



August 2025

# What We Heard Report

Imagine Invermere Official Community Plan  
Interim Housing Needs Alignment and Update



**Invermere**  
on the Lake

**wsp**

# Imagine Invermere OCP: Interim Housing Needs Alignment and Update

## What We Heard Report

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROJECT CONTEXT

WSP was retained by the District of Invermere to undertake the preparation of updating the current Imagine Invermere Official Community Plan (OCP) to align with the 5- and 20-year housing needs identified in the District of Invermere Interim Housing Needs Report, 2024. An important part of providing updates is to ensure it reflects the interests of landowners, the public, community stakeholders and approving authorities.

With housing affordability and availability emerging as a growing concern—particularly in light of rising costs, limited rental options, and shifting demographic pressures—the survey was designed to capture local perspectives on housing types, development preferences, and policy priorities. The findings provide a critical foundation for updating the OCP to align with the Interim Housing Needs Report and ensuring that housing strategies reflect the lived experiences of Invermere residents, support inclusive growth, and respond to long-term housing demand.



## 2.0 SURVEY FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The following sections detail the feedback received as part of the online survey posted from May 30, 2025, to June 27, 2025.

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The District of Invermere conducted a community housing survey to gather resident perspectives on key housing challenges, priorities, and potential solutions. The survey covered four core themes:

- housing affordability and availability;
- municipal action and land use strategy;
- accessory dwelling units; and
- demographic and ownership patterns.

Responses revealed strong concern over housing costs and rental availability, a desire for more visible municipal action, and broad support for mixed-use and infill development. While accessory dwelling units were moderately supported, barriers such as zoning and privacy concerns were noted. The survey also highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration and provided insight into the community's demographic makeup, with most respondents being full-time homeowners. The following sections summarize the survey findings in detail.

### 2.2 HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND AVAILABILITY

Housing affordability and availability emerged as a central concern among Invermere residents, reflecting widespread challenges in securing suitable and reasonably priced housing. Survey responses highlighted the high cost of purchasing and renting homes, limited availability of rental units, and concerns about their quality. Participants also noted a lack of housing options tailored to families and seniors, while the prevalence of short-term rentals and second homes was seen as contributing to reduced long-term housing stock.

These issues were consistently ranked as top priorities (SQ1), with the cost to purchase a home and rent receiving the highest concern scores, while second homes and short-term rentals were rated as less significant. Respondents expressed strong preferences for housing types such as apartments, townhouses, and accessory units (SQ5), with ideal dwelling sizes falling between 501–2,000 square feet (SQ6). To address these challenges, survey participants emphasized the importance of zoning flexibility, infill development, and restrictions on short-term rentals (SQ10). Ownership patterns—showing limited operation of short- or long-term rentals (SQ17 & SQ18)—further underscore the need for targeted policy interventions that expand housing options for full-time residents.

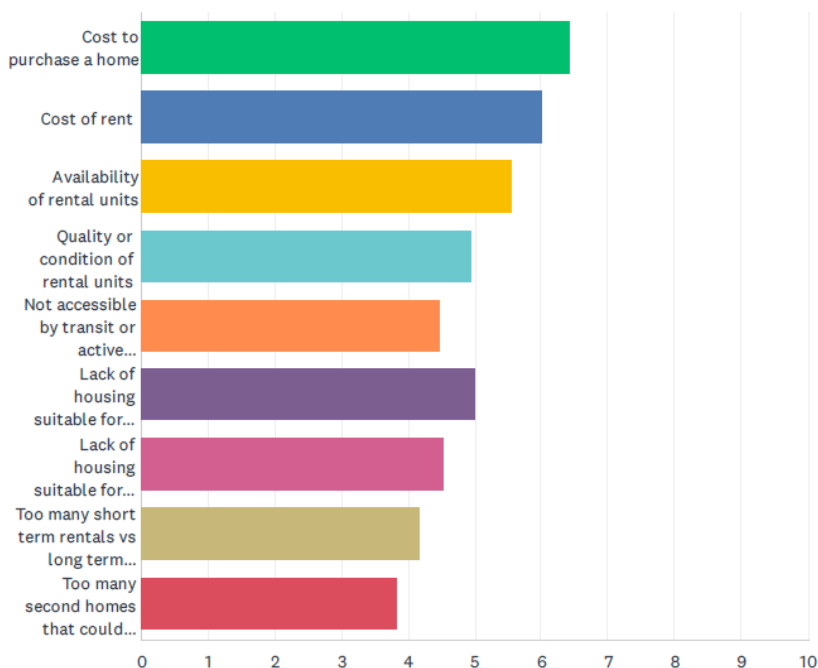
Survey responses regarding housing affordability and availability were received through the survey and are outlined below.

#### SURVEY QUESTION 1: RANK THE FOLLOWING HOUSING ISSUES FOR INVERMERE IN ORDER OF SIGNIFICANCE (9 = BIGGEST ISSUE, 1 = SMALLEST ISSUE):

The highest number of votes for each section are identified below:



- Just under half of the respondents (46%) ranked the **cost to purchase a home** as a the most significant issue in the District (voted as first or second biggest issue) with a total of 6.5/9.
- The **cost of rent** was ranked the second most significant issue in the District (6/9).
- **Too many second homes that could potentially be lived in by full-time residents** was rated as the smallest issue identified (3.8/9).
- The following options had different rankings, but ultimately fell into the middle of the rankings for the order of significance:
  - Availability of rental units ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> most significant (5.6/9);
  - Lack of housing suitable for families ranked 4<sup>th</sup> most significant (5/9);
  - Quality of condition of rental units ranked 5<sup>th</sup> most significant (4.9/9);
  - Not accessible by transit or active transportation ranked 6<sup>th</sup> most significant (4.5/9);
    - The votes were vast for this topic with 25% of voters rating this as the least significant, but 16% rating this as the most significant, making this a contentious issue.
  - Lack of housing suitable for seniors ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> least significant (4.5/9); and
  - Too many short-term rental vs long term rentals ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> least significant (4.2/9).



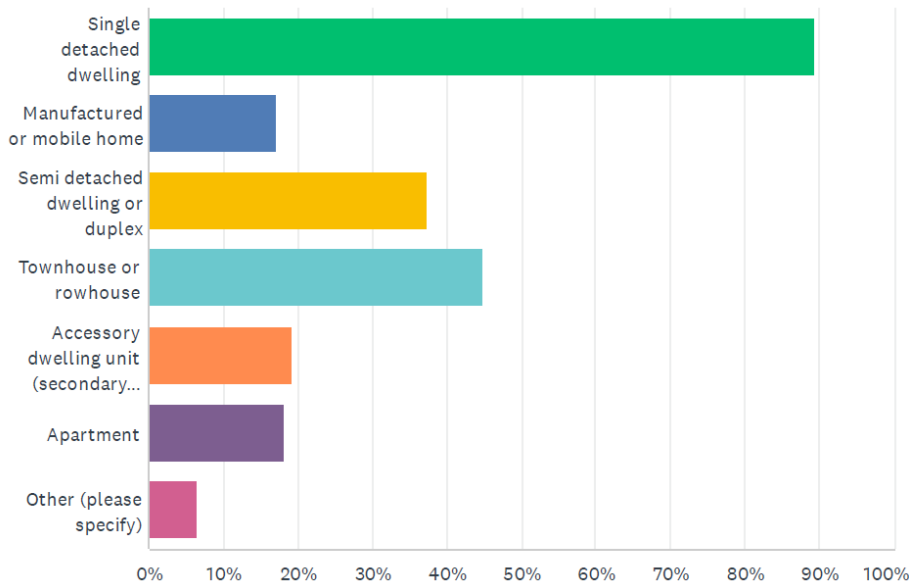
## SURVEY QUESTION 5: WHAT SIZE OF DWELLING IS MOST SUITABLE FOR YOUR HOUSEHOLD? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

A total of 94 respondents answered this question and deemed that more than one answer applied, resulting in 218 responses. A high proportion of respondents demonstrated that a single detached dwellings would be the



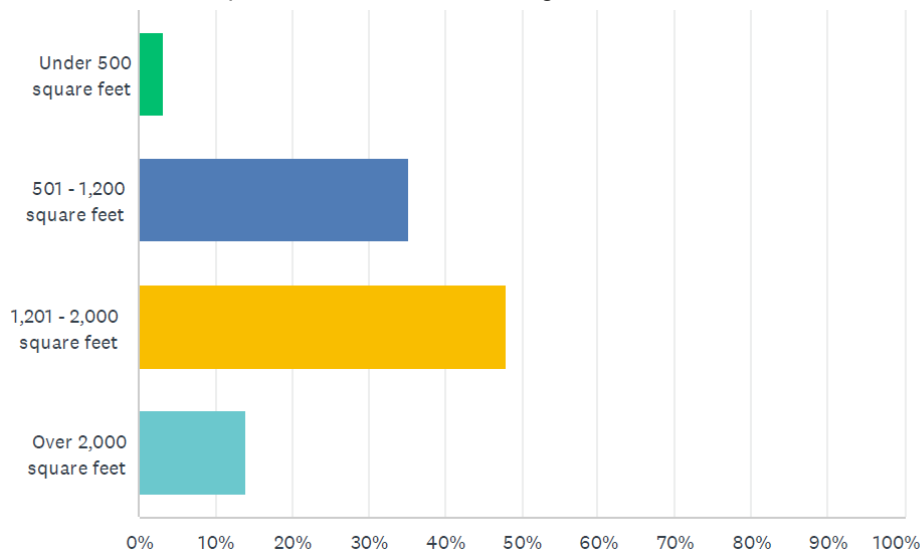
most suitable for their household (89%). Just under half of the respondents selected townhouse or rowhouse (45%) and semi-detached dwelling or duplex (37%) would also be suitable for their household. Six respondents selected other and added other options including:

- A single detached dwelling with a secondary suite that is rented out to subsidize the cost; and
- Pre built homes such as Osprey Lane and Fieldstone Glen.



## SURVEY QUESTION 6: WHAT SIZE OF DWELLING IS MOST SUITABLE FOR YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

Respondents identified 1,201 - 2,000 square feet as the most suitable dwelling size for their household (48%), with 501 – 1,200 square feet as the second highest suitable household dwelling size (35%).

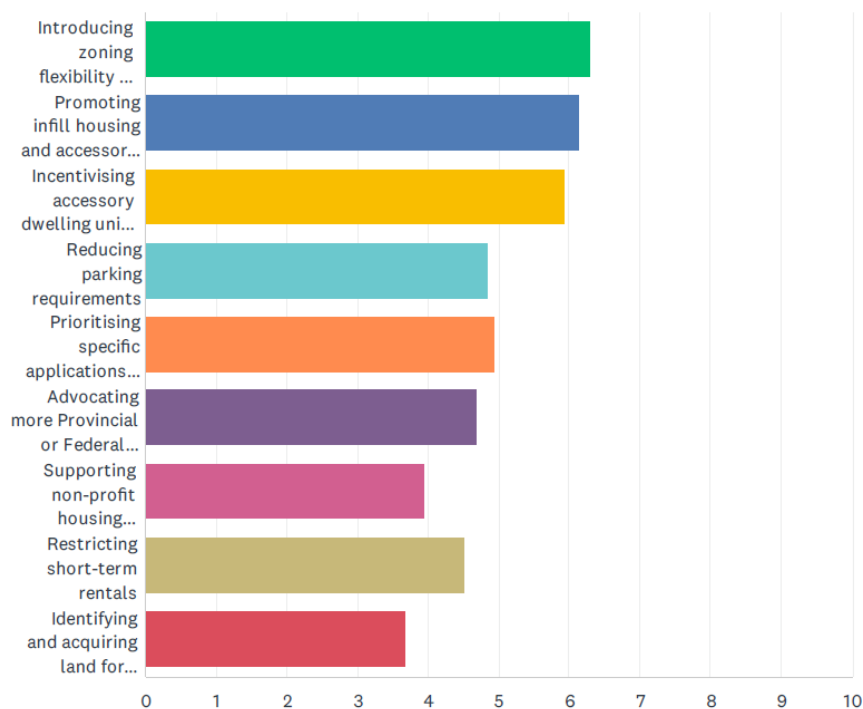




## SURVEY QUESTION 10: PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS THAT THE DISTRICT OF INVERMERE COULD TAKE TO MEET FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE TO YOU. 9 = MOST IMPORTANT, 1 – LEAST IMPORTANT.

The highest number of votes for each section are identified below:

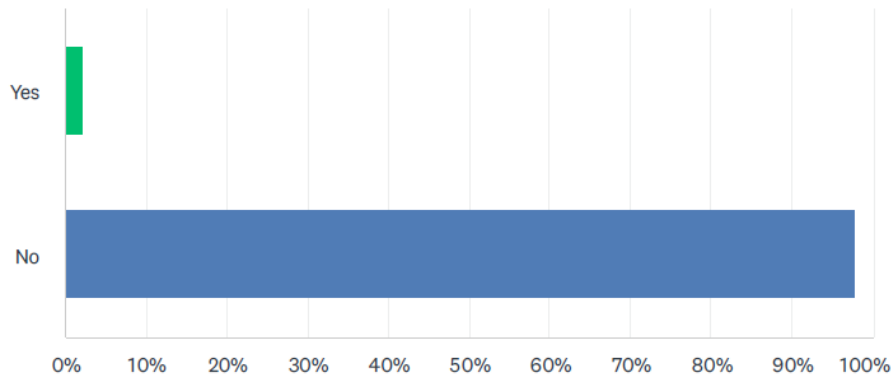
- Introducing zoning flexibility to allow for highest density was identified as the most importance action the District could take to meet future housing needs and had 25% of respondents selecting this as their first choice out of all options.
- Promoting infill housing and accessory dwelling units (e.g. producing informational materials) and incentivizing accessory dwelling units (e.g. reduced permit fees, reduced utility fees) were ranked as the next most important action the District could take.
- Identifying and acquiring land for housing was the least important action the District could take to meet future housing needs.
- The other responses were ranked in the middle of most important and least important and are shown in the graph below.



## SURVEY QUESTION 17: DO YOU OPERATE A SHORT-TERM RENTAL IN INVERMERE?

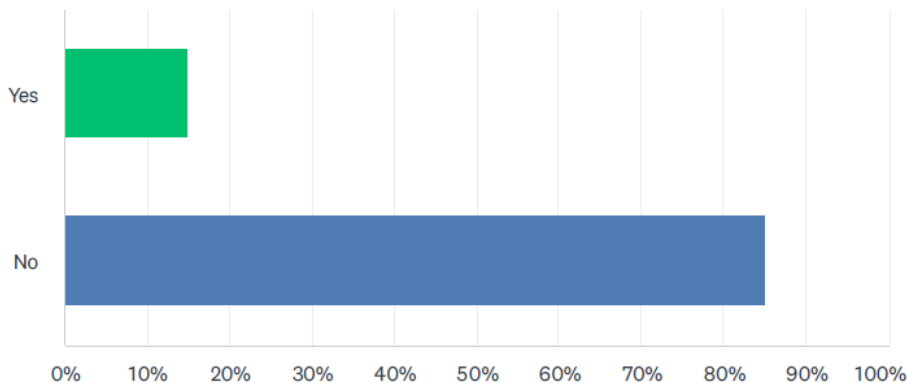
Almost all respondents do not operate a short-term rental in Invermere (98%), with only 2% of respondents operating a short-term rental.





## SURVEY QUESTION 18: DO YOU OPERATE A LONG-TERM RENTAL IN INVERMERE? (RENT BY MONTH OR LEASE)

Most respondents do not operate a long-term rental in Invermere (85%), with 15% of respondents operating a long-term rental.



## 2.3 MUNICIPAL ACTION AND LAND USE STRATEGY

Community feedback from the survey revealed a strong desire for more decisive and visible municipal action to address Invermere's housing challenges. Many respondents expressed frustration with perceived delays and an overemphasis on planning over implementation. Despite these concerns, there is clear support for bold development strategies, including more apartment and multi-unit housing options. Mixed-use development is widely supported, with preferred locations in the Downtown and Athalmer commercial corridors. Respondents also favored infill development over boundary expansion and emphasized the importance of collaboration with other stakeholders such as provincial and federal governments, developers, and non-profits.

The following survey questions explore these themes in more detail: effectiveness of District actions (SQ2), support for mixed-use development (SQ3), preferred development areas (SQ4 & SQ9), and stakeholder roles in housing solutions (SQ11). Survey questions regarding municipal action and land use strategy was received throughout the survey and is outlined below.

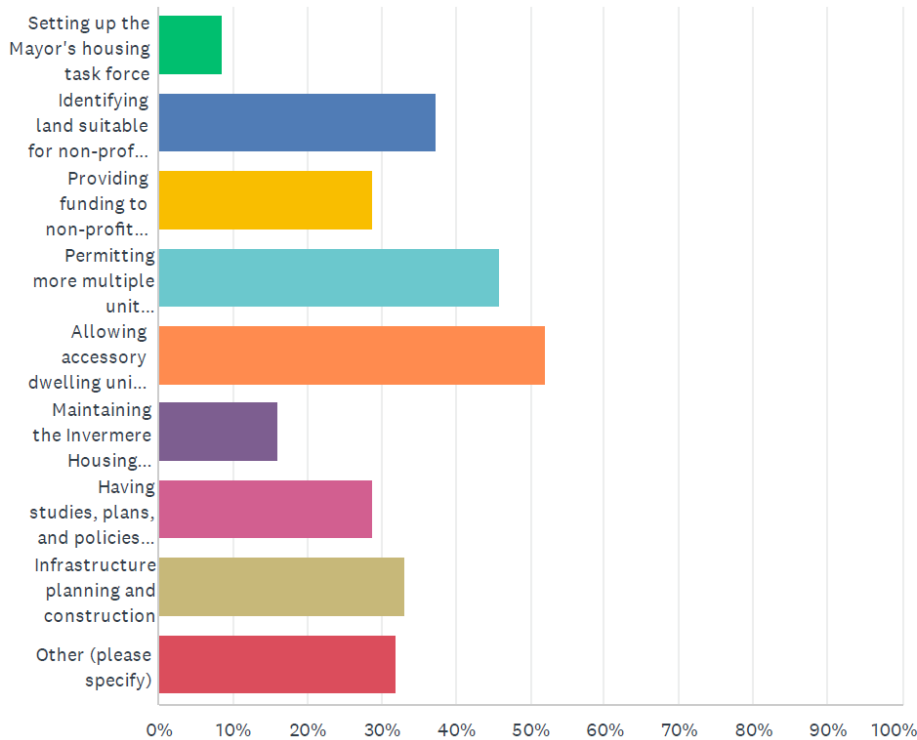
Survey responses regarding municipal action and land use strategy were received through the survey and are outlined below.



## SURVEY QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE ACTIONS THE DISTRICT OF INVERMERE HAS TAKEN TO ADDRESS HOUSING NEEDS IN INVERMERE? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

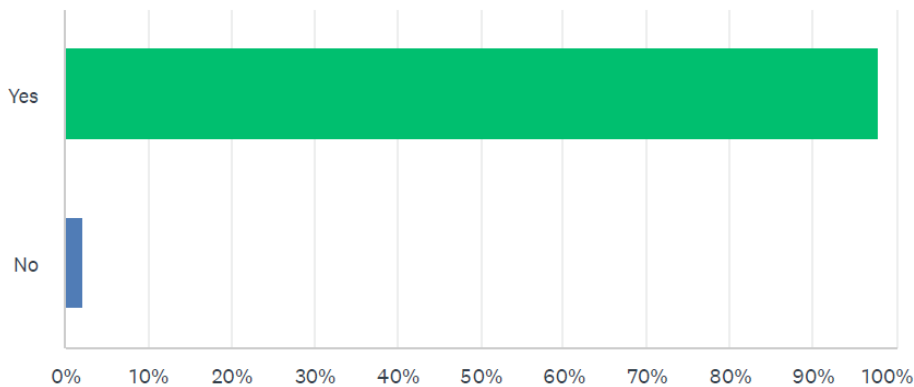
Of the 94 respondents that participated in the survey, 265 effective actions were selected as more than one answer applied for many respondents, demonstrating that participants felt that the District of Invermere has taken actions to address housing needs in more than one way. The results are summarized as follows:

- A majority of respondents (52%) identified **allowing accessory dwelling units** as one of the most effective actions the District has taken to address housing needs in Invermere.
- **Permitting more multiple unit developments** was next the next highly rated effective actions taken to address housing needs at 46% of respondents selecting this answer choice.
- Also chosen by more than a third of respondents include **identifying land suitable for non-profit housing** (37%) and **infrastructure planning and construction** (33%).
- The least chosen selection (8.5%) by respondents was **setting up the Mayor's housing task force** in response to the Districts most effective actions to address housing needs.
- 32% of respondents chose "other (please specify)" for this survey question which resulted in comments summarized as such:
  - o A perceived lack of action / effectiveness with several respondents noting that none of the listed options had been effective;
  - o Criticism of planning and consultation processes stating that the District should take action over analysis;
  - o Suggestions for housing solutions for the local residents including recommendation for large apartment / multi-purpose complexes and requiring long-term rental allocations;
  - o Concerns about short-term rentals reducing a sense of community and housing availability;
  - o Equity and affordability issues including a disconnect between affordable housing definition and actual income levels, and a lack of three or more-bedroom units available; and
  - o Uncertain as to any action taken with some respondents identifying that it was hard to answer this question without being directly involved or with it being an issue for them to relate to.



## SURVEY QUESTION 3: DO YOU SUPPORT MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT (APARTMENTS ABOVE BUSINESSES)?

Almost all respondents expressed support of mixed use development for the District, with 98% of respondents selecting yes, and only 2% of respondents selecting no.

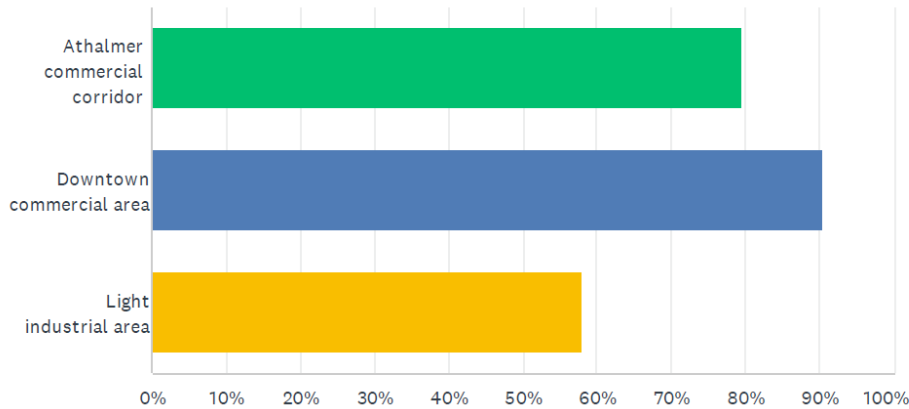


## SURVEY QUESTION 4: IF YOU ANSWERED "YES" TO QUESTION 3, IN WHICH NEIGHBOURHOODS?

Three neighbourhoods were presented as answer options with the downtown commercial area selected by 90% of respondents. The Althamer commercial corridor was selected by 80% of respondents, and lastly the light

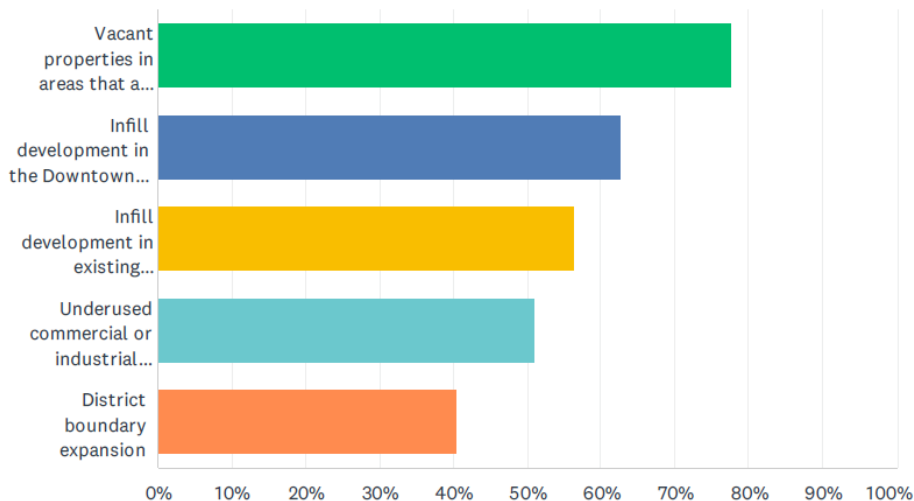


industrial area was selected by 58% of respondents. Respondents selected more than one answer choice, with 212 selections made from the 93 respondents for this question.



## SURVEY QUESTION 9: ACCORDING TO THE HOUSING NEEDS REPORT, INVERMERE WILL NEED OVER 700 NEW DWELLING BY 2041. WHERE DO YOU THINK THE HOUSING SHOULD BE LOCATED? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

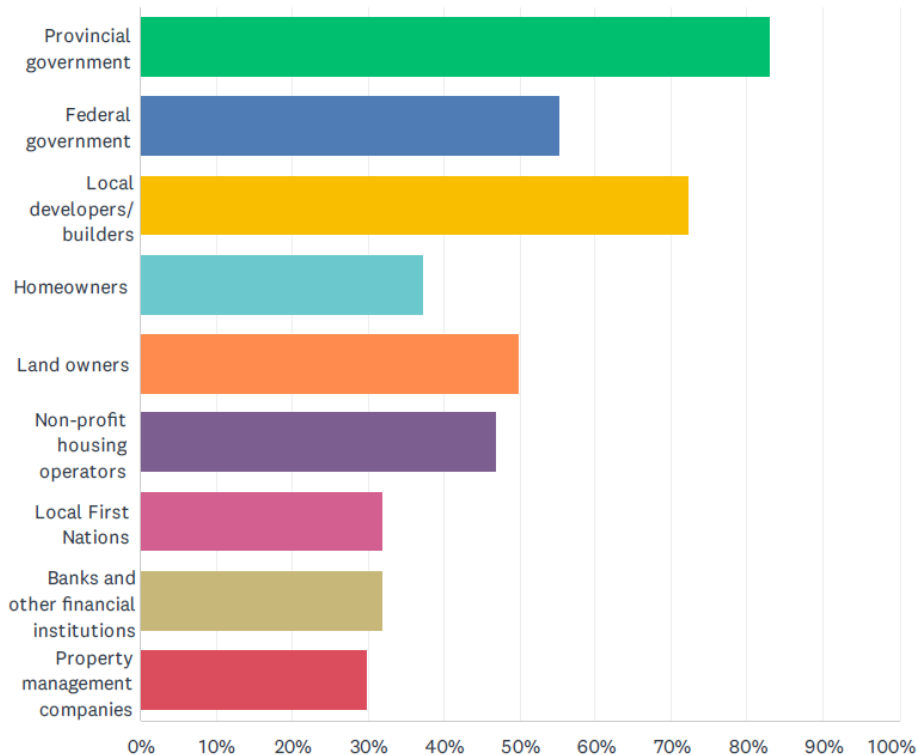
A total of 94 respondents answered this question and deemed that more than one answer applied, resulting in 271 responses. A high proportion of respondents (78%) demonstrated that vacant properties in areas that are not currently developed is where new housing should be located. The following locations had over half of respondents agreeing that housing should be located in infill development in the Downtown core (63%), infill development in existing residential areas (56%), and underused commercial or industrial areas (51%). Lastly, with the lowest amount of respondents selecting this option, implementing a district boundary expansion was the least selected at 40% as the location of new housing.





## SURVEY QUESTION 11: APART FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT, WHO ELSE DO YOU THINK HAS A ROLE IN MEETING HOUSING NEEDS WITHIN THE DISTRICT OF INVERMERE. PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

A total of 94 respondents answered this question and deemed that more than one answer applied, resulting in 412 responses. A high proportion of respondents (83%) think that the provincial government has a role in meeting housing needs within the District. Also highly selected is the role of local developers / builders (72%) to meet housing needs within the District. The Federal government (55%), land owners (50%), and non-profit housing operations (47%) had about half of the respondents agreeing that they have a role in meeting housing needs within the District. Homeowners (37%), banks and other financial institutions (32%), local First Nations (32%), and property management companies (30%) were all the least selected with approximately a third of respondents indicating that they have a role in meeting housing needs within the District.



## 2.4 ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

The survey explored residents' interest in accessory dwelling units and revealed moderate support alongside several barriers to adoption. While over half of respondents indicated they would consider adding an accessory dwelling unit to their property (SQ7), many cited limitations such as lack of space, restrictive zoning, privacy concerns, and hesitancy around landlord responsibilities (SQ8). Some viewed accessory dwelling units as a viable way to increase housing supply, while others felt they were not suitable for long-term community needs.

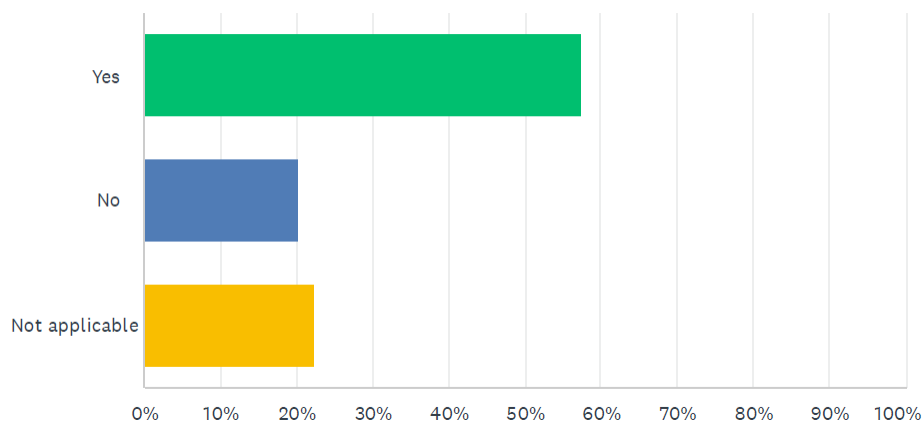


Additionally, respondents emphasized the importance of incentivizing accessory dwelling units through measures like reduced permit and utility fees (SQ10).

Survey responses regarding accessory dwelling units were received through the survey and is outlined below.

### SURVEY QUESTION 7: IF PERMITTED, WOULD YOU CONSIDER ADDING AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT TO YOUR PROPERTY? (SECONDARY SUITE, GARDEN SUITE, LANEWAY HOUSE, ETC)

Over half of the 94 respondents answered that they would consider adding an accessory dwelling unit to their property if permitted.



### SURVEY QUESTION 8: IF YOU REPLIED “NO” TO QUESTION 7, PLEASE TELL US WHY NOT.

In the previous survey question, 19 respondents (20%) of respondents said that they would not consider adding an accessory dwelling unit to their property. 21 respondents (22%) of respondents said that it was not applicable for them to consider adding an accessory dwelling unit to their property. 40 respondents wrote a response to this question regarding these responses and are summarized below:

- Numerous respondents indicated that they have **property limitations** including lack of space, unsuitable layouts to accommodate an accessory dwelling unit, restrictions under the current Zoning By-Law, and part of a Strata that would not allow this;
- Some respondents mentioned that they have **concerns about tenancy** and do not want to become landlords, with some highlighting concerns with current rental laws;
- Some respondents highlighted the importance of **privacy and valuing personal space**;
- A couple respondents suggested that **townhome or apartment developments are better suited** for the community rather than individual accessory dwelling units; and
- Many respondents highlighted that **they do not own their dwelling**, so the questions is not applicable.





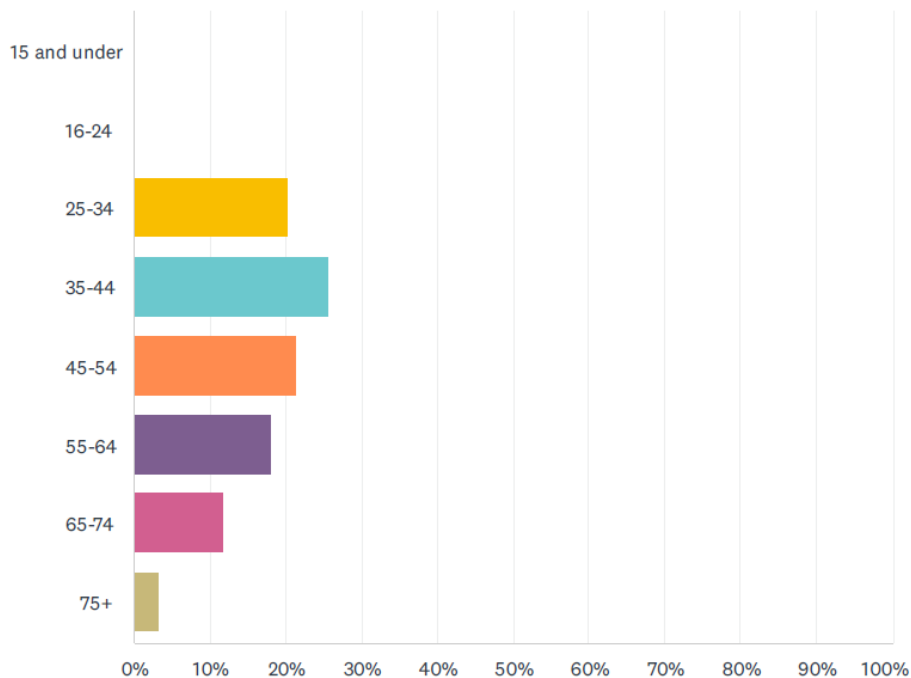
## 2.5 DEMOGRAPHIC AND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS

To better understand the community's housing context, the survey collected demographic and ownership data from Invermere residents. Most respondents were homeowners living in Invermere, with household sizes ranging from one to five people. The majority were aged 25 to 54, and very few owned second homes or multiple properties. These patterns suggest that housing policies should reflect the needs of full-time residents and support inclusive, locally focused solutions.

Survey responses regarding demographic and ownership patterns were received throughout the survey and is outlined below.

### SURVEY QUESTION 12: PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF... WHAT IS YOUR AGE?

A total of 94 respondents answered this question and demonstrated that the highest proportion of respondents were between 34 – 44 (25.5%) and either 45 – 54 (21%) or 25 – 34 (20%) years of age. Respondents aged 55 + if combined total 33% and the survey had no respondents under the age of 25.



### SURVEY QUESTION 13: WHAT IS YOUR HOUSEHOLD SIZE?

A total of 93 respondents answered this question, with the results summarized as follows:

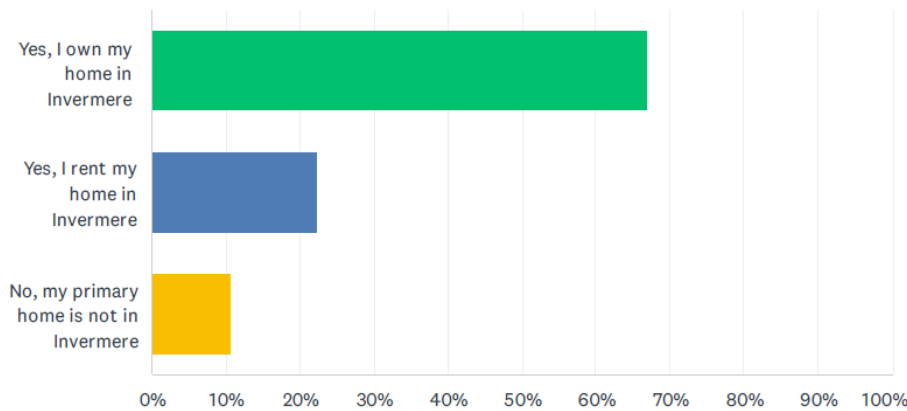
- 6 respondents have a household size of 1.
- 38 respondents have a household size of 2.
- 16 respondents have a household size of 3.
- 17 respondents have a household size of 4.



- 7 respondents have a household size of 5.
- 2 respondents have a household size greater than 5.
- 7 respondents did not provide a household size.

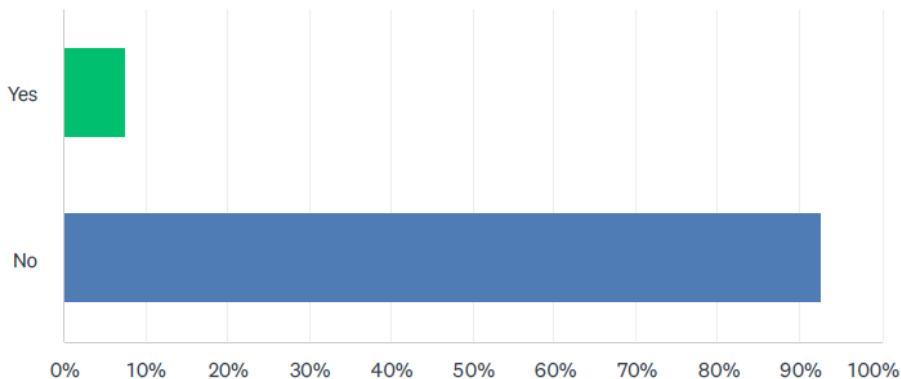
## SURVEY QUESTION 14: IS YOUR PRIMARY HOME IN INVERMERE?

Almost all respondents' primary homes are located in Invermere, with 67% of respondents owning their primary home and 22% of respondents renting their home in Invermere. 10.5% of respondents' primary homes are not located in Invermere.



## SURVEY QUESTION 15: DO YOU OWN A SECOND HOME IN INVERMERE?

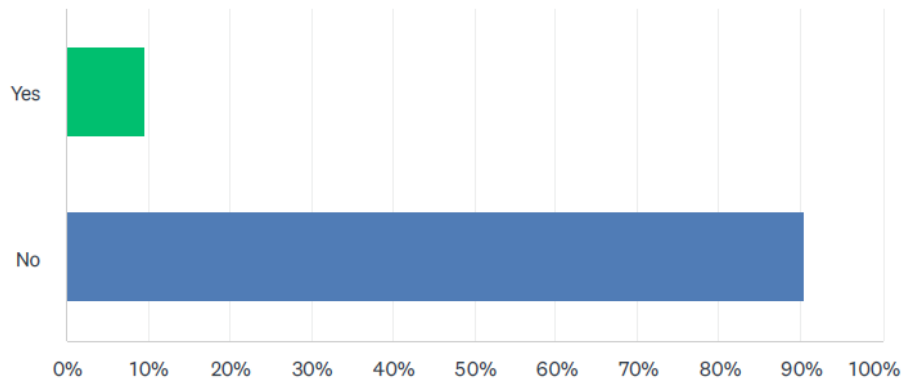
Most respondents do not own a second home in Invermere (92.5%), with 7.5% of respondents owning a second home.



## SURVEY QUESTION 16: DO YOU OWN MORE THAN ONE PROPERTY IN INVERMERE?

Most respondents do not own more than one property in Invermere (90.5%), with 9.5% of respondents owning more than one property.





## 3.0 SUMMARY

### 3.1 SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

The survey results reflect a community deeply engaged with the housing challenges facing the District of Invermere. Residents identified housing affordability and availability as the most urgent concern, with high costs and limited rental options affecting a wide range of households. There is strong support for policy changes such as zoning flexibility and infill development, and a clear preference for housing types that accommodate diverse needs, including families and seniors.

Respondents also expressed a desire for more visible and effective municipal action, particularly in enabling multi-unit and mixed-use development. Accessory dwelling units were moderately supported, though barriers such as zoning restrictions and privacy concerns remain. The survey further highlighted the importance of collaboration with provincial and federal governments, developers, and non-profits in addressing housing needs.

Demographic data showed that most respondents are full-time homeowners with varied household sizes, reinforcing the need for inclusive, locally focused housing strategies. Together, these findings offer a comprehensive view of community priorities and provide a strong foundation for future planning and policy development in the District of Invermere.

