

BRENTWOOD MASTER PLAN 2022 SURVEY – SUMMARY REPORT

November 2022

The Brentwood Master Plan Committee, in cooperation with the Brentwood Planning Board, is updating the Brentwood Master Plan as required under state law (RSA 674). The issuance of this survey and review of the survey results is the first step in the Master Plan update process which will include updates to the Vision Chapter and Transportation Chapter this year.

RESULTS

Between September 11, 2022 and November 30, 2022 a total of 351 individuals took the survey and provided 32,407 responses or comments. The survey was an online survey advertised with postcards announcing the survey distributed around Brentwood and passed out during Election Day. The survey link was posted on the Town website, social media, announcements at multiple municipal board meetings, and in the Town newsletter. This survey is neither statistically nor scientifically valid, however, it does represent the most comprehensive insight into the needs and wants of Brentwood residents since the last Master Plan updates in 2018. This survey will serve as one of many sources used in the current Master Plan update; other sources may include additional public input opportunities, census data, and other resources.

The survey was intended primarily for residents, however, individuals who own property or business in Brentwood were also invited to provide their thoughts. Of the responses received, no individual taking the survey lived outside of Brentwood and only seven participants owned a business in Brentwood. 35% of survey participants have lived in Brentwood for more than 20 years, 20% of participants have lived in Brentwood for 10-20 years, and 43% have lived in Brentwood for less than 10 years. 60% of survey participants were employed full time and 26% were retired. A quarter of survey respondents were between the ages of 56 and 65, 22% over the age of 65, and 40% between the ages of 36 and 55.

The full survey results are available at publicinput.com/BrentwoodMasterPlan2022 and on the Brentwood Planning Board website at <https://www.brentwoodnh.gov/entity/planning-board-4>.

NEXT STEPS

The Brentwood Planning Board, with the Master Plan Committee is working on drafting updates to the Master Plan, beginning with the overall vision statement. The intention is to update the Vision Chapter and Transportation Chapter in the coming months. **Any updates to the Brentwood Master Plan will require a public hearing prior to Planning Board adoption in accordance with RSA 674:1-4.**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following outlines some of the major survey findings. The survey itself was initiated to assist the Brentwood Planning Board in updating the Master Plan, however, some questions were also included to inform other municipal boards, services, and functions. Many of the items asked about in this survey are the same as issues found in the previous Master Plan goals or based on recent discussions within the community.

Several major themes emerged from survey responses:

- **Residents value Brentwood's rural character.** Throughout the survey, a common theme of maintaining Brentwood's rural land, open spaces, forest land, and natural resources emerged. While some, well-planned development may be supported by residents, the overwhelming sentiment was that this development should be directed towards certain areas of town to preserve other areas for open space, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. This included the desire to maintain the quiet nature of town and dark sky.

"I like that Brentwood is a small town. A place where you can get to know more than just your neighbors. I like that Brentwood is rural. That my family can experience wildlife without leaving our yard. I like that it is informal and not cookie-cutter. I love that we have a good school system for our kids."

- **Concern about political divisiveness at town meetings and among local community.** A very strong sentiment expressed in the survey was the desire to bring back the close-knit community where residents and neighbors are respectful to each other and can set aside differences to work together to do what is best for Brentwood.
- **Concern about future change.** Many expressed trepidation on changes occurring in Brentwood due to development pressure, particularly certain types of housing development including age-restricted and cluster housing. While many participants want to see Brentwood maintain affordability so their families can stay in the community, there was a strong sentiment that housing development should be limited to reasonably sized and spaced homes and that the 2-acre minimum lot size for residential developments should be maintained.
- **Commercial development in certain areas of Brentwood is supported.** Strong support was shown for commercial development in certain areas of town, including the Route 125 corridor. The desire to increase commercial development to balance the tax base was mentioned in many different aspects of the survey comments and responses. While commercial development in general had strong support, many respondents highlighted a want for local, small businesses including restaurants, and a convenience store or gas station. There was interest in developing a “town center” which could be home to small, local businesses and provide a space for gathering.

“I am very concerned about the growth in Brentwood. I have lived here for almost 30 years and this little sleepy farming town has grown by leaps and bounds. While growth for a town like Brentwood is necessary, I feel the explosion of new construction has really changed Brentwood, and not for the better. I understand people have the right to sell their land to whomever they want, but there are measures where various boards can mitigate the impact to our open land and wooded spaces. How many crowded cookie cutter neighborhoods do we really need in Brentwood?”

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT LIVING IN BRENTWOOD?

Top answers:

- Rural character.
- Small community feel.
- Quiet atmosphere.
- Access to beaches, lakes, and/or mountains.
- Quality of schools.

WHEN YOU THINK OF BRENTWOOD IN THE FUTURE, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

Top answers:

- Commercial Development in specific areas of Brentwood.
- Maintain rural character, including open space, conservation land, and preservation of local agriculture.
- Limits on housing development.
- Additional housing options for various populations including seniors and young families.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING FEATURES TO BRENTWOOD’S CHARACTER?

Results:

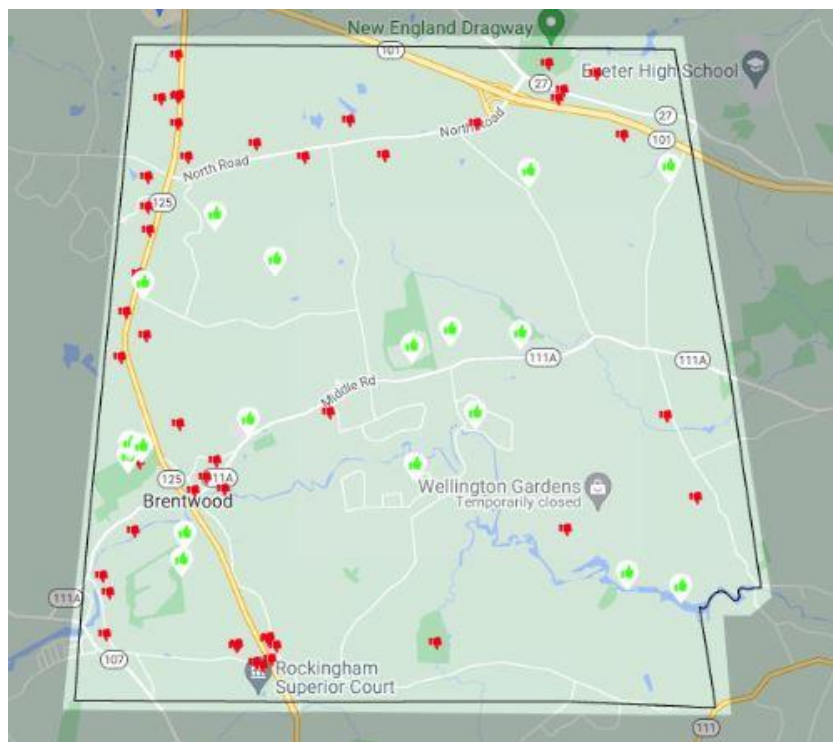
- 98% feel that the quality of drinking water from private wells (aquifer protection) are important or very important (with 91% feeling it is very important).
- 97% feel that water resources (healthy wetlands, streams, and ponds) are important or very important.
- 97% feel that open space (forested land, open fields, pastures and meadows) are important or very important.
- 95% feel that land suitable for wildlife habitat are important or very important.
- 94% feel that locally owned businesses are important or very important.
- 91% feel that both good schools and small community feel are important or very important.
- 90% feel that maintaining treeline streets and scenic roads (including old stone walls) are important or very important.

WHAT DO YOU NOT LIKE ABOUT BRENTWOOD?

These are some areas and topics where residents have concerns:

- Community divisiveness, politics, and negative attitudes toward neighbors and community members.
- Taxes.
- Growth, including age-restricted housing and cluster developments.
- Lack of affordability in town.

Survey participants were asked to indicate on a map, locations in Brentwood they like (in green) and areas they think need improvement (in red) and provide comments as to why. The topics covered by these comments vary by subject and location, but give geographical focus to topics of concern. A larger version of this map is available with the full set of survey results at: <https://publicinput.com/BrentwoodMasterPlan2022>.



The Brentwood Master Plan Survey and summary report were developed by the Brentwood Master Plan Steering Committee, a subcommittee of the Brentwood Planning Board, with assistance from Rockingham Planning Commission.