

**TOWN OF YARMOUTH  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING**

**November 28, 2023**

**7:00 PM, Town Hall Community Room, 200 Main Street, and via Remote Meeting**

**<https://meet.goto.com/451872165>**

**Join by phone: 1 (872) 240-3412, Access Code: 451-872-165**

**AGENDA**

- I. Public Comment (5 minutes)**
- II. Review Meeting Summary from October 24 (5 minutes)**
- III. Debrief on Future Land Use Workshop and Community Engagement (20 minutes)**
  - a. Presentation and Discussion on feedback from Future Land Use Workshop**
- IV. Moving from Vision and Feedback to Goals, Policies, Strategies (60 minutes)**
  - a. Presentation and Discussion on next steps developing local goals**
- V. Report on Other Events (10 minutes)**
  - a. Com-plan-ion Event: Historic Village Walking Tour**
  - b. Other events in the planning stage**
- VI. CPSC Meeting Schedule (5 minutes)**
  - a. Upcoming Date: December 19**
- VII. Adjournment**



To: Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee  
From: Erin Zwirko, Director of Planning & Development  
Re: Background for November 28, 2023, Steering Committee Meeting  
Date: November 18, 2023

Please see the following notes to help you review and be prepared for the November 28, 2023, Steering Committee meeting.

#### **Public Comment**

I have not received any additional written comments since our last meeting.

#### **Review Meeting Summary from October 2023**

Attached is the October meeting summary from the Steering Committee's previous meeting for the Committee to review and approve. Please let me know if you have any revisions to the meeting summary.

#### **Debrief on Future Land Use Workshop and Community Engagement**

Thanks to the Steering Committee members for your support and participation in the Community Conversations and the Future Land Use Workshop. The Future Land Use Workshop was a successful closure to this stage of our planning process!

Town staff and NSP recently released two reports on the engagement analysis, which can be found attached here, but also available on the project website: <https://www.planyarmouth.com/engagement-reports>

Kate will provide a short presentation with initial results from the Future Land Use Workshop.

#### **Moving from Vision and Feedback to Goals, Policies, Strategies**

The next stage of comprehensive planning is to move into the development of goals, policies, and strategies. Ben will lay the groundwork for the goals, policies, strategies part of the plan and lead the group through some interactive activities to start developing local goals.

Take a moment to think about what you've learned from the community over the past several months. As we discussed during the last few Committee meetings, what are the consistent themes and are they calls to action for the community over the next decade or so. Come prepared to discuss!

## **Report on Other Events**

Sunday, November 19, will feature the rescheduled Walking Tour of the Historic Village. Staff and Committee members in attendance will provide an overview of the event.

Julie will also report on other com-plan-ion events in the works.

## **CPSC Meeting Schedule**

Please note that the December meeting will be held on December 19.

## **Attachments:**

1. Draft October 24, 2023 meeting summary
2. Summer Public Engagement Report, Results & Analysis, November 2023
3. Community Conversations, Results & Analysis, November 2023

Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC)  
October 24, 2023  
7:00 PM  
Meeting Summary

Name	Attendance
John Auble	Y
Daniel Backman	Y
Crispin Bokota Bolese	N
Emily Bryson	Y
Judy Colby-George	N
Hildy Ginsberg, Co-Chair	Y
Kevin Hartnett	N
Miriam Markowitz	Y
Tim McGonagle	Y
Tred McIntire	Y
Neena Panosso	N
Todd Rich	N
Bill Richards, Co-Chair	N
Lynne Seeley	Y
Sophie Wentzell	N
Jamie Whittemore	N
Sarah Witte	N
Karin Orenstein, Town Council Liaison	N
Erin Zwirko, Planning Director	Y
Julie Dubovsky, Assistant Planner	Y
Ben Smith, North Star Planning	Y
Kate Burch, North Star Planning	Y

**I. Public Comment**

None received. No members of the public were in attendance.

**II. Review Meeting Summary from September 26**

The Committee unanimously approved the meeting summary from September 26, 2023.

**III. Planning for Future Land Use Workshop**

**a. Discussion on additional themes from final Community Conversation and how they inform the Future Land Use Workshop**

As part of the agenda packet, Erin provided an updated presentation on the engagement to date. The Committee received this presentation in September, and Erin updated it for a presentation to the Planning Board in October. The staff and NSP are also working on completing two reports on

the various engagement over the summer and on the Community Conversations, which will also be included in the appendix to the final plan.

Erin also noted that she anticipates providing an update to the Town Council in December.

Ben reiterated that the intention of the three community conversations was to inform the Future Land Use Workshop, which is a core part of the comp plan as it is translating the vision statement into a map of the town. Initially, the idea was to shape that workshop as “growth areas + rural areas + transition areas + impact of LD2003,” culminating in a FLU plan with a narrative description and details for the map.

The CPSC discussed how the adoption of LD2003 amendments would impact the FLUW as there has not yet been an opportunity to have a discussion of zoning overall and what it means for implementing the feedback gleaned so far from the community conversations. It was suggested that a “gradient of growth” be used to illustrate what has been heard.

b. **Future Land Use Workshop Agenda and Logistics**

NSP presented on the current draft agenda of the FLUW for feedback. With four geographic focus areas (village/Main St, Route 1, Residential Neighborhoods (aka the MDR) and rural and islands, the FLUW will ask targeted questions about how to protect, enhance, and transform these key areas. The event will include a short presentation on what has been heard to date and an introduction to the concept of future land use and the requirements of the law. There will be time for questions/answers before the open house style workshop.

NSP shared draft renderings that will be used during the workshop to obtain feedback. The group discussed the renderings and whether they should be specific and feasible, or conceptual, and the pros of cons of each approach. They noted that the other geographies are specific to a place rather than the characteristics of “residential neighborhoods,” and that perhaps the question should be framed as “where do we want this” vs. “where could it actually happen” so that people can respond to the restrictions of the current zoning but also be thoughtful about the type and form of growth. For the Main St Village rendering, it was suggested to use an image with the existing storefronts so there could be a discussion of what types of businesses bring more vibrancy to Main Street and what land uses are needed to support those businesses.

There was consensus in providing a “menu of options” so that people so see a spectrum of architecture, building forms, and lot allowances, to find

what's acceptable in the different geographic contexts of the town. A collage of building forms (residential and commercial) could be placed over images of existing places.

It was also suggested that the balancing of priorities be shown with the factors underneath the spectrum (i.e. open space preservation, seal level rise, infrastructure service, etc.). This would also provide an opportunity for people who live in these different geographies to discuss what they want, which goes back to the "tensions" community conversations activity.

Due to the concern expressed that the "free choice" format might not yield equal participation at the geographic areas, Erin suggested that a "passport" with raffles to get people to visit each table and provide an incentive to move, perhaps even a bell rung. It was also suggested that the Main St and Village area have more than one table since it will likely elicit more feedback than the others, and that the renderings be spread out and not tied to an area so that people can imagine the different "options" within different geographic contexts. A station in the middle where people could draw was also proposed. NSP and staff will give the mechanics of the event additional thought.

#### IV. **Report on Other Events**

##### a. **Climate Action Workshop**

Erin attended the workshop on October 10<sup>th</sup>, which had similar turnout to the community conversations and was set up similarly to what the plan for the FLUW will be, with stations on a variety of topics. Meddy Smith, Yarmouth's sustainability coordinator, provided written feedback from the event, which was shared with the Committee. Erin pointed out the consistencies with feedback from the community conversations. The next steps for YCAT are to analyze the public feedback, start prioritizing strategies and bring the draft to the department heads for a feasibility review. During the review period, the CPSC will need to consider how best to integrate the Climate Action Plan, such as themes or graphically showing their concurrency.

##### b. **Com-plan-ion Events**

The October Walk was cancelled due to rain and the remote work event had light attendance at 317 Main, with CPSC members who work from home and some new faces. Participants did complete a ranking activity about municipal resources and everyone noted that their internet and cellphone quality wasn't dependable. Coworking facilities are part of EDAB's focus for the year. John added that it was apparent that better access to Portland airport was needed, which CPSC members agreed upon.

##### c. **HS Assembly**

Staff and NSP reported that Neena and Sophie presented on the

comprehensive plan as part of a larger YHS Student Senate presentation on civic engagement, which also included a student representative for YCAT and the town's School Committee. The highlight was seeing 12% of attendees (juniors and seniors) vote in favor of moving back to Yarmouth someday. A notable difference in the high school survey results was their prioritization of diversity/inclusion as outranking housing, land use & preservation, sustainability, and transportation.

V. **CPSC Meeting Schedule**

Upcoming Dates: November 28<sup>th</sup> and December 19<sup>th</sup>

VI. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

# PLAN → YARMOUTH



## Summer Public Engagement Results & Analysis November 2023

Erin Zwirko, Director of Planning & Development, Town of Yarmouth  
Juliana Dubovsky, Assistant Planner, Town of Yarmouth



## Overview

The Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan team connected with the community during summer 2023 in two main ways: through a survey and through pop-up events at various locations in Yarmouth. Understanding that engagement during the summer months can be difficult, we chose to offer a survey as well as go to where the Yarmouth community may be during the summer.

## Summer Survey

The Comprehensive Plan team administered the topic-based survey to gauge community responses to questions based on data highlights from the inventory chapters, as well as reaction to the vision statement drafted in 2022.

The survey was open from June to September 2023, available online and in paper format, and received 123 responses. The survey asked 17 questions on the following topics: vision statement, housing, economy, recreation & open space, transportation, and demographics, along with general open-ended questions about the future of Yarmouth.

The survey was advertised on the Town's website, and through the Town's newsletter and social media channels. In addition, paper copies of the survey were made available at all of the summer pop-up events, at Town Hall, and at the Library.

## Community Values and Draft Vision Statement

Before beginning the comprehensive plan update, in 2022 the Town of Yarmouth completed a visioning and engagement initiative called *Imagine Yarmouth* with the support of consulting firm Berry Dunn. The purpose of the initiative was to identify common values and priorities for the future through community input in a fair and representative engagement process. To guide the development of a vision for the Town, a robust public engagement effort was conducted to obtain input from as many Town residents and stakeholders as possible. The feedback gathered as part of the *Imagine Yarmouth* initiative, such as community values, priorities, and goals, informed the creation of a vision statement.

The following values were expressed by residents and stakeholders throughout the visioning process. While not all participants agreed on how the Town should move forward, there was consensus on the community values that are fundamental to the Town's identity:

*We value the **natural environment**, including the numerous parks, open space preserves, rivers, and Casco Bay, and prioritize preserving and protecting these areas for enjoyment by all and as critical ecosystems.*

*We value a **connected community** where residents have strong social bonds through a shared commitment to civic engagement, and where community members can safely and easily access services, amenities, recreation, jobs, and social opportunities within the Town.*

*We value the **history and culture** of the people and land that is now the Town of Yarmouth and the physical environment that embodies that history, from the natural land and water features to the built environment.*

*We value a **welcoming and inclusive environment** where neighbors help one another and a strong sense of community brings all people together, regardless of background.*

The draft vision statement was developed based upon the themes and values that were expressed by community members throughout the visioning process:

*The Town of Yarmouth is a small coastal community with a vibrant and picturesque village center. Yarmouth's identity is deeply rooted in the Town's history, beauty, and commitment to community. The walkability of the Town's historic Main Street, abundant open space areas, and active community groups all contribute to community members' sense of connectedness to the Town.*

*The Town is dedicated to protecting and preserving what makes Yarmouth a great place to live. At the same time, residents recognize the significant local, regional, and global challenges that the Town faces, and are committed to addressing these issues with careful consideration for the Town's history and culture and with creativity to leverage opportunities to enhance the Town's defining characteristics – beauty, history, inclusivity, abundant open spaces and recreation opportunities, and commitment to volunteerism – to build an even stronger community.*

*To meet the needs of residents and community members, the Town will plan and make decisions through a lens of equity, sustainability, and fiscal responsibility to ensure that the community's values and critical assets are sustained for future generations.*

This statement is intended to be a clear but broad aspiration for the future of Yarmouth and is meant to guide the development of the Town's next Comprehensive Plan, but to also be adaptable as the planning process moves forward and additional research, discussions, and engagement exposes new aspects and nuances of the Town's future goals.

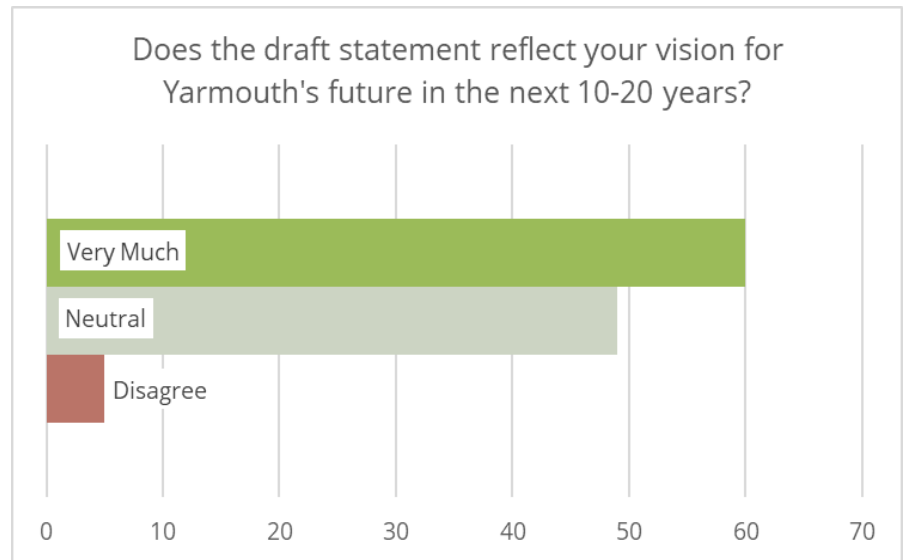
## **Analysis**

This analysis was completed by the Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan Team to understand what respondents' thoughts were on the draft vision statement and community values, as well as comprehensive plan topics housing, economy, recreation, and transportation. A qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions about the future of Yarmouth is also included.

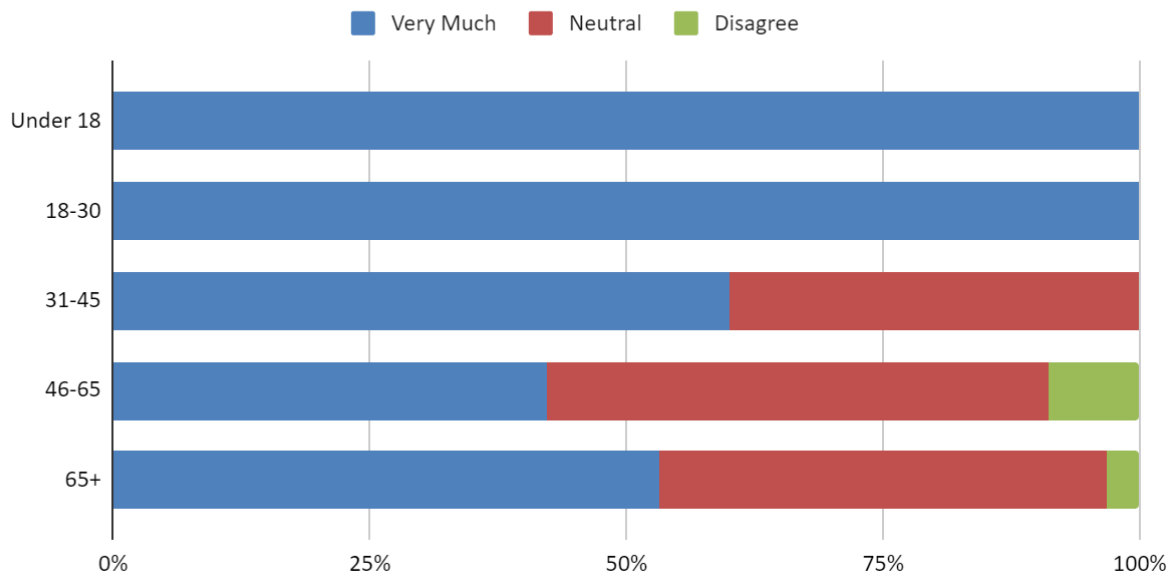
## Draft Vision Statement

Most respondents agreed the draft vision statement “very much” reflected their vision of Yarmouth’s future for the next 10–20 years, or were neutral.

The survey asked for the respondent’s age, so the Comprehensive Plan team is able to review more closely how the draft vision statement reflects the values of different age groups. 114 respondents out of the 123 respondents completed both these questions.



## How well does the draft statement reflect your vision for Yarmouth by Age?



As can be seen in the chart above, no one under the age of 30 disagreed or had a neutral opinion of the draft vision statement. No one under the age of 45 disagreed with the draft vision statement. In the age demographic of 46 to 65 years old, the

Respondents to the survey were asked to rank the themes in the draft vision statement in order of importance. A walkable and bikeable community, vibrant and picturesque village center, and abundant open space and natural resources were the most highly ranked themes.



The high priority themes were also broken out by age cohort:

**Highest Ranked Themes by Age Cohort**

Ranking	Under 18	Ages 18-30	Ages 31-45	Ages 46-65	Ages 65+
#1	Sustainability	Sustainability	Walkable/ Bikeable Community	Walkable/ Bikeable Community	Vibrant and picturesque village center
#2	Equity	Walkable/ Bikeable Community	Abundant open space and recreational opportunities	Fiscal Responsibilit y	Inclusivity
#3	Walkable/ Bikeable Community	Abundant open space and recreational opportunities	Vibrant and picturesque village center	Vibrant and picturesque village center	Fiscal Responsibilit y
#4	Inclusivity	Inclusivity	Natural Beauty	Abundant open space and recreational opportunities	Equity
#5	Commitment to Volunteerism	Equity	Sustainability	Natural Beauty	Sustainability

When comparing the highly ranked themes across the different age cohorts, there are some themes that appear across the age spectrum including sustainability and a walkable and bikeable community. Those respondents under the age of 30 indicated that sustainability, equity, a walkable and bikeable community, and inclusivity are highly ranked themes. Those respondents in the older age groups noted fiscal responsibility, abundant open space and recreational opportunity, and a vibrant and picturesque village center as highly ranked themes.

Overall, the highly ranked themes are generally consistent with the community values identified as part of the *Imagine Yarmouth* initiative. They focus on the health and resilience of the community (sustainability, walkable and bikeable community, and fiscal responsibility), a welcoming and diverse community (commitment to volunteerism, equity, and inclusivity), the natural environment (abundant open space and recreational opportunities and natural beauty), and history and culture (vibrant and picturesque village center).

The survey provided space for respondents to let the Comprehensive Plan team know what was missing in the draft vision statement. There were a significant number of comments about balancing priorities over the next several years, such the two comments below:

*"Everything on the list above is relevant. There is something needed about balancing population growth with changing demographics of the area along with the desire to have a minimalist ecological footprint. Maintaining affordability for all age groups, exploring ways the community can grow and manage the pressures of growth. I hope the Town will continue to be a leader in education, seeking alternatives to cars and exploring ways to be inclusive to new residents while welcoming long-time families. Let this be a community where new ways of living can be tried."*

*"I believe that the statement should acknowledge the intense period of growth that the town has experienced in the past ten years and the importance of assessing the feasibility of maintaining this vision in the face of rapid building and population growth."*

Adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change and protecting our natural resources was also a focus of the open-ended responses:

*"I think Yarmouth should be leading the environmental responsibility charge (among other communities) in Maine, as the broader impacts of climate change are becoming impossible to ignore/deny."*

Many comments also focused on the need to support the whole community. The comment below highlights the struggle to select one theme that addresses all of these concerns, such as affordability, diversity, safety and accessibility, supporting Yarmouth's small business community, and the working waterfront.

*"Not sure how to phrase it, but Yarmouth needs to be a place where people of all ages and income levels can live and enjoy all the town has to offer. Perhaps inclusivity covers that, but increasingly Yarmouth has become a wealthy suburb of Portland, and it is difficult for young and old residents to be able to afford to continue to live here."*

Finally, the open-ended comments highlighted the fact that many of words used in the community values and draft vision statement can mean different things to different people, and the updated Comprehensive Plan should highlight simple calls to action needed to spur implementation:

*"Yarmouth's vision is about concrete qualities of the Town, not trendy buzzwords that mean different things to different people."*

## **Housing**

The survey asked two questions about housing in Yarmouth: what type of housing is needed in Yarmouth, and where should new housing be located in Yarmouth. In both questions, respondents were given a number of responses and could select as many responses as desired. For both questions, "other" was an allowed response with space for additional thoughts.

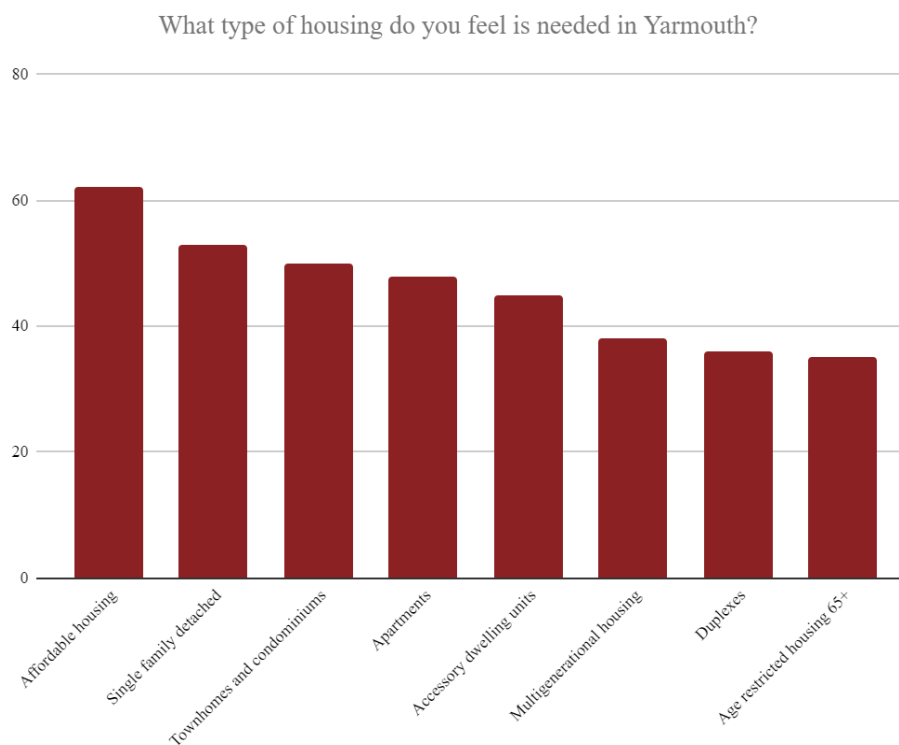
The question "what type of housing is needed in Yarmouth" gave respondents the option of selecting any of the following responses: single-family detached, duplexes, townhomes and condominiums, apartments, accessory dwelling units, multigenerational housing, affordable housing, and age restricted housing for those



aged 65 and older. Of the 123 responses received, 109 respondents completed this question.

Survey respondents believe that a wide range of housing types are needed in Yarmouth, as shown in the chart below. No responses were received in the “other” category, suggesting that the list provided respondents with all housing types that might be considered in Yarmouth.

“Affordable housing restricted to people earning below median income” was the most frequently selected type of housing needed in Yarmouth. The open-ended responses provided throughout the survey suggest that both deed-restricted housing as well as housing that is affordable to a spectrum of households is needed in the community.



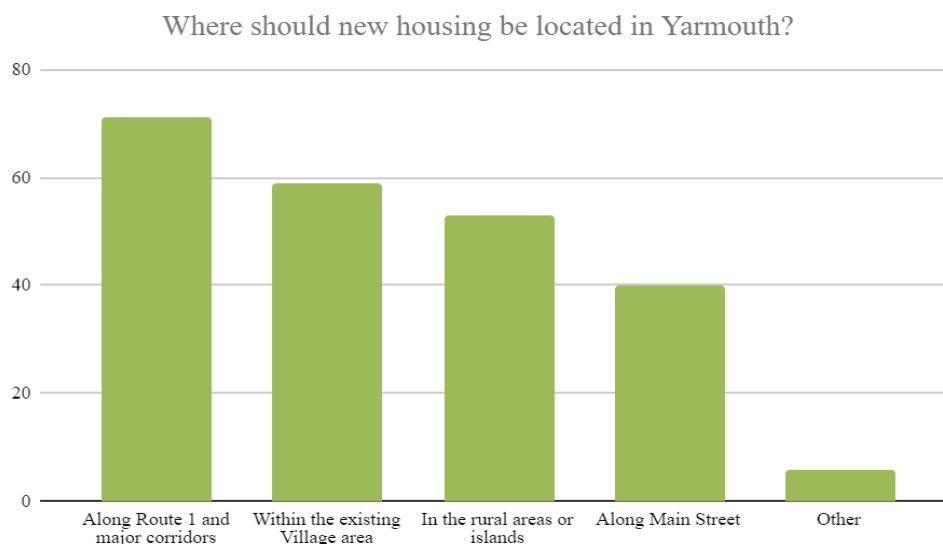
Housing, and the related affordability of Yarmouth, were also themes in responses about the draft vision statement, with comments generally supporting the results of the housing survey questions:

*"We are experiencing a severe housing shortage. There is no mention of housing at all in the vision statement or list of priorities."*

*"There should be a recognition that historically Yarmouth was a mix of blue collar workers, middle class folks and some wealthy people. There is a shift underway toward wealthy people, leaving blue collar people and even lower middle class people out of the town's future... an ominous trend for our town's future as a healthy, vibrant and resilient place to live."*

The second housing question asked respondents where new housing should be located in Yarmouth from a number of options: along Route 1 and major corridors; within the existing Village area; in the rural areas and islands; and along Main Street. An "other" open-ended response was also allowed. Of the 123 responses received, 110 respondents completed this question.

"Along Route 1 and major corridors" was the top selected response followed by "within the existing Village". Interestingly, along Main Street was selected less often, perhaps due to the perception that Main Street is the center of Yarmouth's small business community and people would not want to replace businesses with housing.



Six respondents filled in the "other" response regarding location of new housing. Two locational responses were provided:

- Backyards: when you talk about accessory dwellings, they just kind of "fit snugly in" to everything else.
- Portland Street and/or areas that are not quite rural but also not in the village.

One respondent noted that new housing needs an area that is properly zoned and available, connecting housing with land use. Similarly, a respondent noted that new housing should be "carefully located to preserve the values of Yarmouth's vision" consistent with other open-ended responses that balancing all of the priorities of Yarmouth must be a cornerstone of an updated Comprehensive Plan.

Finally, "no new construction" was mentioned in two different ways. One respondent wrote "No new construction. Repurpose existing structures in town. Ensure that all existing buildings are fully utilized." Another respondent wrote "I would say NO to all of it! No more apartments, no duplexes, no affordable housing. Just stop cramming in more homes/apartments/banks into our community." While the second comment suggests an outright moratorium of housing in Yarmouth, the first comment as well as the comment about accessory dwellings in backyards noted above, suggest that there are ways that Yarmouth can be innovative in developing new housing.

## **Economy**

Two questions about Yarmouth's economy were asked in the survey: one about business growth in Yarmouth, and the other about the respondent's work arrangement and commute. In both questions, respondents were given a number of responses and could select as many responses as desired. For the first questions, "other" was an allowed response with an open response for additional thoughts.

The first question "What kind of business growth would you like to see in Yarmouth?" gave respondents the option of selecting any of the following that applies to their preferences:

- Small businesses and shops;
- Restaurants and cafes;
- Entertainment activities (theater, bowling alley, etc);

- Large employers and national brands;
- Industrial and manufacturing facilities;
- Coworking spaces;
- Art studios and maker spaces;
- Business and technology incubator;
- New business park;
- More tourism-based businesses;
- Working waterfront and ocean-based businesses.

117 of the 123 survey respondents answered this question. Restaurants and cafes and small businesses were the top selections for business growth for Yarmouth, as shown in the chart below. The working waterfront and ocean-based businesses and art studios and maker spaces were the next highest rated business growth for Yarmouth. Entertainment activities, business and technology incubator, and coworking facility were clustered together, as were a new business park, tourism-based businesses, large employers and national brands, and industrial and manufacturing facilities.

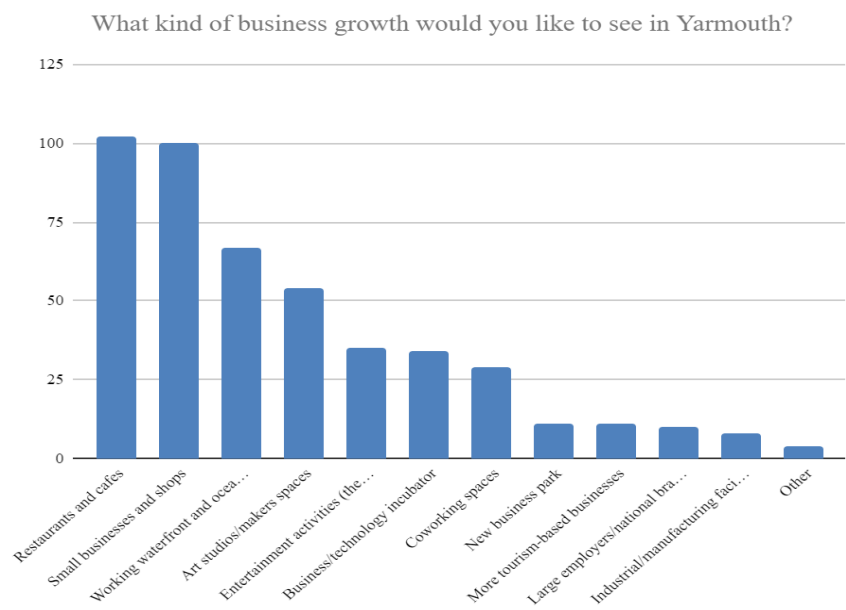
Respondents provided more detailed information about types of businesses needed in Yarmouth in the open-ended question on the draft vision statement such as the following comments:

*"Yarmouth could use a retro arcade or maybe a cool ping pong lounge like you'd find in bigger cities -- it's a perfect place for kids to hang out). We need more indoor places for our kids to burn off energy or relax with friends during the cold or wet months. Also, a cafe that also serves kid-friendly drinks - hot milk steamers, cocoa, Boba tea drinks, with comfy sofas and lots of board games would be great."*

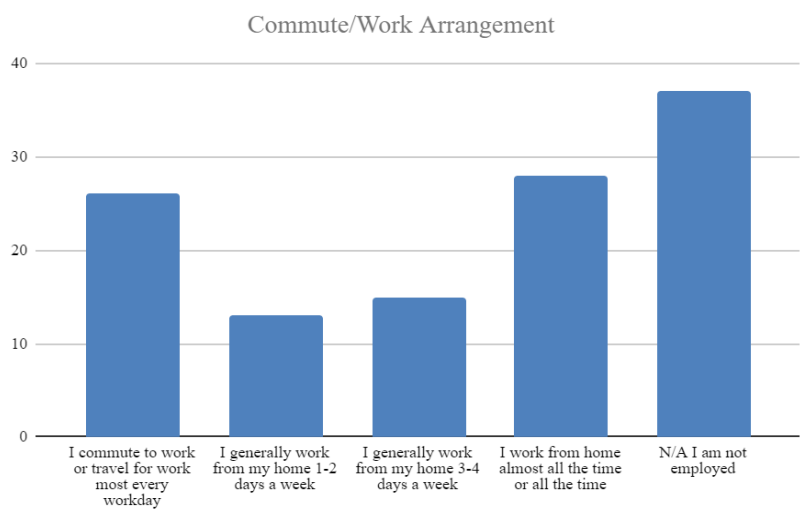
*"Support small businesses and local businesses over national chains."*

In the open-ended responses, three respondents provided more detail on recreational desires, such as a skate park and splash pad, a fitness center with swimming pool, and outdoor activities companies. These responses overlapped with

the responses in the next section on public recreation facilities or activities missing in Yarmouth.



The second question in this section asked respondents to describe their work arrangement. Of the 123 survey responses, 118 respondents answered this question. The most respondents selected that they are not employed, although this question did not allow respondents to expand on this response (i.e., retired, high school or college student, stay at home parent or guardian). Overall, most respondents either exclusively commute or travel for work on workdays, or are exclusively working from home, as shown in the chart below.



## Recreation

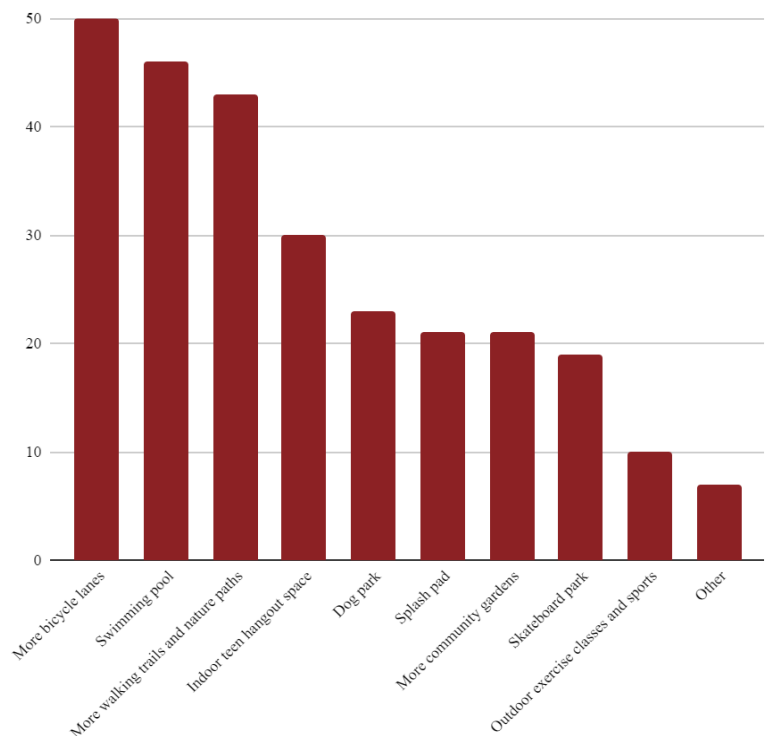
The survey asked respondents what types of public recreation facilities or activities are missing from Yarmouth. In response to this question, 114 respondents selected from the following options:

- Swimming pool;
- Splash pad;
- Skateboard park;
- Indoor teen hangout space;
- Dog park;
- Outdoor exercise classes and sports;
- More bicycle lanes;
- More walking trails and nature paths;
- More community gardens;
- More places to access the river or ocean.

The question also allowed an open-ended “other” response.

The top three most selected responses were more places to access the river or ocean; more bicycle lanes; and a swimming pool, as shown in the chart below. Behind those were more walking trails and nature paths; indoor teen hangout space; a dog park; splash pad; community gardens; and a skateboard park. The desire for a swimming pool currently being pursued by a separate interest group in Yarmouth, which

What types of public recreation facilities or activities are missing from the Town of Yarmouth?



collected over 400 signatures in support of a public pool during 2023.

The “other” responses provide some clarity on the responses given to the previous question, such as:

- Access to water (like Sandy Point) that is handicapped accessible; handicapped accessible fishing platforms.
- Recreational activities for the elder community.
- Connecting all the open spaces in town and surrounding community through walk/bike paths.

Other specific suggestions included a community center, dedicated tennis courts and pickleball courts for public use, and a performing arts amphitheater. One respondent suggested that the multiple-choice options offered in the question were inappropriate for and unneeded in Yarmouth.

## **Transportation**

Survey respondents were asked two questions about transportation around Town:

- What actions could the town take to encourage forms of transportation besides single-occupancy vehicle travel?
- What places in Yarmouth do you regularly walk or bike to?

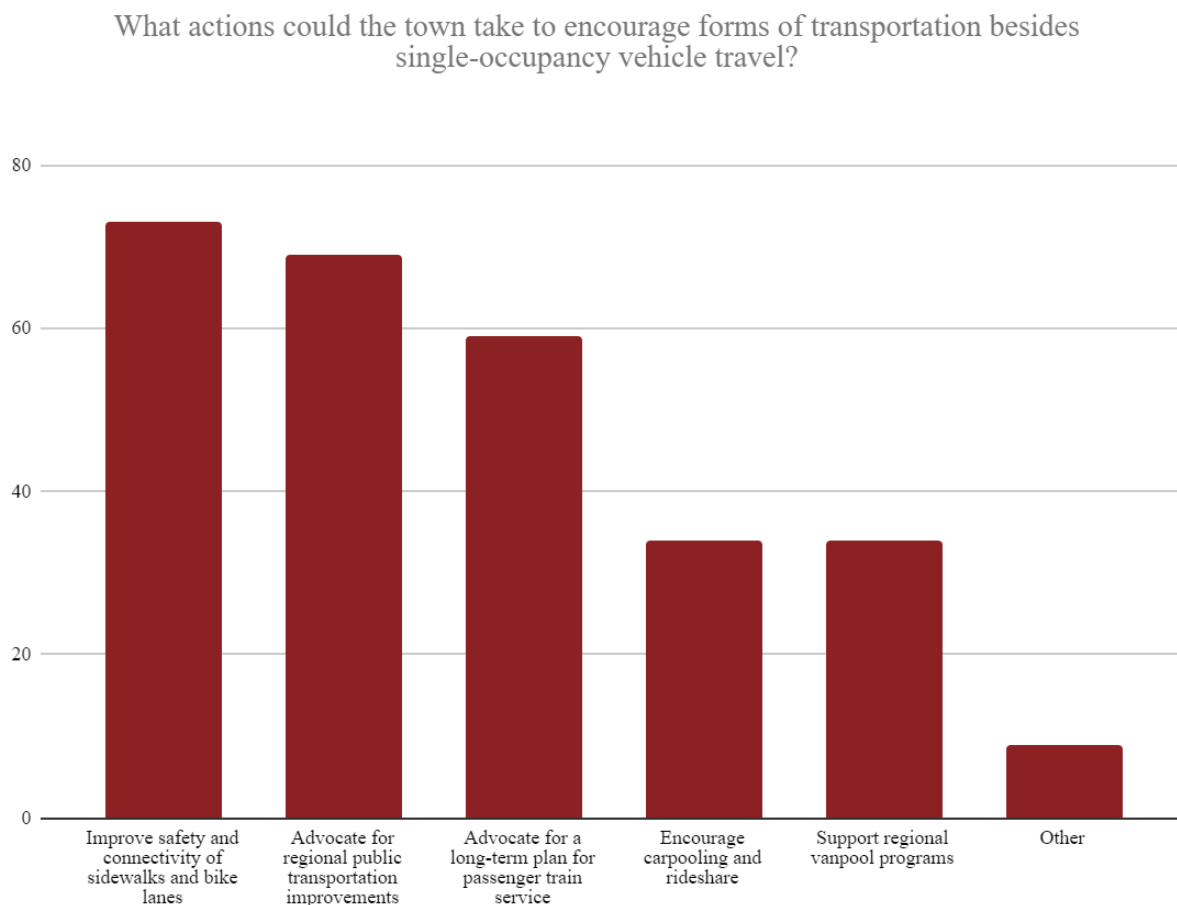
In response to both questions, respondents could select from multiple options.

In response to the first question, 111 respondents answered this question, selecting from the following responses:

- Improve safety and connectivity of sidewalks and bike lanes;
- Encourage carpooling and rideshare;
- Support regional vanpool programs;
- Advocate for regional public transportation improvements;
- Advocate for a long-term plan for passenger train service.

An open-ended “other” response was also provided.

The top ranked response suggested that the town should improve the safety and connectivity of sidewalks and bike lanes. The second and third ranked responses were related to alternative modes of transportation, including advocating for regional public transportation improvement and advocating for a long-term plan for passenger rail service. Behind those responses, was support for carpooling, ridesharing, and vanpooling.



Respondents that selected the “other” response provided the following additional feedback in three general categories about actions the Town can take around transportation:

- Local and regional shuttle service: “Town shuttle to locations in Yarmouth and maybe Falmouth center”



- Support of regional trails: “Create a bike/pedestrian path where the railroad currently sits. This will connect Yarmouth to other communities including Portland.”
- Breez bus service: “Support Breez ridership- it's an amazing service that is not well-used”

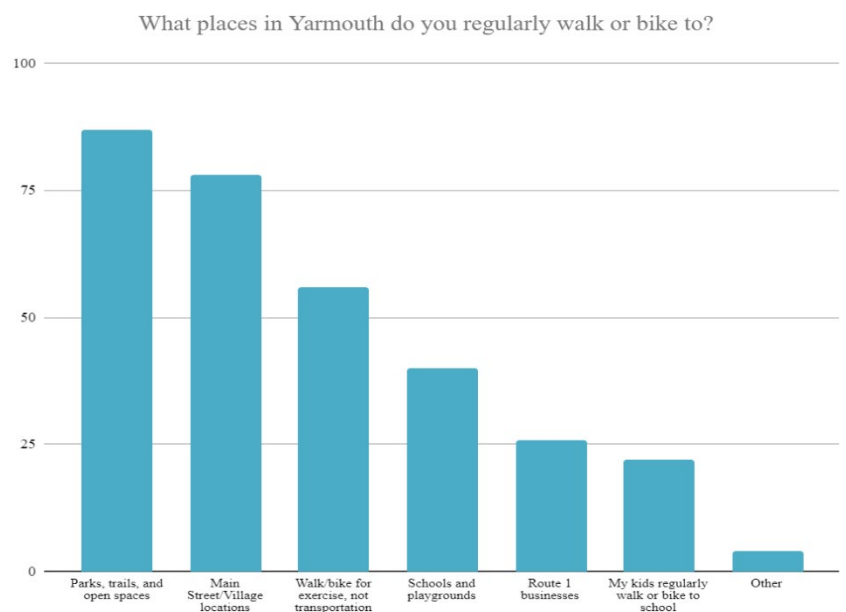
The second question received 116 responses out of the 123 survey respondents on where the respondent regularly walks or bikes to within Yarmouth. The respondents selected from the following options:

- Route 1 businesses;
- Main Street/Village locations;
- Parks, trails, and open spaces;
- Schools and playgrounds;
- My kids regularly walk or bike to school;
- Walk/bike for exercise, not transportation;

Respondents had the option of providing an “other” response.

The top two responses included parks, trails and open spaces, and Main Street or Village locations. Respondents selected schools and playgrounds and Route 1 businesses less often. Many respondents also indicated that they do not walk or bike for transportation, only for exercise. Very few respondents indicated that their kids regularly walk or bike to school.

Three respondents provided specific locations such as Intermed and the Library, and to points on Cousins Island in the “other” response.



## Open Ended

The survey concluded with two open-ended questions for respondents to provide additional comments to the Comprehensive Plan team:

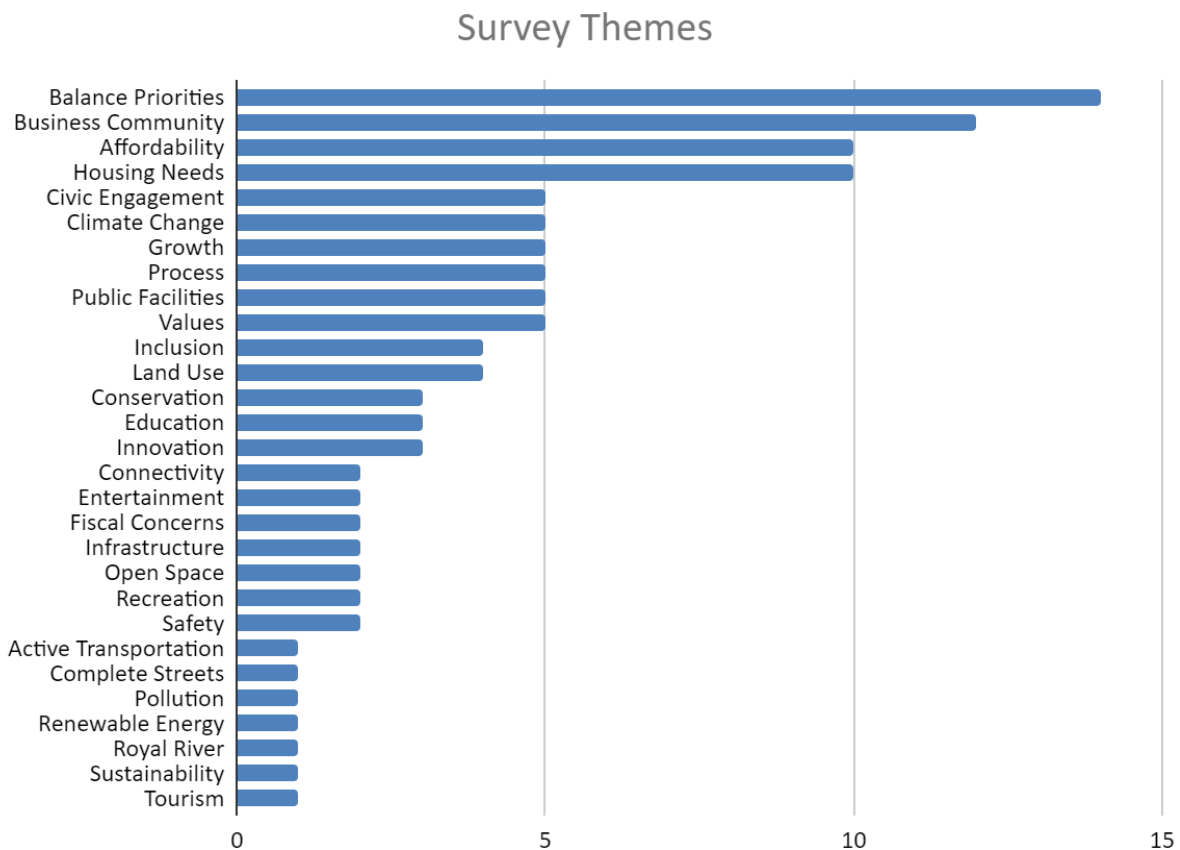
- What is one thing that would make Yarmouth a better place?
- Is there anything else you want us to know as we move forward with the comprehensive plan update?

The Comprehensive Plan team reviewed the responses and identified the themes in each response for analysis. Four themes appearing in the most comments rose to the top: Balance Priorities, Business Community, Affordability, and Housing Needs. Overall, the respondents to the survey made it clear that Yarmouth is special and how important it is to remember the important qualities that make Yarmouth a desirable community.

*The people. A wonderful community. Been here 22 years.*

*Yarmouth is a special community that is in high demand. It is in high demand for a certain set of reasons. We must not lose sight of why their community is so desirable and we must not fundamentally change it into something different.*

*Strengthening an already strong sense of community. We must not dilute that feeling and work to make it stronger.*



The top four themes and representative comments are described below.

#### **Balance Priorities**

The following comments that were categorized as “Balance Priorities” are representative of open-ended survey responses. Respondents consistently acknowledged that there is a desire to have the best of everything, but little discussion on how those desires relate to each other. In addition, respondents note that Yarmouth is already a great Town, and express concern that too much growth or development will change what makes the town great already. There is a delicate balance to ensure that Yarmouth continues to be a community that is desirable.

*My concern is that we have the potential to "Love Yarmouth to Death".*

*Creative planning and budgeting. Lower expectations from 'always wanting to be the best' to setting goals to improve (we are already*

*doing most things better than others). Slow the growth of people and improve the resources that are already here.*

*I was hoping to read more about how many of these values and how to sustain them, are interconnected. Walkability, village, open spaces, environment, fiscal responsibility & housing for instance are inextricably linked. We need to start talking about them together and their relationships to each other instead of as separate issues.*

*I would love to see more about preserving the land and the small town feel, and keep growth to a sustainable levels. Expansion and growth at too accelerated a pace would cause both environmental as well as infrastructure issues (schools, roads, land) that I don't think the town is ready for.*

### **Business Community**

The small business community in Yarmouth was repeatedly identified as something that makes Yarmouth great and should be supported, consistent with the responses on the economy above. Although there were strong opinions expressed that Yarmouth did not need any more pizza places or banks, there is some desire for access to general merchandise stores.

*The thoughtful development of Main Street with small boutique retail businesses. Maples really proved a point, that we are all looking for informal places to gather and be together. I think Handy's also proved the same point. We want those central places to take walks and see one another.*

*Opening up Main Street on a summer night for walking with some signs of life with music from local restaurants*

*Closer/easier access to a general-merchandise store like Target.*

*Anchor more into Main Street on a community-basis (ie: Second Saturday type encouragement to get out similar to First Fridays in other places) - not necessarily to draw other towns in, but to encourage those who live in Yarmouth to come out more through organized events. Similarly, more summer park movies!*

### **Affordability**

Respondents noted that Yarmouth is becoming less affordable for residents new and old. There is concern that if Yarmouth is no longer affordable, community members will have to leave the town, including seniors, teachers, police, and service workers.

*We just finished digesting significant budget increases. It's a good time to manage the day to day and let people's finances catch up. We'll run fixed income people right out of town if we aren't careful.*

*A return to the traditional mix of occupations, income and housing to include blue collar, lower income brackets and multi family housing.*

### **Housing Needs**

As discussed above in the targeted questions on housing, affordable housing is a concern of survey respondents. Innovation is needed to create new housing options in Yarmouth. Density is one means to an end, but being creative in allowing new housing options should be balanced alongside calls for increased density.

*Making an absolute commitment to affordable housing rather than lip service that has been the case over several cycles of comp plan. Continue to encourage all types of diversity.*

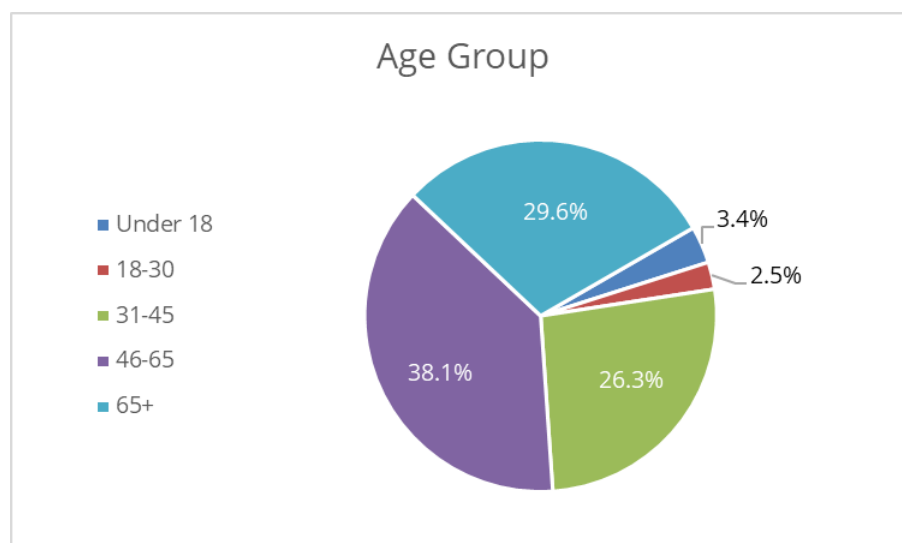
*Continued development of the village/main street area, especially multi-unit, energy efficient and affordable housing.*

*Consider that increasing density is not the only answer to providing more diversity in housing.*

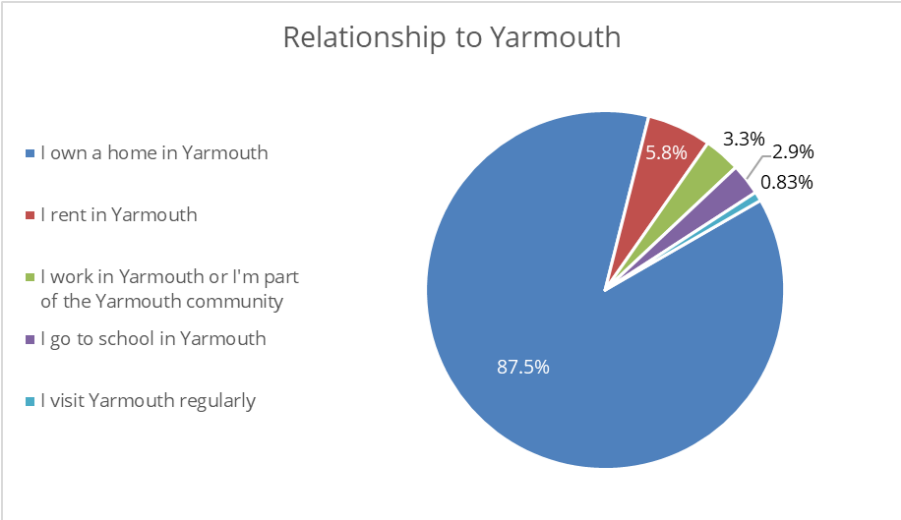
## Demographics

The survey asked three demographic questions to understand who responded to the survey. Those demographic questions include age group, relationship to Yarmouth, and length of time associated with Yarmouth. These questions were optional for respondents.

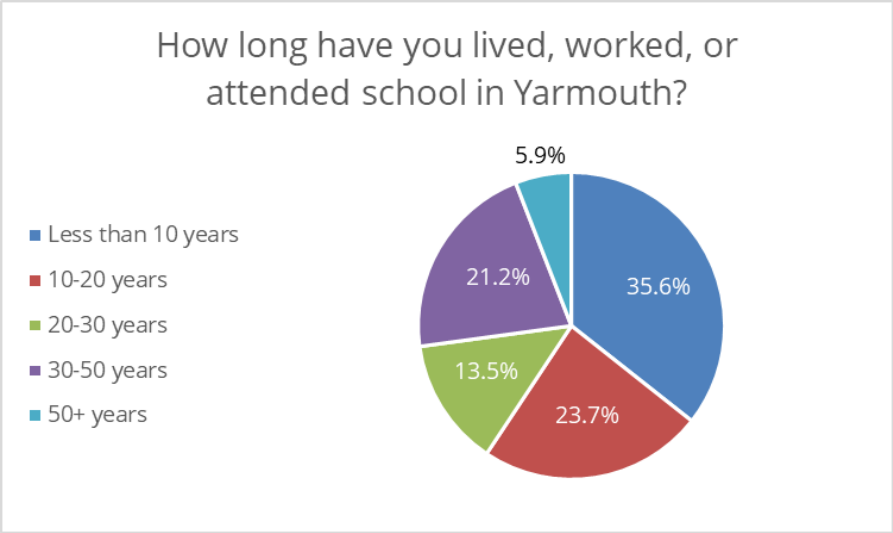
The survey respondents were primarily over the age of 31, with about 26% of respondents aged 31 to 45, about 38% aged 46-65, and about 30% over the age of 65. About 6% of respondents were under the age of 30.



The large majority of the respondents (87.5%) own a home in Yarmouth defining their relationship to Yarmouth. Just under 6% of respondents rent a home in Yarmouth. About 3% work in Yarmouth, define themselves as part of the Yarmouth community, or go to school in Yarmouth. Less than 1 percent of respondents were people who don't live in Yarmouth but visit regularly.



The largest share of respondents (35.6%) have lived in Yarmouth for less than 10 years, followed by 23.7% of respondents living in Yarmouth for 10 to 20 years. 21.2% of respondents have lived in Yarmouth for 30 to 50 years. The smallest shares of respondents have lived in Yarmouth for 20 to 30 years (13.5%) and more than 50 years (5.9%).



## Summer Pop-Ups

The pop-up events were designed by the Comprehensive Plan team to provide informal and fun ways to let the community know about the Comprehensive Plan update, how to get involved, and solicit input. As noted, the primary goal of the summer pop-up events was to introduce to the community to the Comprehensive Plan Update through methods other than email, website postings, and mailings. Instead of asking the community to come to us, the Comprehensive Plan team went to the community. Nineteen events were held in Yarmouth during June, July, and August, including having a presence at the Yarmouth Clam Festival.

The following pop-ups were held:

- June 15: Coffee with Community hosted by Yarmouth Community Services
- June 22: Yarmouth Farmers' Market
- June 24: Brickyard Hollow
- June 30: Storytime hosted by the Merrill Memorial Library
- July 12: Royal River Park Daytime Concert
- July 14: Yarmouth Food Pantry
- July 17: Merrill Memorial Library
- July 20: Yarmouth Farmers' Market
- July 21: Yarmouth Clam Festival
- July 24: Clayton's Cafe and Bakery
- July 28: 317 Main Community Music Center
- July 30: Cousins Island & Littlejohn Island Improvement Association Summer Social
- August 2: Royal River Park Concert Series
- August 9: Royal River Park Concert and Movie Night
- August 15: Merrill Memorial Library
- August 17: Chebeague Transportation Company Ferry Dock on Cousins Island
- August 19: Artascope Plein Air Festival
- August 22: Merrill Memorial Library
- August 24: Yarmouth Farmers' Market

Wrapping up the summer engagement pop-ups, the Comprehensive Plan team hosted a Trivia Night in conjunction with the Yarmouth History Center and the Yarmouth Historic Preservation Committee on August 31. Beyond the summer months, the Comprehensive Plan team was present at the Yarmouth Public Schools



back to school nights and the weather-delayed Bartlett Woods barbeque in September.

In addition to an introduction to the Comprehensive Plan update, two simple questions were posed to those who chose to engage with the Comprehensive Plan team:

- Where are the places to protect and preserve?
- Where are the places that should have new investment, growth, and change?

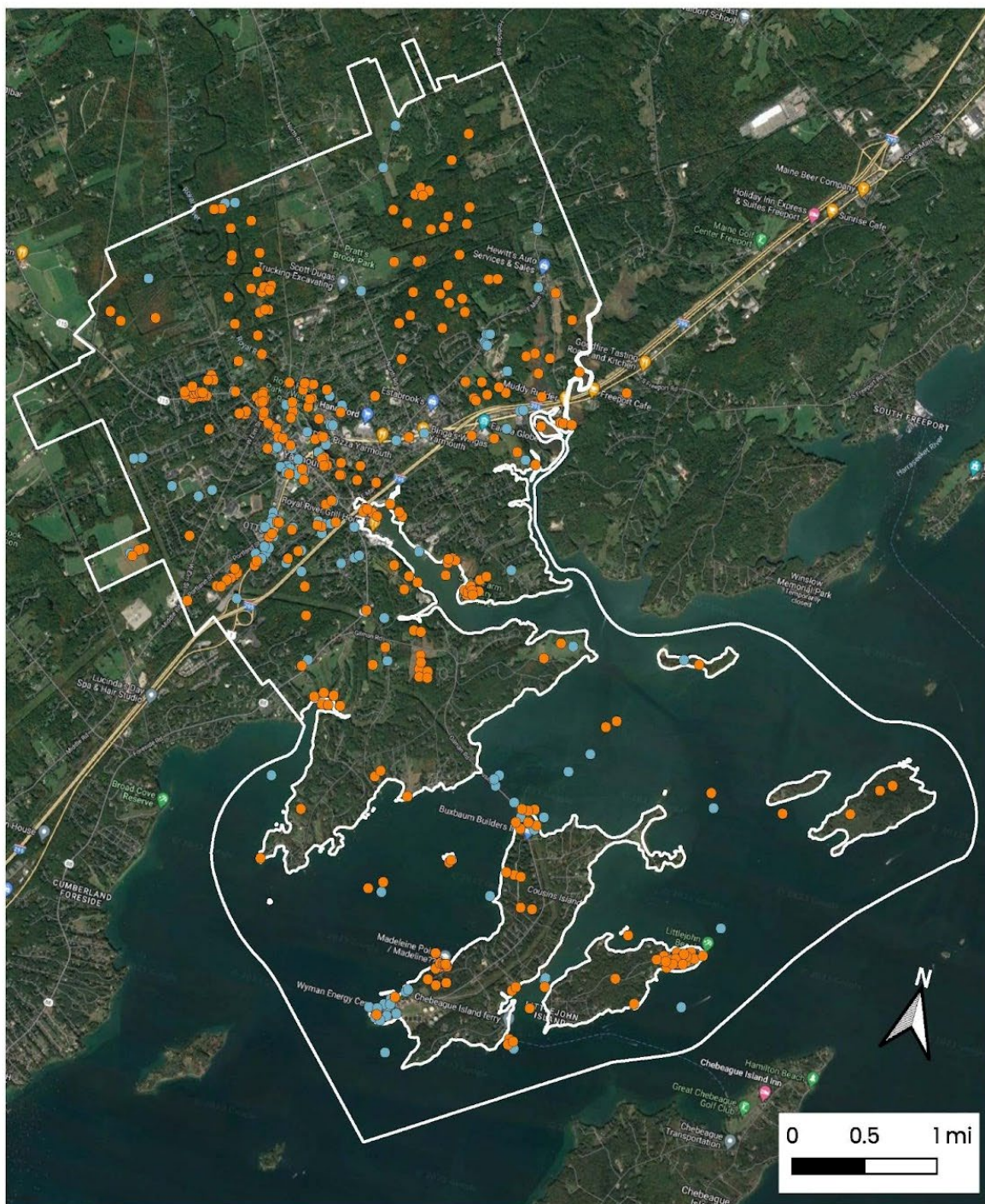
A large poster of Yarmouth was presented and those who chose to engage could add different colored dots to the map to indicate their preferences. In addition, participants could add other notes to the poster to provide any clarifying comments or to share any additional information. This activity was also duplicated on the project website.

The aggregated results of the exercise are presented in the map on the following page. The results of the mapping exercise are not unsurprising when taken in conjunction with the results of other engagement, such as the summer survey and the Community Conversations.

The places to protect and preserve are along the Royal River, large open spaces adjacent to existing open space such as Frank Knight Forest, coastal and estuarine areas along Casco Bay, the islands, and areas along the Cousins River.

Wyman Station and areas along Route 1 were identified as places where new investment, growth, and change should be focused. In addition, the Cousins Island Bridge and other critical infrastructure have been designated for investment, growth, and change.

## Summer Pop-Ups and Online Survey: Map Results



- Places that should be preserved and protected
- Places that should have new investment, growth, and change

Regarding the comments received during the pop-up events and online were categorized into five categories: safe streets, connectivity and open space, public access, Town amenities and facilities, and islands.

Safe Streets	More bike paths and sidewalks that connect to places where people want to go like the YMCA and into Portland Vehicular speeds are problematic in some areas in town
Connectivity and Open Space	Wayfinding is important for locals and visitors alike Wildlife corridors should be established through open space preservation Preserve farmland and existing open space
Public Access	Water access points need investment Parking is limited at Royal River Park and other loved open spaces and parks Accessibility to and within town-owned access points is needed
Town Amenities and Facilities	Desire to see more restaurant options Affordable housing is needed Recreation opportunities like a pool
Islands	Island neighborhoods are unique Wyman Station presents opportunities

Other comments included some thoughts on flooding and resilience within Yarmouth. In general, the responses are consistent with the results of the summer survey described in this report and the other engagement efforts that continued into the fall of 2023.



# PLAN YARMOUTH



## **Community Conversations Results & Analysis November 2023**

Erin Zwirko, Director of Planning & Development, Town of Yarmouth



## Overview

The Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan team held three topic-based Community Conversations events in Fall 2023 to support the development of the Comprehensive Plan Update. The topics selected were **Housing, Economy, and Environment & Natural Resources**. The topics were chosen by the Comprehensive Plan team as they encompass both the built environment and the natural environment of Yarmouth, and relate to the major themes we heard in the summer survey. Each session provided an opportunity for the community to have deeper discussions on these topics and get more nuanced feedback than the high-level questions in the summer survey.

Each event was held in-person in the same location on a Monday evening on September 18, September 25, and October 2. Events began with a brief presentation by the project team's subject matter experts. Following the presentation, attendees worked in groups to discuss targeted questions on each subject. Groups were led by table facilitators consisting of members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, the project team, and other community volunteers. Before the event ended, facilitators or other volunteers shared a brief report of what was discussed at each table. After the event, the presentations and video recordings of the events were made available on the Plan Yarmouth website, with online analogues of each activity.

During the same period of time, members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee held a companion event about the needs of the growing number of Yarmouth residents who work from home. These results are also shared in this report.

In addition to the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Town of Yarmouth is concurrently working on developing its first Climate Action Plan. The Yarmouth Climate Action Task Force and the Yarmouth Sustainability Coordinator held a Community Action Workshop on October 10. Because of the interconnectedness of these two important planning processes, relevant results from the Community Action Workshop are referenced where there is overlap with the results from the Community Conversations.

# Housing

## *Event Overview*

*Community Conversations: Housing* was held on Monday, September 11, 2023 from 6 PM to 8 PM. 53 people attended the event, plus staff and facilitators. Jeff Levine of Levine Planning Strategies and a member of the Comprehensive Plan Team gave a presentation on the data incorporated in the Housing Inventory Chapter and the results of the Housing Affordability Market Study prepared by Levine Planning Strategies. The presentation shared important data points such as:

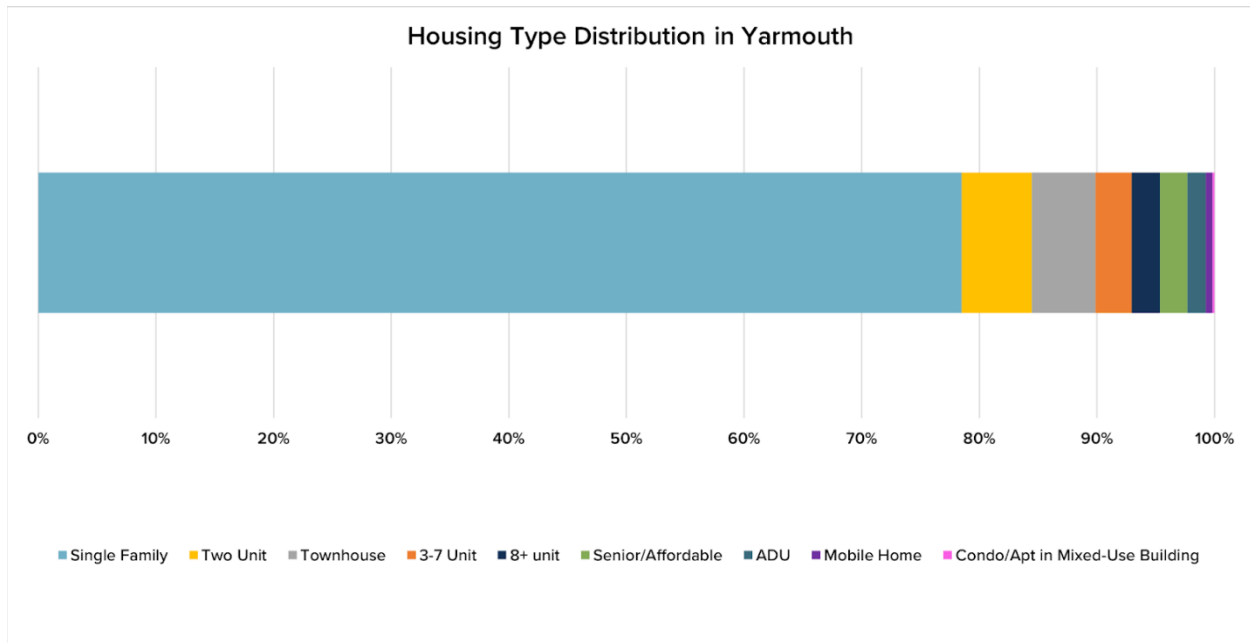
- Existing housing types in Yarmouth;
- Home construction over time in Yarmouth;
- Affordability data including the percent of households unable to afford the median-priced home and the resulting cost-burdened households in Yarmouth;
- Yarmouth's zoning limitations that affect the construction of new housing; and
- Number of homes needed to satisfy the current demand from renter and homeowner households based on income.

Armed with this information, small groups of attendees were asked to discuss what the mix of housing options should look like in Yarmouth in the future, where new housing should be located in Yarmouth, how new housing might relate to a variety of other topics, and strategies that Yarmouth can advance to create new housing. Attendees could also refer to Yarmouth's zoning map and land use map as well as the copies of the presentation.



## Housing Mix

Attendees were provided with a graph showing the existing mix of housing types in Yarmouth, shown below.

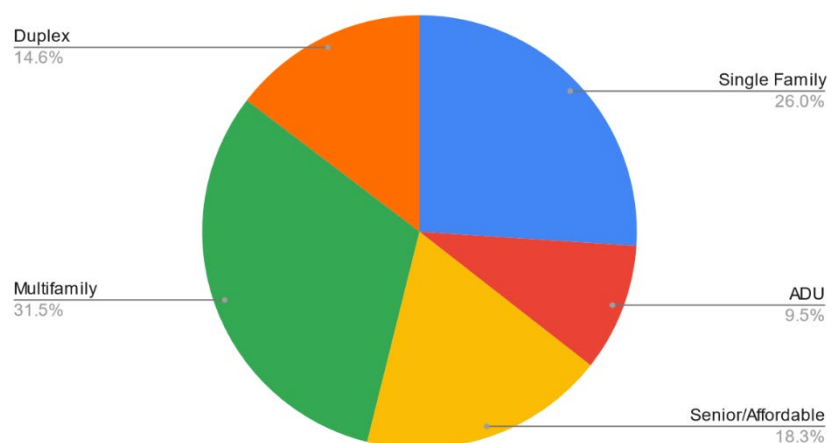


Based on this existing mix, each group was asked to consider what mix of housing types they would like to see be created in Yarmouth over the next 5 years. Groups were encouraged to discuss the housing types to gain a common understanding amongst group members as well as discuss other housing types that are missing. Each group developed their own categories for housing types and provided a distribution for what percentage of each type should be built.

Taking each group's housing mix and finding the average of each housing type, an average distribution was calculated.

Written comments on this activity and group comments at the end of the event illuminated that the participants did not recommend abandoning the single-family housing type in Yarmouth. However,

**Average Housing Distribution**





different types of single-family homes need to be available, such as cottages and smaller homes, and corresponding smaller lots, which in turn may be more affordable.

Many of the groups recommended that a baseline of affordable homes across all housing typologies be available in Yarmouth, with one group specifying 20 percent of all housing types be affordable.

Groups recommended, on average, that about one-third of new housing in Yarmouth should be multifamily. The summer survey yielded a similar result.

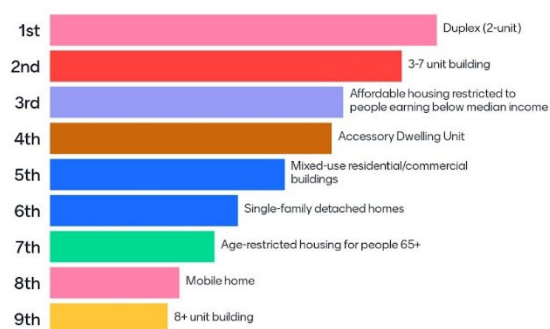
A version of this question was available online after the event. Respondents were asked to rank the housing types that should be built in Yarmouth over the next 5 years from a list of options:

- Single-family detached home
- Duplex (2-unit)
- 3-7 unit building
- 8+ unit building
- Age-restricted housing for people age 65+
- Affordable housing restricted to people earning below median income
- Accessory dwelling unit
- Mixed-use commercial/residential
- Mobile home

6 people responded. Results reflected the Community Conversations event and the summer survey in a desire for more multifamily housing, with duplex and 3-7 unit buildings ranked first. There was a strong preference for smaller multifamily

developments, with 8+ unit buildings ranked last. Affordable housing was ranked third. Accessory dwelling units were fourth and single-family detached homes were

## Housing Mix



Mentimeter





sixth, showing again that respondents want to keep building single-family homes in Yarmouth, but may be interested in different types of dwellings.

### *Housing Location*

For the next exercise, each small group was given a handful of beans and asked to place the beans on a print out of Yarmouth in places where new housing should be located. Each bean was not assigned a value; rather the groups could use more beans to illustrate higher density and fewer or no beans to illustrate less density of housing.

Two examples of the bean maps that illustrate the range of responses to this question from the small groups are shown below:



The bean map on the left illustrates one group's interest in high housing density within the Village and along major corridors. The bean map on the right illustrates some increased density along Route 1 and some major corridors, but limited new housing elsewhere in town, which is more consistent with the other maps prepared by attendees. The Comprehensive Plan team reviewed each bean map for

commonalities and where there was divergence. Those common locations across the eight bean maps include:

- Village and Main Street;
- Route 1;
- Major corridors and intersections;
- Vacant land between the Garmin building and Bayview Street; and
- Creating more density around existing developments such as the Brookside Condominiums and the Taymil properties.

Where there was less agreement was along minor corridors such as Sligo Road, North Road, Granite Street, and Bayview Street. Only two maps put beans on any of the islands, the example above, and another map that placed beans at Wyman Station.

A version of this question was available online after the event. Respondents were asked where in Yarmouth new housing should be built over the next 5 years, and could drop a pin on a map to share. Only two answers were provided: one near the current Tyler Technologies property by Route 1 and the 295 ramp, and one on Blueberry Cove Road where there is currently an existing development of attached townhomes.

The results of the summer survey echoed the Community Conversations results, with the top response identified for new housing being located along Route 1 and major corridors. The attendees at the Community Action Workshop also supported prioritizing density and mixed-use buildings in areas close to transit and economic centers.

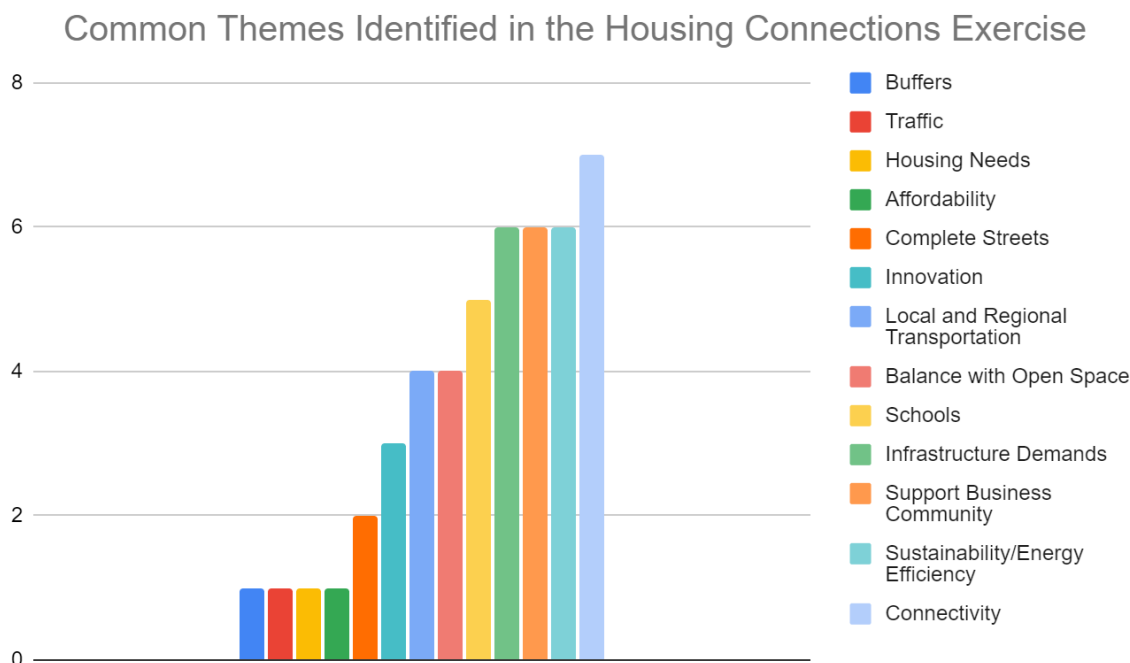
## *Housing Connections*

Attendees were given the opportunity to think about what impacts the housing mix and locations they just developed would have on other aspects of life in Yarmouth: transportation, community amenities & infrastructure, open space & recreation, public schools, facilities, & services, energy efficiency & greenhouse gas emissions, and economy.

The Comprehensive Plan team reviewed the responses and assigned themes to the various connections identified by each small group. The most often cited item was connectivity – not only references to infrastructure to support walking and biking, but also local and regional transportation. Not unsurprisingly, there were many

references to the schools and infrastructure demands and striving to protect valuable open spaces. Other common themes cited include: sustainability and energy efficiency, housing supporting the business community.

The chart below illustrates how often various themes came up across the various small groups:



The same question was posed to respondents online. Only one person answered, citing the need for affordable workforce housing.

The respondents to the summer survey also expressed strong support for public transit improvements and supporting a community that is walkable and bikeable. Attendees at the Climate Action Plan Community Action Workshop provided input on high priorities consistent with the themes found in this exercise including preserving open space with a focus on wildlife corridors, aligning future development and building construction with climate goals, and supporting public transit and connectivity within Yarmouth.

## *Housing Strategies*

Optionally, attendees could identify actions they would like to see the town of Yarmouth take to encourage this new housing. Not every group was able to complete this exercise, but the variety of responses suggested that the current zoning needs to be updated to support housing needs, there should be density bonuses for transit-oriented development, and affordable housing development needs to be incentivized.

The same question was posed to respondents online. Two respondents answered. One person listed affordability strategies: inclusionary zoning, support ADUs, create a housing trust, and commit town-owned land to affordable housing. Another person suggested that vacant buildings in town could be converted to affordable housing, and all housing should be surrounded by green space.

The variety of strategies provided suggests the desire by many members of the community to support and incentivize affordable housing. At the same time, others want to focus on balancing priorities and preserving Yarmouth's built environment and open space when addressing housing issues.

## **Economy**

### *Event Overview*

*Community Conversations: Economy* was held on Monday, September 18, 2023 from 6 PM to 8 PM. 23 people attended the event, plus staff and facilitators. Tom Dworetsky, of Camoin Associates, and a member of the Comprehensive Plan Team gave a presentation on the data incorporated in the Economy Inventory Chapter and the results of the Real Estate Market Analysis prepared by Camoin Associates. The presentation shared important data points such as:

- Key demographic trends on population and age, commuting, job growth, and growing industries;
- Yarmouth's key assets and strengths within in the region;
- Residential, retail, industrial, and general office market opportunities; and
- Key economic issues and needs in Yarmouth.



Following the presentation, attendees divided into small groups for discussion. Each small group was asked to complete four exercises: what businesses are missing in Yarmouth and where they should be located, what municipal actions to take to strengthen the local economy, what municipal actions to take on the creative economy, and what municipal actions to take on the working waterfront. Attendees could also refer to Yarmouth's zoning map and land use map as well as a map of Yarmouth's retail trade area and copies of the presentation.

### *New Business Growth: Missing Businesses and Appropriate Locations*

Each small group was given a poster-size chart of business types for consideration. Each poster also provided space for groups to fill in any other business types that the group identified as missing in Yarmouth. Each attendee voted for five preferred businesses as part of the small group discussions. The photo on the following page is an example of one of the complete charts, illustrating how each small group rated each business category and added other ideas based on the group conversation.



When aggregating the responses from each table, the following top businesses were identified as missing in Yarmouth:

- Restaurants (full service, quick service, cafes, and diners);
- Outdoor recreation and agri-tourism;
- Boutique retailers;
- Daycare and childcare; and
- Urgent care.

This list diverges somewhat from the top five businesses identified for growth in Yarmouth in the summer survey. The top business type identified in the summer survey was restaurants and cafes, consistent with the results from the Community Conversation. Summer survey respondents identified the next four needed business types as small businesses and shops, working waterfront and ocean-based businesses, art studios and maker spaces, and entertainment activities. There is likely overlap between small businesses and shops and boutique retailers when comparing the Community Conversation results and the summer survey results, suggesting that the small business community is important to Yarmouth residents.

There are connections between the open-ended comments in the summer survey and the highly ranked missing businesses. A number of survey responses focused on family-oriented businesses, and both indoor and outdoor recreation were highly ranked in this event. Further, in the photo example above, this small group suggested that small department stores, such as a Reny's, are missing from Yarmouth, but the summer survey responses were clear that large box stores are not appropriate for Yarmouth.

The second part of this exercise asked attendees where they would locate their top new businesses in Yarmouth. Each small group was asked to identify where in Yarmouth new business growth would be appropriately located. Each table was given a second poster-sized chart as seen in the photo below and the options for

YARMOUTH Community Conversation Economy

**What business types are missing from Yarmouth?**  
 Review the list below.  
 Place a blue dot next to the top 5 business you wish you had in Yarmouth.

Full service restaurants	• •
Quick service restaurants	
Supermarkets/grocery stores	
Specialty food stores	
Pharmacies	
Clothing stores	
Bookstores	
Furniture stores	
Large department stores	Small Dept. Store, Apple & Apple's, School Supplies, RENY'S • • •
Boutique retailers	
Barber shops and hair/nail salons	
Pet stores	•
Drycleaners	
Movie theaters	
Health/fitness centers	
Indoor recreation	• • •
Outdoor recreation	•
Urgent Care	
Outpatient medical services	
After-school tutoring	•
Day care/child care	
Music/Arts Education	
Museums	
Live Entertainment venues	•
Other: Energy Generator	• •
Other: Agri Tourism	Apple Orchard, Corn Maze, Pumpkin Picking, Maple Syrup • • •
Other:	•

locations for new business growth included along Route 1, in the village, in neighborhoods, and elsewhere in town.

**Fill in the chart with your table's top 5 missing businesses. If you had these businesses in Yarmouth, where should they be located?**

Business Type	Along Route 1 (high visibility, car access)	In the village (smaller, walkable, downtown)	In neighborhoods (local amenities)	Elsewhere in town (new development areas)
Full Service Restaurants - Destination Restaurants - Medium Price	Yes	Yes		
Quick Service Restaurants Cafes open on weekends Breakfast Spots	Yes	Yes		
Boutique Retailers	Yes	Yes		
Clothing Stores	Yes	Yes		
Urgent Care (for pets as well -- Vets)	Yes	Maybe?		

Wyman  
Day care

Recreation uses

Across the small groups, most new business growth was recommended to be located along Route 1 and in the village, especially for all types of restaurants. Urgent care for people and pets and outpatient medical services were also recommended for Route 1. Boutique retailers and other small businesses were recommended primarily in the Village. One group identified high-end hospitality and accommodations as a new business type for Yarmouth, and recommended it to be located along Route 1 and in the Village.

Turning to new business growth in neighborhoods, the groups recommended daycares, full-service restaurants, boutique inns, and indoor recreation be available.

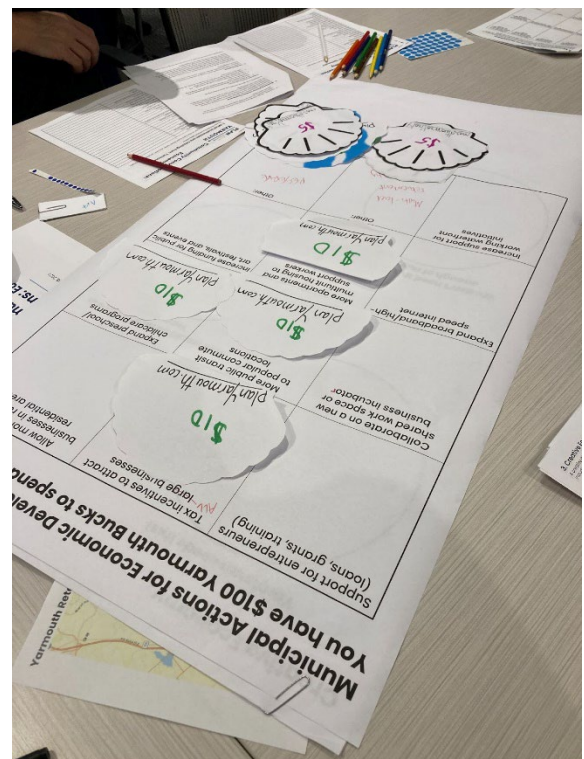
Specifically on Cousins Island, one group recommended new retail options. Groups specifically identified Wyman Station on Cousins Island as a good location for recreation, waterfront services, and aquaculture support. Further, another group identified East Elm Street at Depot Road as a good location for new light manufacturing. Finally, agritourism and outdoor recreation was identified for areas beyond Route 1 and the Village and not necessarily as a neighborhood amenity.

Following the event, a similar prompt was posed online. Respondents were asked what businesses are missing in Yarmouth and where they should be. Three people replied, requesting: restaurant with breakfast/moderately priced dinner, tech firms or incubators with mid to high paying jobs, and an inn/bed and breakfast.

## *Municipal Actions for Economic Development*

For this exercise, the small groups were given \$100 Yarmouth Bucks to allocate to different municipal actions to support economic development. Each small group was directed to divvy up their \$100 toward a variety of actions Yarmouth could take including:

- Support for entrepreneurs (loans, grants, training);
- Tax incentives to attract large businesses;
- Allow more small businesses in rural and residential areas;
- Collaborate on a new shared work space or business incubator;
- More public transit to popular locations;
- Expand preschool/childcare programs;
- Expand broadband/high speed internet;
- More apartments and multiunit housing to support workers;
- Increase funding for public art, festivals, and events; and
- Increase support for working waterfront initiatives.



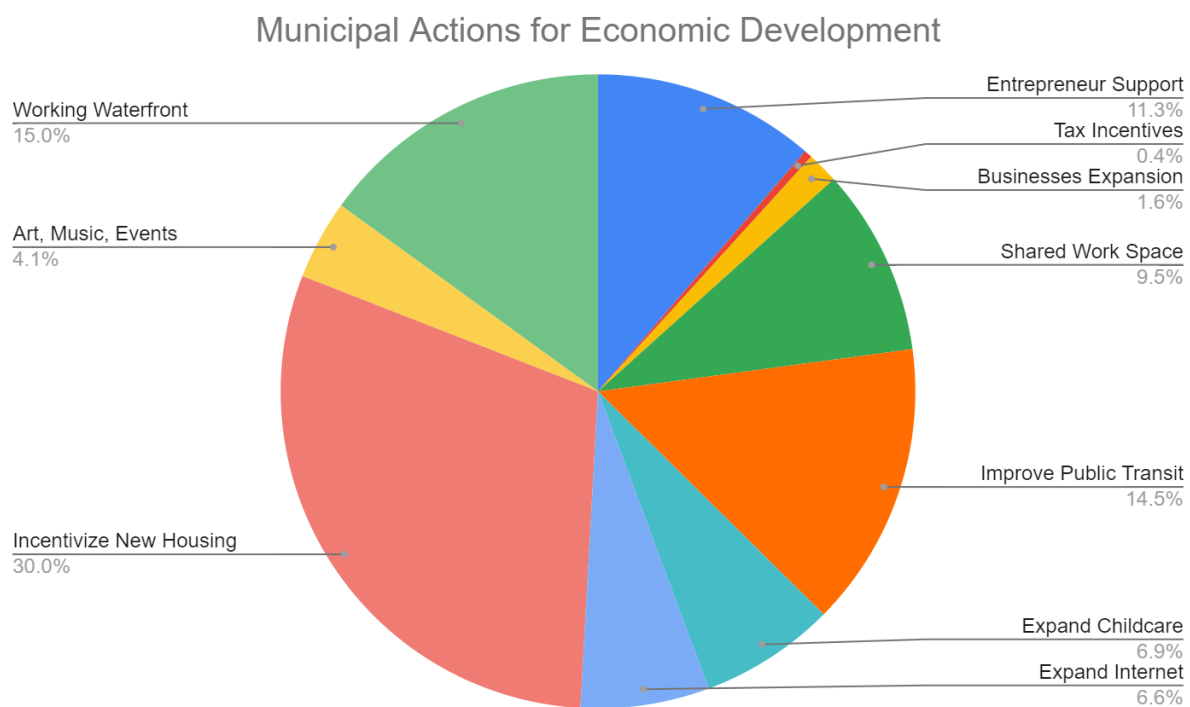
As with other activities, the small groups could add their own suggested municipal actions.



By aggregating the data across the small groups, the categories that received the highest amount of Yarmouth Bucks are:

- Incentivize new housing options;
- Increase support for working waterfront initiatives;
- Improved public transit to popular locations;
- Collaborative on a new shared work space or business incubator; and
- Support for entrepreneurs.

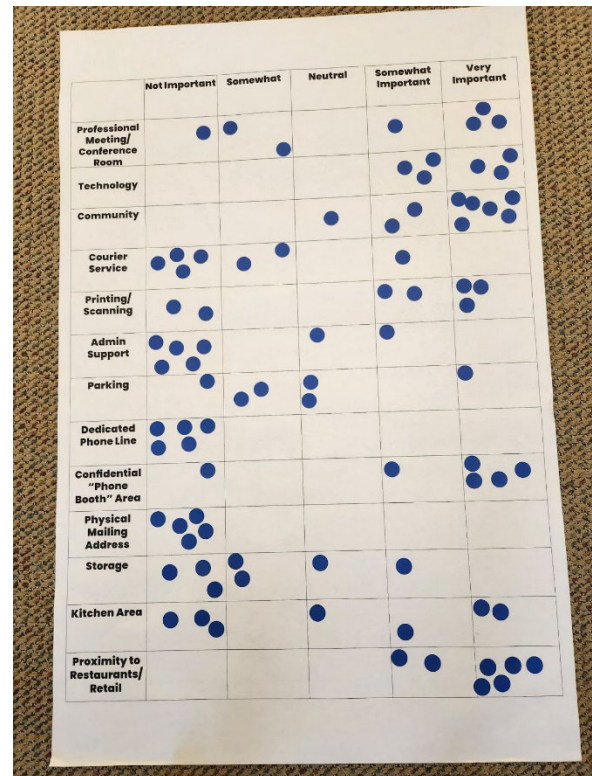
The following chart illustrates how the small groups in the aggregate distributed Yarmouth bucks across the topics.



“Other” responses included tax incentives for small businesses, outdoor recreation, entertainment, satellite parking in the Village, and trail connections. The results suggested that the small groups found consensus on supporting the small businesses in Yarmouth and expanding those opportunities for small businesses. These results are consistent with the feedback received through the summer survey.

The focus on collaborating on a shared work space or business incubator is consistent with the Town's Economic Development Advisory Board's current plan to focus on workforce development, business resources through shared work space, and business attraction.

At a companion event focused on remote work, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee learned that remote workers desire better internet infrastructure in the community. Although it was rated lower priority at the Community Conversation, the discussion at the remote work event illustrated that internet infrastructure in Yarmouth is still lacking. At the same event, attendees were asked about features of a



shared work space that would be considered important. Attendees indicated that the sense of a community would be the most important aspect of a shared work space, whereas features such as a dedicated phone line, administrative support, and a physical mailing address were not as important to attendees. (Results of community preferences for a shared workspace are in the photo above.) Although most of the attendees indicated that the firms they work for provide significant support for remote work, those who do not have that support system would benefit from growth strategy, graphic design and marketing, and technical support services.

Online, respondents were asked to share on a scale of 1-5 how much they agree (5) or disagree (1) with the following municipal actions. Two people responded.

- Support for entrepreneurs: average rank 2
- Tax incentives for large businesses: average rank 1
- More small businesses in rural/residential areas: 3
- Support public transit to popular commute locations: 5
- Expand preschool/childcare programs: 3
- More workforce housing: 3
- New coworking space or business incubator: 1.5
- Expand high-speed internet: 5

The small number of respondents means these rankings are not representative, but the two respondents did also highly value public transit and workforce housing, which were some of the top-ranked municipal actions in the in-person activities.

### *Creative Economy and Working Waterfront*

The final two activities required the small groups to consider two niches of Yarmouth's economy, the creative economy and the working waterfront. For the two exercises, the small groups were provided with a list of elements that support these economies and were asked to determine whether Yarmouth needs that element, would be nice to have, or has enough of that element or it is not needed.

For the creative economy, the pre-selected elements included:

- "Percent for art" tax fund for arts and culture;
- Event space;
- Studio space;
- Visual/performing arts classes for kids;
- Visual/performing arts classes for adults;
- Public art installations;
- Sidewalk vendors;
- Music festivals; or
- Art fairs.

Each small group could also identify other elements that were important to the attendees.

Overall, the exercise illustrated that there are strong organizations in Yarmouth that already offer many of the items on the list, such as youth and adult classes and studio space. The "need to have" items included event space, sidewalk vendors (but not blocking the sidewalk), and music festivals. The "nice to have" items included studio space and public art installations. The items identified as not needed included the percent for art tax fund, youth and adult classes, and art fairs. An additional item identified included marketing to showcase Yarmouth's local creative economy to Yarmouth and the region.

Online, respondents were asked to rank the same list of creative economy elements in order of preference. Only one person answered. They ranked visual and performing arts classes for kids and adults highest, differing from the in-person results. Similar to

the in-person results, they also highly valued public art, art fairs, and studio space. "Percent for art" tax fund was ranked lowest.

For the working waterfront, the pre-selected elements included:

- Public wharves, piers, and boat ramps;
- Dedicated moorings for commercial use;
- Waterfront parking for commercial use;
- Boat and gear storage;
- Waterfront processing facilities;
- Education and job training;
- Increased shoreline and beach access;
- Public facilities (changing rooms, bathrooms, etc);
- Recreational boat tours;
- Waterfront dining;
- Address vulnerability to sea level rise; and
- Water-dependent energy generation (i.e., offshore wind).

As above, the small groups could also provide other responses.

Although not all of the groups completed this exercise, the responses that were received illustrate the tension between providing access to the waterfront for commercial users and for recreational uses when most of the shoreline in Yarmouth is privately owned. Additionally, more education may be needed in the community to understand what is needed to support a working waterfront today. There was strong interest in increased public access, boat ramps, public facilities, and energy generation. There was moderate support for dedicated commercial moorings, storage, and education. The responses were divided on recreational boat tours, waterfront dining, and other "touristy" activities.

Online, respondents were asked to rank the same list of working waterfront elements in order of preference. Only one person answered. They ranked "address sea level rise" highest, followed by public facilities and public wharves, piers, and boat ramps. Commercial activities were ranked lower.

### *Open-Ended Questions*

The event also featured two open questions which attendees could respond to any time during the event. The two questions asked were:

- What are the biggest obstacles to starting or running a business in Yarmouth?
- If you could give input on the redevelopment of Wyman Power Station, what public benefits would you like to see?

The responses received to the first question included parking, staffing, and access for deliveries. These responses (parking and access for deliveries) suggest that Yarmouth's commercial districts do not provide space for indirect support for businesses, and this may be truer for the Village and Main Street.

The responses received to the second questions included providing a commercial tax base, establishing an environmentally sound business, and that appropriate future uses may be a park, a new mixed-use space open to the public, or a modern power plant. The commonality between these responses is that it should be put into productive use that could have public benefits for Yarmouth and the region.

## **Environment & Natural Resources**

### *Event Overview*

*Community Conversations: Environment & Natural Resources* was held on Monday, October 2, 2023, from 6 PM to 8 PM. 29 people attended the event, plus staff and facilitators. Bina Skordas of FB Environmental, and a member of the Comprehensive Plan Team gave a presentation on the data incorporated in the Natural Resources, Marine Resources, Agriculture and Forestry, and Recreation Inventory Chapters. The presentation shared important data points such as:

- Highlights on invasive plant species, groundwater water quality, stormwater management, and fish passage on the Royal River;
- Coastal bluff stability;
- Land conservation;
- Threats to water quality;
- Highlights on marine resources including important habitats, threats to marine resources, water-dependent commercial activities, and access; and
- Impacts of climate change on recreation and agriculture and forestry.

This presentation was more substantial than at the previous Community Conversation events, so the attendees were asked to complete fewer exercises in small groups. The first exercise was a mapping exercise where attendees used

different colored dots to identify locations in Yarmouth that should be prioritized for ecological value and resiliency, and locations that should be preserved for recreation uses.

For the second exercise, the small groups reviewed various municipal priorities to protect environmental quality, increase access to open space, and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Attendees could also refer to Yarmouth's zoning map and land use map and copies of the presentation.



### *Places to Protect*

In the mapping exercise, attendees used different colored dots to designate areas in Yarmouth for ecological value and resiliency, or for recreation. Identified locations could be designated for both priorities. Attendees could also provide comments by



adding sticky notes to the map. The photo to the right of one group's map is representative of the feedback received through this exercise.

The Comprehensive Plan team reviewed each map and cataloged where attendees placed the different colored dots. The most common responses are provided below. Many of the groups designated the same locations as needing to be preserved for ecological value and resiliency, as well as for recreational opportunities.

The following locations in Yarmouth were most commonly recommended to be preserved for ecological value and resiliency:

- Land adjacent to the Royal River;
- The Garmin/DeLorme property;
- Sandy Point Beach and Camp SOCI on Cousins Island;
- Wyman Station;
- Archdiocese land on either side of Whitcomb's Way near the Yarmouth Water Treatment Plant;
- Large vacant privately-owned land near existing important resources and open spaces.

The large vacant parcels consisted of parcels around the Frank Knight Forest and Pratt's Brook Park; at the mouth of the Royal River; along Cousins River; and off of Sligo Road. Although not necessarily vacant, the land around the estuary that intersects with Princes Point Road was also identified as an important area for ecological value and resiliency.

The following locations in Yarmouth were most commonly designated as recommended to be preserved for recreation:

- The Saint Lawrence and Atlantic railroad corridor;
- Sandy Point Beach;



- Wyman Station;
- Maine Coast Heritage Trust property at corner of Granite Street and Old County Road;
- The Garmin/DeLorme property;
- Privately-owned land at the end of Bucknam Point Road;
- Town-owned land adjacent to the Yarmouth Water District;
- Large vacant privately-owned land around Frank Knight Forest and Pratt's Brook Park;
- Archdiocese land on either side of Whitcomb's Way near the Yarmouth Water Treatment Plant.

These two lists have many overlapping locations, illustrating how land preservation could serve both ecological and recreation purposes in Yarmouth, and accommodate other priorities such as access to the waterfront, accessible trails, and wildlife corridors and connectivity.

As noted above, each small group could also provide additional information through written notes on the maps. Those comments were categorized into different themes as outlined in the chart below with examples:

Theme	Examples
Accessibility	"Accessibility for all users"
Buffers	"Buffers along Royal River are critical" "Wider buffers along waterways"
Connectivity	"Protect wildlife corridors and ensure there is connectivity even under roads" "Wayfinding and connections"
Preservation	"Permanent protections for town owned property"
Process	"Implement/build on Open Space Plan" "Prioritize high value ecological sites"
Regulations	"Steep slopes protection and ordinance" "Assess coastal bluffs for updated maps and regulations"
Water Quality	"Water quality is important for aquaculture industry" "Look at septic systems along Casco Bay"



Following the in-person workshop, a similar mapping activity was placed online. Participants could drop a blue pin on a map in places that should be protected for environmental value, and an orange pin in places that should be protected from recreation. Only two pins were dropped, both on the Cousins Island power line corridor. The respondent added a note that habitat on Cousins Island has been damaged by CMP.

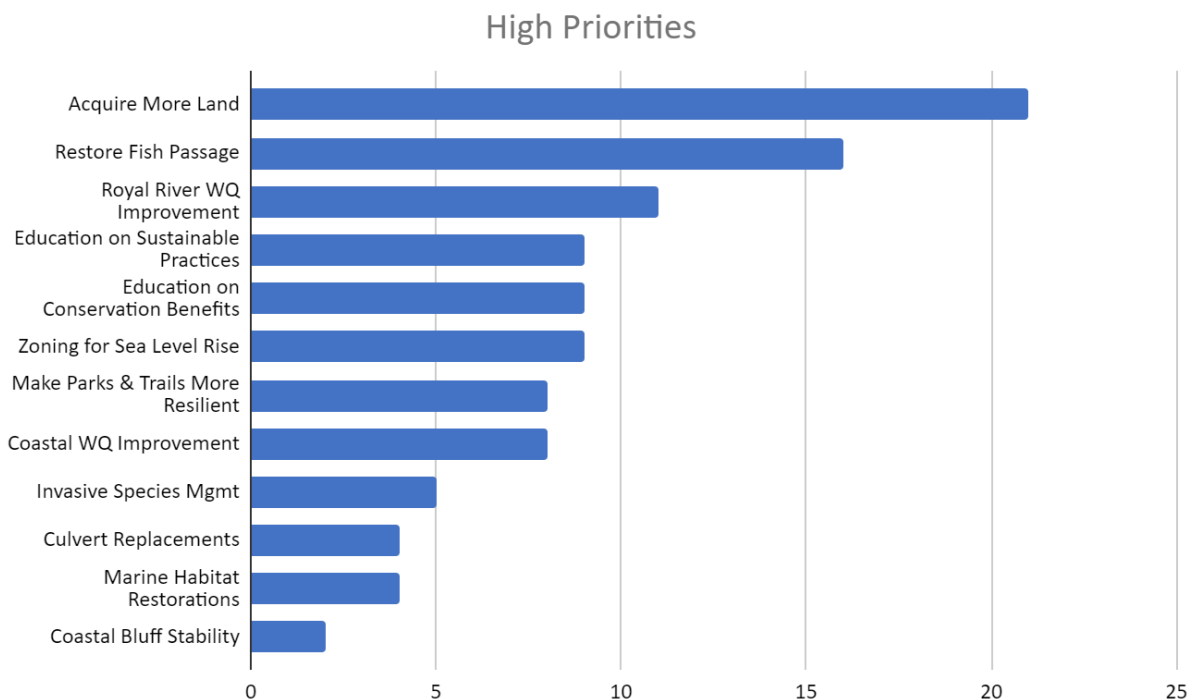
The results from the Climate Action Plan Community Action Workshop mirror the results recorded from this mapping exercise. One of the highest priorities for natural resources coming out of the Community Action Workshop was to protect 400 to 500 acres of land through focused acquisitions prior to 2050. In addition, the attendees at the Community Action Workshop recommended new regulatory and incentive strategies to protect trees within the community and to reduce clear cutting. There was also interest in conserving land with a focus on wildlife corridors and maximizing the tree canopy.

### *Municipal Priorities*

The focus of the second exercise was for the small groups to identify high and medium priority municipal actions from a pre-selected list. Attendees also had the chance to add their own recommended priorities. Dots were used to differentiate between high and medium priorities. The pre-selected priorities included the following:

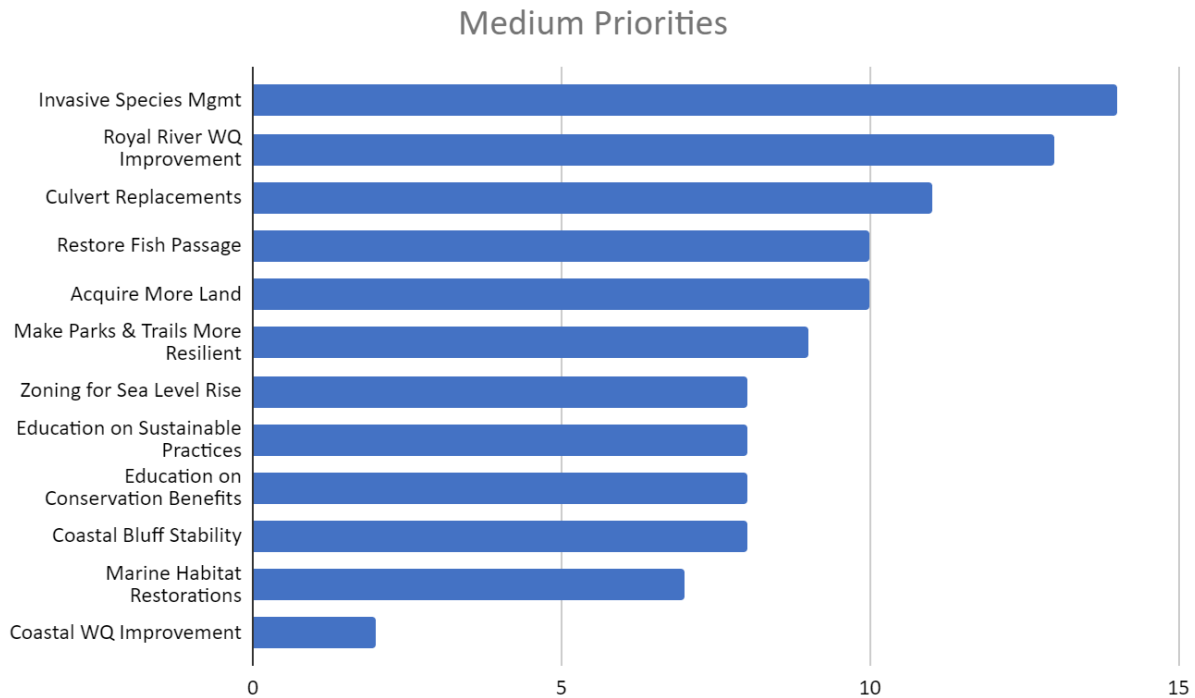
- Coastal water quality improvement;
- Marine habitat restoration;
- Royal River water quality improvement;
- River restoration for fish passage;
- Coastal bluff stability;
- Zoning for sea level rise;
- Make waterfront parks & recreation trails resilient to sea level rise;
- Invest in culvert replacement projects to reduce flood risk;
- Invasive species management;
- Invest in acquiring more conservation land;
- Educate large private landowners on the benefits of easements for conservation and recreation; and
- Educate homeowners on sustainable land care practices (native plants, pesticide and fertilizer use, etc).

The Comprehensive Plan team aggregated the results across the groups. The chart below illustrates the high priority ranking.



The top five high priorities were investing in acquiring more conservation land, restoring fish passage on the Royal River, Royal River water quality improvements, education for property owners, and zoning for sea level rise. These top three priorities have implications throughout Yarmouth and are big picture priorities for the community to address. These results are consistent with the results of the Climate Action Plan Community Action Workshop.

The next chart illustrates how the groups ranked the pre-selected priorities as medium priorities. If we took out the items ranked the highest of the high priorities, the top five medium priorities include invasive species management, culvert replacements to reduce flooding, making parks and trails more resilient, coastal bluff stability, and marine habitat restoration. In comparing these items to the high priority items, these actions are more targeted to specific areas in town, with the exception of marine habitat restoration.



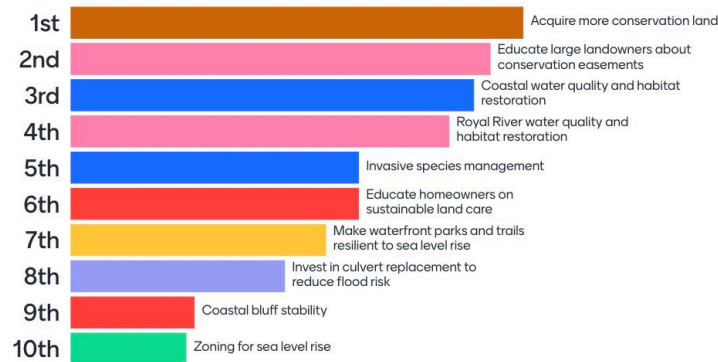
Other priorities that were identified by the small groups include the following items:

- Provide accessible trail systems;
- Protect the health of the tree canopy and increase the tree canopy each year;
- Eliminate point source pollution and other stormwater management improvements;
- Act regionally to address water quality improvements in Casco Bay;
- Educate the community on the threats of erosion from climate change;
- Provide multilingual outreach on these topics.

Respondents online were asked to rank the same municipal priorities. Seven people responded. Notably, acquiring more conservation land was also the top-ranked priority. The other high priorities were education for large landowners, coastal water quality, and Royal River water quality. Zoning for sea level rise and coastal bluff stability were the lowest-ranked priorities. (See chart on following page.)

Comparing these results to the feedback received in the summer survey about priorities for Yarmouth, there is clear consistency in the goal of preserving open space within the community, and a desire for Yarmouth to be a leader in addressing climate change and sea level rise. Access to and connectivity around open spaces for wildlife as well as people were also referenced often in the summer survey.

## Rank these municipal priorities.



### Open-Ended Question

The event also featured an open question which attendees could respond to throughout the evening: what factors are most important when considering the future of the Royal River dams?

The responses received to the question were mixed, but one response noted that whatever is done, it must be done correctly after the completion of the analysis currently underway by the Army Corps of Engineers. Other responses noted that there is the opportunity to reverse the impacts to biodiversity and the natural riverine ecology resulting from the dams. Still others noted that the fish ladders can work properly even if the dams remain. Finally, another response noted that the removal of the dams could help mitigate global warming and sea level rise projections.