

Housing Survey Results Summary

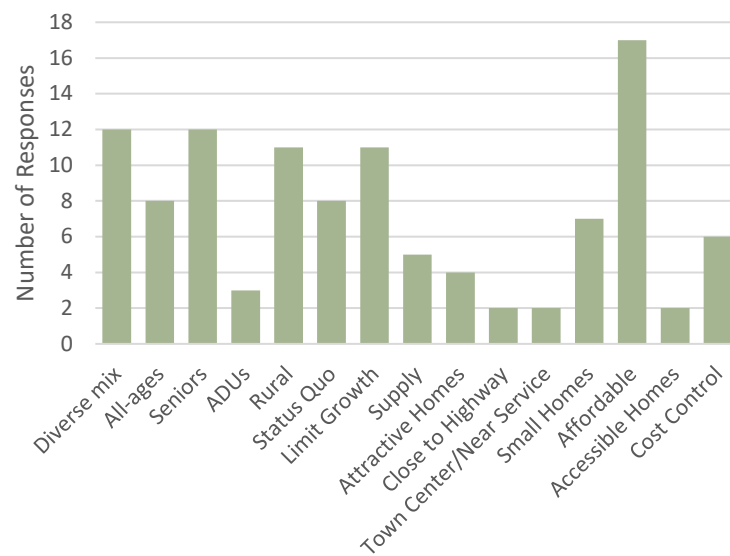


The Dunstable Housing Survey was open from November 14, 2022 to December 24, 2022 and received 79 responses. In addition to paper copies with a digital link handed out at the Dunstable Town Meeting, the survey was advertised via Nextdoor, Dunstable’s Facebook Page, the *Neighbor to Neighbor* newsletter, and at Select Board and Planning Board meetings. Paper copies with a digital link were also available at the Public Library and Town Hall.

79 Responses
11/14/22 – 12/23/22

Question 1: What is your vision for new housing in Dunstable?

62 people responded to this question with a wide variety of vision statements. These vision statements were scanned for keywords listed in the chart to the right (statements could have more than one keyword).



There was the highest level of agreement on affordability being a key part of Dunstable’s vision, as subsidized or affordable housing

was mentioned in 17 responses. Housing for seniors was mentioned 12 times and maintaining a rural character was mentioned 11 times—although many visions included integrating housing growth into Dunstable’s rural aesthetic. Twelve responses included a more diverse mix of housing, such as townhomes, condos, or apartments; 11 suggested limited or limiting growth; and eight suggested maintaining a status quo or not changing Dunstable’s housing mix. Some example visions include:

Dream of a town that had housing appropriate to young couples to elders. One bedroom to four bedrooms. Ability for families to have in-laws and granddad apartments.

We need to provide a balanced mix of housing that supports a broader mix of income levels. We have too much of our town and our tax base tied up in low density, high cost personal real estate, making it very difficult to keep pace with the growing financial needs of our town.

Keep Dunstable a rural community.

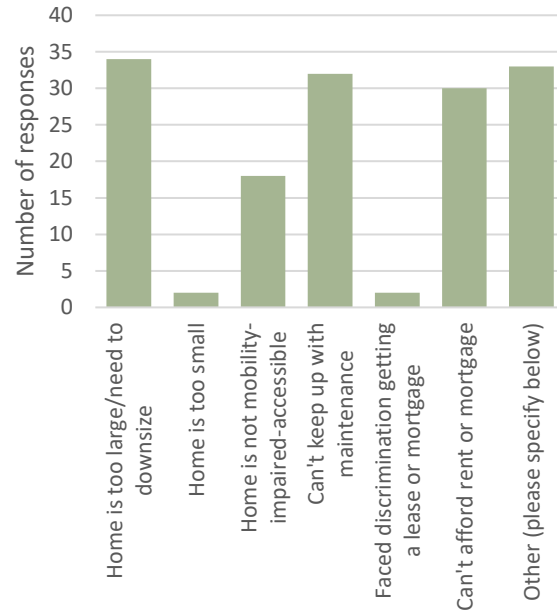
Smaller houses for elders in a more village-like setting. Fewer huge single-family houses.

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Question 2: What housing issues or concerns have you experienced or believe others might face in Dunstable?

This question gave respondents an option to check multiple boxes and provide their own answer in an “other” category. “Home is too large/need to downsize”, “Can’t keep up with maintenance” and “Can’t afford rent or mortgage” were each selected by more than 30 people. Very few selected “Home is too small” or “Faced discrimination getting a lease or mortgage” (two responses each).



Other housing issues included:

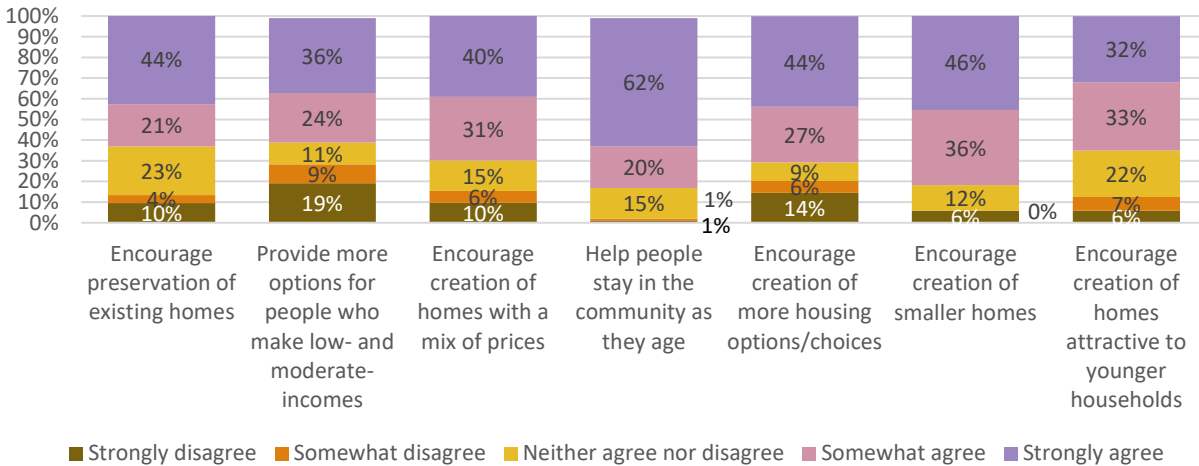
| Issue | # Responses |
|--|-------------|
| Tax expenses | 13 |
| Utility expenses (Either private or public) | 4 |
| Expense or lack of options for friends or family | 3 |
| Car dependency | 2 |
| Other responses | 7 |

Other responses involved concern about loss of farmland, overdevelopment, lack of things to do, lack of zoning enforcement, household budgeting, and traffic. One respondent mentioned an impact due to 40B development as a housing issue Dunstable has faced, but there are no existing 40B developments in Dunstable, suggesting need for further education.

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Question 3: Which housing initiatives should be prioritized over the next five years?



Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with seven priorities for Question 3. All priorities were somewhat or strongly agreed upon by at least 60% of all respondents, with the most popular priorities being “Encourage the creation of smaller homes” at 83% and “Help people stay in the community as they age” at 82%. The most controversial category priority was “Provide more options who make low- and moderate-incomes, on which 19% of respondents strongly disagreed, and 36% of respondents strongly agreed.

Question 4: Please list any other housing initiatives that should be prioritized over the next five years that were not listed above

Responses to this free-answer question were scanned for keywords (statements could have more than one keyword). 38 people responded to this question, although many reiterated priorities from Question 3 or their vision from Question 1—including the most common response to this question, senior housing.

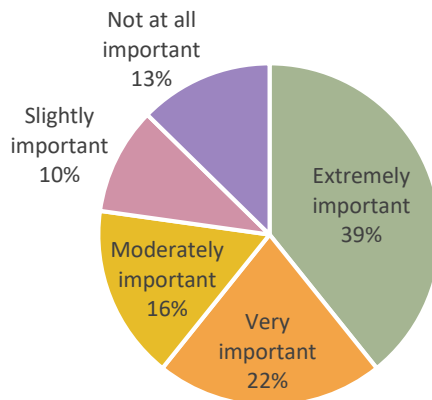
| Keyword | # Responses |
|--|-------------|
| Senior housing | 11 |
| Control or lower taxes, especially for seniors | 4 |
| Increase housing diversity | 3 |
| Multimodal transportation | 2 |
| Mixed Use District development | 2 |
| Farm preservation | 2 |

In addition to responses listed in the table below, respondents mentioned middle income housing, character, signs, maintaining a free market, housing preservation, limiting growth, commercial growth, school quality, sustainability, control expense of single family on two-acre plots, and zoning enforcement.

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Question 5: How Important is it for you to age in Dunstable?



This question was a multiple choice. All respondents (79) answered this question, with 39% stating that the ability to age in Dunstable was extremely important and an additional 22% stating it was very important.

Question 6: Dunstable's zoning bylaw allows multifamily senior housing and accessory dwelling units in most of the town. However, few such units have been developed. Why do you think this is?

The final question was meant to identify additional issues for the Housing Production Plan project team to research. Participants voiced their belief that the following issues impacted development:

- A lack of infrastructure such as water and sewer
- A permitting process that is too restrictive
- Lack of knowledge on the part of developers
- Lack of Return on Investment, especially compared to expensive, large homes
- Opportunities for diverse housing in Nashua or other neighboring communities
- Multigenerational housing options being available and preferred
- Lack of communication from Housing Committee or other boards
- Need for further investment by the Town
- Need for continued and strengthened leadership on the issue by the Town
- A desire on the part of residents or town leadership for the status quo
- Restrictions on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) being too tight
- Lack of transportation options such as sidewalks or transit
- Lack of commercial activities or a town center
- High taxes

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Town of Dunstable

Housing Production Plan for 2023-27

Conclusions

Although the survey was not scientific and it is unknown if a certain demographic is overrepresented among the respondents, the results did appear to represent a wide variety of opinions and perspectives. The following high-level conclusions might be drawn:

- The rural design aesthetic and land use patterns of Dunstable are very important to residents, and there is support for the preservation of agriculture, including many who nevertheless believe housing options should also be expanded.
- A majority of participants responded positively to the all goals the survey put forth, such as preserving homes, creating affordable housing, and a more diverse variety of housing types.
- Making the construction of smaller homes more financially feasible, including single family homes and other housing types, was a recurring theme throughout the survey responses.
- Several participants voiced a belief that there are major barriers to affordable housing, ADUs, and senior housing, including a lack of infrastructure, difficult permitting processes, and need for further commitment from Town officials. This may suggest areas to explore whether there is room for improvements and/or a need to further communicate the Town's vision and successes.
- Many respondents were concerned about Dunstable's tax burden, either for themselves or for the senior population.
- Senior housing is one of the most critical issues to many survey respondents.