

TOWN OF SMOKY LAKE



HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY SUMMARY



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SMOKY LAKE

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HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from the Housing Needs Questionnaire conducted by the Town of Smoky Lake. The survey aimed to assess housing affordability, availability, and preferences among residents to inform future policies and decision making. The survey ran for 6 weeks, from January 13, 2025 to February 24, 2025. A total of 66 respondents participated either online or by completing paper copies.

The survey was divided into 6 sections:

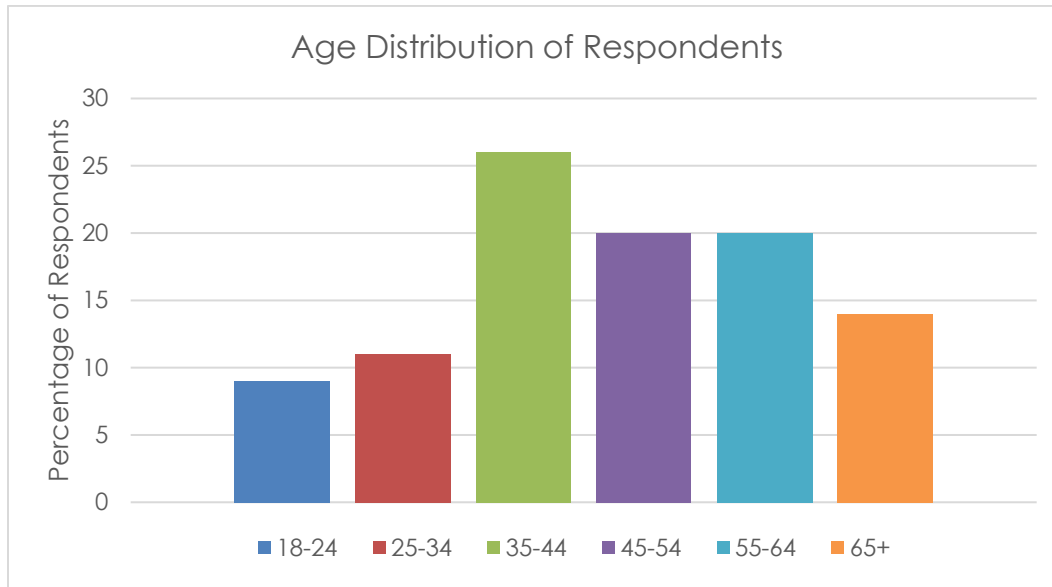
- A. Demographics
- B. Current Housing Situation and Affordability
- C. Housing Preferences and Needs
- D. Barriers to Affordable Housing
- E. Support for Policy or Program Solutions
- F. Open-Ended Questions

The reoccurring themes highlight a shortage of housing, affordability challenges and a limited variety of available housing options.

A. SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

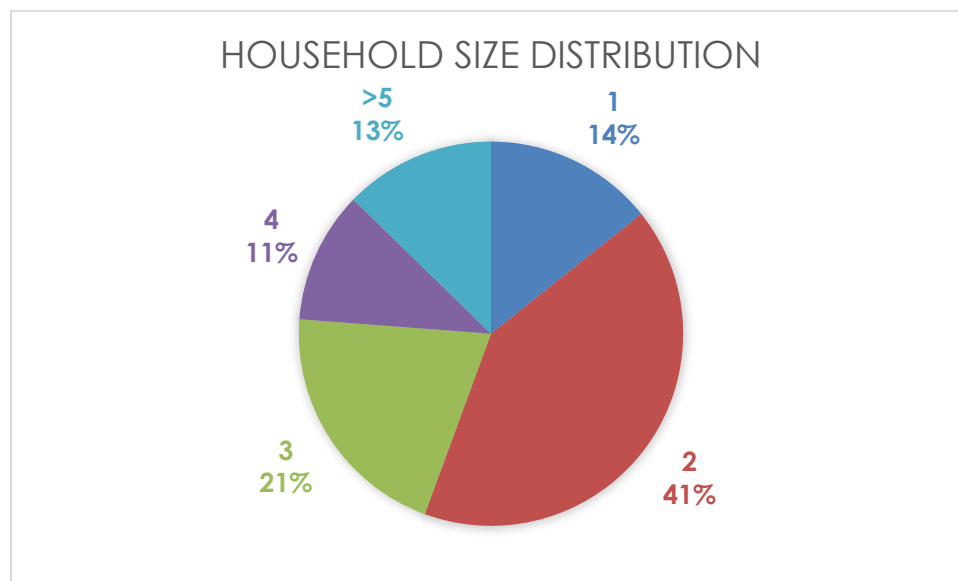
Age Distribution of Respondents

The majority of respondents were between 35-44 years old (26%). Individuals aged 45-54 and 55-64 years old each represented 20% of respondents. The lowest represented age groups were the 18-24 years old (9%) and 25-34 years old (11%).



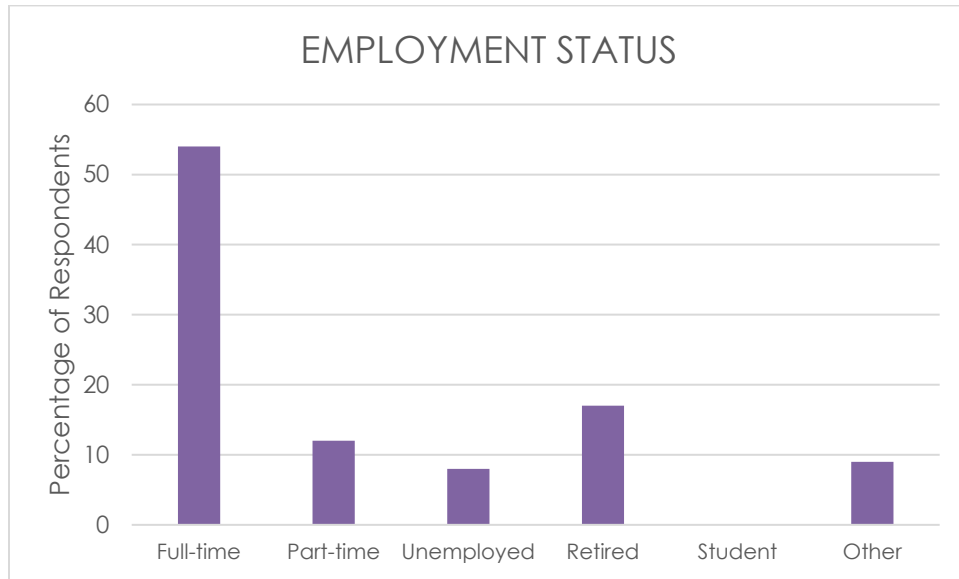
Household Size

Most respondents live in 2-person households (41%).



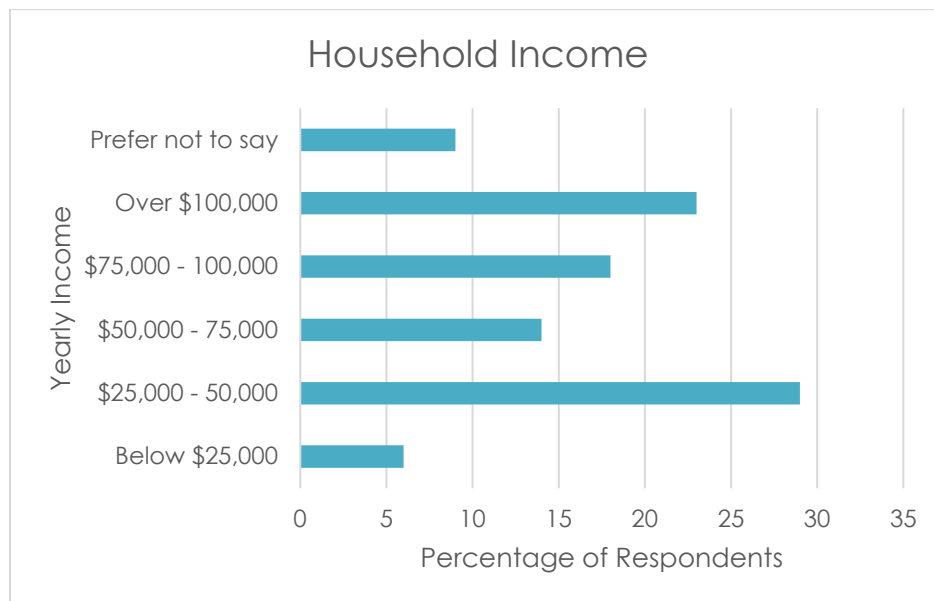
Employment Status

Over half (54%) of respondents are employed full-time, while 17% are retired. Other responses included: homemaker and caregiver, semi-retired, disabled and business owner.



Household Income

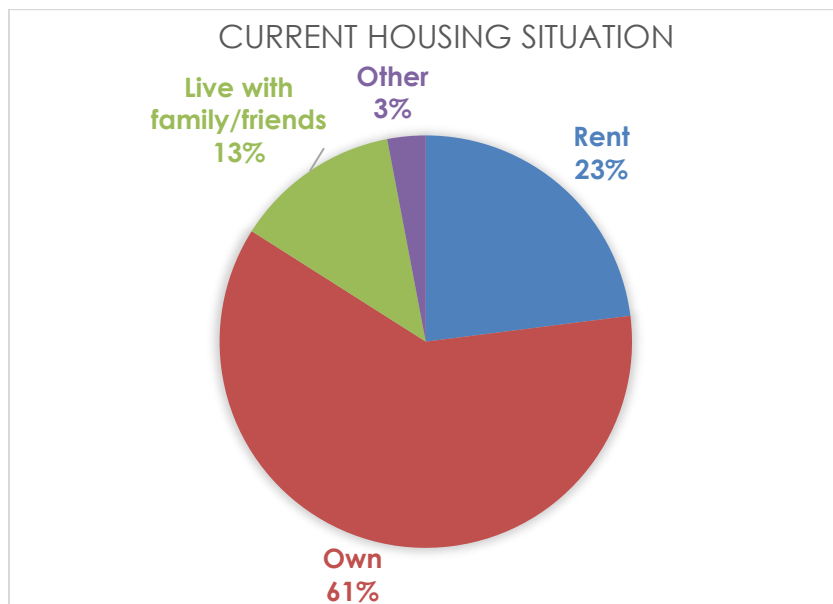
On average, 29% of respondents were making \$25,000 – 50,000 in yearly income. While 23% of respondents made over \$100,000.



B. HOUSING SITUATION AND AFFORDABILITY

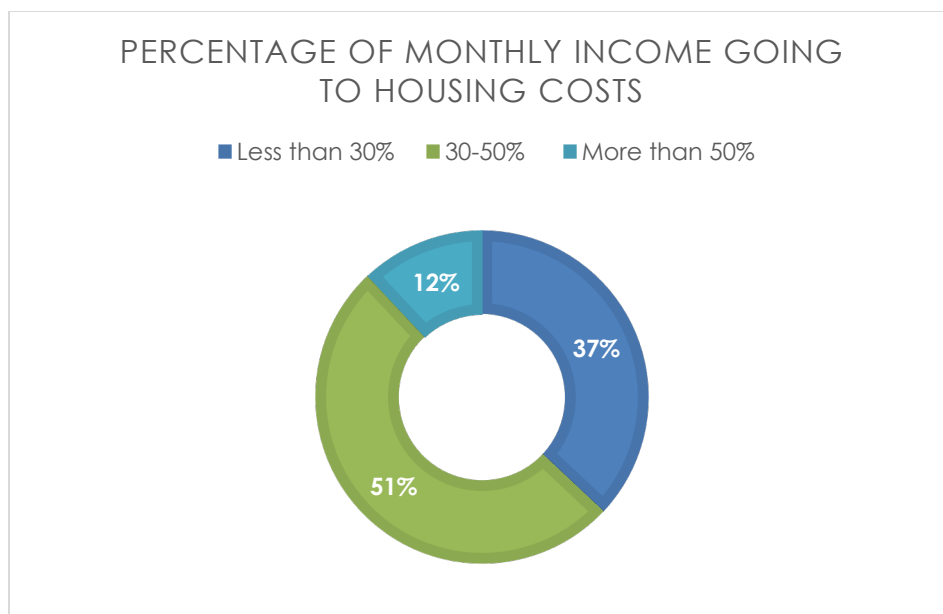
Current Housing Situation

The majority of respondents (61%) own their homes, while 23% rent. Other responses included: pet sitting, nomad, and semi-retired.



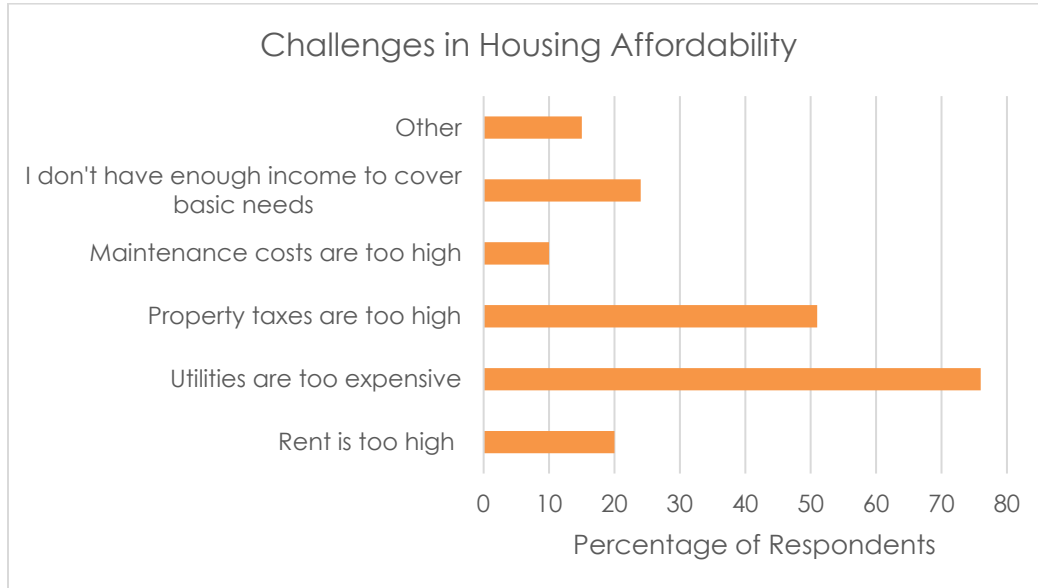
Monthly Housing Cost

51% of respondents are spending between 30-50% of their monthly income on housing costs.



Perception of Housing Affordability

34% of respondents find their housing unaffordable, citing high utility costs, rent, and property taxes.

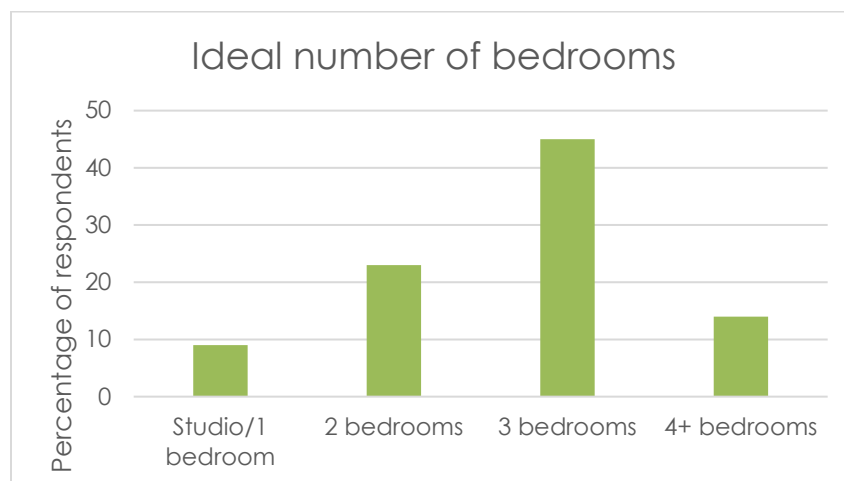


C. HOUSING PREFERENCES AND NEEDS

Housing Type

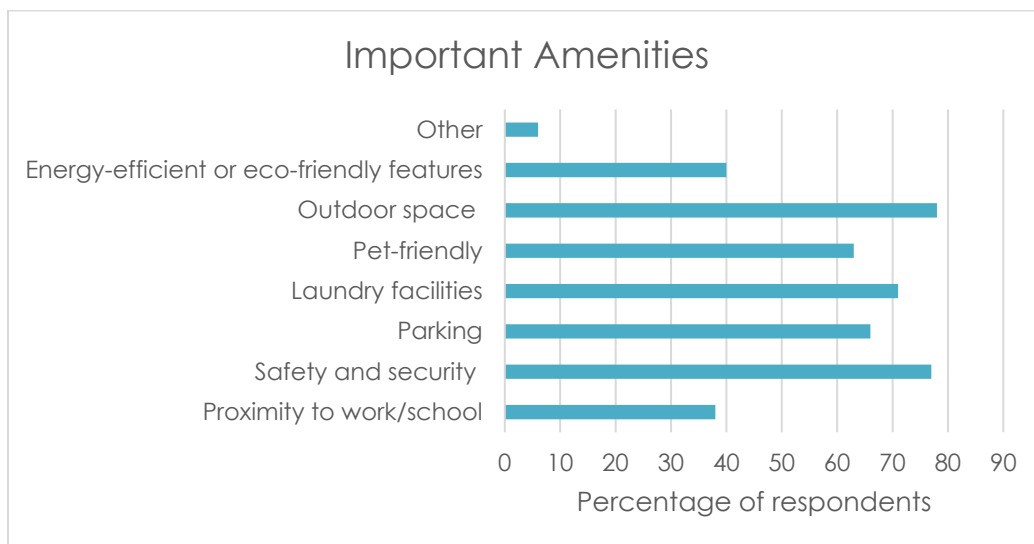
Although 50 respondents chose Single-Family Homes for types of housing that interested them, an additional 55 indicated they were interested in other types of dwellings (i.e. apartment/condo, townhouse, multi-family homes, accessory dwelling units or shared housing situations).

45% of respondents would prefer a home with 3 bedrooms.



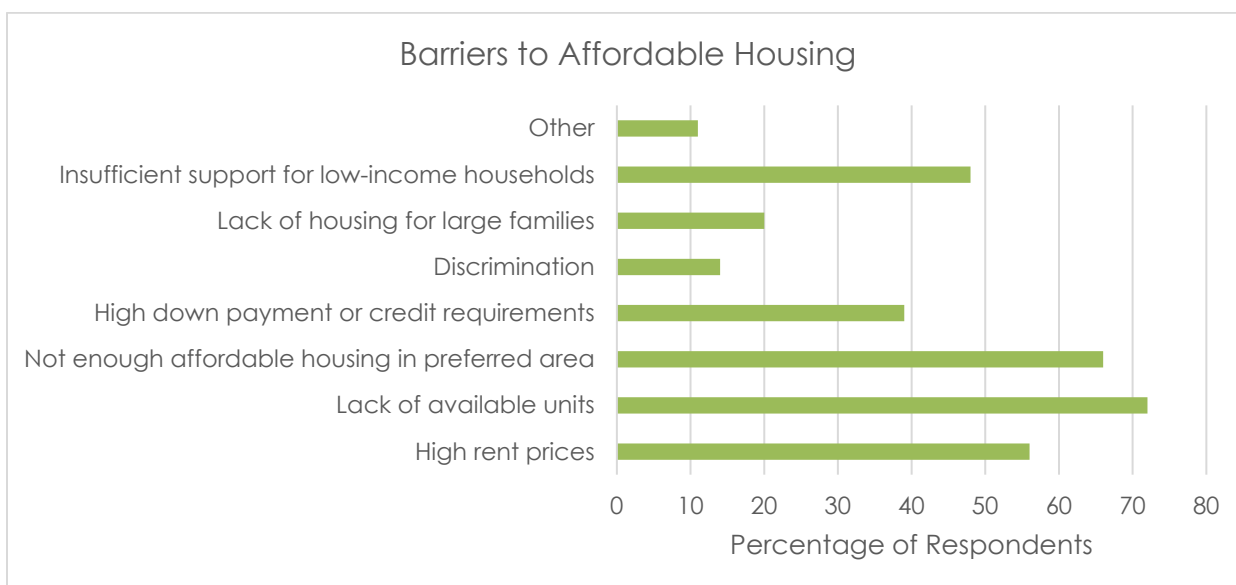
Important Amenities

The top 3 most important amenities for affordable housing identified were: outdoor space (78%), safety and security (77%), and laundry facilities (71%). Followed closely by parking (66%) and pet-friendly (63%).



D. BARRIERS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The top barriers in finding affordable housing include lack of available units (72%), high rent prices (56%), and not enough housing in preferred areas (66%).



E. SUPPORT FOR POLICY OR PROGRAM SOLUTIONS

- **85% of respondents** felt there was not enough affordable housing available in the Town of Smoky Lake.
- **79% of respondents** would support the development of more affordable housing in the Town, even if it meant increasing density or building on vacant land.
- **65% of respondents** indicated they would be interested in affordable housing programs.

Biggest Barriers to Finding Affordable Housing

- **72% of respondents** indicated there was a lack of available units
- **66% of respondents** answered that there is not enough affordable housing in my preferred area
- **56% of respondents** replied that rent prices are too high

F. OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

What do you think is the most important issue when it comes to affordable housing in our community?

1. Lack of Available Housing

- A major concern is the shortage of rental units and homes for sale.
- Many respondents emphasized that there are simply no available units for new residents or those looking to relocate within the town.

2. Affordability Challenges

- High utility bills, rent costs, and down payment requirements make housing unaffordable.
- Some respondents highlighted the need for housing costs to remain below 30% of household income to ensure financial stability.

3. Limited Housing Variety

- There is a demand for more diverse housing options such as townhomes, duplexes, apartments, and smaller homes.
- Current options may not meet the needs of different demographics, including seniors, single individuals, and low-income families.

4. Minimal Development Despite Population Growth

- In the past four years, the town has grown in population, but housing development has not kept pace.
- Respondents noted a lack of efforts to create new rental or ownership opportunities.

5. Utilization of Existing Space

- Concern over empty buildings and underutilized lots that could be repurposed for housing.
- Some suggested incorporating affordable housing into community expansion plans rather than concentrating it in high-density areas.

What suggestions do you have for improving affordable housing options in the area?

1. Increase Housing Supply

- Build more affordable rental units, townhouses, apartments, and single-family homes.
- Develop empty/underutilized lots into housing.
- Encourage a mix of housing types, including small/tiny homes, modular housing, duplexes, and triplexes.
- Construct rental units above retail spaces.

2. Incentives & Collaboration

- Work with investors, developers, and government agencies to build affordable housing.
- Offer tax breaks, land purchase rebates, and financial incentives to builders.
- Partner with organizations that focus on providing affordable housing, like Habitat for Humanity.

3. Zoning & Policy Changes

- Support in-law suites, garage apartments, and smaller lots.
- Implement rent control and reduce utility and property taxes.
- Prevent investors from profiting off publicly funded housing.

4. Infrastructure & Community Support

- Improve public transportation, especially in winter months.
- Promote sustainable housing solutions (e.g., net-zero homes, solar power, mini-split heating).
- Establish community gardens to enhance quality of life.
- Maintain and enforce standards for high-density housing upkeep.

5. Economic & Social Factors

- Market the town as an affordable alternative to urban areas.
- Improve high-speed internet access to attract remote workers.
- Provide education on renting, homeownership, and investment risks.
- Consider town-managed housing projects for long-term affordability.

Are there any other housing-related concerns or needs you would like to share?

1. Affordability & Availability

- High property taxes and utility costs make housing unaffordable.
- Lack of rental properties, especially for newcomers and younger generations.

- Expensive home insurance, particularly for wood-burning stoves.
- New homes are priced too high (\$450,000+), making them inaccessible.
- Need to encourage homeownership by allowing tenants to buy low-income rental properties.

2. Infrastructure & Services

- Lack of sidewalks, particularly near key areas like the gas station, Bigway and police station.
- Frequent power outages create an unreliable living environment.

3. Policy & Planning

- Bylaws should be more flexible, especially for homeowners with large backyards.
- The town should invest in modernized, affordable housing options.
- Development of Nekinan as a housing solution, requiring only transportation and shared kitchen use.

4. Community Growth & Vision

- More focus on making the town an attractive destination for newcomers.
- Expand available rental options to prevent people from living in RVs at campgrounds.
- Think bigger—capitalize on trends to develop the town into a thriving, peaceful community.

Recommendations & Next Steps

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Increase affordable housing options through government support.
- Explore options for rental assistance programs to help residents with housing costs.
- Develop zoning policies that encourage new housing development.

CONCLUSION

The survey results highlight a clear demand for more affordable housing in the Town of Smoky Lake, for rent or ownership. The respondents support initiatives to improve housing affordability and availability. The insights gathered will be valuable for decision-making.

The main issues identified revolve around **availability, affordability, and diversity of housing options**. The Town of Smoky Lake needs **more housing development, better affordability measures, and smarter use of existing spaces** to address the ongoing housing crisis.