



PLAISTOW HOUSING SURVEY - SUMMARY REPORT

October 2023

Overview

Housing is a hot topic everywhere and Plaistow is no exception. The Plaistow Planning Board is seeking input via this survey on how housing options can be integrated into Plaistow in a way that reflects the existing fabric of the community. The survey is a first step in engaging the town in a conversation about housing priorities and what strategies should be taken to accommodate those needs.

In early February 2023, the Planning Board was awarded a \$50,000 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 Plaistow?" The Rockingham Planning Commission will assist the Plaistow Planning Board with this effort over the coming months. The discussion on housing will also be integrated into the Plaistow Master Plan update and buildout analysis.

The first task in the Plaistow 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 August 21, 2023, and September 27, 2023, 118 individuals took the Plaistow Housing Survey and provided over 1,500 responses or comments to the survey questions. The survey was a predominantly online survey, with paper surveys available at the Plaistow Town Hall, Public Library. (Only four paper survey responses were 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, and flyers were circulated at the public library.

**SHARE YOUR IDEAS ABOUT THE
FUTURE OF HOUSING IN
PLAISTOW**

TAKE THE SURVEY TODAY!



www.publicinput.com/PlaistowHousing2023

**SURVEY EXTENDED
UNTIL WEDS. 9/27!**



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

**PAPER SURVEYS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE AT THE TOWN OFFICES, AND
LIBRARY. CONTACT VICTORIA HEALEY AT [VHEALEY@THERPC.ORG](mailto:vhealey@therpc.org)
FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

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.

Full survey results are available at: www.publicinput.com/plaistowhousing2023

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

Next Steps

During the coming months the Plaistow Planning Board will continue working with Rockingham Planning Commission to continue the discussion of housing in Plaistow.



PLAISTOW HOUSING SURVEY - SUMMARY REPORT

October 2023

Next steps include:

- **Hold a public input event** to present the background information, discuss housing preferences in Plaistow gained from the survey and other sources, and allow for facilitated discussion related to housing that may fit Plaistow's needs and desires.
- **Develop a land use regulatory audit** that evaluates the housing status, demographics, and housing-related issues within Plaistow. This assessment will include guidance about tools and potential changes to local regulations, their impact on housing opportunities, and their relation to Plaistow residents' priorities and community goals. The assessment will be presented to the Planning Board later this Fall.
- **Develop a Build Out Model** that evaluates the potential for housing development in Plaistow. This is an important tool that can show what the future of Plaistow could look like under the current zoning ordinance or with a proposed change.

For more information about this project, please visit the town website or contact RPC Planner Victoria Healey at VHealey@therpc.org or (603) 658-0523 or Dee Voss, Plaistow Planning and Zoning Administrator at DVoss@plaistow.com or (603) 382-5200 X 202.

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 Plaistow were also invited to provide their thoughts. Of the 118 responses received, only 7 individuals taking the survey owned a business in Plaistow and 22 respondents own property. Over half of survey participants (60%) have lived in Plaistow for more than 10 years, less than half of participants were over the age of 55 (44%), and 74% work full time while 20% are retired. 14% of respondents have a household income over \$200,000, and 34% had a household income that was less than \$100,000 but the majority of respondents did not wish to answer.

The following outlines some of the major survey findings. The survey results are intended to assist the Plaistow 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 Plaistow's housing future should be. Representative comments were selected to help represent Plaistow's residents' desires in their own words. The full listing of comments is available in the full survey results linked on the previous page.



RESIDENTS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT AFFORDABILITY

Plaistow residents are aware that the housing market is driving up the prices of homes due to high interest rates and lack of availability, but they are also seeing that all of the homes that are being built are too expensive for the average person. Residents are aware that young families and older individuals cannot afford to live in the area.

"Lack of affordable housing. The homes that are being built are unaffordable for younger families trying to get into the housing market."

The topic of high taxes was raised almost 50 times especially when people were discussing what concerned them about the future and if their homes would continue to fit their needs.

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

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Plaistow provides affordable home purchase choices.	5% Strongly agree	12% Agree	28% Neutral	36% Disagree	19% Strongly Disagree
Plaistow provides housing choices that attract workers of all ages.	4% Strongly agree	17% Agree	18% Neutral	39% Disagree	22% Strongly Disagree
Plaistow provides adequate housing options for aging seniors.	4% Strongly agree	7% Agree	23% Neutral	45% Disagree	21% Strongly Disagree
Plaistow has adequate rental options.	11% Strongly agree	11% Agree	33% Neutral	24% Disagree	21% Strongly Disagree
Plaistow provides adequate housing choices near jobs and transit access.	8% Strongly agree	26% Agree	24% Neutral	30% Disagree	12% Strongly Disagree

PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES IS A PRIORITY

Many are concerned about protecting Plaistow's natural resources and environmental services. In particular, the impacts of potentially more housing on wetlands, open spaces, conservation areas, and watershed protection areas. Residents are concerned about housing developments taking up open space and forested recreational areas.



PLAISTOW HOUSING SURVEY - SUMMARY REPORT

October 2023

A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF RESIDENTS DO NOT FEEL SECURE IN THEIR HOUSING IN PLAISTOW

Around 40 respondents did say yes when asked 'When you think of living in Plaistow in 5, 10, or 20 years, will your current home meet your future needs?' but most of them still voiced concerns about taxes, lack of elder care, lack of transportation, their homes being too big, or about wanting to add an additional unit. 21

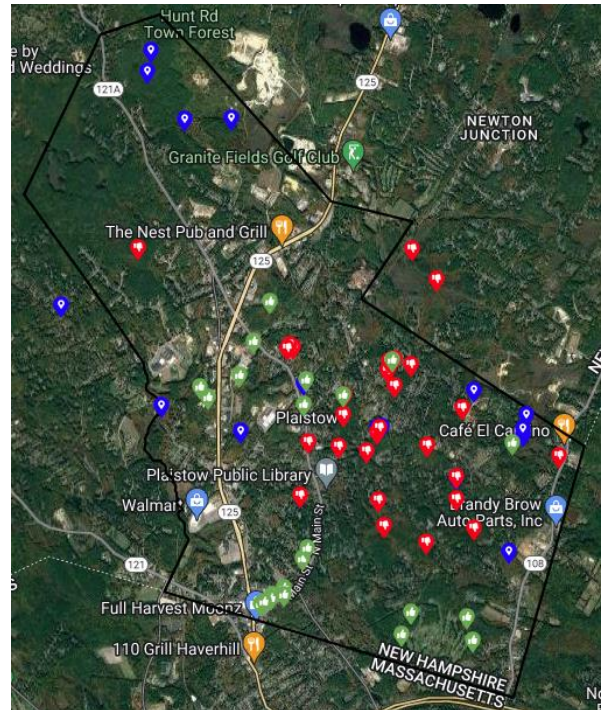
"We will need to add an ADU to make our home multigenerational."

respondents said no with similar concerns, and very few mentioned needing larger housing that is affordable. 21 respondents stated that no for the various reasons mentioned.

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF PLAISTOW'S HOUSING GOALS

"To make sure that we have housing for all incomes and age brackets. We have enough businesses along 125 now."

When asked about Plaistow's housing goals, 25 respondents indicated that they were not sure what the goals even were. Several residents expressed that they wished the goals were to slow or stop development. Many had concerns about the local influx of commercial development specifically. There were some respondents that felt that developers usually 'got what they wanted' regardless of the wants and needs of the community.



PLAISTOW RESIDENTS PREFER SMALL ONE FAMILY HOMES

During the visual preference section of the survey, respondents liked the single home options the most. A lot of the comments centered around overcrowding, size of homes, and setbacks for the other options. Some people understand that older homes in certain areas of NH communities were built closer to the road, and they recognize that as historic character of the community but would not like to see it anywhere else. They responded well to the two-family buildings but wish that they were setback away from the road.

"We have enough of these types of older homes, close to the street, in Plaistow in the 'town zone' of Main Street. No real yard, too close to the street. Looks nice & 'homey' though - like a small town."



What People Had to Say About Housing

There is a range of opinions about what Plaistow'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/plaistowhousing2023.

NO MORE HOUSING

"Terrible, stop expanding a small town. Enough is enough. We are not salem NH."

"It should be to maintain what we have and help to improve what exists. Do not build!"

"There should not be any more multifamily units this will cause overcrowding"

"I feel Plaistow is full. No need to squeeze more houses in. The current new builds in town have zero lawn space. Stop building!"

"People are here to stay, not going to loose their low interest rates. It is not the towns responsibility to provide more housing, we do not have the space and are not a city. No one wants to be on top of each other here and taxes are high enough."

SOME HOUSING

"I wouldn't wanted to see segregated low-income housing, the kind we used to call "the projects." I believe housing should be integrated throughout the community, should take a variety of forms and definitely include housing that is accessible to all types of renters or buyers. I'd like to see small units added to existing properties (like mine) as well as beautifully designed income-based developments that the renters or owners can be proud to live in. It can be done!"

"Short answer: Curb/stop building houses - especially single family ones. I am concerned builders/landowners will continue to shoehorn more housing into previously undeveloped areas until there is very little forest, wetlands, green space left. Establish a cap, of sorts, based on what the resources of the town can support. Not just land, but the water aquifer(s), town services, schools, roads, etc. I am not like some folks who think that Plaistow is, or should get back to being, a quaint, country, New England farm town. We are a suburb.. and we're in a great place on the planet so let's enjoy it without over-crowding it"



PLAISTOW HOUSING SURVEY - SUMMARY REPORT

October 2023

"Balancing needed housing growth for young home buyers with keeping the rural feel of the community."

"Overcrowding we currently don't have a lot of land available in Plaistow for building. Sidewalks are a issue and for the future I would like to see a assisting living for our seniors and would like a veterans home. I would like to see more commercial areas be zoned for multiple rental property for families that can't afford a home."

MORE HOUSING IS NEEDED

"The world and the USA's population has more than doubled since I was born. Additionally, the size of individual households has decreased - i.e before an average household may have had 6 or more people, now it has fewer people in the household. This points to a need for more individual housing units. I don't foresee this trend changing in the next several decades. The question is how smart are we going to be in developing plans to address growing housing needs while improving the quality of life for the needs of a growing population."

"The need for more 55+ communities. Plaistow is an aging community, and the seniors need more options."

"Smaller and more affordable housing is needed like ranches. Not large, expensive, single-family homes. A neighborhood of tiny houses should be considered."

"I'm concerned there is no affordable housing anymore. I would hope to see apartment complexes so younger people or families of smaller means can also find themselves a place to call home. I know of several 20+ year olds that are unable to find a place to live because the state or town decides against apartment complexes. Be it even a 2 or 4 duplex. I think that's bad for our future generations of families and couples."