Monhegan Island

Housing Needs & Preferences Survey

Results Summary

Survey Period: Fall 2025

Total Responses: 69

Executive Summary

The Monhegan Island Housing Needs & Preferences Survey gathered input from 69 community members in an effort to better understand the current housing landscape and identify priorities for addressing the island's housing challenges. This survey represents a significant cross-section of the island community, including full-time residents, seasonal residents, and property owners.

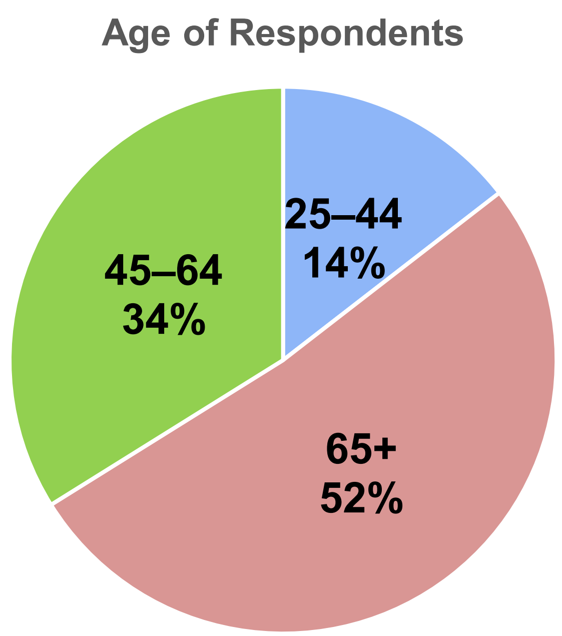
The results reveal a community deeply concerned about housing availability, with strong support for strategic interventions to preserve Monhegan's year-round character. The data clearly indicates that housing difficulties affect the vast majority of community members, with 81% of respondents reporting that finding suitable housing is either "somewhat difficult," "very difficult," or "impossible."

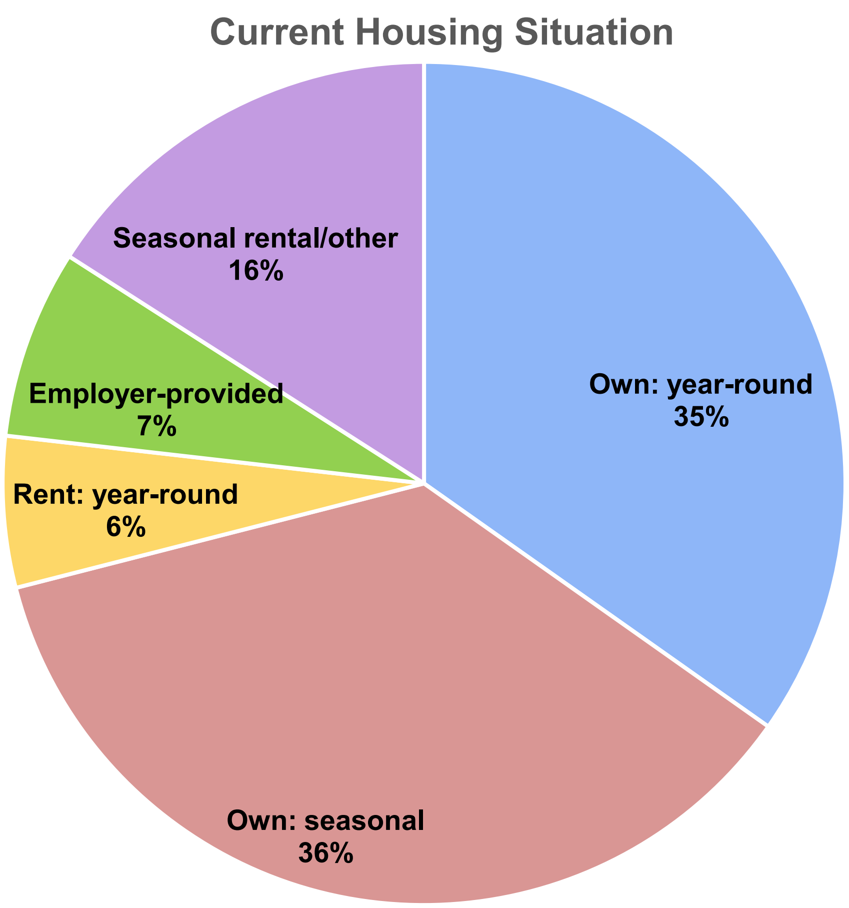
Key Findings at a Glance

- **81%** report housing is somewhat difficult, very difficult, or impossible to find
- **84%** identify year-round residents as a high housing priority
- **78%** support expanded ADU development with appropriate limits
- **58%** support multi-unit/clustered housing if carefully designed
- **61%** strongly support nonprofit/cooperative housing approaches (MISCA)

Respondent Profile

Visual Snapshot of Respondents





Community Member Type

The survey captured a wide variety of perspectives within the Monhegan community. The respondent pool was nearly evenly split between full-time residents (38%) and seasonal/part-time residents of less than 6 months per year (39%), with seasonal residents of more than 6 months per year (12%), property owners (4%) and others (7%) rounding out the sample.

Community Member Type	Count	Percentage
Full-time resident	26	38%
Seasonal/part-time (less than 6 months)	27	39%
Seasonal/part-time (over 6 months)	8	12%
Property owner only	3	4%
Other	5	7%

Housing Tenure

The majority of respondents (72%) own their housing on Monhegan, while the remainder rent, have employer-provided housing, or have other arrangements. This ownership-heavy sample is notable given that renters and those in precarious housing situations may be underrepresented.

Housing Tenure	Count	Percentage
Own	50	72%
Rent	6	9%
Other arrangements	13	19%

Current Housing Situation

When asked to describe their current housing situation on Monhegan, responses revealed a community divided between those with stable year-round ownership and those in more precarious situations:

Current Housing	Count	Percentage
Own a seasonal/ part-time home	25	36%
Own a year-round home	24	35%
Rent year-round	4	6%
Employer-provided housing	5	7%
Seasonal rental or other	11	16%

Several respondents described particularly challenging situations, including having to switch jobs to secure employer-provided housing, living in homes that need significant work to be winterized, or facing uncertainty about continued housing availability.

Rental Property Ownership

Understanding rental property patterns is critical to addressing housing availability. Among respondents, 39 (57%) do not own any rental property, while 18 (26%) own short-term rentals and only 5 (7%) own long-term rentals. This imbalance between short-term and long-term rental availability reflects a broader pattern where seasonal tourism demand has shifted the rental market away from year-round housing options.

Demographics

Age Distribution: The respondent pool skewed older, with 46% aged 65 or older and 30%

aged 45-64. Only 13% were in the 25-44 age range, which represents the demographic most likely to be raising families and building careers on the island.

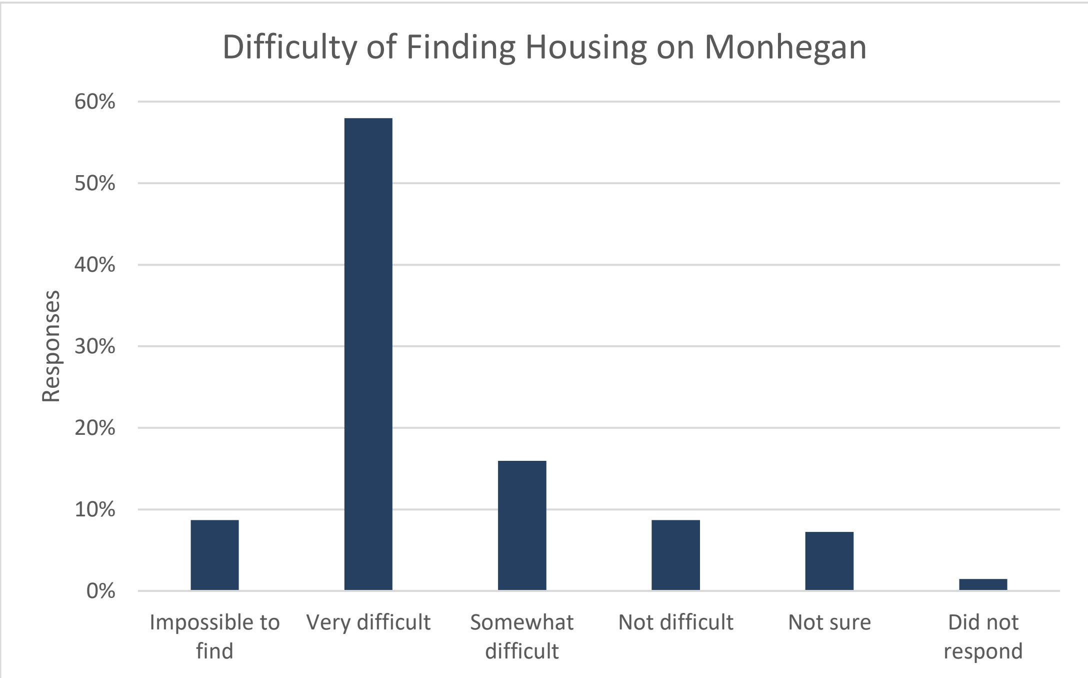
Household Size: Two-person households were most common (42%), followed by households of 3-4 people (26%) and single-person households (10%).

Household Income: Income distribution was varied, with the most common bracket being $25,000-$49,999 (17%), followed by $75,000-$99,999, $50,000-$74,999, $100,000-$149,000, and $200,000+ each at approximately 12%. This diversity in income levels underscores the need for housing solutions across multiple price points.

Housing Difficulty Assessment

The survey results highlighted the severity of housing challenges facing Monhegan. When asked how difficult it is to find suitable housing on Monhegan (either for themselves or for people they know), respondents overwhelmingly reported serious difficulties:

Difficulty Level	Count	Percentage
Impossible to find	**6**	**9%**
Very difficult	**40**	**58%**
Somewhat difficult	10	14%
Not difficult	4	6%
Not sure / Other	9	13%



Combined, 67% of respondents indicated that finding suitable housing is either "very difficult" or "impossible." When "somewhat difficult" responses are included, a total of 81% of respondents acknowledge significant housing challenges on the island.

Several respondents provided detailed comments elaborating on the nature of housing difficulties. One noted that "housing technically exists...but it's often tied to jobs or priced far out of reach. Year-round renters have virtually no path to ownership." Another observed that they had been "forced to leave the island due to lack of winterized housing options."

Housing Development Preferences

Types of Housing Development Supported

Respondents were asked about their support for various types of new housing development on Monhegan. The results reveal a community that generally supports modest, incremental development while expressing more concern about larger-scale or higher-density options:

Highest Support (Over 80% in favor)

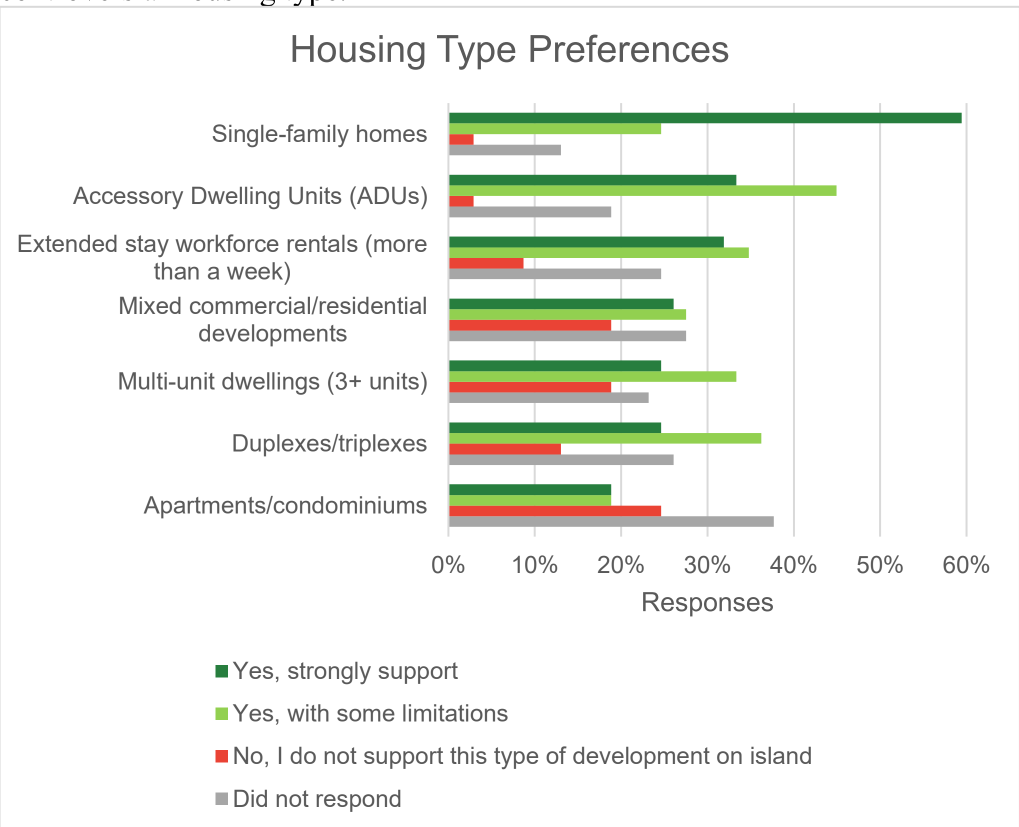
- **Single-family homes:** 59 respondents (87%) support, with 41 strongly supporting and 18 supporting with limitations. Only 2 respondents oppose this housing type.
- **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** 54 respondents (78%) support, with 23 strongly supporting and 31 supporting with limitations. Only 3 oppose.

Strong Support (60-80% in favor)

- **Duplexes/Triplexes:** 42 respondents (61%) support, with 17 strongly supporting and 25 supporting with limitations. 9 oppose.
- **Extended stay workforce rentals:** 46 respondents (67%) support, with 22 strongly supporting and 24 supporting with limitations. 7 oppose.
- **Multi-unit dwellings (3+ units):** 40 respondents (58%) support, with 17 strongly supporting and 23 supporting with limitations. 13 oppose.

More Divided Opinion (Below 60% in favor)

- **Mixed commercial/residential:** 37 respondents (54%) support, with 18 strongly supporting and 19 supporting with limitations. 13 oppose.
- **Apartments/condominiums:** 26 respondents (38%) support, with 13 strongly supporting and 13 supporting with limitations. 17 oppose, making this the most controversial housing type.



Preferred Scale of Development

When asked about the appropriate scale of development for Monhegan, the community expressed clear preference for modest, incremental approaches:

Scale of Development	Count	Percentage
A few units at a time (2-4 units)	**29**	**42%**
One unit at a time (small-scale)	13	19%
Medium-sized projects (5-10 units)	7	10%
Renovation of existing properties only	7	10%
No new development	2	3%
Other / Multiple approaches	11	16%

The strong preference for 2-4 units at a time (42%) combined with one unit at a time (19%) suggests that 61% of respondents favor very modest development scales. Several respondents advocated for flexibility, noting that "a combination of a few units at a time and renovation of existing properties" might be optimal, or that decisions should be made on a "case by case basis, depending on the project."

Housing Priority by Resident Type

Respondents were asked to prioritize which types of residents should be served by additional housing. The results reveal strong consensus around prioritizing year-round residents and families, while opinions were more divided on other groups:

Clear Priorities

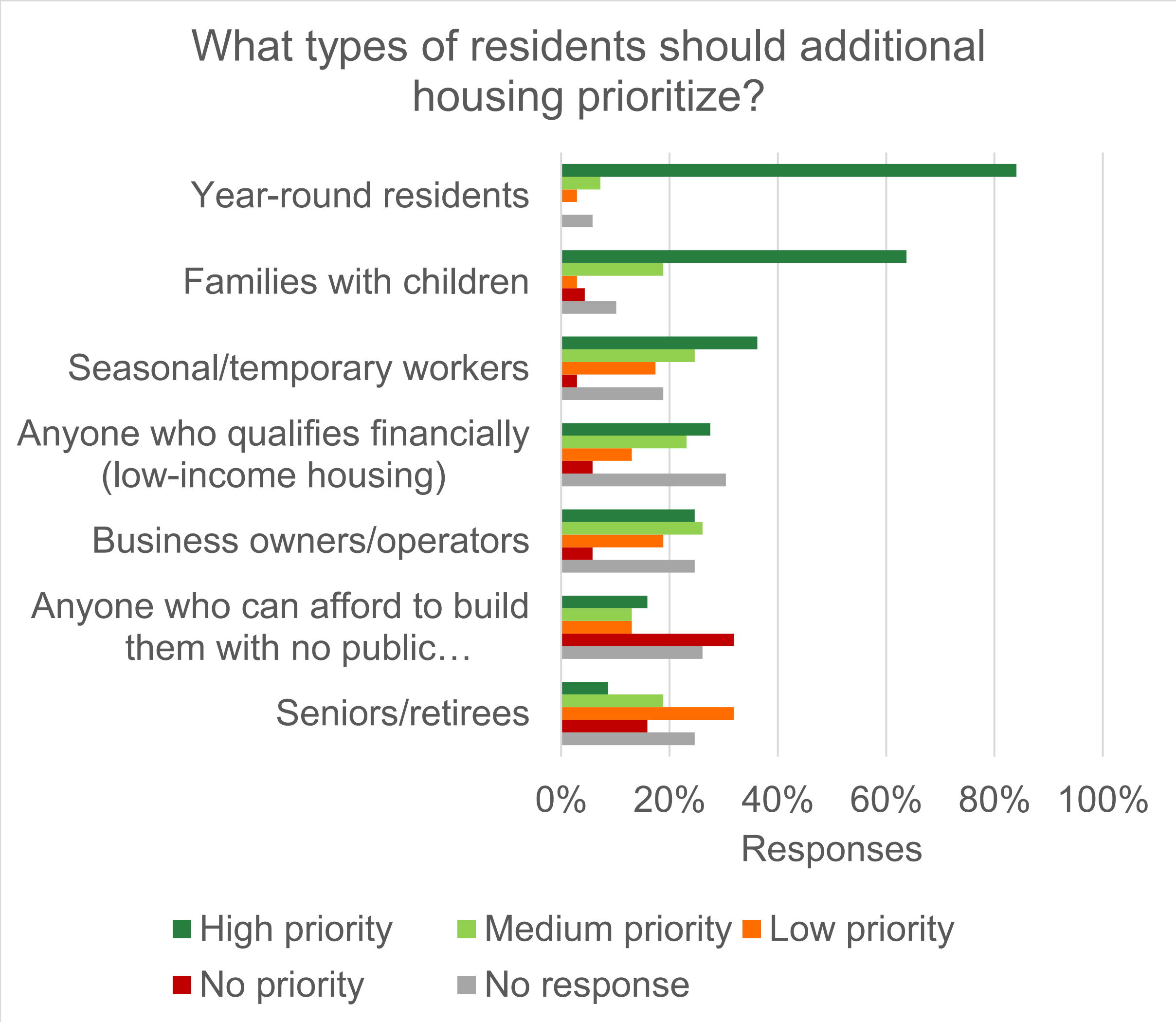
- **Year-round residents:** 86% rated as high priority (59 respondents), with only 2 rating as low priority. This is the strongest consensus in the survey.
- **Families with children:** 65% rated as high priority (45 respondents), reflecting community recognition that sustaining the school and multigenerational community requires housing for families.

Moderate Support

- **Seasonal/temporary workers:** 36% rated as high priority, 25% medium priority, 17% low priority. The community recognizes workforce housing needs but is more divided on priority level.
- **Business owners/operators:** 25% rated as high priority, 26% medium priority, 19% low priority. Business owner housing is viewed as important but not the top priority.
- **Anyone who qualifies financially (low-income):** 28% rated as high priority, 23% medium priority, 13% low priority. Support exists but with significant uncertainty.

Lower Priority

- **Seniors/retirees:** Only 9% rated as high priority, while 32% rated as low priority and 16% as no priority. This may reflect the existing age profile of property owners on the island.
- **Market-rate buyers (no public assistance):** 32% rated as no priority, 13% low priority, 13% medium priority, and 16% high priority.



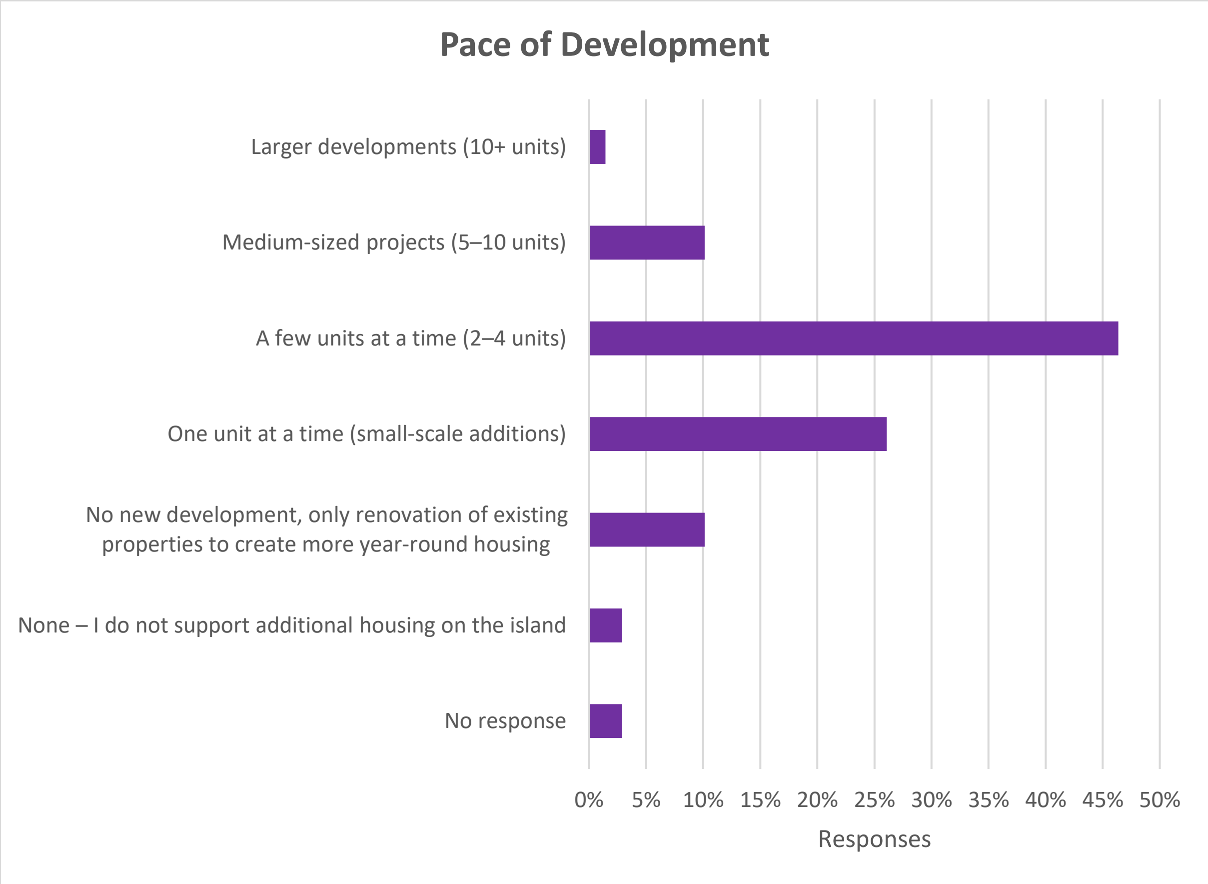
Accessory Dwelling Units and Shared Resources

Support for Multi-Unit/Clustered Housing

When asked whether they would support building more multi-unit or clustered housing that utilizes shared resources such as wells and septic systems, the community showed qualified support:

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes, but only if carefully designed	33	48%
Yes, strongly support	15	22%
No	15	22%
Not sure / Other	6	9%

Combined support reaches 79%, but the emphasis on "carefully designed" signals that the community wants assurances about aesthetics, infrastructure capacity, and neighborhood compatibility. One respondent noted that "2-3 units with shared septic is fine" but shared reservations about creating a building that sticks out too much from the existing.

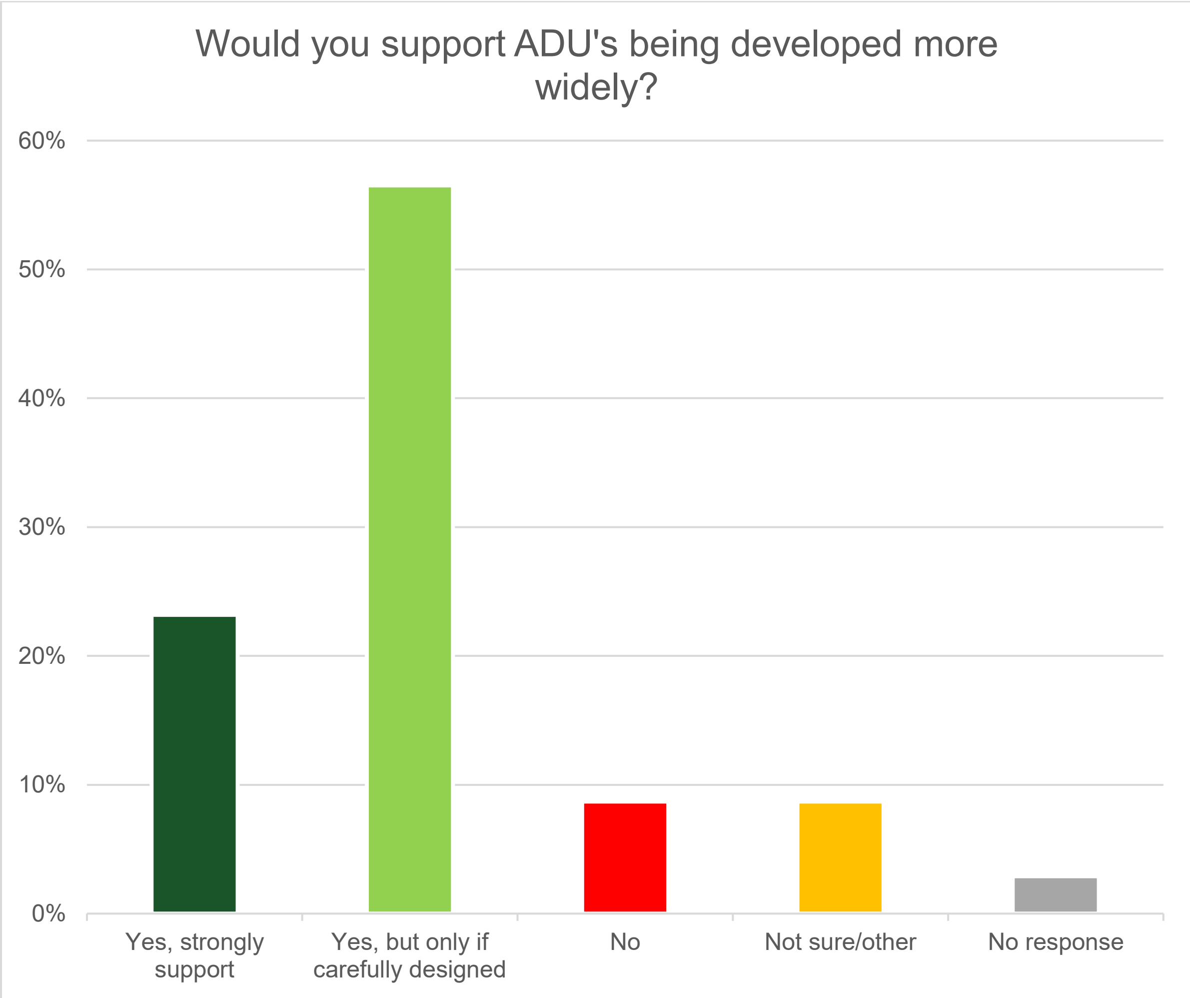


ADU Development Support

Accessory Dwelling Units received strong general support as a development strategy:

- **Yes, with some limits:** 38 respondents (55%)
- **Yes, strongly support:** 16 respondents (23%)
- **No:** 6 respondents (9%)
- **Not sure:** 5 respondents (7%)

78% of respondents support ADU development, making it one of the most broadly supported strategies in the survey.



Property Owners and ADU Interest

When property owners were asked whether they would consider adding an ADU to their property, responses were more cautious:

- **No:** 23 respondents (33%)
- **Not sure:** 10 respondents (14%)
- **Yes:** 10 respondents (14%)
- **Yes, if financial assistance available:** 5 respondents (7%)
- **Not applicable (don't own property, no space):** 21 respondents (30%)

This gap between general support for ADUs and willingness to build them suggests that while the concept is appealing, practical barriers exist. Addressing these barriers will be crucial to realizing the potential of ADU development.

ADU Barriers and Concerns

Those who answered "no" or "not sure" to adding an ADU identified several concerns:

- **Not enough space on property:** Most frequently cited concern
- **Too expensive to build:** Often cited in combination with space constraints
- **Don't want to manage tenants:** Significant concern for several respondents
- **Don't want to change property use:** Preference to maintain current character

- **Septic system limitations:** Infrastructure capacity concerns

ADU Incentives Desired

Respondents identified multiple forms of support that might make ADU development more feasible. The most commonly requested incentives included:

- Financial assistance (grants, low-interest loans)
- Technical/design assistance
- Pre-approved building plans
- Relaxed zoning/dimensional requirements
- Property tax incentives

The combination of financial, technical, and regulatory assistance emerged as the preferred approach, with 8 respondents explicitly selecting all five incentive options.

Plantation Strategies and Resources

Resources to Promote Affordable/Workforce Housing

Respondents were asked what resources they would support the Plantation using to promote affordable or workforce housing. Results showed broad support for leveraging multiple resource types:

- **Plantation-owned land:** Supported by majority of respondents
- **Partnerships with nonprofits or land trusts:** Very strong support
- **State/federal grants:** Widespread support
- **Property tax revenue:** Moderate support, with some expressing concern about tax burden impacts

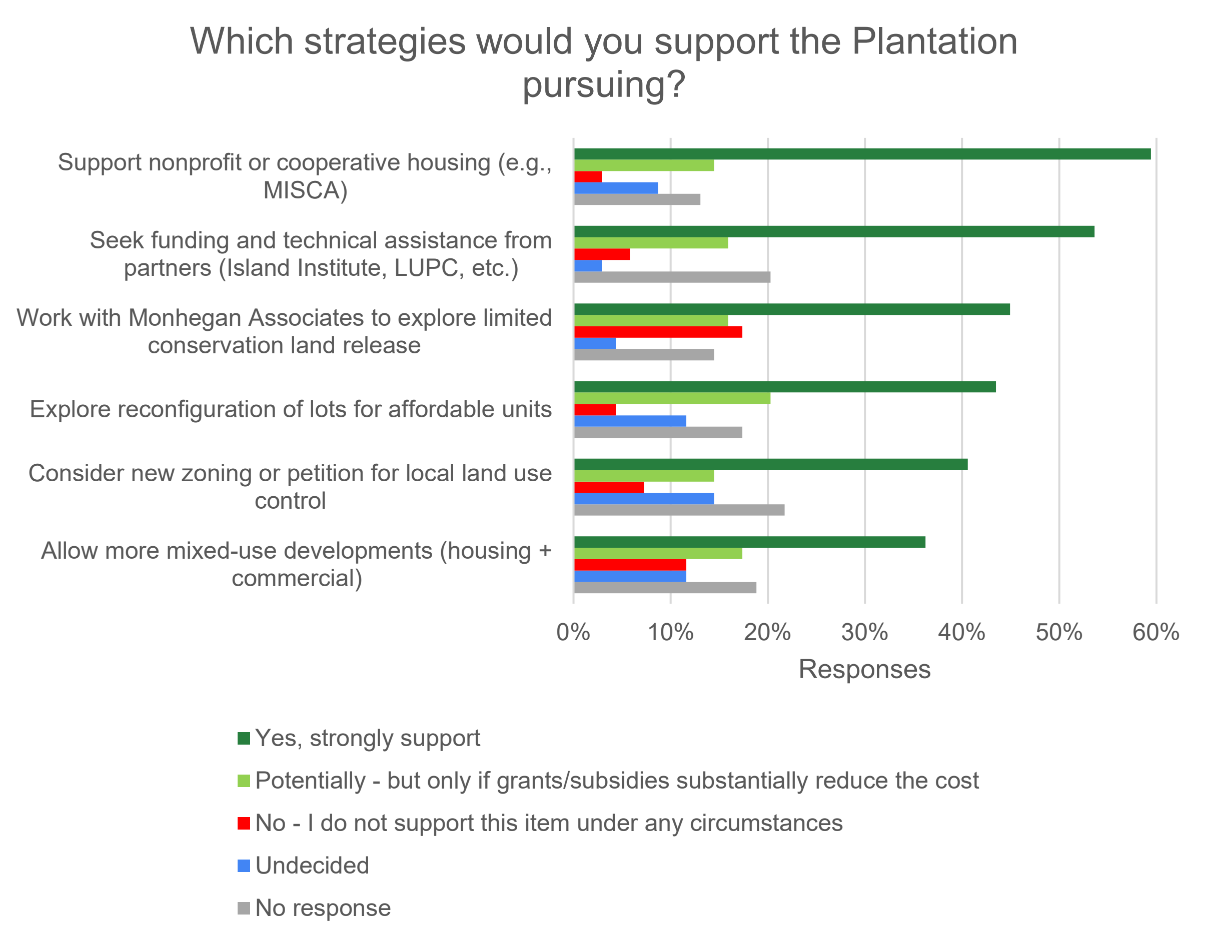
The most common response (19 respondents) supported using all four resource types together. Another 18 respondents supported a combination of Plantation-owned land, nonprofit partnerships, and state/federal grants while excluding property tax revenue.

Strategies the Plantation Should Pursue

Respondents were asked to indicate their support for specific strategies the Plantation might pursue:

Strategy	Strong Support	Potential Support	Oppose
Support nonprofit/cooperative housing (MISCA)	**41 (59%)**	10 (14%)	2 (3%)
Seek funding/technical assistance	**37 (54%)**	11 (16%)	4 (6%)
Work with Monhegan Associates on land release	31 (45%)	12 (17%)	13 (19%)
Explore lot reconfiguration	30 (43%)	15 (22%)	4 (6%)
Consider new zoning/land use control	28 (41%)	10 (14%)	5 (7%)
Allow more mixed-use development	25 (36%)	12 (17%)	9 (13%)

Supporting MISCA and similar nonprofit/cooperative housing efforts received the strongest support (59%), followed closely by seeking external funding and technical assistance (54%). Working with Monhegan Associates on potential limited land release showed significant support but also notable opposition (19%), reflecting the difficulty of balancing competing values of wildland conservation and year-round housing development.



Becoming a Maine Town

Respondents were asked whether they would favor the Plantation exploring the process of becoming a Maine town to gain more local zoning and land use control. This question generated divided opinions:

- **No:** 23 respondents (33%)
- **Yes:** 19 respondents (28%)
- **Not sure:** 18 respondents (26%)
- **Other responses:** 9 respondents (13%)

Several respondents expressed interest in learning more before forming an opinion, noting "I would have to know more about the differences between plantation government responsibilities and town responsibilities" and recognizing that becoming a town "requires a great deal of work to write a town plan, and then administer it." One respondent strongly felt that "Monhegan must always remain a plantation." Given that the responses were so divided and many expressed interest in learning more, this topic would be worth more extensive community conversations to better understand the ramifications of such a potential change.

Community Voices: Open-Ended Responses

Thirty-six respondents provided additional comments about housing needs on Monhegan. Key themes emerged from the comments:

Urgency of the Housing Crisis

Multiple respondents expressed alarm at the current trajectory. One noted that "housing needs on the island have become extremely urgent. We are losing year-round residents and people are not having families because of housing instability." Another stated simply: "we desperately need housing to be able to exist as a year-round community!"

Year-Round Community Preservation

Many comments emphasized the importance of maintaining Monhegan's year-round character. One respondent observed that "a lot of the stuff that we all enjoy in the summer wouldn't happen if there wasn't a year-round community." Another applauded "an earnest attempt to increase the ability of young people, particularly families, to live and work on Monhegan in permanent housing so that Monhegan doesn't become a complete rental community."

Infrastructure Concerns

Several respondents raised practical concerns about the island's capacity for growth. One noted that "denser housing requires infrastructure—principally sewage treatment and municipal water supply. There are limits to the potential for leech fields without poisoning the meadow. The biggest obstacle to development is poop!" Another cautioned: "Be careful to not strain the limited Island resources."

Economic and Housing Integration

Multiple respondents emphasized that housing cannot be addressed in isolation. One argued that "for the Monhegan community to attract and hold residents, affordable housing has to be coupled with more sources of income." Another noted that "the housing dilemma needs to be considered in conjunction with available economic opportunities and overall affordability."

MISCA and Existing Mechanisms

Several respondents expressed views about MISCA's role and effectiveness. Some suggested the Plantation should "first and foremost work with MISCA." Others raised concerns about organizational capacity and coordination, noting that "there are four lots available to be built on thru MISCA" and questioning why additional housing efforts were being launched separately.

Policy Tools and Incentives

Respondents offered various policy suggestions, including: "Discourage (financially) absentee owners who leave property vacant most of the year" and "there should be real incentive for people who own existing (year-round) housing that will not rent through the winter." One respondent advocated for "funding for workforce including year-round [that] can be funded through rental 'tax', higher commercial real estate tax, and landing fees charged to all visitors."

Design and Community Character

Several respondents emphasized the importance of thoughtful design. One noted that "any development must be carefully designed so that the peace and privacy of neighbors is not disturbed." Another advocated for development to "stay within current village boundaries."

Conclusions and Key Findings

The Monhegan Island Housing Needs & Preferences Survey reveals a community that recognizes the severity of its housing challenges and is broadly supportive of taking action, while expressing important concerns about scale, design, and community character. The following key findings should guide next steps:

1. Universal Recognition of Housing Crisis

With 81% of respondents reporting that finding suitable housing is difficult or impossible, there is overwhelming consensus that housing challenges are real and urgent. This shared understanding provides a foundation for collective action.

2. Clear Priority on Year-Round Residents and Families

86% identify year-round residents as a high housing priority, and 65% prioritize families with children. Any housing strategy should center these populations to preserve Monhegan's year-round community character.

3. Strong Support for ADUs and Single-Family Development

These smaller-scale, property-level solutions received the broadest support (78-87%). However, there is a gap between general support for ADUs and property owners' willingness to build them, suggesting that incentives and assistance programs are needed.

4. Qualified Support for Clustered/Multi-Unit Housing

70% support multi-unit housing if carefully designed. The emphasis on design quality and infrastructure capacity indicates that such projects will need to demonstrate sensitivity to community character and practical sustainability.

5. Preference for Incremental Development

61% favor development of 1-4 units at a time. Large-scale projects are unlikely to gain community acceptance; instead, multiple smaller initiatives may be more feasible politically and practically.

6. Strong Support for Nonprofit/Cooperative Approaches

MISCA and similar organizations enjoy strong support (59% strongly support, 14% potentially support). Strengthening and supporting existing nonprofit housing infrastructure should be a priority.

7. Openness to External Resources and Partnerships

The community broadly supports seeking state/federal grants and technical assistance (54% strongly support). Pursuing external funding should not be controversial and represents an area where immediate progress can be made.

8. Tensions Around Land Use and Conservation

Working with Monhegan Associates on potential limited conservation land release generated significant support (45%) but also notable opposition (19%). Balancing housing needs with conservation values will require careful dialogue and creative solutions.

9. Infrastructure Capacity is a Real Constraint

Community comments consistently raised concerns about wells, septic systems, and other infrastructure. Housing strategies must account for these practical limitations and potentially include infrastructure investments.

10. Housing and Economic Development are Linked

Multiple respondents emphasized that housing cannot be addressed in isolation from economic opportunities. A comprehensive approach that considers both housing availability and year-round income opportunities will be more effective than housing-only solutions.