



BRENTWOOD HOUSING SURVEY - SUMMARY REPORT

April 2024

Overview

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

In February 2023, the Brentwood Planning Board was awarded a \$40,000 grant from InvestNH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program's Housing Opportunity Program Needs Assessment Grant (HOP Grant) to prepare a Housing Master Plan, develop a Land Use Regulatory Audit and conduct public outreach and engagement to answer the question "what should the future of housing be in Brentwood?" Rockingham Planning Commission was selected to assist the Brentwood Planning Board with this effort.

A major component of the project is to conduct public outreach, including a survey to seek feedback from residents, businesses, and officials on housing to help guide potential actions and future engagement. Between February 1 and March 22, 2024, 212 individuals took the Brentwood Housing Survey and provided nearly 3,000 responses or comments to the survey questions. The survey was a predominantly online survey, with paper surveys available at the Brentwood Town Hall. (Only one paper survey was received.) Outreach about the survey included having links posted on the Town website, 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 2024 Town meeting, and flyers were posted around Brentwood.

Full survey results are available on the **town website** and at: www.publicinput.com/BrentwoodHousing

Summary of Findings



This survey was intended primarily for residents, however, individuals who own property or a business in Brentwood were also invited to provide their thoughts. Of the 212 responses received, only 4 individuals taking the survey do not live in Brentwood and only 17 participants owned a business in Brentwood. Over half of survey participants (55%) have lived in Brentwood for more than 10 years, around half of participants were over the age of 55 (47%), and 56% work full time while 24% are retired. About a fifth of participants indicated their annual household income was over

THE FUTURE OF HOUSING IN BRENTWOOD

The Brentwood Planning Board received funding from InvestNH through a grant which is focused on answering "What is the future of housing in Brentwood?" and are looking input from all residents.

Below you'll find out how to access our website which features educational material about housing, our regions housing needs, demographic data and more. If you appreciate a more guided approach there is a recording of a presentation from the Rockingham Planning Commission.

The Brentwood Housing Survey is live and the Planning Board is seeking input from all residents!

SCAN TO ACCESS THE HOUSING WEBSITE OR VISIT: HTTPS://WWW.BRENTWOODNH.GOV/NEWSVIEW.ASPX?NID=6664 	SCAN TO ACCESS THE HOUSING SURVEY OR VISIT: PUBLICINPUT.COM/BRENTWOODHOUSING 
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Please contact Jillian Benedix (603) 642-6400 ext 116 for more information



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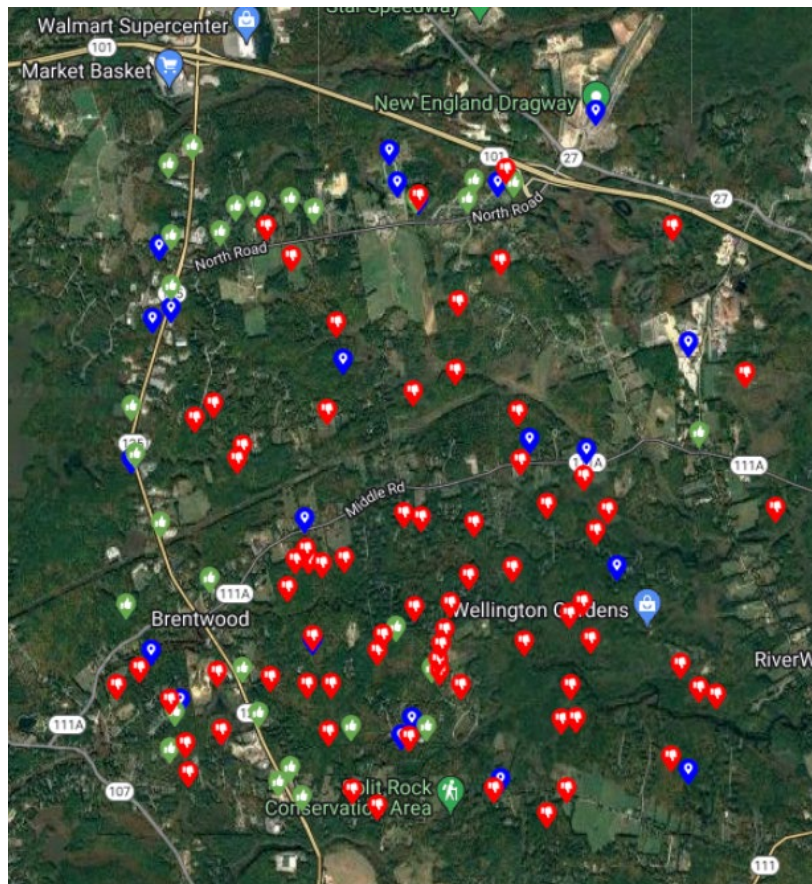
\$200,000, 17% indicated having an annual household income under \$100,000, and a third of participants preferred not to give their annual income.

The following outlines some of the major survey findings. The survey results are intended to assist the Brentwood 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 Brentwood’s housing future should be. Representative comments were selected to help represent Brentwood’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 BRENTWOOD’S CHARACTERISTICS

Maintaining Brentwood’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 Brentwood’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 125 and North Road near the county complex.





PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES IS A PRIORITY

Many are concerned about protecting Brentwood’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 one of the most commonly stated concerns.

TAX IMPLICATIONS OF HOUSING DECISION ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO RESIDENTS

Many expressed strong opinions regarding the tax implications of housing –with the number of houses, whether households had children in school, or if they could continue to afford the taxes. When considering any future housing regulations in Brentwood, it is recommended that the town review the potential tax implications and convey those findings the public.

“Yes we bought this home as our forever I am concerned that we will lose our rural charm and appeal if we allow any more dense housing areas. If we are to allow dense housing, then I would focus on 55 and older developments which will minimize growth in school aged children which will control tax growth (the more children the higher our assessed school district costs). Workforce housing is not appropriate for Brentwood. First all my neighbors work (many have two incomes) so we already have “workforce” housing. In regards to “affordable” housing I think Brentwood is “affordable” given where we are and what we offer. In regards to “low income” housing, Brentwood probably is NOT ever going to be for first time homeowners. This is fine, let other communities that can better support low income residents (public transportation, job opportunities, public assistance centers) do that.

MOST RESIDENTS FEEL SECURE IN THEIR HOUSING IN BRENTWOOD

Most existing residents noted that their current housing in Brentwood 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.



LACK OF UNDERSTANDING BRENTWOOD'S HOUSING GOALS

When asked about Brentwood's housing goals, many indicated that they were not sure what the goals even were. Many did not feel that Brentwood provided needed to provide housing choices. Common responses to what the housing goals should be included not adding more 55+ communities, maintaining the two-acre zoning, protecting rural character, and limiting the number of multifamily developments.

"Why do we keep needing goals? Can't we just maintain? I think our goals should be to keep our town beautiful (think, the way Hampton Falls does). Finding solutions to our ever rising property taxes would be nice, but that is largely due to our excessive school spending and unnecessary growth plans from those who no longer want a small town to offer only small town amenities. I would rather pay high property taxes to keep our town rural, than have low property taxes and become an overpopulated, treeless, suburban area.



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Question 8: Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about Brentwood:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I do not know
Brentwood provides affordable home purchase choices.	10% Strongly agree	15% Agree	20% Neutral	21% Disagree	33% Strongly Disagree	2% I do not know
Brentwood has adequate rental options.	9% Strongly agree	8% Agree	14% Neutral	18% Disagree	36% Strongly Disagree	16% I do not know
Brentwood provides housing choices that attract workers of all ages.	12% Strongly agree	16% Agree	18% Neutral	18% Disagree	33% Strongly Disagree	2% I do not know
Brentwood provides adequate housing options for aging seniors.	18% Strongly agree	25% Agree	16% Neutral	18% Disagree	18% Strongly Disagree	4% I do not know
Brentwood provides adequate housing choices near jobs and transit routes.	19% Strongly agree	27% Agree	21% Neutral	13% Disagree	19% Strongly Disagree	1% I do not know



What People Had to Say About Housing

There is a range of opinions about what Brentwood’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/BrentwoodFuture.

NO MORE HOUSING

“Too much new construction going on. Overbuilding the community. Adding housing types which adversely affect the type of community Brentwood 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 Brentwood development a high grade.”

“I want Brentwood 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 Brentwood. I don't want condo's and apartment houses being built in Brentwood. There are plenty of small to large homes. Over development of Brentwood 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 Brentwood as it is, quaint and personable.”

SOME HOUSING

"The rural nature of Brentwood 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 Brentwood 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 Brentwood 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."

"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 Brentwood 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 Brentwood 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 Brentwood that I am aware of - hopefully Brentwood'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."