Elyse Oliver, ERC Fellow | Towns of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor

Overview

The Boothbay Region Community Survey was released on October 6, 2025 and closed on October 31, 2025. It was designed to capture community perspectives on local assets in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor and to help identify those assets. The survey was disseminated via publicly posted flyers across the two towns, newspaper press releases, and digitally via direct outreach to community groups and neighborhood associations. The survey received 199 responses. Respondents could enter a raffle for one of fifteen $50 gift cards to a local business of their choice in Lincoln County.

Importantly, this was a voluntary response survey, not a randomized sample, which means self-selection bias is present. People who feel strongly about the topic—either positively or negatively—are more likely to respond than those who are indifferent. As such, the findings reflect the perspectives and economic patterns of engaged community members rather than all community members. Findings from this survey will be combined with findings from other community asset mapping activities conducted as part of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor's Rural Infrastructure Strengths Evaluation (RISE) process.

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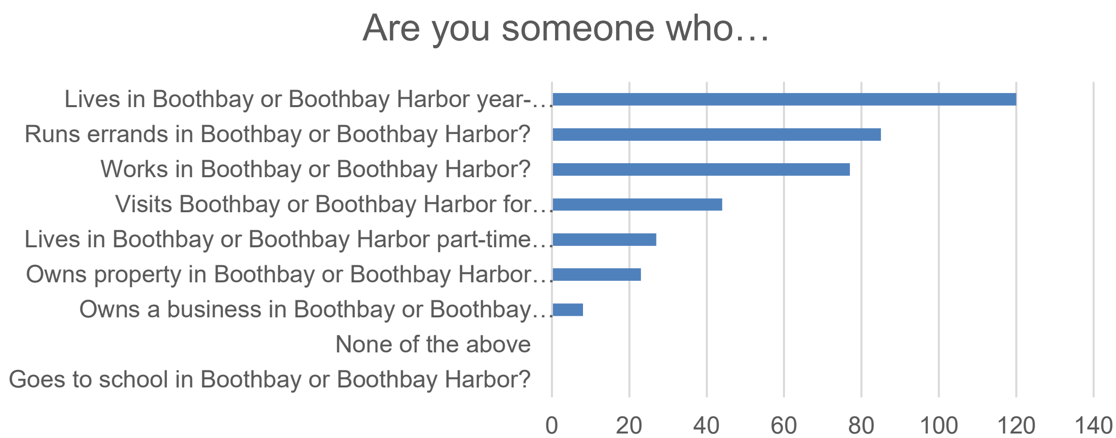
Key Respondent Demographics

1) The survey captured responses from multiple, interconnected and often overlapping community groups:

- 120 year-round residents (60%);
- 85 errand-focused visitors (43%);
- 77 workers (39%);
- 44 leisure visitors (22%);
- 27 part-time residents (14%);
- 23 non-resident property owners (12%); and
- 8 business owners (4%).



2) **Roughly half (50.25%) of respondents hold multiple community affiliations**, an indication of respondents' deep integration within Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor. Of particular note:

- All 8 business owners hold multiple roles, primarily identifying as year-round residents (7), errand-focused visitors (6), and workers (4).
- Fifty-seven percent of workers (44 out of 77) also run errands in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor, suggesting that they spend time beyond their work hours in the community.
- Eighty-six percent of leisure visitors (38 out of 44) also run errands during their stay, an indicator that their economic impact for the community extends beyond pure tourism businesses.
- All 23 non-resident property owners hold multiple roles, primarily identifying as someone who runs errands in Boothbay or Boothbay Harbor. This suggests that non-resident property owners are still physically present in the community frequently and contribute to local spending.

3) Demographic trends amongst respondents include:

- **Fifty-one percent of respondents (102 out of 199) are age 65+**, indicating an aging population.
- Fifty-six percent of respondents (112 out of 199) live in a two-person household without children.

- **The median household income (MHI) of survey respondents is between $105,000 - $134,999, roughly double the communities' 2023 MHI of $58,949 (US Census)**.
- Eighty-four percent of survey respondents (168 out of 199) hold a 4-year degree or higher, exceeding the communities' 2023 4-year degree educational attainment rate of 50.4% (US Census). The predominance of bachelor's degrees held true across age ranges and household incomes reported.
- Over 90% of respondents indicated that they are white, non-Hispanic, English-speaking, and heterosexual.
- Thirteen respondents indicated that they are LGBT+. Of LBGT+ respondents, ten individuals work in Boothbay and/or Boothbay Harbor (77%) and seven are between the ages of 25-34 years old (54%).

4) **With zero student responses, overwhelming homeowner representation (see below), and a highly educated respondent pool, critical voices from renters, young families and entrepreneurs, and working-class residents and workers are missing from these results**.

Top Themes and Findings

Strong Roots and Significant Investment in Place

Residents demonstrate deep commitment through long tenure, substantial property improvements, and plans to stay for decades, with the ocean and small village character as primary draws. Non-resident property owners are also deeply invested, having made substantial improvements comparable to resident homeowners, with most planning to hold properties long-term rather than sell/flip.

<u>Why Residents Choose to Live Here</u>

- **Connection to the ocean: 71%** (103 out of 146 respondents)
- Small village character: 67% (98 out of 146 respondents)
- Other amenities mentioned: economic reasons (6), active land trusts (2), YMCA summer camp (1), summer weather (1)

<u>Why Non-Resident Property Owners Choose to Buy Here</u>

- Personal use (vacation home, future retirement, relocation plans): 83% (19 out of 23)
- Lifestyle appeal (natural beauty, quiet/rural living, outdoor recreation): 78% (18 out of 23)

<u>Tenure / Length of Residency</u>

- Length of residency in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor skews longer across year-round and part-time residents:
  - **Over 20 years: 38%** (55)
  - 10-20 years: 20% (29)
  - 5-10 years: 20% (29)
  - 3-5 years: 11% (16)
  - 1-3 years: 8% (12)
  - 0-1 year: 3% (5)
- Similarly, a majority (12 out of 23) of non-resident property owners purchased their properties before 2010 (over 15 years ago).

- Residents have plans to remain in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor for a long time horizon (see below). **The most common reason for a potential move that residents cited was the need for assisted living (64 out of 146)**, which also reiterates the significant aging population.
    - Over 20 years: 37% (54)
    - 10 years: 27% (39)
    - 20 years: 17% (25)
    - 5 years: 11% (16)
    - Less than 5 years: 8% (12)

Survey Question: If you were to leave your current home, what reason(s) would cause you to move?	
Choice	**Count**
Need for assisted living	64
Higher cost of living	26
Other	26
Need for better community services	24
Smaller dwelling needs	24
Change in my household income	23
Desire to live in a less remote area	18
Retirement	15
Desire to live in a more urban area	10
Job transfer	10
Desire to live in a more rural area	7
Larger dwelling needs	6

Homeownership and Property Improvements

- Eighty-nine percent of residents own their homes (130 out of 146).
- **Ninety-six percent of homeowners (125 out of 130) have invested in improving their properties**. The most common improvements include:
    - Building renovations: 85% (110 out of 130)
    - Outdoor space enhancements: 70% (91 out of 130)
    - Energy efficiency upgrades: 62% (80 out of 130)
    - Utility and infrastructure improvements: 56% (73 out of 130)
    - Technology or equipment installations: 50% (65 out of 130)
- Ninety-six percent of non-resident property owners (22 out of 23) have invested in improving their properties. The most common improvements include:
    - Building renovations: 83% (19 out of 23)
    - Utility and infrastructure improvements: 65% (15 out of 23)
    - Outdoor space enhancements: 65% (15 out of 23)
    - Technology or equipment installations: 52% (12 out of 23)
    - Energy efficiency upgrades: 52% (12 out of 23)
- **It was most common for homeowners and non-resident property owners to have invested between $100,000 - $499,999** (46 out of 125 and 12 out of 22, respectively) in their property improvements.

- Eighty-nine percent of homeowners (112 out of 125) paid for their improvements with cash/savings. Ninety-six percent of non-resident property owners (22 out of 23) paid for their improvements with personal cash/savings or business profits.
- Roughly 70% of homeowners have plans for additional, future property improvements:
  - Building renovations: 38% (50 out of 130)
  - Outdoor space enhancements: 38% (49 out of 130)
  - Energy efficiency upgrades: 28% (36 out of 130)
- Roughly 87% of non-resident property owners have plans for additional, future property improvements:
  - Building renovations: 65% (15 out of 23)
  - Outdoor space enhancements: 43% (10 out of 23)
  - Utility and infrastructure improvements: 30% (7 out of 23)

Strong Local Spending with Critical Availability Gaps

While residents readily complete daily errands locally, three-quarters leave town for other services that simply don't exist in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor.

<u>Errands Completed Locally by Residents</u>

A majority of resident respondents complete the following errands in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are errands completed locally across all respondents:

- *Trash and recycling: 98% (143 out of 146)
- *Grocery shopping: 97% (141 out of 146)
- *Fueling up the car: 96% (140 out of 146)
- *Mailing letters or packages: 95% (139 out of 146)
- *Picking up prescriptions: 88% (128 out of 146)
- *Banking transactions: 75% (109 out of 146)
- Buying gifts: 64% (93 out of 146)
- Medical appointments: 59% (86 out of 146)
- Specialty foods shopping: 52% (76 out of 146)

<u>Why Residents Leave Town for Other Errands</u>

The primary reason that residents leave town to complete their errands is because there are no establishments within Boothbay or Boothbay Harbor that provide these services (108 out of 146). This trend holds true across all respondents (126 out of 199); however, non-resident workers (42) most commonly stated more convenient options outside of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor as their reason for spending elsewhere (26 out of 42). Visitors mentioned Damariscotta as a competing destination.

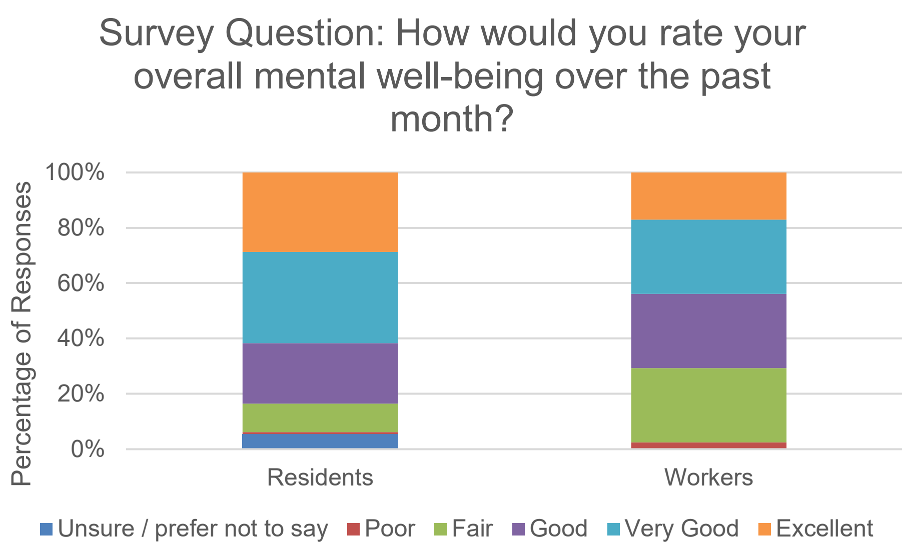
Jobs That Fulfill but Don't Always Pay the Bills

Workers find meaning in their work and maintain work-life balance, but only half feel fairly compensated, and two-thirds view local employment opportunities and wages negatively.

<u>Job Satisfaction and Career Advancement</u>

- **91% find their work meaningful and fulfilling** (70 out of 77)
- 83% maintain positive work-life balance (64 out of 77)

- Of those workers with a positive work-life balance, 53% (34 out of 64) report their mental health and well-being as “Very Good” or “Excellent” and 36% (23 out of 64) as “Fair” or “Good”.
  - In contrast, **no workers with a negative work-life balance described their mental health and well-being as “Very Good” or “Excellent”**.
  - Overall, workers show slightly more moderate levels of mental health and well-being than residents. Sixty-two percent of residents (90 out of 146) report their mental health and well-being as “Very good” or “Excellent” and 37% (53 out of 146) as “Fair” or “Good”.
- 57% have opportunities for career advancement (44 out of 77)
  - Of the 15 part-time workers who responded to the survey, 47% do not have advancement opportunities (7 out of 15).



<u>Compensation</u>

- **Only 51% of workers feel their compensation is fair** (39 out of 77), though 81% feel their household is overall financially stable (62 out of 77).
  - All 15 part-time workers report that their household is financially stable, with 93% reporting an income of $90,000 or above.
- For those workers who feel their household is financially unstable (25 out of 77), the top barriers identified were:
  - “I work full-time but my pay doesn’t cover my expenses”: 7 responses
  - “My rent or mortgage is too high”: 6 responses
  - “My property taxes are too high”: 4 responses
  - “Food prices are too high”: 4 responses
  - “Heating my home is too expensive”: 4 responses
- Across residents and workers, 67% (125 out of 187) have a negative view of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor’s employment opportunities and wages.

A Highly Mobile Workforce

With 74% working primarily in-person and half of multiple-job holders traveling outside the area for work, cross-commuting reveals limited local job variety and better opportunities elsewhere.

Work Arrangements and Tenure

- 81% work full-time (62 out of 77)
- 19% work part-time (15 out of 77)
- 77% hold only one job (59 out of 77)
- 23% hold multiple jobs (18 out of 77)
- 26% have worked in the community 5-10 years (20 out of 77)
- 18% have worked in the community 3-5 years (14 out of 77)
- 17% have worked in the community for 1-3 years (13 out of 77)
- 16% have worked in the community for over 20 years (12 of 77)
- **71% of people employed in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor for less than a year (5 of 7) work part-time**, suggesting that new workers may start in part-time roles or that finding full-time work initially is challenging.

Commuting

- **Of the 18 workers with multiple jobs, only 7 work all their jobs in Boothbay/Boothbay Harbor (39%)**. When looking at multiple job-holders who both live and work in the community (10 of 18), only 5 work all jobs locally (50%). Across all workers, almost three-quarters spend 75% or more of their hours in-person (57 out of 77).
    - All this shows significant cross-commuting, potentially indicating limited job availability or variety, or better opportunities elsewhere.
- Altogether, a majority of workers who do not live in Boothbay or Boothbay Harbor have a positive view of their commuting time (21 out of 41). Splitting the responses by part-time and full-time status yields slightly different results. **A majority of full-time, non-resident workers have a negative view of their commuting time (19 out of 35) and part-time, non-resident workers have a positive view (6 out of 6)**.

What's Working: Safety, Cleanliness, and Natural Beauty

An overwhelming majority praises downtown cleanliness, daytime and nighttime safety, well-maintained roads, and protection of natural resources from open spaces to wildlife.

- Business environment - majority positive views:
    - **Storefronts: 92% positive** (183 out of 199)
        - Residents: 90% (132 out of 146)
        - Non-resident workers: 95% (39 out of 41)
    - Financial services (banking): 77% positive (144 out of 187)
        - Residents: 83% (121 out of 146)

        - Non-resident workers: 56% (23 out of 41)
    - Types of dining establishments: 65% positive (130 out of 199)
        - Residents: 64% (94 out of 146)
        - Non-resident workers: 61% (25 out of 41)
    - Commercial and retail options: 60% positive (119 out of 199)
        - Residents: 58% (84 out of 146)
        - Non-resident workers: 61% (25 out of 41)
    - Types of retail establishments: 60% positive (119 out of 199)
        - Residents: 58% (85 out of 146)
        - Non-resident workers: 56% (23 out of 41)
- Transportation - majority positive views:
    - **Ability to travel by car: 93% positive** (173 out of 187)
        - Residents: 94% (137 out of 146)
        - Non-resident workers: 88% (36 out of 41)
    - Ability to travel to downtown by transportation of choice: 78% positive (155 out of 199)
        - Residents: 79% (115 out of 146)
        - Non-resident workers: 68% (28 out of 41)
    - Amount of traffic: 58% positive (115 out of 199)
        - Residents: 64% positive (93 out of 146)
        - Non-resident workers: 68% <u>negative</u> (28 out of 41) *outlier result*
- Public space and safety - majority positive views (residents and visitors, 158 total):
    - **Cleanliness of business/commercial areas: 96% positive** (152 out of 158)
    - **Daytime safety: 93% positive** (147 out of 158)
    - Nighttime safety: 88% positive (139 out of 158)
    - Condition of recreational paths and walking trails: 88% positive (139 out of 158)
    - Amount of public space: 74% positive (117 out of 158)
- Natural resource protection - majority positive views (residents and visitors, 158 total):
    - Open spaces: 86% positive (136 out of 158)
    - Wildlife: 80% positive (127 out of 158)
    - Wetlands: 73% positive (116 out of 158)
    - Working waterfront: 73% positive (116 out of 158)
    - Shorelines: 73% positive (116 out of 158)
    - Streams and rivers: 69% positive (109 out of 158)
    - Beaches: 59% positive (94 out of 158)

What's Not Working: Bikes, Parking, and Paychecks

Critical infrastructure gaps in bicycle access and parking combine with concerns about employment quality to create significant barriers to economic vitality.

- **Employment opportunities and wages: 67% negative view** (125 out of 187 residents and workers)
        - Residents: 70% negative (102 out of 146)
        - Non-resident workers: 56% negative (23 out of 41)

- **Bicycle infrastructure: 64% negative view** (128 out of 199 across all groups)
    - Residents: 65% negative (95 out of 146)
    - Non-resident workers: 66% negative (27 out of 41)
- **Parking: 66% negative view** (131 out of 199)
    - Residents: 65% negative (95 out of 146)
    - Non-resident workers: 73% negative (30 out of 41)

Workers' Future Plans

Workers indicated the amount of time that they plan to continue working in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor, with **the majority (55%) planning to continue work locally between 3-10 years**:

- 3-5 years: 29% (22)
- 5-10 years: 26% (20)
- Over 20 years: 13% (10)
- 10-20 years: 12% (9)
- 0-1 year: 8% (6)
- 1-3 years: 13% (10)

The most common reasons workers indicated they would stop working in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor included:

- Personal reasons: 47% (36 out of 77)
- **Career advancement: 39%** (30)
- Retirement: 36% (28)
- **Economic factors: 32%** (25)
- Logistical issues: 22% (17)
- Change in career direction: 18% (14)
- Job dissatisfaction: 17% (13)
- Involuntary departure: 12% (9)
- Education or entrepreneurship: 10% (8)
- Health and well-being: 1% (1)

Those who selected "Other" as a reason for leaving noted their dislike of local political direction, overreliance on philanthropy, seasonal employment, and starting a family as core to the future decision.

Top Represented Industries Amongst Workers

The top industries employing workers included:

- Other business or professional services: 31% (24 out of 77)
    - Amongst part-time workers: 47% (7 out of 15)
- Life sciences/biotechnology: 30% (23 out of 77)
- Sightseeing and tour guide operations: 12% (9)
- Marina and pleasurecraft services: 1%

Of note: No workers indicated that they work in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor's heritage industries (i.e., fishing, deep-sea and coastal shipping, ship and boat building and repair, and port operations and cargo handling).

Trends in Non-Resident Property Ownership

The majority of non-resident property owners form a stable property ownership base in the community, with most having purchased before 2010 and few intending to sell or expand their holdings in the near term.

Current Ownership

- Seventy-eight percent of non-resident property owners do not anticipate selling their properties within the next five years (18 out of 23).
- Number of properties owned:
  - 1 property: 70% (16 out of 23)
  - 2 properties: 5
  - 3 properties: 1
  - More than 3: 1
- The primary allowable use across the properties of all 23 non-resident owners is residential (100%). Three owners have property where commercial use is allowed, two where environmental use is allowed, one where agricultural use is allowed, and one where industrial use is allowed.
- Twenty-two percent own vacant properties (5 out of 23).

Acquisition Process

- Fifty-two percent reported no significant challenges when purchasing their properties (12 out of 23). For those who did encounter challenges, 39% cited property availability or selection as an issue (9 out of 23). Specific concerns mentioned in open responses included affordable housing (2) and downtown zoning restrictions (1).

Future Ownership

- Seventy-eight percent are not interested in purchasing additional property within the next five years (18 out of 23). Of the three non-resident property owners who did express interest in purchasing additional property, two are seeking commercial properties, one is seeking environmental and working waterfront property, and one is seeking residential property.

Trends in Business Profiles

The 8 business owners surveyed represent a small but established cross-section of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor's business community, with most having operated locally for over 15 years.

Industry

The primary industry represented was "Other business or professional services" (5 out of 8). Other industries included sightseeing and tour operations (3), manufacturing (2), and hotels/motels (1).

<u>Years Open</u>

Five of 8 businesses opened before 2010, four of which have operated locally (in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor) since that time. A fifth business also established itself in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor before 2010 but opened between 2010-2014, suggesting a gap between business formation and the start of operations. All in all, five businesses opened before 2010 and a slightly different mix of businesses established themselves in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor before 2010.

<u>Location</u>

Across all the businesses surveyed (8), half own their business space (4 out of 8); 2 are home-based; 1 rents space; and 1 declined to answer. **Half of the business owners surveyed have additional locations outside of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor (4 out of 8)**.

<u>Seasonality</u>

Five out of 8 businesses operate year-round, with 4 maintaining consistent offerings throughout the year.

Three operate seasonally, all from May through October. One business also extends their season into November through December.

Reasons for seasonal-only operation include lack of profitability (2) and reliance on seasonal weather or wildlife conditions (1). **Two of the 3 seasonal businesses—including the one reliant on seasonal weather—would prefer to operate year-round**.

<u>Employment</u>

A majority employ between 1 and 8 people during their busiest period. During their slowest periods, businesses retain full-time staff and contractors but lose part-time staff. Only one business adds part-time staff during slow periods.

<u>Patrons</u>

Businesses can serve between 1 and 2,500 patrons at one time and have between 100 and 350,000 unique patrons per year.

<u>Parking</u>

Among the 5 brick-and-mortar businesses, patron parking ranges from 2 to 650 spaces and employee parking from 2 to 80 spaces. One of the 5 businesses has more patron parking than patrons that can be served at one time. Two out of the 5 businesses have at least one parking spot per employee.

Underrepresentation

Three business owners identify their businesses as veteran-, LGBTQIA+-, or female-owned. None hold official certifications or designations such as Veteran Business Enterprise or Women Business Enterprise.

Access to Capital

Five of 8 work with or obtain financing from a local bank; 1 receives funding from a government agency. Six of 8 have not applied for new loans or financing in the last two years. Half have incurred personal debt to finance their business (4 out of 8). **Two of 8 have payments that are three or more months overdue, including vendor and supplier bills, taxes, and utilities**.

Future Plans

Future business plans over the next five years: 1 plans to sell and/or close; 5 have no plans to sell, close, or transfer; and 1 declined to answer.

Community Involvement

Half sponsor local events or programs (4 out of 8), and 75% volunteer their time in the community (6 out of 8). Chamber membership is common. One business owner cited their business as an overall draw to the area; 1 stated that they do not contribute to the community.

Business Owner Priorities

Businesses are prioritizing finding new customers over physical expansion.

- High priorities for the next two years:
    - Finding new customers: 63% (5 out of 8)
    - Increasing sales or revenue: 50% (4 out of 8)
- Low priorities for the next two years (includes not applicable responses):
    - Finding more space: 88% (7 out of 8)
    - Hiring more people: 63% (5 out of 8)
    - Improving accounting systems: 63% (5 out of 8)
    - Making business environmentally sustainable: 50% (4 out of 8)
    - Improving online presence: 50% (4 out of 8)
    - Getting capital: 50% (4 out of 8) *4 also selected this choice as a Medium or High priority*
- Sixty-three percent of business owners do not want to change anything about their physical location in the next two years (5 out of 8). Two owners want to expand their existing space and would be interested in doing that within Boothbay or Boothbay Harbor. One owner wants to reduce their existing space and move elsewhere within Maine, and plans to sell the business in the next two years.

Business Owner Challenges

Business owners highlight housing costs, as well as other costs of living, as the single greatest obstacle to hiring and retaining employees.

- Business owners indicated that they had between 0-6 open positions as of October 2025.
- Sixty-three percent report difficulty filling positions during their busiest times (5 out of 8). During the slowest period, half indicated the question was not applicable.

- Retention during the busy season: 3 report it is easy, 1 reports it is difficult, 3 said not applicable, and 1 declined to answer. During the slowest season: 3 report it is easy, 4 said not applicable, and 1 declined to answer.
- Top obstacles to hiring and retaining employees:
    - **Cost of housing: 63%** (5 out of 8)
    - **Limited seasonal housing availability: 63%** (5 out of 8)
    - Cost of living: 63% (5 out of 8)
    - Cost of childcare: 50% (4 out of 8)
    - Taxes: 50% (4 out of 8)
- **Five of eight business owners have no succession plan in place**, risking institutional knowledge and economic continuity as an aging population contemplates retirement.
- Support needs identified by business owners (no majority):
    - Access to low interest loans: 2
    - Accounting, bookkeeping, cash management: 2
    - Access to/applying for grant funding: 1
    - Creating/revising financial plans: 1
    - Networking opportunities with potential customers: 1
- Seven out of 8 business owners have not received pro bono coaching or assistance from a community organization, investor, or government agency in the last 12 months. Of those:
    - 4 didn't need it
    - 3 weren't familiar with this assistance/don't know providers/didn't know how to search
    - 1 said provider didn't speak their language

Parks as Community Anchors, Led by the Botanical Gardens

Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens dominates as the community's recreational centerpiece, with residents and visitors alike drawn to nature trails and hiking opportunities.

- The most popular parks for residents (146 total):
    - **Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens: 82%** (119)
    - Barrett's Park: 66% (97)
    - Oak Point Farm: 56% (82) - notable as resident-specific favorite
    - Ocean Point Preserve: 50% (73)
    - Linekin and Burley Preserves: 44% (64)
    - Thorpe Preserve: 27% (39)
    - Memorial Park: 26% (38)
    - Shipbuilder's Park: 25% (37)
- Thirty-three residents named an additional 10 parks not included on the survey: Porter Preserve, Ovens Mouth Preserve, Knickbocker Lake, Autumn View, Boothbay Memorial Library lawn, High school field and outdoor basketball court, Colby Preserve, Gregory Preserve, Schmid Preserve, and Dodge Preserve.
- Most popular parks for non-resident visitors (44 total):
    - Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens: 59% (26)
    - Barrett's Park: 32% (14)
    - Ocean Point Preserve: 32% (14)
- No non-resident visitors reported using Fullerton Park, Lewis Park, or Saunders Preserve, and no additional parks were mentioned beyond the survey list.

- Primary park uses by residents:
  - **Nature trails: 81%** (118 out of 146)
  - **Hiking: 67%** (98 out of 146)
  - Jogging: 38% (56)
  - Playground equipment: 14% (20)
  - Bike paths: 10% (15)
- Primary park uses by non-resident visitors:
  - Nature trails: 50% (22 out of 44)
  - Hiking: 32% (14)
- Additional activities mentioned by residents (34 respondents): picnicking, enjoying waterfronts, tranquility/rest and relaxation, walking the dog, volunteering, nature watching, snowshoeing, boating, swimming, and local events. No residents indicate that they regularly hunt (only activity with zero participation from residents). No non-resident visitors indicate that they regularly play baseball/softball, basketball, fish, hunt, play tennis, or use the youth center.

A Civically Aware but Cautiously Engaged Community

While two-thirds of residents are aware of opportunities to engage with community leaders and interested in providing feedback, 60% are not excited about current changes and half question whether plans serve residents' interests.

64%	**78%**	**60%**	**44%**
Aware of Engagement Opportunities	Want to Give Feedback to Leaders	Not Excited About Current Changes	Trust Community Plans Serve Residents' Interests
94/146	114/146	87/146	vs 44% disagree

- Sixty-four percent of residents are aware of opportunities to engage with community leaders (94 out of 146 residents).
- Town government participation among residents:
  - **Do not participate in any aspects of town government: 38%** (56)
  - Attend annual Town Meeting: 34% (50)
  - Watch or listen to recordings of meetings: 32% (46)
  - Attend Selectboard or other committee or board meetings: 20% (29)
  - Serve as a committee or board representative or town staff: 5% (8)
  - Other forms of participation mentioned by 14 residents included: voting, school committee involvement, and newspaper engagement.
- **Seventy-eight percent are interested in providing feedback to community leaders** (114 out of 146 residents).
- **Sixty percent are not excited about changes and plans happening in the community** (87 out of 146 residents).
- **Residents were split on whether community plans are made with residents' best interests in mind**: 44% agree (64), 44% disagree (64), with the remainder neutral or indicating not applicable.
- Top information sources by respondent group:
  - **Residents (146 total): newspaper (85%, 124), Facebook (55%, 80), Chamber of Commerce (38%, 56)**, city government website (29%, 42), community newsletter (25%, 37), radio (18%, 26), and word of mouth (15%, 22).

    - Business owners (8 total): **newspaper (75%, 6) and Chamber of Commerce (63%, 5**).
    - Visitors (91 total): **newspaper (69%, 63), Chamber of Commerce (30%, 27)**, and Facebook (23%, 21).
    - Workers (41 total): no single majority source, with top choices being Chamber of **Commerce (41%, 17), Facebook (41%, 17), and newspaper (32%, 13)**.
    - Non-resident property owners: Chamber of Commerce and Facebook (based on 1 respondent who received this question).

The Volunteer Paradox: Deep Commitment from Some, None from Others

While non-volunteers slightly outnumber volunteers, those who do engage contribute across dozens of organizations from land trusts to libraries to cultural institutions.

- **Fifty-three percent of residents do not volunteer (78 out of 146); 47% do volunteer (68 out of 146).**
- **Sixty-six percent of residents report that they and their neighbors help each other with household tasks** such as lending tools, sharing produce, and house or pet sitting (96 out of 146).
- Organizations where residents volunteer include: YMCA, the hospital and Hospital Auxiliary, Rotary Club, Student Aid Fund, Boothbay Harbor Regional High School committees, Land Trust, Local Cable Access Channel, Route 1 Bypass Committee, Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission, Selectman, the library and Boothbay Harbor Memorial Library used book store, Habitat for Humanity, Railway Village and Spooktacular, Boothbay Harbor Waterfront Preservation, Chamber of Commerce, Community Center, Community Resource Council, Juniper Point Village Improvement Society, Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens and Gardens Aglow, Congregational Church of Boothbay Harbor, Spruceworld Association, Opera House, East Side Waterfront Park, Boothbay Garden Club, Boothbay Region Health Center, Boothbay Region Healthcare, Oceans on Tap, Preble Street, Earth Day, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Science, Historical Society, Boothbay Region Climate Action Team, Barters Island Community Association, HospitalityMaine, Rebuilding Together, Shipyard Classic, St. Andrews Thrift Shop, Harbor Theater, American Legion VFW, Action for Animals Maine, Rescue Charlie's Friends, Boothbay Sea and Science Center, Southport Yacht Club, Southport Island Association, Boothbay Baptist Church, Lincoln County Arts Festival, Boothbay Register, River Arts Gallery, New Hope Midcoast, Boothbay Fire Department, Windjammer, Boothbay VETS, Brady's community lunch, buoy tree assembly, food pantry and community fridge, Spruce Point Association, Fisherman's Festival, Girl Scouts, Maine Needs, Southport Library, Joint Economic Development Committee, All Saints by the Sea, Boothbay Region Elementary School, West Harbor Pond Association, Boosters Club, Maine People's Alliance, Boothbay Shores Association, Bayville Village Corporation, comprehensive plan committee, food donations, and various neighborly support activities.
- Residents most commonly reported having skills in:
    - Cooking and culinary arts: 25 respondents
    - Digital literacy and computer skills: 24
    - DIY and home improvement: 23
    - Budgeting and financial management: 20
    - Teaching and tutoring: 20

- An additional 27 residents described skills including creative and artistic abilities (writing, editing, photography, art, dance, pottery, music, floral design, and woodturning), trade skills (welding, home improvement, handyman services, construction management, and gardening), business management (HR, entrepreneurship, and hospitality), specialized professional skills (legal, hydrogeology, R&D, and hair styling), and marine skills (shellfish aquaculture and boating).

Cultural Identity Rooted in Maritime Heritage and Community Traditions

Residents identify strongly with fishing, lobstering, and shipbuilding history, along with beloved annual events like Windjammer Days and Fisherman's Festival, but personal connection to these histories is waning.

- When asked about history and culture, residents most commonly highlighted maritime industries (fishing, lobstering, shipbuilding, and boatbuilding); community events and festivals including Windjammer Days, Fisherman's Festival, the lighted boat parade, Halloween parade, July 4th fireworks, Gardens Aglow, Fall Foliage Fair, Farmers Market, and Tuna Challenge; cultural venues such as the Opera House, historical museums, and YArts; natural resources including lighthouses, islands (especially Burnt Island), land trust trails, and the connection to the sea; and historical industries such as ice harvesting, canning factories, and farming. Residents also described the area as a summer destination and vacation spot as central to its identity.
- Eighty percent of residents do not have a historic structure on their property (117 out of 146); 20% do (29 out of 146).
- Fifty-one percent of residents do not have family records or research on family history in Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor (75 out of 146); 23% do (34 out of 146); and 26% indicated not applicable (37 out of 146).

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings from this survey paint a picture of a community with deep roots, strong civic pride, and significant investment in place — but one facing real and interconnected pressures around housing affordability, wage adequacy, workforce retention, and representation. Residents and workers alike express meaningful attachment to Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor's natural beauty, maritime heritage, and small village character, and demonstrate this commitment through long tenure, substantial property investment, and extensive volunteerism. At the same time, critical gaps persist: **two-thirds view local employment opportunities and wages negatively, businesses struggle to hire and retain workers due to housing costs, bicycle and parking infrastructure fall short** of community needs, and trust in local leadership is evenly divided. Perhaps most importantly, **the voices captured in this survey skew toward established, older, and higher-income homeowners — meaning the challenges documented here likely understate the full scope of economic hardship** experienced by renters, young workers, seasonal employees, and others who are harder to reach but no less central to the community's future. These findings, combined with results from other asset mapping activities conducted as part of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor's RISE process, will inform strategies to build on the community's considerable strengths while addressing the barriers that stand between today's challenges and a more equitable and economically resilient future.