

Open Space and Recreation Plan

Community Survey Summary



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Open Space & Recreation Plan

Community Survey

Nantucket, Massachusetts

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Introduction

The Town of Nantucket is updating its Open Space and Recreation Plan. Once complete, this plan enables the Town to remain eligible for state funding for open space preservation and park improvement projects. The Plan will lay out a road map for the next seven years to help guide land protection efforts and improvements to existing recreation facilities and programs.

As part of the planning process to update its Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Town developed an on-line survey as one way to seek input from community members and other stakeholders. The survey was available on line for four weeks, closing on January 25, 2012. The survey was announced and promoted through a variety of media including newspapers, the Town's website, and e-mails that requested recipients take the survey and also pass the link on to others. The e-mails targeted individuals as well as groups and organizations including home-owner associations, resource protection organizations and agencies, recreation providers, and departments, boards and committees. The Town also sent written notices with water bills and made public announcements at Board of Selectmen Meetings.

This report is a summary of survey results.

Responses

Total Responses - 583

This represents 15.6% of total households. (total households: 3,745; 2011 ACS, US Census)

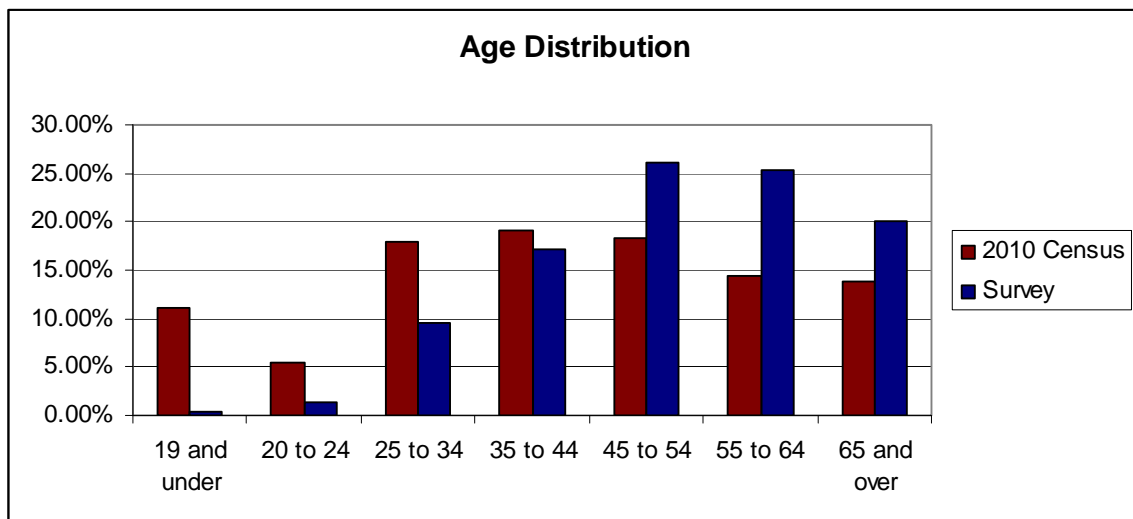
Survey Respondent Demographics

As seen below in comparing the survey demographics to those from the US Census Bureau, residents over the age of 45, earning \$100,000 a year or more, and having owned their home for over 5 years participated in the survey more than their counterparts.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

(82.3% answered question)

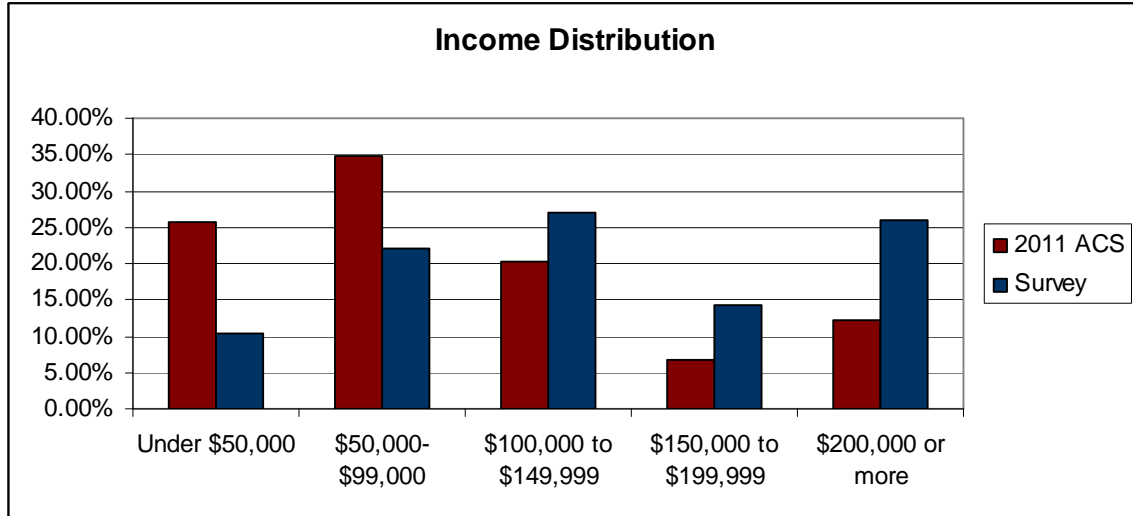
The age distribution of survey respondents shows that residents ages 45 and above are represented in greater proportion than those under 45. The highest level of response to the survey came from people between the ages of 45 and 54.



INCOME DISTRIBUTION

(72.7% answered question)

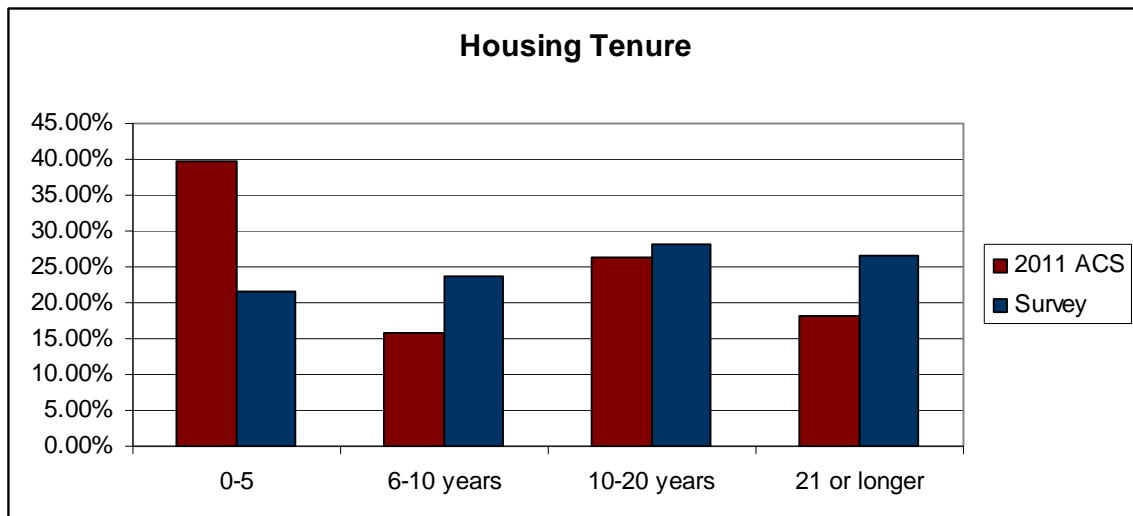
The income distribution of survey respondents leaned toward those earning \$100,000 or more annually when compared to the distribution given by the US Census's American Community Survey (ACS) taken between 2007 and 2011.



HOW LONG RESIDING IN YOUR CURRENT HOME?

(81.5% answered question)

Newer home-owners were represented to a lesser degree than longer-term residents in the survey.



CHILDREN AT HOME

(90% answered question)

As reported by the 2010 Census, 28.7% of Nantucket households have children under the age of 18 living in them. Approximately thirty-two percent (32.2%) of survey respondents reported that they have children under 18 years old living with them.

SENIORS AT HOME

(90% answered question)

As reported by the 2010 Census, a senior over the age of 65 resides 21.4% of Nantucket households. Approximately twenty-eight percent (28.4%) of survey respondents reported that a senior over the age of 65 resides in their household.

RENT VS. OWN

(81.8% answered question)

As reported by the 2010 Census, 58.5% of Nantucket residents own their home (41.5% rent) whereas nearly eighty-one percent (80.9%) of survey respondents reported that they own their home.

YEAR-ROUND OR SEASONAL RESIDENT?

(82.7% answered question)

Nearly seventy-four percent (73.7%) of survey respondents replied that they are year-round residents of Nantucket. Almost a quarter of survey respondent (23.7%) replied that they are seasonal residents, with the remaining survey respondents (2.7%) answering as a visitor or other.

Open Space & Recreation Survey

QUESTION 1

How well do Nantucket recreation areas and open spaces meet your expectations in the following areas. (1 = very well, 5 = does not meet expectations)

(99.1% answered question)

	<i>Average Response</i>
Parks and playgrounds	2.4
Access to ocean for recreational purposes	2.0
Access to ponds for recreational purposes	2.4
Active youth recreation programs and facilities, including play structures and court-based and field sports	2.5
Active adult recreation programs and facilities	2.9
Outdoor or indoor health and exercise programs	3.1
Bicycle paths and bike lanes	1.9
Walking trails	1.7
Wildlife educational and appreciation opportunities	2.1
Historic and cultural educational and appreciation opportunities	1.9
Passive recreation programs	2.4
Opportunities for off-leash dog exercise	2.6

In the table above, a value closest to one (1) represents an open space or recreation area or element that is best meeting the survey respondents' expectations. For instance, "Walking trails" received an average response of 1.7, indicating the highest level of satisfaction among Nantucket's open space and recreation resources. Conversely, a higher number indicates a lower level of satisfaction. "Outdoor or indoor health and exercise programs" received an average rating of 3.1, meaning current resources may not be meeting the expectations of some respondents. A score of 2.5 indicates neutrality across survey respondents.

Question 2

Are there any types of recreation areas or specific recreation activities that you think are lacking in the town that should be considered adding for the future?

(321 comments)

Survey respondents offered a wide range of expanded recreational opportunities. One of the most commonly requested resource was a fenced-in, off-leash dog park, often citing that Nantucket is a very dog-friendly community in need of such a place.

Another popular suggestion was overall improvement to the bike and pedestrian networks. These suggestions included varying opinions on whether or not trails should be well marked and mapped, or if they should be left in a more natural state. Several respondents specifically noted the need for a bike connection to the downtown area.

Many respondents indicated the need for improved facilities and maintenance of playgrounds and other recreational resources for children. Some voiced a need for free or town-sponsored indoor activities for children.

More than ten (10) respondents believe that Nantucket needs a shooting range. Several people requested a place for public performances, such as an amphitheatre. Some specifically want an amphitheatre to be created downtown near the waterfront, with associated waterfront access.

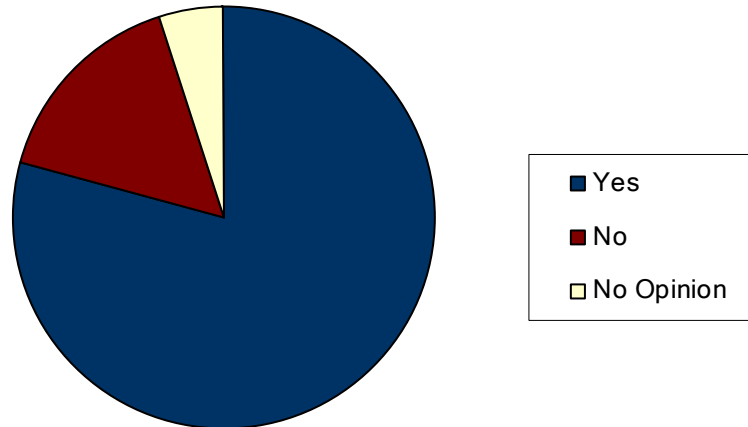
Additional ideas for new recreational opportunities included:

- Expanded public boat launches
- Indoor/Outdoor running track
- Equestrian venue
- Bowling alley
- More ball fields and better maintenance of existing fields
- Improved public tennis courts
- Trips to mainland, town sponsored trips/tours
- Picnic areas
- Community garden

QUESTION 3

Is Nantucket doing a good job of protecting our town's natural resources?

(88% answered question, 115 comments)



When asked how the town could improve in protecting its natural resources, several major themes arose. Water resource protection stood out as the most common concern among survey respondents. Many concerns stemmed from the residential use of fertilizers and pesticides as well as septic system maintenance. A number of others indicated that there is a need for stronger protection of the harbor from pollution by boats and run-off. Further, some expressed concern with run-off waters damaging the salt-marshes and swamps.

Additionally, several respondents believe the town needs to do a better job in communicating and enforcing shoreline protection policies, including dune and erosion control (particularly Madaket Beach). Several others expressed discontent with the degradation of forested land in favor of recreational fields.

Interwoven in all of the concerns above was a desire for improving public education on environmental matters, on issues of private property maintenance and sensitivity of public natural resources.

QUESTION 4

Please indicate your priorities for open space protection (either through acquisition or other means). Rank the following 1 (highest priority) to 5 (lowest priority).

(91.9% answered question, 61 comments)

	<i>Average Response</i>
Areas that protect the town’s groundwater resources	1.4
Areas that have potential to provide facilities for active recreation (sports fields, courts, etc.)	2.7
Areas with potential for informal or passive recreation (walking/hiking/riding/skiing trails, etc)	2.0
Unique scenic areas	1.9
Historic sites	1.9
Land that abuts and / or connects existing open spaces	1.9
Access to beaches	1.5
Important natural resources and wildlife habitat	1.6

The table above lists the average response of survey respondent’s priorities in open space and recreation efforts. Protecting groundwater resources and providing access to beaches ranked as the highest priority, while providing recreation areas through open space protection ranked the lowest. However, it is important to note that while providing recreation areas ranked lowest, they still received a near-neutral or higher priority level.

In the comment section of this question, survey respondents elaborated or offered additional priorities for open space protection. Several respondents took the opportunity to once again voice the need for a dog park. Several others supported enhancing the connectivity of bike and walking trails. Some respondents reiterated the need for a downtown park area. Other concerns included habitat protection and keeping Nantucket as “natural” as possible.

There was some disagreement on the level of open space protection the town pragmatically needs. Some respondents felt that enough has been done regarding open space protection and indicated a need to use land for tax revenue generating functions, such as housing.

QUESTION 5

To preserve open space, which strategies would you personally consider? (Please check all that you would consider.)

(83.7% answered question, 71 comments)

	<i>Response Percent</i>
Contribute some of your land to the Town	5.1%
Contribute some of your land to Nantucket Islands Land Bank	11.1%
Donate money to the Town to acquire open space or recreation land	18.6%
Donate money to the Town to manage open space or recreation land	19.3%
Donate money to Nantucket Islands Land Bank to acquire open space or recreation land	31.8%
Donate money to Nantucket Islands Land Bank to manage open space or recreation land	26.2%
Provide a conservation restriction on your land to limit future development	23.0%
Sell land to the Town	10.2%
Sell land to Nantucket Islands Land Bank	18.4%
Vote for Town-supported land acquisition	65.8%
Vote for Nantucket Islands Land Bank-supported land acquisition	70.7%
Pay higher property taxes to allow the Town to acquire more open space	29.1%
Other (please specify)	14.5%

The most popular preservation strategy among survey respondents was to vote for Land Bank-supported land acquisition, followed by Town-supported acquisition. Around a third of respondents indicated a willingness to donate money to the Land Bank or pay higher property taxes to support these efforts.

Comments to this question often expressed reluctance to paying any additional taxes for this purpose. Many feel that the non-profit entities are doing a sufficient job in protecting open space and that town efforts are not needed. Other ideas included using tourism-based taxes, volunteer work, and using open space initiatives in conjunction with affordable housing development.

QUESTION 6

Please indicate how often you visit the recreational areas listed below. Then, rate how satisfied you are with the site overall. In rating your level of satisfaction, consider whether each site is adequate for the intended uses, as well as the general appearance and upkeep, and the overall quality of your experience. (5 = highest quality, 1 = lowest quality)

(variable response rate)

The table on the following page summarizes the responses to Question 6. The Average Visit Factor is used to compare how often respondents visited these sites relative to one another. Similar to the Average Response calculated in previous tables, it is an average of responses. This number does not quantify usage of a particular area, but provides a means of comparison. A higher score indicates more visits. For instance, Ram Pasture/Sanford Farm and the Milestone Road Bike Path received the highest score of 1.85, indicating these are the most visited areas by survey respondents. These areas also received a high rating in terms of quality.

Question 6 Summary Table

Answer Options	Avg Visit Factor*	Avg Quality Rating
Fortieth Pole Beach	1.10	3.6
Francis Street Beach	0.54	3.2
Jetties Beach	1.60	3.9
Codfish Park	0.81	3.7
Low Beach	0.59	3.8
Fisherman's Beach	1.28	4.1
Miacomet	1.35	4.0
Nobadeer Beach	0.94	3.4
Point of Breakers	0.47	3.8
Surfside	1.25	3.9
Cisco Beach	1.73	3.9
Madaket Beach	1.44	3.8
Smith's Point	0.99	4.0
Children's Beach	1.40	3.6
Warren's Landing	0.66	3.8
Dionis Beach	0.99	4.0
Washing Pond Road Beach	0.79	4.0
Eel Point	0.93	4.1
Mill Hill/Dead Horse Valley/Civic League Park Area	0.66	3.5
Coffin Park	0.25	3.6
Teen Center	0.04	2.8
Nantucket Youth/Delta Fields	0.78	3.8
Tom Nevers	1.17	3.5
The Creeks	1.02	3.9
Altar Rock/Middle Moors	1.54	4.4
Ram Pasture/Sanford Farm	1.85	4.5
Coatue	1.07	4.4
Madequecham Valley	0.88	4.2
Tupancy Links	1.34	4.1
Settler's rock at Maxcy's Pond	0.27	3.6
Essex Road Playground	0.45	3.4
School Playground and Fields	0.95	3.6
Land Bank Park at Fair and Main Streets	0.79	4.0
Hummock Pond Road Bike Path	1.05	4.2
Polpis Road Bike Path	1.62	4.3
Milestone Road Bike Path	1.85	4.3
Madaket Road Bike Path	1.76	4.2

This table displays the raw data of frequency of visits to each area.

Answer Options	times visited annually						
	<1	1 to 5	6 to 11	12 to 24	25 to 36	37 to 52	52+
Fortieth Pole Beach	138	188	53	31	10	6	2
Francis Street Beach	250	110	21	6	6	2	2
Jetties Beach	39	236	99	43	17	11	6
Codfish Park	178	169	38	15	2	4	2
Low Beach	232	123	26	10	2	2	2
Fisherman's Beach	148	127	51	32	17	15	7
Miacomet	119	166	61	29	15	7	14
Nobadeer Beach	178	144	40	19	5	4	9
Point of Breakers	262	72	21	7	6	2	1
Surfside	123	178	63	26	15	7	8
Cisco Beach	92	160	64	43	36	15	17
Madaket Beach	121	156	65	32	21	11	14
Smith's Point	176	142	51	17	12	6	5
Children's Beach	114	159	54	40	18	9	10
Warren's Landing	229	105	25	12	6	5	2
Dionis Beach	153	158	47	17	13	5	2
Washing Pond Road Beach	195	121	43	15	6	3	2
Eel Point	166	145	46	26	7	4	1
Mill Hill/Dead Horse Valley/Civic League Park Area	228	100	23	12	7	3	4
Coffin Park	290	63	8	1	1	0	1
Teen Center	357	9	1	1	0	0	0
Nantucket Youth/Delta Fields	243	71	26	27	9	4	7
Tom Nevers	131	165	40	27	14	5	8
The Creeks	157	134	41	30	8	1	7
Altar Rock/Middle Moors	74	192	62	44	13	10	13
Ram Pasture/Sanford Farm	71	145	73	63	28	19	12
Coatue	140	160	52	28	11	3	3
Madequecham Valley	182	119	44	19	9	2	4
Tupancy Links	137	147	55	30	16	12	13
Settler's rock at Maxcy's Pond	289	60	12	3	1	0	0
Essex Road Playground	279	50	23	6	5	3	3
School Playground and Fields	227	62	38	18	15	6	13
Land Bank Park at Fair and Main Streets	197	133	30	14	9	4	3
Hummock Pond Road Bike Path	217	74	22	26	23	7	13
Polpis Road Bike Path	111	141	65	41	22	20	15
Milestone Road Bike Path	101	129	64	51	31	17	26
Madaket Road Bike Path	105	136	64	49	31	18	20

QUESTION 7

For those sites on the list above that you use infrequently or gave a low satisfaction rating what are some reasons you don't use them or are not satisfied with the experience? (Please check ALL that apply)

(74.4% answered question, 70 comments)

	<i>Response Percent</i>
Site is not easily accessible by walking or biking from my home	26.3%
There isn't enough parking available	26.0%
Poor condition or maintenance	25.1%
Site doesn't fit my recreational interests / needs	50.9%
Lack of restrooms	21.4%
Safety concerns	10.4%
Crowding / too many people	38.9%
Size of park / amount of space available	11.1%
Lack of accommodation / accessibility for disabilities	3.7%
Don't know where that particular site is located	24.2%
Needs are met by other locations	52.5%
Other (please specify)	16.1%

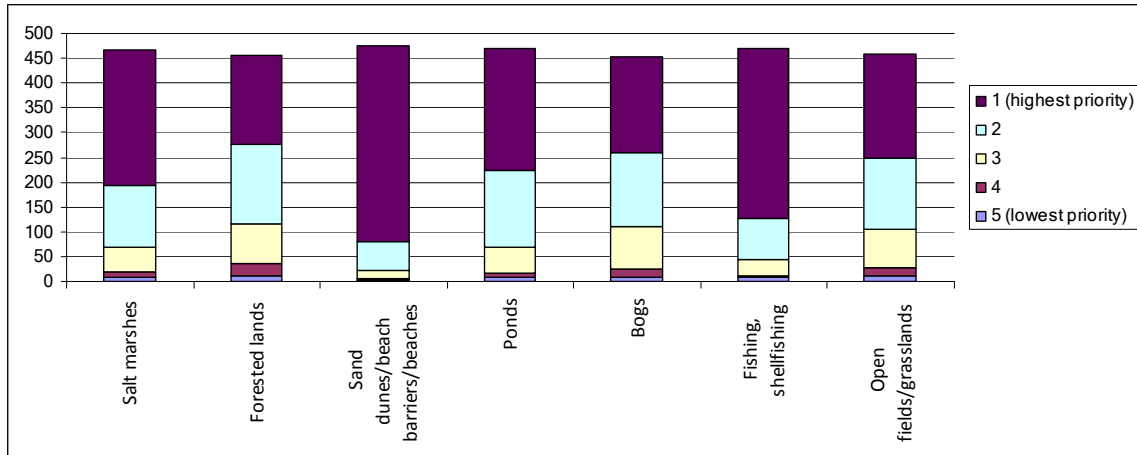
When asked why respondents rated a resource low or as infrequently used in Question 6, the most common responses were that the site either didn't interest them, or that their need was met elsewhere. More than a third also indicated large crowds as a deterrent.

In the comment section to Question 7, the most common observation was that bike paths, particularly the Madaket bike path require improved maintenance to improve safety. Another concern often mentioned was with dog waste and off-leash dogs. Several respondents felt that some areas have been "over-landscaped" both publicly and privately, which detracts from the natural appearance they desire. Several others were dissatisfied with the amount of litter and over-crowding around the island.

QUESTION 8

What natural resources are highest priority for protection? Please rank the following list on a scale of 1 (highest priority) to 5 (lowest priority).

(83.5% answered question, 50 comments)



As seen in the chart above, beach areas ranked as the highest priority for survey respondents, followed by fishing resources and salt marshes. Although they did not receive a significant percentage of “low priority” votes, resources that are not directly tied to water resources ranked lowest.

The comment section of this question reaffirmed many respondents’ concern for water-related resources, including drinking water supply, fishing, erosion zones and protection of the harbor. Also mentioned as important was the protection of scenic vistas and wildlife habitat.

QUESTION 9

What Town actions do you favor to preserve open spaces? (please check all that you support)

(81.5% answered question, 45 comments)

	<i>Response Percent</i>
Acquire more open space and conservation areas	54.3%
Acquire land to connect existing open space and recreation lands	59.4%
Acquire easements to connect existing open space and recreation lands	59.2%
Acquire and remove development from land to connect existing open space and recreation lands	33.3%
Educate residents about land conservation issues	60.4%
Regulate (through zoning or other methods) the intensity of development to encourage open space protection	52.8%
Defer taxes on private properties which are currently used for recreation and forest land to encourage continuation of those uses (Chapter 61)	45.3%
Dedicate more Town funds for maintenance and upkeep of existing open space and recreation areas	50.1%
Collaborate with other public and private land conservation entities	72.2%
Negotiate dedication of open space by developers	55.4%
Other (please specify)	9.5%

Strongest support from survey respondents was for collaborating with other land conservation entities, followed by public education on conservation issues and improving connectivity between current resources.

The comment section to this question largely reiterated the result of the table above. Respondents voiced the desire to work with conservation organization rather than town-run initiatives. Education of residents, seasonal residents and tourists was also stressed in several comments as an important role the town could embrace. Improved maintenance of current resources was the focus of several comments. Also mentioned was evaluating zoning strategies and code enforcement for their efficacy in open space protection. Some respondents expressed dissatisfaction with open space protection as it impedes the development of tax revenue generating uses.

QUESTION 10

What other opinions or ideas would you like to share?

(133 comments)

Survey respondents offered a wide-range of additional comments. The greatest disparity in opinion was over the need for more conservation land. While some favored continuing protection efforts, other worried that such efforts are driving land prices too high, making affordability difficult for year-round residents.

Many respondents voiced support for the continued partnerships between the town and the conservation organizations to protect open space. Many others took the opportunity to reaffirm their desire for improved year-round recreational resources and continued improvement of a connected bike and pedestrian network.

Others expressed concern over both wildlife protection and the health-issues posed by mosquitoes and ticks. Some reiterated their concern of the risk to water resources posed by fertilizers, including the proliferation of algae in the harbor. A few respondents stressed the need to retain the natural feel of the island, worrying that too much development and impervious surface will degrade Nantucket's character. Other comments included: the need for better maintenance of restroom facilities; varying opinions on vehicular access to beaches; and the need for greater pollution/litter control.