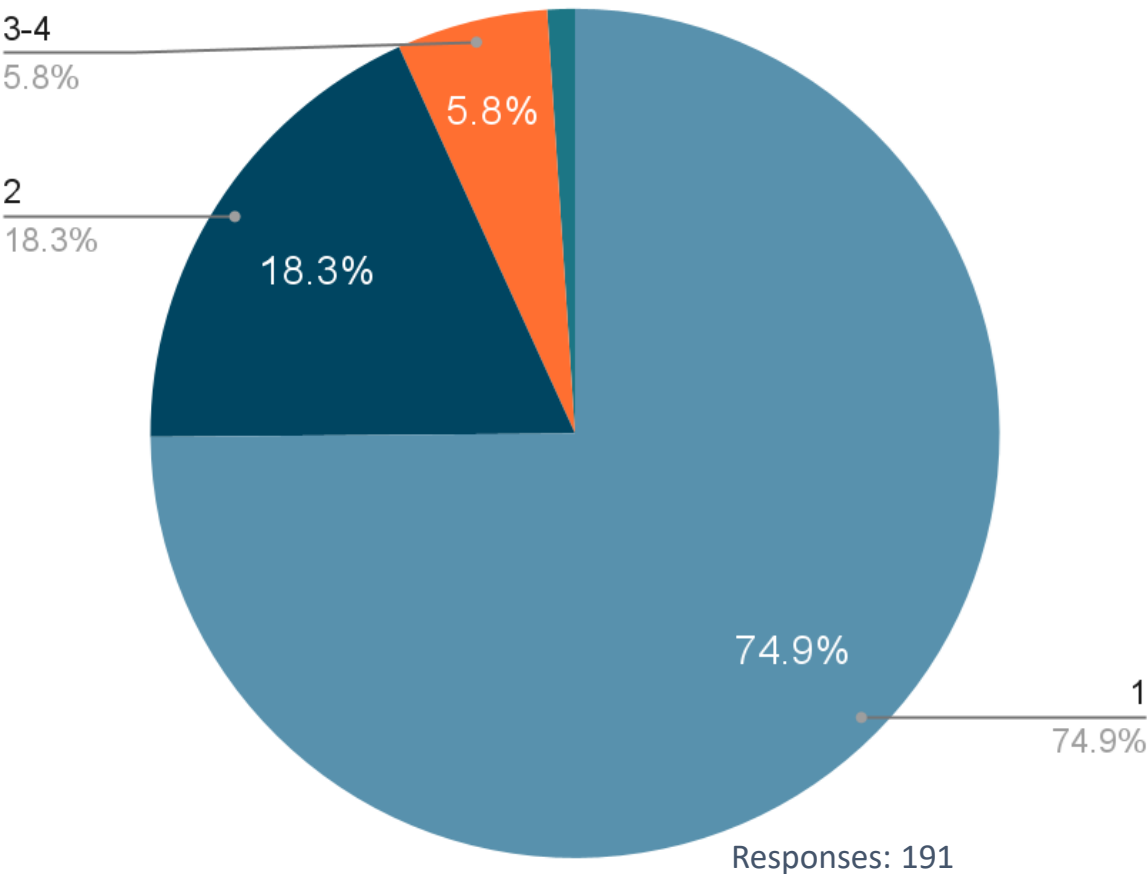


Of 126 “yes” responses

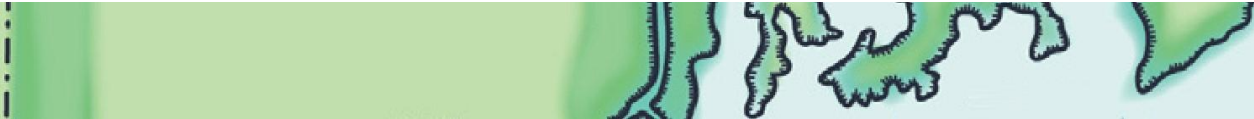
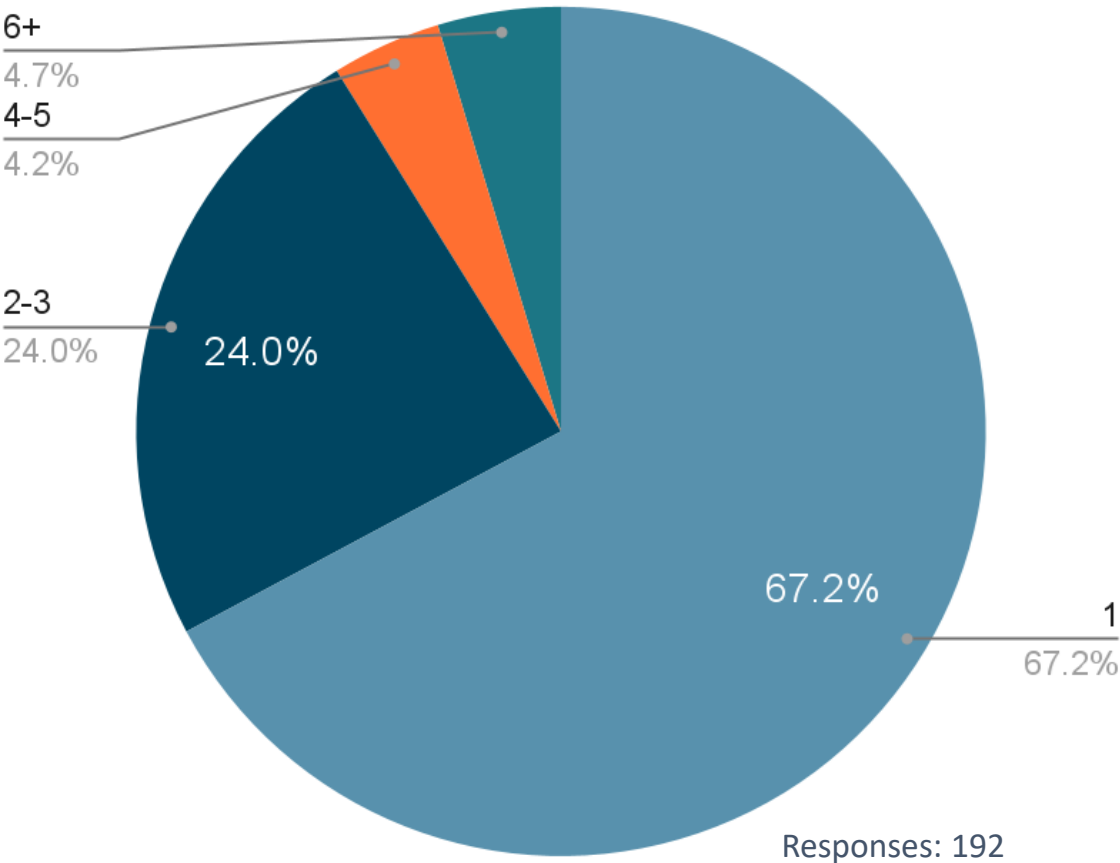


Landlord Responses: Properties & Units

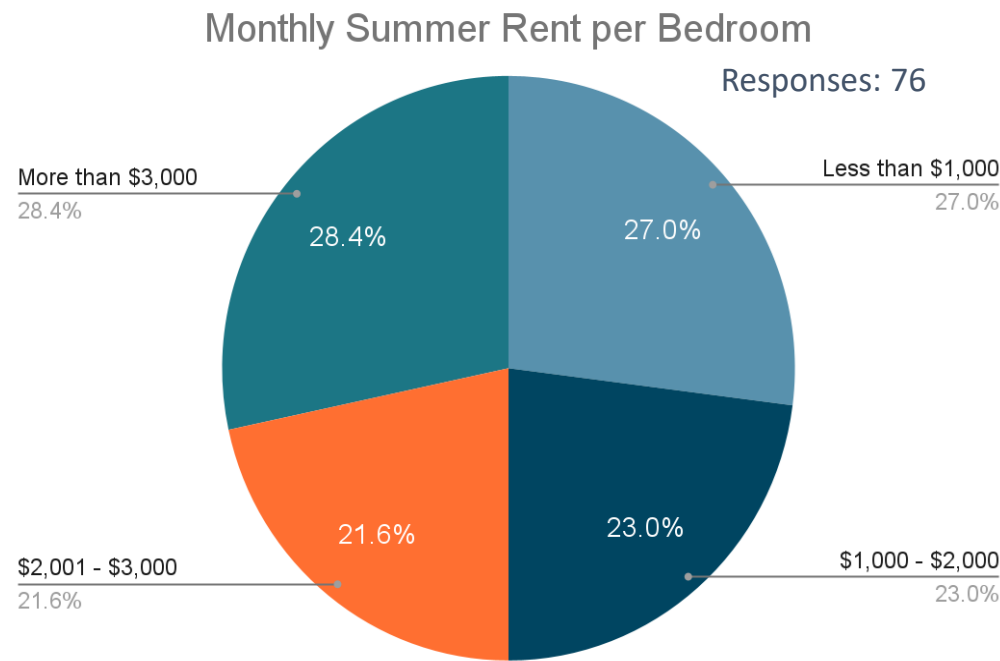
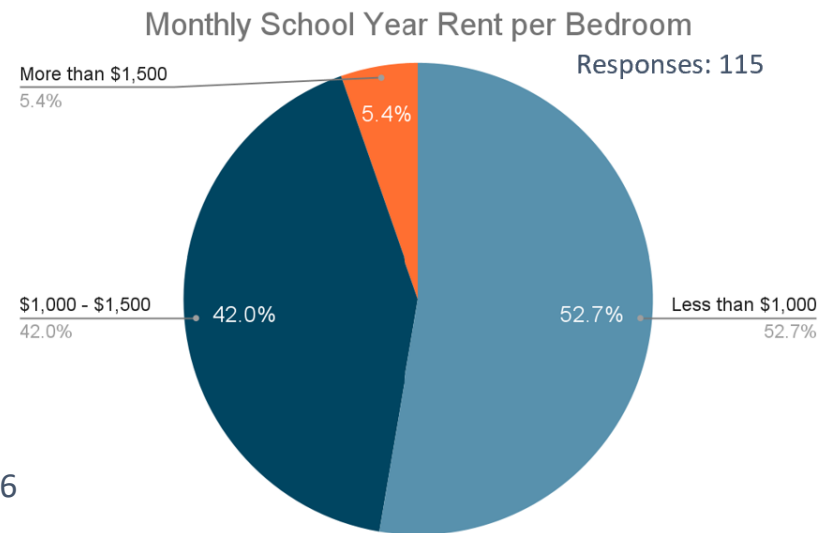
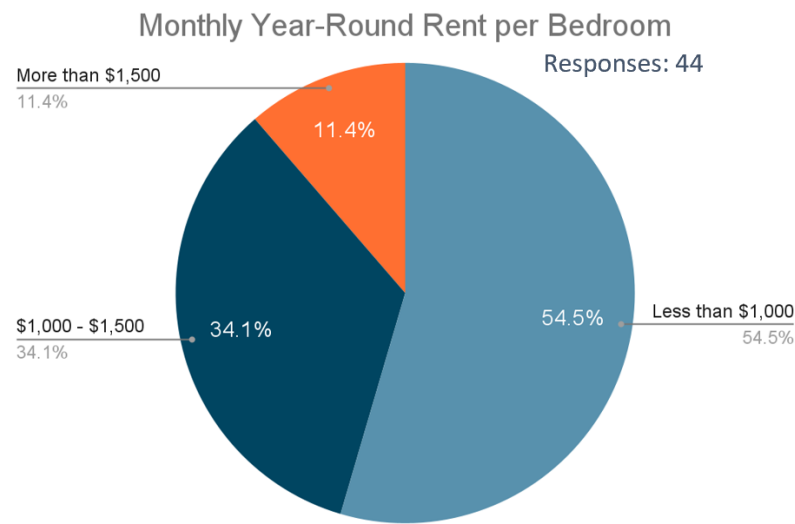
Number of Rental Properties



Total Number of Rental Units

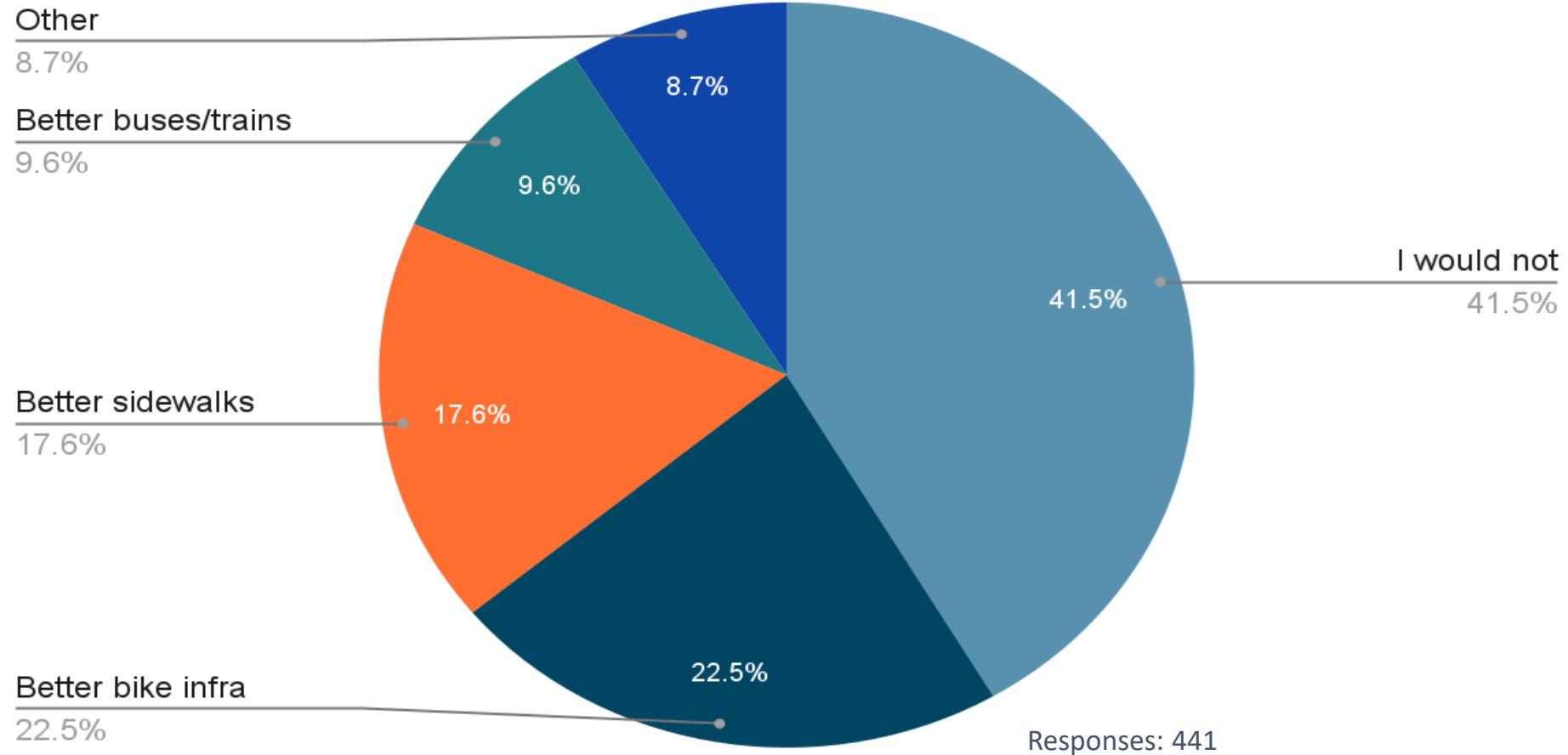


Landlord Responses: Rents



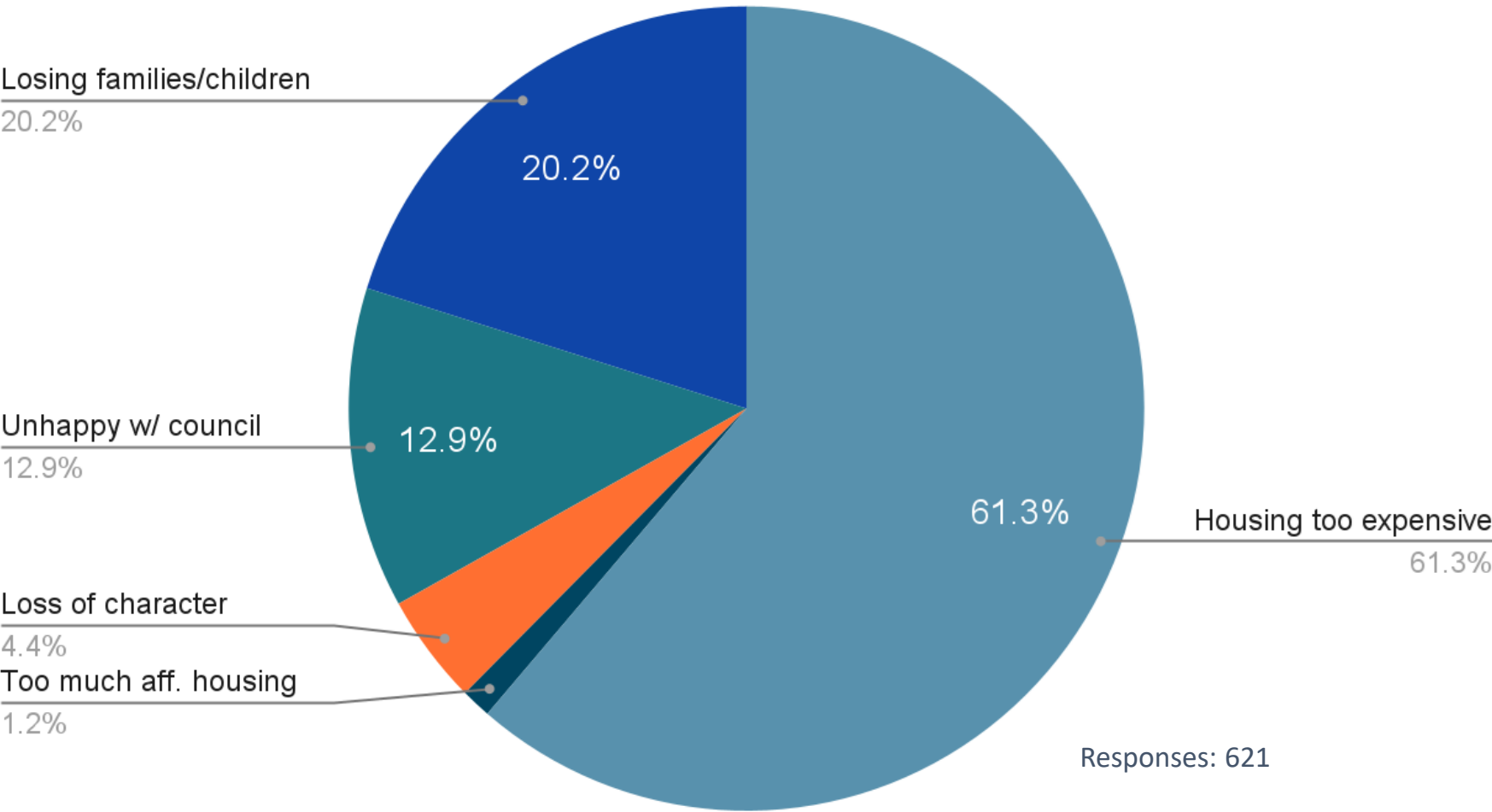
Survey Results: Transportation Habits

What would help you use your car less?



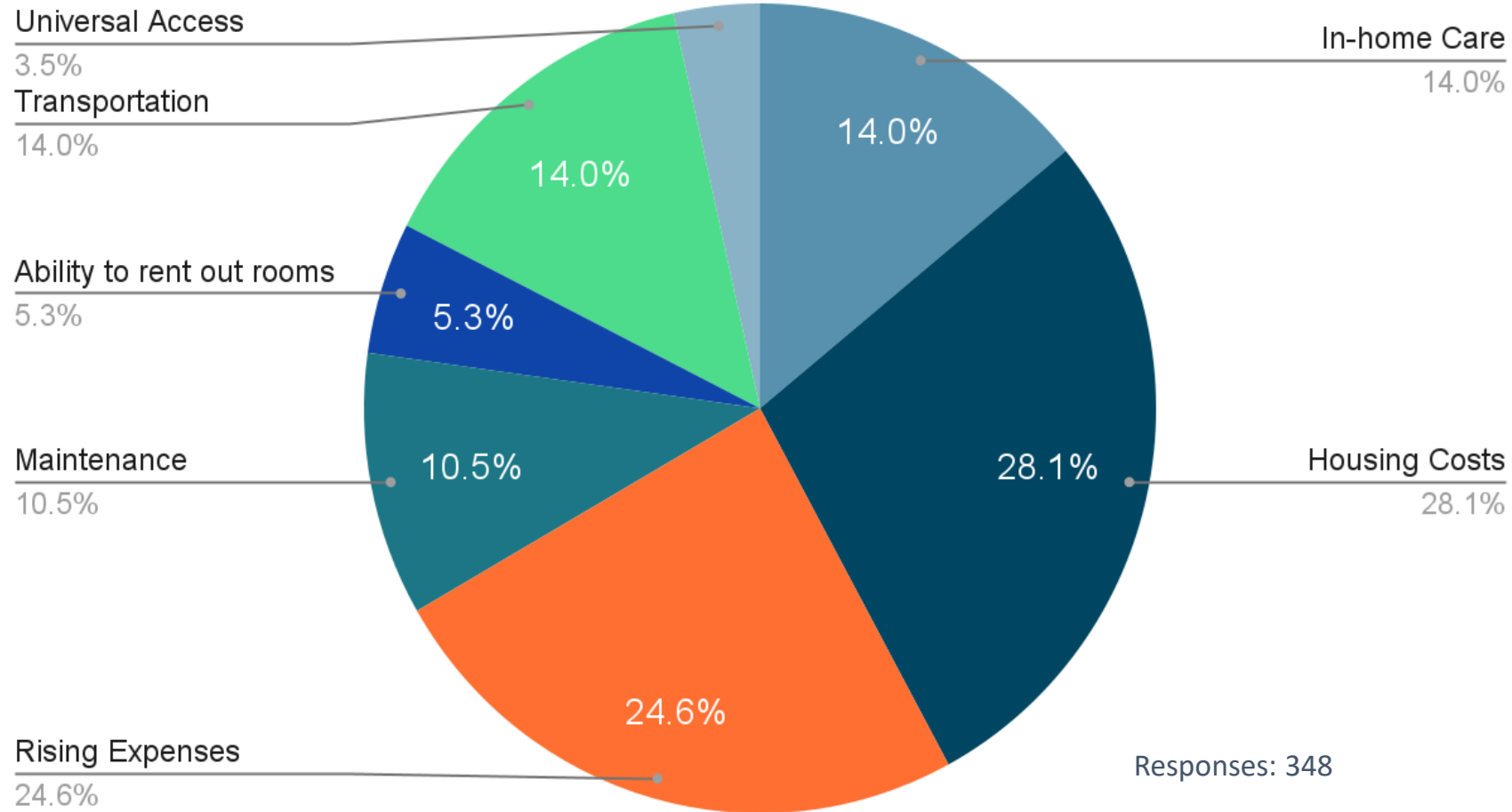
Survey Results: Housing Conversations

Subjects of housing convos



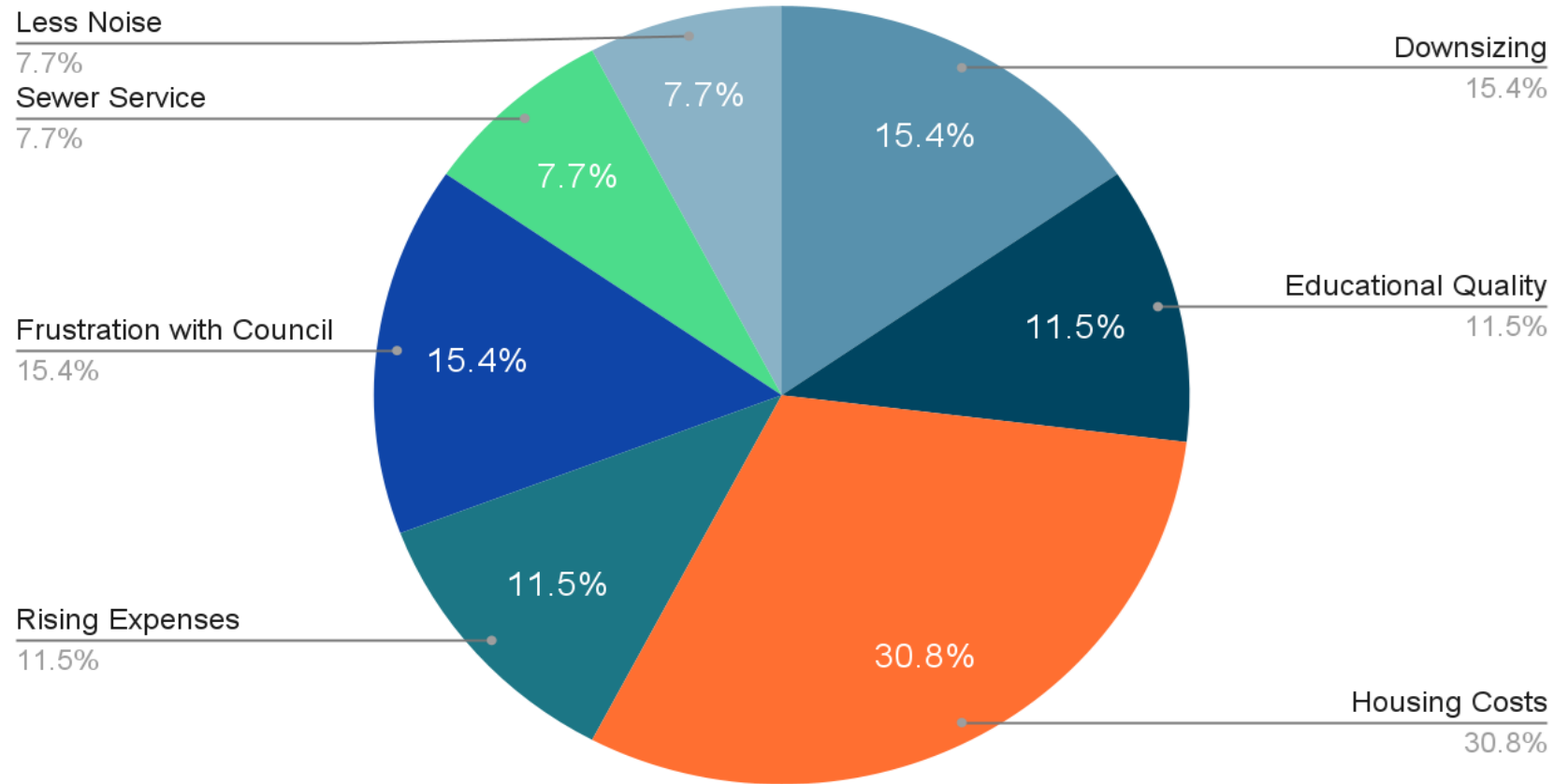
Survey Results: Personal Future Needs

Anticipated Support Needed While Aging



Survey Results: Personal Current Needs

Current Difficulties and Needs



Responses: 146

Agree - Disagree Statements

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The town needs to find more ways to facilitate the creation of more homes	70%	10%	20%
There are housing needs in town	74%	12%	14%
There are sufficient homes and apartments available	16%	19%	65%
There are housing needs, but it is the responsibility of developers to provide more housing	25%	32%	43%
We should build more of the homes historically built	52%	30%	18%
State and other funding sources need to allow for higher levels of funding	50%	28%	22%

Workshop Series

HOUSING & LIVABILITY WORKSHOPS

Hosted by HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University



Topic	Time	Location
From Village Life to Suburbanization	September 5th 6:00 - 8:00pm	Community Center 53 Mumford Rd
Modern Day Challenges: 1970s to Present	September 12th 6:00 - 8:00pm	Community Center 53 Mumford Rd
Facing the Future: Ensuring a Livable Narragansett	September 26th 6:00 - 8:00pm	Community Center 53 Mumford Rd

- Learn about the history of housing in Narragansett and help shape its future!
- Opportunities to engage in small group discussion with other residents
- Interactive Q&A sessions
- **Refreshments will be provided!**



Learn more at: bit.ly/HWRI-Workshops
Registration encouraged but not required

Workshop 1: From Village Life to Suburbanization

Rhode Island is often characterized by its small village centers. Yet, few villages remain the walkable centers of community life they once were. In this workshop, we will discuss the rise and fall of these villages as the central aspect of life, specifically focusing on Narragansett.

Workshop 2: Modern Day Challenges: 1970s to Present

Like elsewhere in the United States, the suburbanization of Rhode Island saw an explosion of neighborhoods dominated by single-family homes and the automobile. Accompanied by a demographic population and economic shift away from central cities. Significant changes in the real estate market and a lack of sustained investment in housing led to skyrocketing housing prices and deepened the legacy of socio-economic segregation. Come learn about what states and municipalities are doing to encourage more diverse types of homes at price points that average incomes can afford.

Workshop 3: Facing the Future: Ensuring a Livable Narragansett

As we look toward the future, Narragansett faces a range of challenges. Rising sea levels. Housing affordability. Shrinking school enrollment. In order to ensure that Narragansett remains a place where future generations can live and thrive, this workshop will reflect on ways to mitigate current struggles and forge a way toward a sustainable future for all who live and work here.



RHODE ISLAND

Workshop Series

Housing & Livability in Narragansett: *Community, Affordability & Resilience*

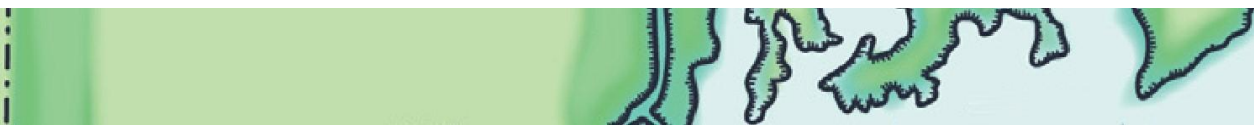
- Goal was to build a “story” of Narragansett over the series
- Mapping exercise: Where do you live? (full Town coverage)
- Interactive exercise: Question relevant to the topic matter
- Two breakout discussions (notes given to Town)
- Handouts, including timelines relevant to workshop
- Total of 22 participants, including current/retired officials and Staff (of residents 3 attended two workshops and 1 attended all three)



WS 1: From Village Life to Suburbanization (7 participants)

“Early Communities and the Rise of the Resort (1700-1900)”

- History of the Town as a Native American settlement and early colonial village to a center of entertainment for high society that rivaled Newport
- Brief review of start of human civilization and early laws that questioned who belonged, such as “Warning Out” laws and the “Ugly Laws.”
- Town’s desirability remains a core part of Narragansett’s identity
- Tension between being neighborhoods/communities where people would like to remain into retirement, and the economic and seasonal reality that exacerbates costs—both financially and environmentally
- One specific mention was made of how the “commercial use of housing has changed drastically.”



WS 1: From Village Life to Suburbanization

Growing, Zoning, and Driving (1900-1970)

- Participants fully recognized the early impact of tourism and seasonal housing driven by oceanfront location
 - The “first summer people” were from northern Rhode Island who rented or owned summer homes
- **Dual identity was captured by one participant who wrestled with “What are we? A tourism Town or ...?”**
- Post-WWII decades characterized as more modest in nature: homes around the pier in the 1950s were described as “summer cottages”
 - 1970s’ rental population included local workers and fishermen who rented year-round
- Replacement of traditional renters by URI students especially, **which the university should help solve**
- Two substantial drivers of the suburbanization growth were the creation of Route 4 and the excellent school system
- **Redevelopment of Narragansett Pier begun in 1969 appeared as a deciding factor in the rest of the Town’s development. One participant described it as a “scar.”**
- Increase in overall tourism came with highway expansion
- Town’s economic drivers: tourism, fishing, government (URI) and military workers
- Potential for natural assets as an opportunity for future economic growth, as in environmental tourism
- **Lack of meaningful public transportation** throughout the Town; senior bus was mentioned as an asset, but some residents missed or wished to reinvigorate “Ted Wright’s trolley to get around the Town
- Improvements that came with suburbanization also coincided with recognition of **environmental protection, which was noted both with pride and with some acknowledgement of the complexity it brings to housing development.**



WS 1: From Village Life to Suburbanization

For many participants, Narragansett is the place where they chose to raise their children and experience a high quality of life. It was clear they want that for others as well, but in examining the challenges of “affordable” housing—even for middle-class families—they observed the **stigma attached to** the concept, including that the children who live in affordable homes get “labeled.” They referenced what many people, particularly older adults, remember as “**affordable housing,**” and **programs like “Section 8.”** Mention was made that “we still imagine the projects of the old days [and their] bad reputation.” It was observed that “**you shouldn’t know**” **what is affordable housing—integrating it into** community context should be routine and not segregated. Points were made that housing relates to all aspects of a community, including its schools and businesses. It was considered that clarification and better informing residents would help.



WS 2: Modern Day Challenges: 1970s to Present (14 participants)

Participants first identified:

- URI heavily dependent
- New leadership
- Cost
- Unique and interesting
- Crowds / traffic
- Lack of land
- Income and families
- Ocean impact

“Framing the Present: 1970s to Present”

- Data on the growth of the Town’s population, median age, and housing units
- Pressures of the real estate market through the decline of vacancies and median days of market listings

“Contemporary Challenges: Housing Affordability”

- Framed within the Social Determinants of Health (health, education, community, economy, environment):
 - Housing cost burdens
 - Area median incomes (US HUD) and associated housing costs
 - Types of affordability (market-rate and long-term, subsidized)
 - Statutory definition of low- and moderate-income housing
 - Images of long-term affordable homes in Narragansett
- Participants’ responses to information: families, affordable, basic, challenging, community, functional, future, helpful, impossible, income-based, location, needed, nonexistent, realistic rent, Section 8, unattainable, workforce, and younger families.



WS 2: Modern Day Challenges: 1970s to Present (14 participants)

Discussion prompt “***What does a livable community mean for [housing, transit, economy, environment] in the context of Narragansett?***”

- **Market/affordability:** Town’s market has been “monetized” for lucrative investments; “absentee landlords”; “out of state”; “ROI”; “supply/demand imbalance” due to environmental factor of land & infrastructure; “seasonal rentals”; older residents who are “over housed” but can’t find smaller places in Town to downsize to.
- **Housing ideas:** Clarke Point; ADUs; mixed-use development (but not w/o concern re parking & noise); Town financial contributions (no South County Habitat homes or contributions to Trust—at that time); acknowledge low tax rate.
- **Public education/attitudes:** “stigma” of “affordable housing”; not Section 8; “community character”; “NIMBY”; resistance to change; use “workforce housing” instead; discuss “YIMBY”



WS 2: Modern Day Challenges: 1970s to Present (14 participants)

Discussion prompt “***What does a livable community mean for [housing, transit, economy, environment] in the context of Narragansett?***”

- **Schools and children:** loss of young children; decline in school enrollment; irony of “very quiet” (no families) or “very loud” (college students replacing other youth in community)
- **Student rentals:** Used to be concentrated, but is now scattered throughout; State & URI need to help; students are also a part of the community, 90-95% are “good”
- **Transit:** “awful” doesn’t meet needs of students or older adults; improved bus service on URI-Galilee route; ideas for smaller busses (RIPTA), ride-sharing vouchers (for workers), partnering with South Kingstown
- **Economy:** “we don’t have a local economy, it’s seasonal”; State’s reputation as not “business friendly”; misinformation regarding local regulations’ affect on businesses
- **Environment:** water and sewer constraints; land that is not buildable.



WS 3: Facing the Future: Ensuring a Livable Narragansett

Planning/Goals for Narragansett's Future: Asking "What If?"

- High level overview of planning, including British Urban Planner Patsy Healy explained planning as ***"managing our co-existence in a shared space"***
- Community involvement
- State Guide Plan Land Use 2025
- Concept of Smart Growth
- HUD grant awarded to state for "Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO)" through South County Health Equity Zone (HEZ)
- Tools to measure "livability": AARP, Opportunity Index, PAHRC (all premised on topics within SDOH)



WS 3: Facing the Future: Ensuring a Livable Narragansett

Planning Ahead

- Reviewed details from Town's Comprehensive Plan and more recent Crane Associates' Housing Needs Assessment
 - Suggested the need for an additional 404 more rental homes and 1,263 more homes for ownership
- American Planning Association and National League of Cities & Towns recent Housing Accelerator Playbook
- Explanation and visuals of “missing middle” housing types
- Difficulties of change
- Breakout discussion of Town's Strengths & Areas for Improvement



WS 3: Facing the Future: Ensuring a Livable Narragansett

Where to Promote Development? *(3 working groups)*

Green (Yes)

- Eastern end of South Ferry Road (2 maps)
- Boston Neck Rd/Bonnet Shores Special Planning District (1 map)
- Pier Area Special Planning District (2 maps)—and yellow on 1 of the same!
- Dillon Rotary/Caswell Corner Special Planning District (1 map)
- Eastern end of Clarke Road (1 map)
- Eastern Galilee (north of Admirals Way, between 108 & Ocean Road) (1 map)

Yellow (Caution)

- NW of URI Bay Campus (1 map)
- Pier Area Special Planning District (1 map—also green on same map)

Red (Preserve only)

- East side of Narrow River near Middlebridge Rd. (1 map)
- Western areas south of South Pier Road & north of Daytona Ave (2 maps with 2 dots each that seem to be roughly referencing the same area)



Final Observations & Next Steps

- Overwhelming acknowledgement that the Town could use more housing affordability overall and even subsidized affordable homes
- Want the Town to attract younger households, particularly families
- Understanding of conflict between maintenance of what is described as “community character and lack of affordable housing
- Substantial agreement that more resources are needed to fill these gaps, and participants **seemed open to discussing a range of options, including the local and state housing bonds as well as tax policy.**
- The sense of “community loss” of even just the last two decades was palpable
- **The tensions among housing markets, wages, land use, and governments are real and difficult**

Future Opportunities to Consider

1. State & Local Housing Bonds
2. Pathways to Removing Obstacles (PRO) Housing Grant and Engagement with Washington County Health Equity Zone
3. Organizing Advocates as Advisory Group
 - Convene key investment stakeholders, such as landlords, real estate agents, and developers, to establish an understanding of the key sticking points among private market forces, the provision of affordable homes, and the town’s environmental limitations.



THANK YOU!

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