



RYE HOUSING SURVEY - SUMMARY REPORT

August 2023

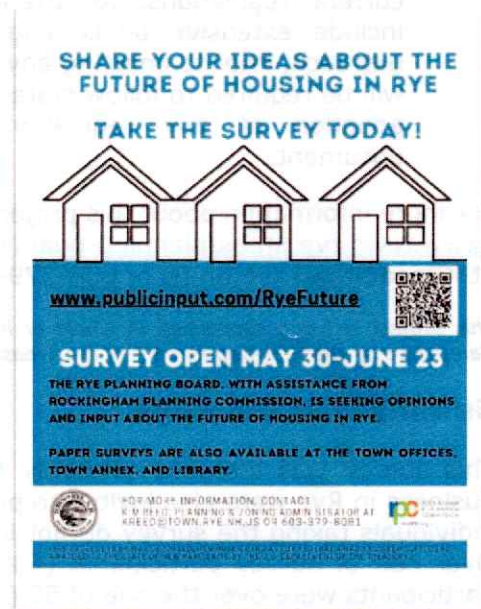
Overview

Communities throughout New Hampshire are wrestling with housing challenges. For Rye, the big question is how to integrate housing options into the existing fabric of the community. The first step is to engage the town in a conversation about housing to identify the priorities and strategies that best accommodate the community's needs.

In February 2023, the Rye Planning Board was awarded a \$17,750 grant from InvestNH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program's Housing Opportunity Program Needs Assessment Grant (HOP Grant) to prepare a Needs Analysis and Plan to fund the public engagement, analysis, and documentation of answering the question "what should the future of housing be in Rye?" Rockingham Planning Commission was selected to assist the Rye Planning Board with this effort.

The first task in Rye Housing Needs Analysis and Plan was to conduct a survey to seek feedback from residents, businesses, and officials on housing to help guide potential actions and future engagement. Between May 30, 2023 and July 6, 2023, 316 individuals took the Rye Housing Survey and provided nearly 5,000 responses or comments to the survey questions. The survey was a predominantly online survey, with paper surveys available at the Rye Town Hall, Town Hall Annex and Public Library. (Only five paper survey responses were received.) Outreach about the survey included having links posted on the Town website, information was included in the Rye newsletter mailed to every household in town, notices were posted on the unofficial and official social media sites, announcements were made at multiple municipal board meetings, flyers were handed out at the July 4th Town Celebration, and flyers posted around Rye.

Full survey results are available on the [town website](https://www.townofrye.com/) and at: publicinput.com/RyeFuture



The survey results will serve as one of many sources used to determine future decisions related to housing in Rye, including tasks being funded through Rye's grant award.

Next Steps

During the coming months, the Rye Planning Board, with the Long-Range Planning Committee, will continue working with Rockingham Planning Commission to continue the discussion of housing in Rye.

Next steps include:

- **Develop a housing needs assessment** that evaluates the housing status, demographics, and housing-related issues within Rye. This assessment will include guidance about tools and potential changes to local regulations, their impact on housing opportunities, and their relation to Rye residents' priorities and community goals. The assessment will be presented to the Planning Board later this summer.



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- **Hold a public input event** to present the background information, discuss housing preferences in Rye gained from the survey and other sources, and allow for facilitated discussion related to housing that may fit Rye’s needs and desires.
- **Continue to the conversation** by integrating housing preferences and information into the Rye Master Plan update and Buildout Analysis approved for funding at Town Meeting in March 2023. The Planning Board is also seeking an additional grant from the InvestNH Program to conduct a land use regulatory audit to identify opportunities and barriers to housing that exist within Rye’s current regulations. All these efforts will include extensive public engagement and outreach. Prior to enacting any changes, Rye will be required to follow state law regarding adoption of any regulation or guiding document.



SHARE YOUR IDEAS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF HOUSING IN RYE

ATTEND THE RYE HOUSING PUBLIC INPUT SESSION

SEPTEMBER 27, 2023
6:30 - 8:00 PM AT RYE JR. HIGH SCHOOL

MORE INFO AVAILABLE AT:
WWW.PUBLICINPUT.COM/RYEFUTURE

THE RYE PLANNING BOARD, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM ROCKINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION, IS SEEKING OPINIONS AND INPUT ABOUT THE FUTURE OF HOUSING IN RYE.

For more information about this project, please visit the town website (www.town.rye.nh.us/planning-board) or contact Kim Reed, Rye Planning and Zoning Administrator at KReed@town.rye.nh.us or 603-379-8081.

This project is being supported, in whole or in part by federal award number SLFRP0145 awarded to the State of New Hampshire by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Summary of Findings

This survey was intended primarily for residents, however, individuals who own property or a business in Rye were also invited to provide their thoughts. Of the 317 responses received, only 11 individuals taking the survey do not live in Rye and only 10 participants owned a business in Rye. Over half of survey participants (53%) have lived in Rye for more than 10 years, over half of participants were over the age of 55 (57%), and 45% work full time while 36% are retired. About a third of participants indicated their annual household income was over \$200,000, 16% indicated having an annual household income under \$100,000, and a third of participants preferred not to give their annual income. (Note that Rye Beach Village District residents were also invited to take part in the survey, however, only a small number (four total) of those identifying the general location of their home, property or business indicated a location within the Village District.)

The following outlines some of the major survey findings. The survey results are intended to assist the Rye Planning Board in making future land use decisions about housing, however, some feedback will also be used to assist other municipal officials and staff on future decisions.

Several major themes emerged from survey responses as outlined below. Additionally, the spectrum of comments received echoed the complexity of deciding what Rye’s housing future should be. Representative comments were selected to help represent Rye’s residents’ desires in their own words. The full listing of comments is available in the full survey results linked on the previous page.

STRONG DESIRE TO MAINTAIN RYE’S CHARACTERISTICS

Maintaining Rye’s characteristics was a strong desire of most residents. Preserving these characteristics, including historical homes and structures, open spaces and natural resources, and general feel of a smaller community were important to those that had a range of opinions about Rye’s housing future. Most indicated that they did not want to see new housing (red) along the coast and that more housing (green) or denser housing (blue) was potentially acceptable along Route 1 and areas of Wallis and Sagamore Roads.

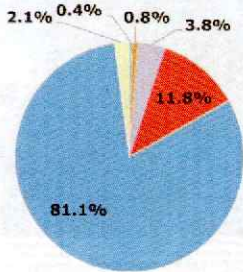


PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES IS A PRIORITY

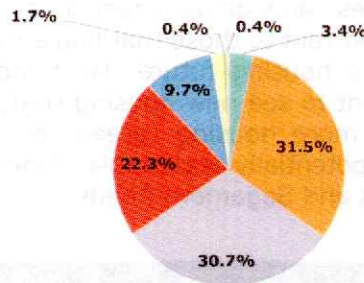
Many are concerned about protecting Rye’s natural resources and environmental services. In particular, the impacts of potentially more housing on water availability, flooding concerns, open space availability, and infrastructure capacity were noted as major concerns. Of priorities, protecting natural resources and rural character was selected as the highest priority with 95% stating it was a medium or high priority.

Please identify the priority of the following issues in terms of highest priority for Rye to address:

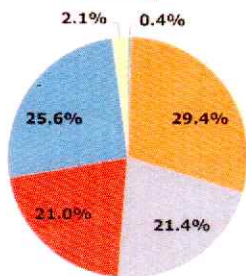
**Natural Resource Preservation/
Preservation of Rural Character**



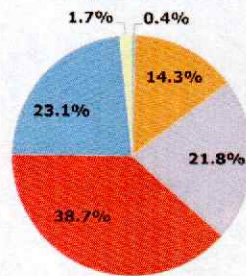
Workforce Development



**Affordable and/or Workforce
Housing**



**Transportation/Infrastructure
Improvements**



- Unsure
- Not a Priority
- Low Priority
- Medium Priority
- High Priority
- No Answer

MOST RESIDENTS FEEL SECURE IN THEIR HOUSING IN RYE

Most existing residents noted that their current housing in Rye will likely meet their housing needs in the foreseeable future. However, some expressed concern about the housing needs of others in the community or the ability for younger people to find housing options.

"Yes we bought this home as our forever home and plan to stay there while improving our property for the foreseeable future."



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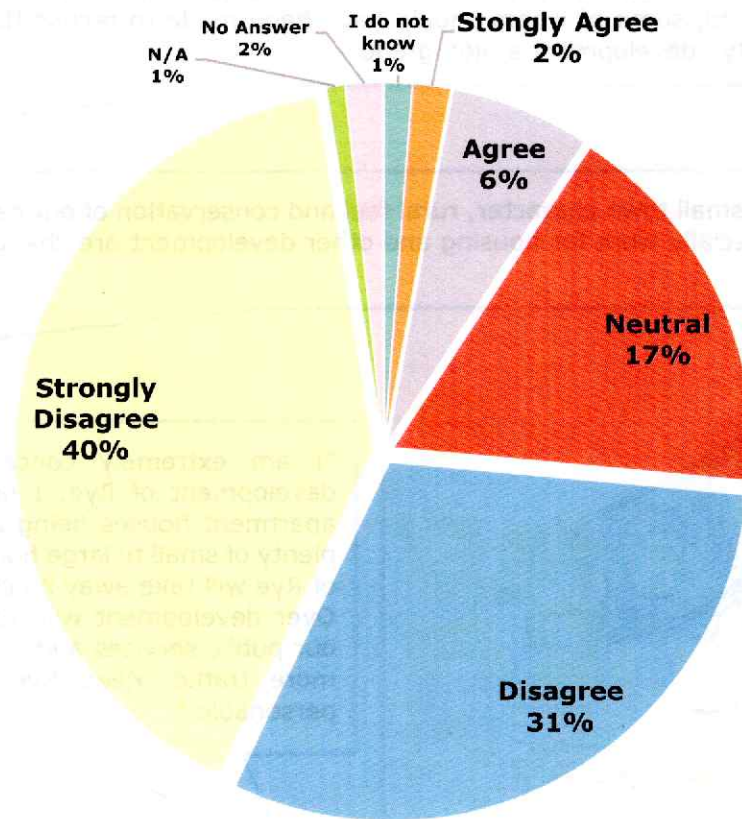
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LACK OF UNDERSTANDING RYE'S HOUSING GOALS

When asked about Rye's housing goals, many indicated that they were not sure what the goals even were. The majority (73%) did not feel that Rye provided affordable housing choices, and when asked what the cost of an affordable home in Rye would be most did not know. (The US Housing and Urban Development {HUD} estimated maximum affordability purchase price in Rye in 2023 is \$407,000.)

"Not sure what Rye's housing goals are. Housing costs are high in Rye because of its location. This makes it hard for young families to move here. We have been here a long time (Rye native) so were able to start here."

Rye provides affordable home purchase choices



What People Had to Say About Housing

There is a range of opinions about what Rye's housing future should be. The following are a sampling of comments from the survey that represent the range of perspectives – all comments received are in the full survey results report available on the [town website](#) and at: publicinput.com/RyeFuture.

NO MORE HOUSING

"Too much new construction going on. Overbuilding the community. Adding housing types which adversely affect the type of community Rye is, turning it into an undesirable town. We can't be all things to all people, nor should we have to be."

"From our previous detailed responses, I believe you will see that our perspective that recent housing developments have been approved at the great expense of neighbors, the community in general, land and wetlands management, water quality, environmental destruction, all for the benefit of parties with vested economic interests, some of whom should have been made to recuse themselves. I would not give your approach to Rye development a high grade."

"I want Rye to keep its small town character, rural feel and conservation of our natural resources. Lately too much building, especially work for housing and other development are changing the landscape and taxing resources."



"I am extremely concerned about the over development of Rye. I don't want condo's and apartment houses being built in Rye. There are plenty of small to large homes. Over development of Rye will take away its charm and quiet nature. Over development will place demands on all of our public services and infrastructure and create more traffic. Keep Rye as it is, quaint and personable."



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SOME HOUSING

"The rural nature of Rye is getting lost, and any new housing is very expensive, almost eliminating young families from buying homes, which in turn, changes the nature of the Town."

"I see new houses and displaced wildlife. People don't talk much about the damage animals do to properties. Nor the damage filling in Wetlands does to the coast line. The cookie cutter developments take away the charm of the New England Coastal tradition and devalue their neighbors. It would be nice to see a little more taste or less uniformity in developments."

"I am concerned with all the new construction going on. That a house is purchased, then torn down for a larger home to be built. Additionally, I do not like our natural rural landscape taken over by new housing developments. I know we need some new development for sustainability of town services with taxes and new children for our schools, yet I feel in over the past 20 years it has gotten way out of control. I would also like to see some 'workforce housing'. I have found Rye to be an elitist town, yet for full democracy we need all types of diversity."

"There is not enough workforce housing, though integrating it seems difficult. Higher density would lower taxes, but require more services and may hurt property values and change the semi-rural vibe."

"The rural nature of Rye is getting lost, and any new housing is very expensive, almost eliminating young families from buying homes, which in turn, changes the nature of the Town."



"Family friendly homes that are somewhat adorable. It feels like only retired or empty nesters from MA, CT, NY or somewhere else can afford homes here. I'm not against people from out of town I just wish there were more families."



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"I wouldn't want the town to grow too rapidly. By that I mean, the infrastructure (roads, schools, water, emergency services, etc) have to be in place to ensure quality services are available to all. I would also like Rye to keep its New England charm; that doesn't mean we should not grow, just have criteria for new structures (single or multi family) which will maintain that small town feel."

"Everything being knocked down and rebuilt in large non historic homes. There is no ability for anyone who works ie as a nurse, social worker someone who has grown up here to able to live in Rye anymore."

MORE HOUSING IS NEEDED

"There presently is a lack of affordable housing for vital town employees who provide essential services to town residents (i.e. police fire, EMS, Etc). These services are often time sensitive and pertain to life & safety hence the benefit to the community to have these people in town. Without affordable housing in the future or significant pay increases so that staff can pay the increase housing costs the need for additional full time staff will continue as the community grows."

"I am not a home owner in NH. It is not something I have ever envisioned as possible because of the cost. So, my housing experience has always been as a renter. Being a renter in NH is a nightmare. And if you explain this to non-renters they will say "just move." Quality and affordable apartment rentals continues to be the biggest crisis in NH. There's no workforce rental proposals in Rye that I am aware of - hopefully Rye's workforce housing plan will include one and two bedroom apartments."

"Lack of affordability. This lack of affordability limits the diversity of the town. It is also an older population. Young professionals and young families have difficulty finding reasonably affordable housing in the town. There also appears to be many single family homes. Although there have been some recent multifamily developments, such as Washington Road and Thompson Landing, I think more townhomes and condos should be explored as other options. There is also limited room for development due to wetlands, drinking water and sewer limitations."