

NEW CASTLE MASTER PLAN 2022 SURVEY – SUMMARY REPORT

The [New Castle Master Plan Committee](#), in cooperation with the New Castle Planning Board, is updating the New Castle 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.

RESULTS

Between March 4, 2022 and March 21, 2022 a total of 178 individuals took the survey and provided 7,664 responses or comments. The survey was an online survey with postcards announcing the survey mailed to all households, links posted on the Town website, announcements at multiple municipal board meetings, email announcement distribution through municipal and community lists, and flyers posted around New Castle. This survey is neither statistically nor scientifically valid, however, it does represent the most comprehensive insight into the needs and wants of New Castle residents since the last Master Plan updates in 2012 and 2002. 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 New Castle were also invited to provide their thoughts. Of the responses received, no individual taking the survey lived outside of New Castle and only six participants owned a business in New Castle. Half of survey participants have lived in New Castle for more than 10 years, 77% of participants were over the age of 55, and 55% of participants were retired.

The full survey results are available at publicinput.com/NewCastle2022 and on the New Castle Planning Board website at www.newcastlenh.org/master-plan-committee/pages/master-plan.

NEXT STEPS

The New Castle 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 entire Master Plan over the coming year with a focus on having a robust implementation section. **Any updates to the New Castle 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 New Castle 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 New Castle's charm.** The strongest sentiment expressed in the survey was the desire to retain the close-knit community, keep the historic characteristics, maintain its natural beauty, and enjoy its proximity to Portsmouth and the region.
- **Concern about future change.** For all the positive sentiment, many expressed trepidation on changes occurring in New Castle due to development pressure, increasing impact from visitors, Town population shifts, impacts from coastal storms, and infrastructure needs.
- **Services and facilities provided are well regarded, but improvements are needed.** Services provided by the Town are generally viewed as satisfactory, but common concerns include the cost and need for maintaining Town-owned facilities, ensuring safe routes for pedestrians, and improving functionality of existing facilities. A related concern is the coordination of needed improvements to the State and Federally controlled infrastructure in town as well as properties such as the Route 1B bridges and roadway, and Fort Stark and Fort Constitution.

"I like the small town feel and the familiarity of the community. I like being close to the river and the ocean as well as the historic feel of a quintessential New England village. I also enjoy the proximity to the larger towns/cities, amenities like the Wentworth as well as access to the lakes and mountains of upstate NH/Maine. Have to say, I also enjoy the low taxes!"

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT LIVING IN NEW CASTLE?

Top answers:

- Small-town atmosphere and charm.
- Natural beauty, particularly the seaside location.
- Close knit community, particularly within the school.
- Beautiful historic homes, buildings and streetscapes that are reminiscent of historic New England.
- Proximity to Portsmouth, while still being on the water.

WHAT FEATURES ARE IMPORTANT TO NEW CASTLE'S CHARACTER?

Results:

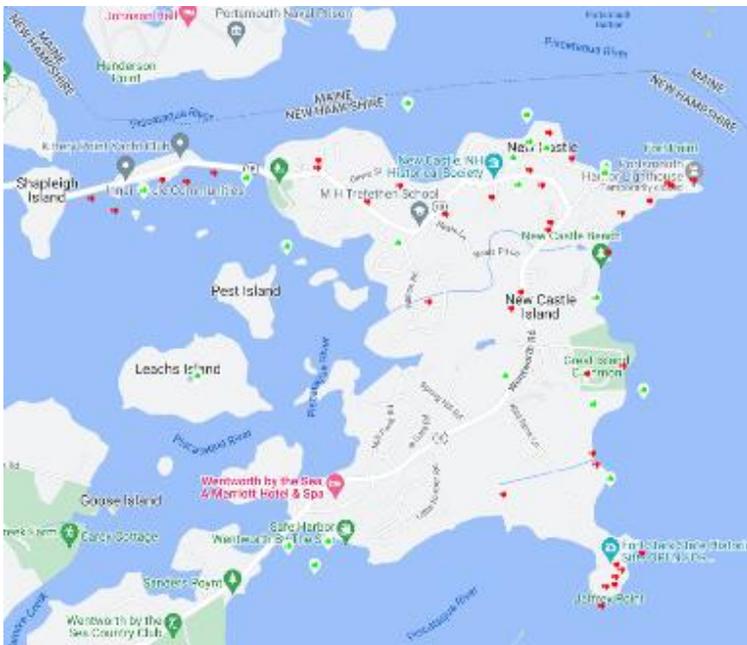
- 97% feel that the natural features and beauty of New Castle are important or very important.
- 87% feel that recreational opportunities are an important or very important feature for New Castle.
- 76% think that having a quality school is important for New Castle.
- 91% think that the tax rate is an important feature, though 37% had no strong concern about it.

WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS FOR NEW CASTLE?

These are some areas and topics where residents have concerns about New Castle in the future:

- 41% expressed concern about the level of building and development in Town, but most are satisfied with preservation of the historic district.
- 75% are concerned about over development on the island. 69% expressed strong feelings about not expanding multi-family housing options, and 71% want increased regulations on short-term rentals.
- 70% were either satisfied or had a neutral opinion about infrastructure upgrades in Town.
- 69% are satisfied with the recreational opportunities in New Castle, but 63% are dissatisfied with the level of pedestrian safety in Town.
- 70% expressed high levels of concern with the impact of coastal storms, sea-level rise, flooding and water pollution.

"On the surface New Castle appears to be an idyllic place to live, and many of us feel that this is true. However, residents also face an increasingly uncertain future, indicated by the questions asked in [question] #5. There are the stresses caused by excessive development, degraded natural resources, climate change and much else. These will all require thoughtful attention and action in the years to come."



Survey participants were asked to indicate on a map, locations in New Castle 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: publicinput.com/NewCastle2022.

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

This project was funded, in part, by NOAA's Office for Coastal Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act in conjunction with the NH Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program.