

Rye 2035 Outreach and Engagement Report

April 15, 2024



Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Key Findings from Public Outreach	3
Summary of Results	
Community Forum and Online Tool	4
Community	6
Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability	11
Land and Development	16
Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience	22
Municipal Operations and Organization	28
Appendix A: Survey Monkey Report – Community Forum/Online Tool	34

Introduction

The Master Plan develops a distinct path and vision for Rye's future and requires an inclusive public engagement process to ensure a diversity of voices are heard. Public outreach is important to the master planning process because community feedback directly will shape the new Master Plan, Rye 2035, and how growth, development, and resource protection is guided over the next ten years. The following outreach techniques were used throughout the project to engage the public:

- One in-person, evening community forum event at the Rye Junior High School in February of 2024.
- An online version of the community forum event available in February/March of 2024.
- Advertising of public participation opportunities through:
 - Rye Future project website (a website for three related planning initiatives in Rye including the Master Plan update, the Build-Out Analysis, and the Housing Assessment).
 - Master Plan webpage on the Town of Rye website.
 - Tabling at community events, such as Rye 400.
 - Email letter and announcement to all municipal staff, boards, and committees including the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Conservation Commission, Select Board, Energy Committee, Heritage Commission, Beach Committee, and Capital Improvement Plan Committee.
 - Rye Facebook pages and social media including the two Town of Rye Facebook pages, the Rye Police page, Rye NH Community Forum Page, Rye Public Library page, and personal Facebook pages of the Master Plan Steering Committee members.
 - Rye 2035 pens distributed at local businesses, town facilities, post office, others.
 - Distribution of flyers at town facilities, the library, and shared with school principals.
 - Distribution of flyers to local groups, organizations, and businesses including Common Roots Café, Seaport Fish and organizations including schools, churches, and Town Boards/Committees in town.

- A large poster display at the Deliberative Session and distribution of posters at the Town Hall, Library, Town Annex, Public Works Department, Transfer Station, and the Rye Elementary School during local election voting.
- Project email subscriber list and public Town of Rye email subscriber list.
- News articles in the Stroll Newsletter and the Town Newsletter.

Key Findings from Public Outreach

This section provides an overview of key findings collected during public outreach activities completed for this project. Key findings were generated by identifying notable and reoccurring themes and topics reported by community members during public outreach. Community members identified the following as priorities for planning for Rye's future. Please note that these findings are not listed by order of importance.

Key findings from the responses collected included the following:

- Respondents expressed a collective desire to **balance development with environmental protection**, promote **sustainable practices**, and **engage the community** in preserving Rye's **natural resources** for future generations.
- There is an overall desire for **community spaces, affordable housing options, improved transportation, enhanced senior activities and services, and infrastructure improvements** such as sidewalks and bike paths to promote a more age-friendly environment in Rye.
- However, respondents reflected a range of opinions regarding **housing development** in Rye, encompassing concerns about **community character, affordability, environmental impact, and infrastructure capacity**.
- Respondents provided context related to the **difficulty of finding volunteers** and the **rise of external civic groups** in Rye. Respondents noted that transparency of processes, perceived inclusion of governmental processes, trust, process inefficiencies, and social dynamics all played a role in the difficulty of finding volunteers to serve in municipal government.
- Respondents collectively agree that **Rye's unique character** as a semi-rural, small coastal town should be supported by preserving nature, history, community, and its low-density development.

- Respondents expressed a desire for more **balanced and environmentally conscious development**, simplified regulations, improved oversight, and the promotion of community well-being and economic vitality.
- There are a **range of perspectives on renewable energy production in Rye**, with **solar energy** being the **most favored option**, while **wind energy** faces considerable **opposition**. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on **respecting individual property rights** and **minimizing taxpayer burden** while implementing renewable energy initiatives.
- There are mixed views about how best the town should support **energy efficiency** and **renewable energy production**. Mechanisms that were highlighted include **financial incentives, simplification of processes, educational support, and collaboration with state and federal programs**.
- Some respondents expressed **significant concern** regarding the **potential consequences of climate change**, particularly in coastal areas. **Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and environmental degradation** are seen as major issues that **require attention and action**. However, there are mixed opinions on what kind of role the Town should play in addressing these issues.
- Other respondents identified the need for a **comprehensive approach** to addressing the challenges of **coastal resilience and extreme weather events** while emphasizing the importance of **collaboration, preparedness, and environmental stewardship**.

Summary of Results

Community Forum and Online Tool

Community Forum Event

On February 15, 2024, the Town of Rye held a community forum event in the evening to inform community members of current information and data on Rye, and to learn what community member's perspectives, thoughts, and feedback are on the future of Rye over the next ten to twenty years. Approximately 60 people attended this event. A brief presentation on the background of the project was given and participants were then encouraged to visit stations by topic to provide their feedback. These topics were taken from the draft Vision for the Rye Master Plan and included:

- Community
- Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability
- Land and Development
- Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience
- Municipal Operations and Organization

Alternative Online Tool

To further engage community members who were not able to attend the in-person community forum events, an alternative online tool was presented to the wider community to increase participation. **320** responses were collected at the forum event and through the online tool combined.

The following section provides a summary of results by question from both the in-person forums and the alternative online tool. They are broken out by topic and the responses are summarized for each question the public was asked to consider. The findings were analyzed using a mix of qualitative and quantitative analysis tools. It should be noted that these findings per question were summarized based on raw feedback that was received and are not ordered by level of importance. A complete Survey Monkey report of raw comments and feedback provided by the public is included in the Appendix.

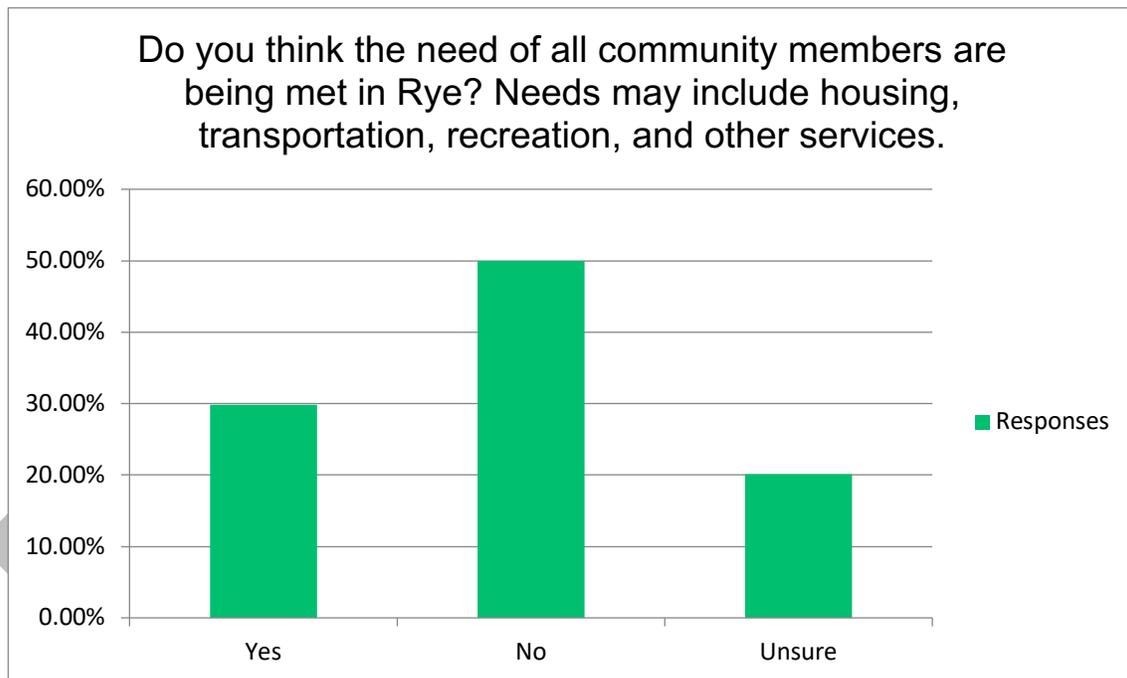
Community

Do you think the need of all community members are being met in Rye? Needs may include housing, transportation, recreation, and other services.

Answered: 278

Skipped: 42

- 50% of respondents do not think the needs of all community members are being met.
- However, about 30% of respondents do think community members needs are being met in Rye, and
- 20% of respondents are unsure.



If not, how could the needs of community members be better supported?

Answered: 156

Skipped: 164

Respondents believe the needs of Rye community members could be better supported by:

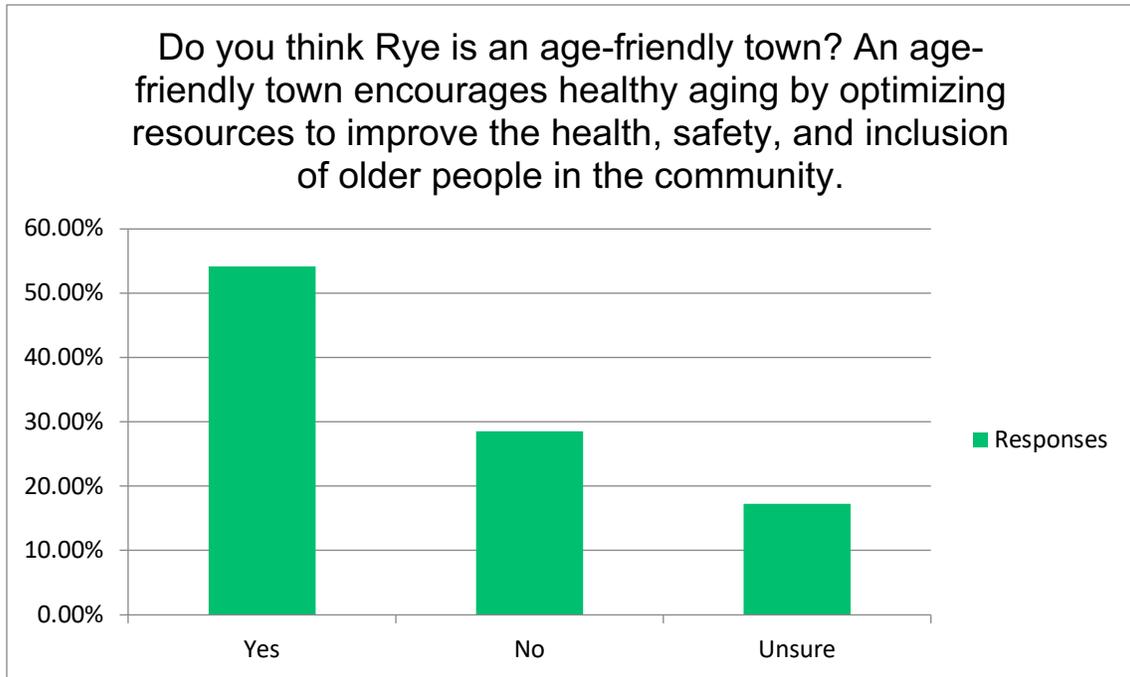
- Providing more affordable housing options in town particularly for low-income families, seniors on fixed incomes, and younger workforce members. Suggestions for expanding affordable housing options included:
 - Requiring affordable housing percentages in new developments
 - Encouraging accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
 - Providing tax credits for low-income elderly homeowners
- Improving transportation services, including handicap-accessible vans, shuttle services to neighboring areas, and public transportation options. Respondents expressed concerns about pedestrian and bicycle safety, and many advocated for sidewalks, bike lanes, and traffic speed control measures to improve safety.
- Expanding recreational facilities and spaces, such as tennis courts, pickleball courts, gyms, community gathering areas, and an indoor recreation center that are accessible to residents of all ages. Some respondents indicated a desire for a town center with cafes, shops, and recreational amenities.

Do you think Rye is an age-friendly town? An age-friendly town encourages healthy aging by optimizing resources to improve the health, safety, and inclusion of older people in the community.

Answered: 273

Skipped: 47

- 54% of respondents think Rye is an age-friendly town,
- 29% of respondents do not think the town is age-friendly, and
- 17% of respondents were unsure.



If not, what could be improved to make Rye more age-friendly?

Answered: 116

Skipped: 204

Respondents identified the following ways to make Rye a more age-friendly town:

- A Community Center and more community gathering space was consistently mentioned to encourage multi-generational collaboration, socialization, and a sense of community.
- Affordable housing options to meet the needs of seniors, young adults, and middle income.
- A safer, connected, and more accessible transportation network to include safe routes for walking and bike riding, better beach access points, and more transportation options for seniors or disabled people.

What are your thoughts or ideas on how to create additional housing units in Rye? Which areas in Rye are the most appropriate for new housing and what types of units should they be?

Answered: 216

Skipped: 104

Respondents identified the following thoughts, ideas, and areas in Rye related to future housing development:

- There are concerns about maintaining the rural character and small-town atmosphere of Rye and how it could be negatively affected by new housing development.
- Overall, there is preference for smaller, affordable housing options such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), duplexes, or cluster communities.
- Respondents emphasized that if new development were to occur, parcels along Route 1 or Lafayette Road are more appropriate for higher density housing, particularly for workforce or affordable housing.
- Some respondents expressed skepticism or opposition to further development due to concerns about infrastructure availability, water supply capacity and quality, environmental impact, and overcrowding.
- Some respondents expressed preference for mixed-use developments, senior housing, or condominiums, particularly in areas with existing infrastructure like sewer and water.

Rye is fortunate to have a significant number of volunteers on municipal boards and committees, but recruiting volunteers is increasingly difficult. And yet, it appears that groups have formed outside of municipal government as well to monitor and direct the actions of the community. Why is this, and are there ways to get these groups directly involved in municipal government? Please explain below.

Answered: 186

Skipped: 134

The following themes emerged from respondents:

- Respondents expressed concerns about the lack of transparency, trust, and communication in local government and volunteer boards. Issues such as

unclear decision-making processes, inadequate explanations for actions, and perceived favoritism contribute to a lack of trust among residents. Respondents express a lack of trust in government officials and perceive them as having personal political agendas. There are concerns about backroom deals and a perceived lack of accountability in decision-making.

- Respondents expressed the perception that certain boards and committees have become closed or exclusive, with like-minded individuals dominating decision-making processes. It was noted that exclusivity leads to discouragement of others from volunteering and leads to a lack of diversity in governance.
- Respondents expressed frustration with the bureaucratic processes involved in volunteering for municipal committees and boards.
- It was noted by some respondents that the emergence of outside groups and the proliferation of social media discussions further divide the community. Respondents mention instances of hostility, incivility, and ideological conflicts, which further deter potential volunteers from getting involved.

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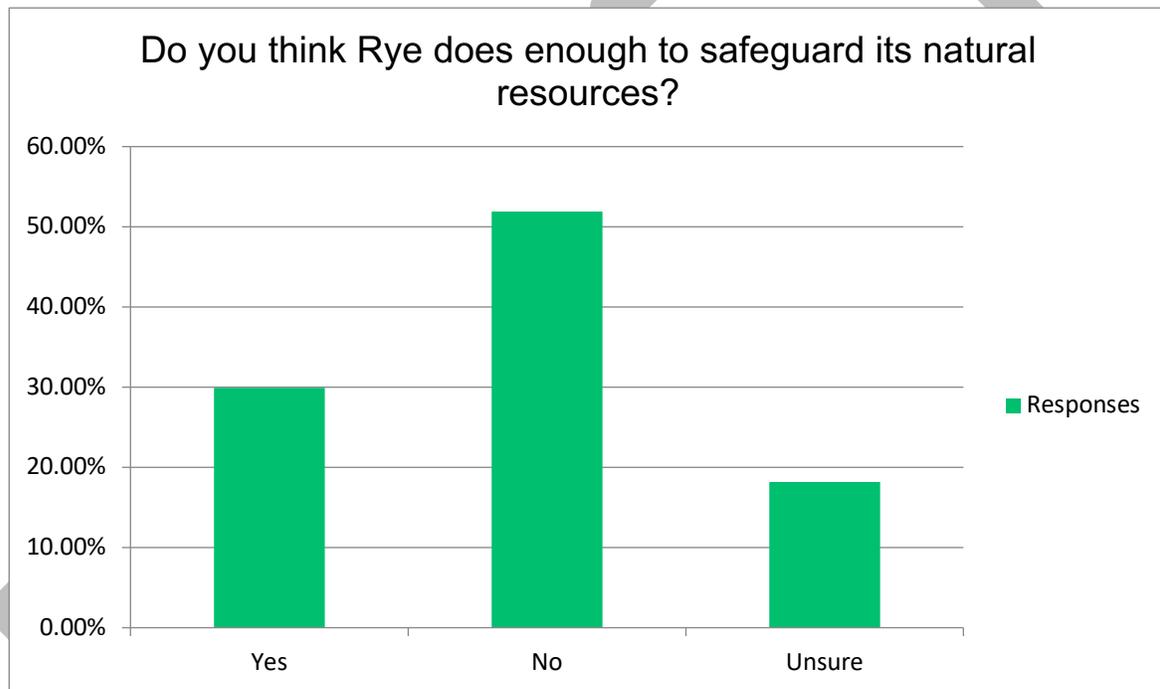
Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability

Do you think Rye does enough to safeguard its natural resources?

Answered: 314

Skipped: 6

- About half of all respondents (51%) do not think Rye does enough to safeguard its natural resources.
- 30% of respondents think the town does, and
- 18% of respondents were unsure.



What natural resources need further protection in Rye? These may include drinking water resources, beaches, forests, fields, etc.

Answered: 276

Skipped: 44

The top natural resources that respondents identified as needing further protection in Rye are as follows:

- Drinking water resources were identified by many respondents with repeated mentions of water quality concerns including contamination and pollution from septic systems, the need for better management practices, and calls for stricter enforcement.
- Surface water resources, such as Parson's Creek and watershed.
- Rye's beaches were also consistently emphasized with respondents expressing concerns related to overcrowding, cleanliness, erosion, and pollution from various sources, such as dog waste and runoff.
- Wetlands and marshes were also identified as needing further protection due to their ecological significance and role in flood protection, water quality, and habitat preservation.
- Forests and fields were mentioned in relation to the need for additional land conservation, maintaining open space, preserving habitat, and preventing further development that could degrade forest and field ecosystems and increase flooding.

How could Rye better protect, steward, or manage the remaining natural resource areas? Mechanisms may include strategic land conservation, strengthening land use regulations, public education, trail management, etc.

Answered: 250

Skipped: 70

The top three natural resource protection mechanisms identified by respondents include:

- Land Conservation and Management
 - Many respondents expressed the importance of preserving natural resources in Rye, strategic land conservation, and maintaining existing conservation lands.
 - However, approximately 35 out of the 250 respondents that answered this question expressed that they believe Rye has enough conservation land already, and that efforts should be focused more on maintaining and managing what is existing.
- Regulations and Enforcement

- Overall, there is strong support for stricter land use regulations, particularly pertaining to ecologically sensitive areas like wetlands and shorelines, and stronger enforcement of regulations, especially related to septic systems and building codes.
- Respondents emphasized the importance of preventing overdevelopment, addressing invasive species, and ensuring proper trail maintenance.
- Public Education and Engagement
 - Respondents indicated the importance of public education in fostering environmental stewardship and compliance with the town’s regulations. It was also suggested that educational initiatives targeting residents, students, and visitors be implemented to raise awareness about conservation, water quality, and responsible land use practices.

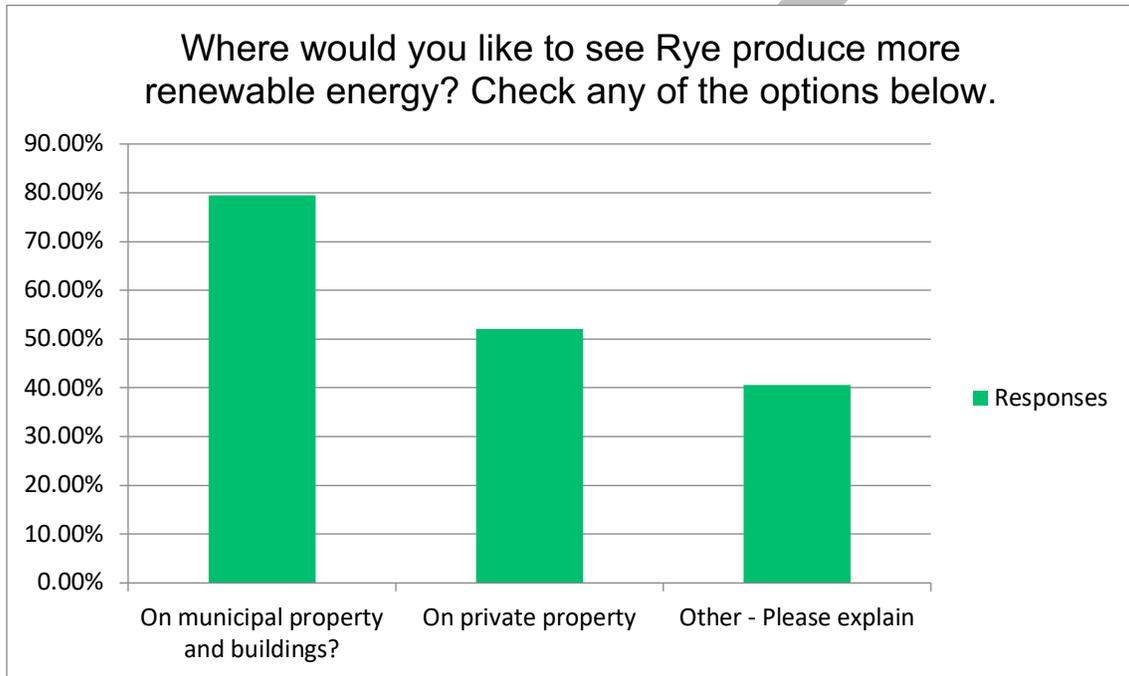
Where would you like to see Rye produce more renewable energy?

Answered: 288

Skipped: 32

- Most respondents (80%) are in support of Rye producing more renewable energy on municipal property and buildings.
- About 52% of respondents would support renewable energy on private property.
- Approximately 41% of respondents selected “other”. The top themes that emerged include:
 - Many respondents indicated a preference for solar energy and suggested installing solar panels on rooftops, municipal buildings, schools, and other suitable locations. Some respondents also expressed a desire to explore solar initiatives and community solar farms.
 - Many respondents expressed significant opposition to wind energy, with many expressing concerns about its visual impact, potential harm to wildlife, and perceived inefficiency.
 - 20 respondents emphasized that the decision to adopt renewable energy should be left to individual property owners rather than mandated by the town.

- Some respondents noted offering tax incentives or property tax breaks could encourage private investment in renewable energy.
- While some respondents expressed a sentiment against using taxpayer funds for renewable energy projects unless they demonstrate a clear economic benefit or pay for themselves within a reasonable timeframe.



Should the Town support homeowners and businesses in their efforts related to energy efficiency and renewable energy production? How might the Town do this?

Answered: 251

Skipped: 69

- There are mixed views on whether the town should provide support, with approximately 95 respondents advocating for tax breaks and facilitation, while about 50 respondents opposed any involvement by the town. Some respondent’s expressed specific concerns about taxpayer dollars being used to support renewable energy initiatives, while others believe it is the town's responsibility to aid in the transition to renewable energy sources.

- The top themes that emerged include:
 - Financial incentives and tax breaks for homeowners and businesses who invest in renewable energy technologies like solar panels such as offering property tax breaks, tax reductions, or rebates to offset the costs of installation. Some indicated the importance of competitive loans being provided through partnerships with local financial institutions.
 - There is continued support for making the permitting process easier and more streamlined for homeowners and businesses looking to implement renewable energy solutions. Recommendations include providing no-fee permits, simplifying zoning regulations, and reducing obstacles to obtaining variances for renewable energy installations.
 - Respondents emphasize the need for educational resources and information on energy conservation practices for homeowners and businesses. Suggestions included sharing information widely on available incentives, promoting energy efficiency measures, and facilitating community power sign-ups for lower energy rates.
 - Several respondents suggest that the town should work in partnership with state and federal programs to support homeowners and businesses in their efforts related to energy efficiency and renewable energy production.

Land and Development

From your perspective, how has the community of Rye changed over the last ten years? What concerns or additional opportunities do you see related to these changes?

Answered: 202

Skipped: 118

Respondents identified the following issues, concerns, and opportunities related to how Rye has changed over the last ten years:

- Increased Development and Overbuilding:
 - Concerns: Loss of rural charm, destruction of habitat, increased traffic congestion, wear and tear on infrastructure, loss of community character, larger homes not in keeping with the town's feel.
 - Opportunities: Implementing better oversight on new buildings and development, promoting agriculture to maintain rural aspects, incentivizing small farm owners, enforcing stricter wetland protection ordinances.
- Rising Costs and Lack of Affordability:
 - Concerns: Increased housing costs, pricing out young families, lack of economic diversity, loss of businesses, declining population of school-aged children.
 - Opportunities: Introducing more affordable housing options like accessory dwelling units (ADUs), promoting economic diversity, investing in infrastructure.
- Changing Demographics and Community Dynamics:
 - Concerns: Aging population, loss of younger families, divide between older residents and younger generations, lack of inclusivity in decision-making processes.
 - Opportunities: Encouraging younger families to move in through better school facilities and affordable housing, fostering inclusivity in community engagement.

- Environmental Concerns:
 - Concerns: Impact of development on natural resources like wetlands and beaches, flooding issues exacerbated by climate change, water quality degradation.
 - Opportunities: Strengthening wetland protection ordinances, investing in infrastructure to mitigate flooding, promoting environmental awareness, conservation efforts.
- Traffic and Infrastructure Challenges:
 - Concerns: Increased road traffic, speeding, inadequate infrastructure, safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists, parking issues.
 - Opportunities: Improving road safety measures, investing in better signage and infrastructure, addressing parking limitations, considering consolidation of school facilities to optimize resources.

In your opinion, what defines Rye’s semi-rural, small-town character? This may include certain areas of town, buildings, open space properties, destinations, and other attributes related to the community’s character, identity, and land use pattern.

Answered: 206

Skipped: 114

Respondents believe the following attributes define’s Rye’s unique character:

- Respondents highlighted the importance of open spaces, including fields, woods, marshes, beaches, and conservation areas. This emphasis on preserving natural landscapes contributes significantly to Rye's semi-rural character.
- The presence of historic homes, barns, town hall, and other buildings adds to the charm and character of Rye. Maintaining these structures is seen as crucial for preserving the town's identity.
- Respondents expressed a desire to limit commercial activity and maintain a small-town atmosphere with locally-owned businesses. Some respondents indicated preference for small-scale commercial properties over larger developments, particularly along Route 1.
- Rye’s sense of community, where people know each other and look out for one another, was highlighted as a defining aspect of of the town’s character.

Events, gatherings, and community spaces, like Parsons Field, were mentioned as important for fostering this sense of connection.

- The preference for low-density housing, larger lots, and single-family homes contributes to the semi-rural feel of Rye. Preserving spacious neighborhoods and limiting high-density developments were common themes among respondents.

What aspects of this character need to be retained as development and redevelopment continues? Examples may include the town center, conservation land, beaches, etc.

Answered: 197

Skipped: 123

Respondents identified the following aspects of Rye's character that needs to be retained as future development occurs:

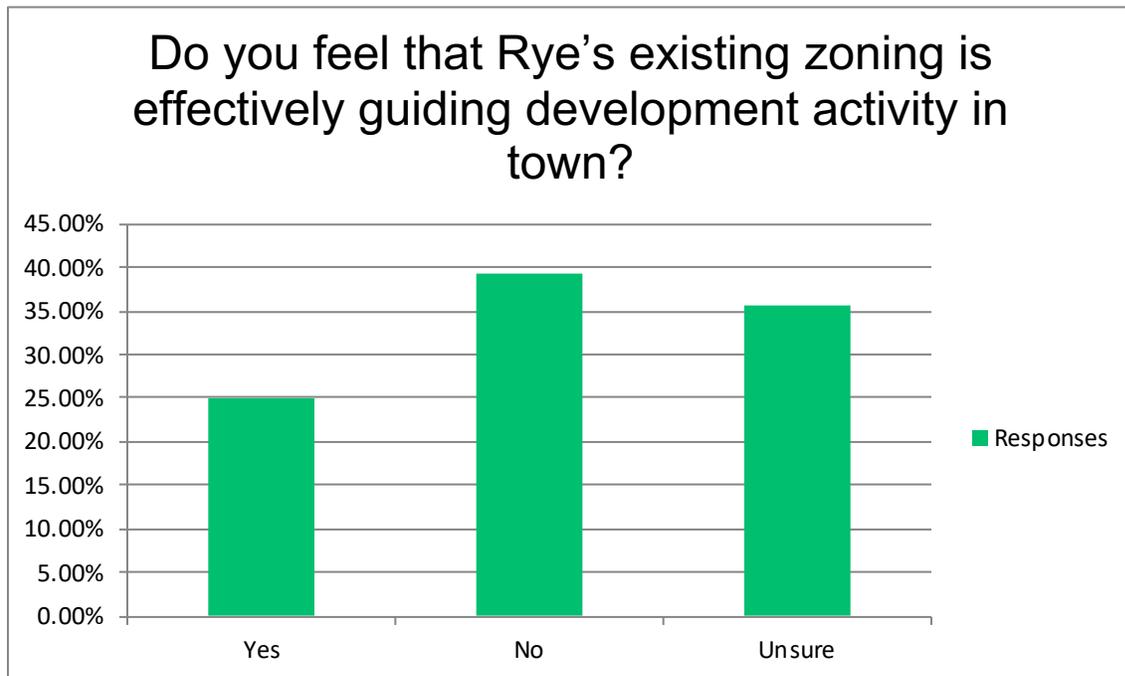
- Conservation of natural resources and open spaces, including forests, fields, wetlands, and beaches.
- Preservation of the historic town center and its character, with an emphasis on maintaining its semi-rural vibe. There appears to be some conflict whether the town center should be changed or not. However, there seems to be consensus that safer pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is needed especially in this area of Rye.
- Limiting overdevelopment, particularly in the town center, and preserving the town's small-town charm.
- Enhancing community spaces and amenities, such as sidewalks, gathering spots, and local businesses.
- Enforcing zoning regulations and land use policies to control development and maintain the town's semi-rural character.

Do you feel that Rye's existing zoning is effectively guiding development activity in town?

Answered: 244

Skipped: 76

- Respondents appear to be rather split if Rye’s existing zoning is effectively guiding development in town as almost 40% think it is not,
- 36% are unsure, and
- A quarter of respondents (25%) think that Rye’s zoning is.



If not, do you have any improvements you would suggest?

Answered: 127

Skipped: 193

For those respondents that do not think Rye’s existing zoning regulations effectively guide development activity in town, the following improvements were suggested:

- Streamline regulations and their process. Respondents suggested that the town should reduce complex regulations and committee oversight, simplify zoning rules to prevent exploitation by those with resources, and improve the permit process to make it more efficient and accessible to the average public.

- Enhancement of environmental protections to strengthen zoning to limit construction, especially in sensitive areas like wetlands, enforce wetland regulations more strictly, and protect aquifers and natural resources from overdevelopment.
- Encouraging affordable housing options and preventing overdevelopment of luxury properties was suggested as well as allowing for more diverse housing options, including smaller single-family homes and detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs), limiting the size of houses on small lots, and preventing excessive rebuilding.
- Improvement of Zoning Board oversight was a common theme among many respondents suggesting that there is a need for the reduction of the granting of variances (especially for projects encroaching on setbacks or impacting wetlands), ensuring that the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) adheres strictly to zoning ordinances, and limiting the influence of special interests to ensure fair decision-making.
- A few respondents also suggested that the town promote local economic development and community services in Rye including encouraging small businesses and services in town centers, development of mixed-use zoning to attract smaller businesses and apartments, and enhancement of community amenities such as gathering places, sidewalks, and bike paths is desired.

If you could change anything about Rye’s transportation network (e.g. roads, sidewalks, bike infrastructure, connectivity, traffic congestion, safety, etc.), what would you change and why?

Answered: 224

Skipped: 96

The following themes emerged for desired transportation network improvements from respondents:

- Respondents expressed a need for more pedestrian infrastructure, particularly in high-traffic areas, such as around schools and town centers, to improve pedestrian safety. Concerns were raised about the lack of sidewalks in town and the danger it poses to walkers, joggers, and children. There were also numerous responses that called for enhanced bike

infrastructure, including dedicated bike lanes, bike paths, and safer routes for cyclists. Some responses mentioned the need for wider shoulders on roads to accommodate cyclists, while others suggested designated bike lanes to separate bikes from vehicular traffic.

- Many respondents highlighted the need to address speeding issues and enforce speed limits more rigorously. Suggestions included lowering speed limits, installing speed monitors and warning devices, and increasing police enforcement to deter speeding.
- Many individuals expressed concerns about the poor condition of roads in Rye, including potholes and deteriorating surfaces. There were calls for better road maintenance and more frequent paving to ensure safer driving conditions.
- Improved beach accessibility was also mentioned by respondents including improving transportation and safety in beach areas, adding sidewalks and bike lanes in appropriate places, improving parking regulations to alleviate congestion, and enhancing accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

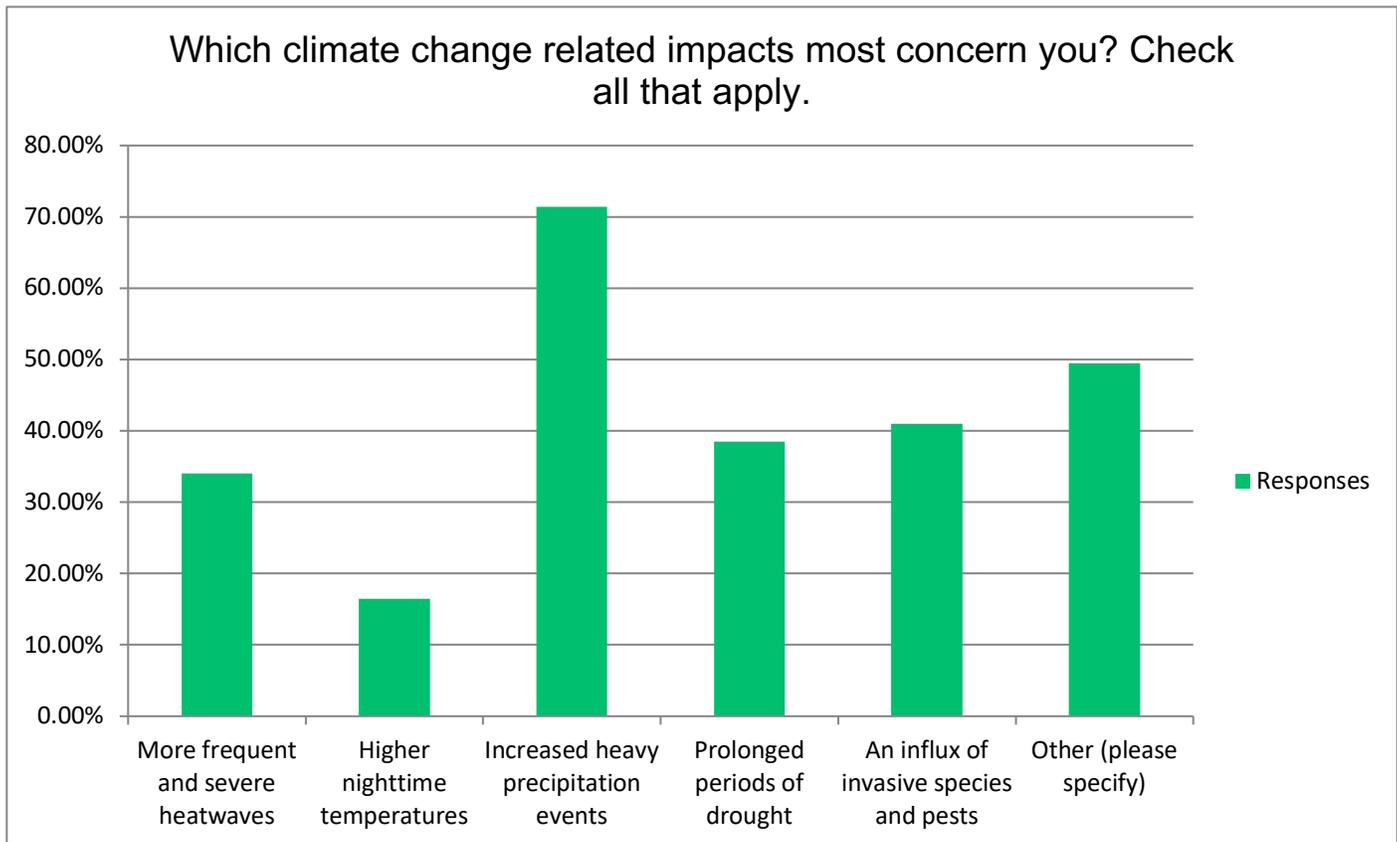
Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience

Which climate change related impacts most concern you? Check all that apply.

Answered: 273

Skipped: 47

- Increased heavy precipitation events seems to be the most concerning climate change related impact among respondents at 71%.
- Other concerns related to climate change impacts that were identified by respondents include:
 - Coastal flooding and sea level rise and its effects such as damage to infrastructure, erosion of beaches, and increased flooding during high tides.
 - The increase in frequency and severity of storms, including heavy precipitation events, windstorms, and storm surges. Concerns about storm damage to shoreline properties, roads, and infrastructure were prevalent among respondents.
 - Water quality, including contamination from flooding, runoff, and rising groundwater levels. Some respondents expressed concern about the decline in biodiversity, such as the loss of habitat for certain species and the decline in populations of oysters and other marine life.
- Approximately 15 respondents noted that they are opposed to the town getting involved in mitigating these climate change related impacts.



Rye is seeking new ways to prepare for and effectively respond to extreme weather events, flooding, and coastal storm emergencies. What actions or initiatives should Rye build into the town budget to accomplish what is needed?

Answered: 221

Skipped: 99

Respondents identified the following ways Rye can effectively prepare and respond to climate change impacts:

- Protection of the coast and infrastructure investment including:
 - Reinforcing and rebuilding seawalls.
 - Improving drainage systems along the coastline.
 - Constructing more durable barriers against storm surges.
 - Investing in sustainable infrastructure to mitigate the effects of extreme weather events. NH Route 1A was specifically identified.
- Emergency management and preparedness including:
 - Allocating funds for emergency response teams and equipment.

- Establishing emergency funds for disaster cleanup and repair.
- Developing evacuation plans and designating emergency shelters.
- Enhancing communication systems for residents during storm events.
- Coordinating with neighboring towns and state agencies for shared resources and response plans.
- Environmental conservation and resilience including:
 - Additional protection and restoration of natural barriers like salt marshes and wetlands.
 - Implementing zoning changes to prevent new construction in vulnerable areas.
 - Supporting initiatives for native landscaping and invasive species management.
 - Investment in long-term plans for coastal resilience and adaptation to sea-level rise.
 - Partnerships with universities and environmental experts for research and monitoring programs.

In your opinion, what are the highest priority buildings, roads, or sites that should be protected from climate impact, flooding, and natural hazards?

Answered: 217

Skipped: 103

According to respondents, the highest priority structures and infrastructure that should be prioritized from climate change impacts include:

- Public safety and town administration buildings including the Town Hall, Library, and Public Safety Building (Rye Police and Fire) with emphasis on the need to safeguard essential services such as schools, emergency response buildings, and municipal infrastructure like water sources, sewer systems, and roads. Respondents expressed concerns about maintaining access to critical facilities, ensuring safe evacuation routes, and protecting water resources from contamination due to flooding.
- Coastal areas and roadways including Rye's beaches, Ocean Boulevard, Harbor Road, and Route 1A. Respondents suggested implementing mitigation measures, constructing more resilient infrastructure, raising roads near marshes, reinforcing seawalls, developing comprehensive

adaptation strategies to address flooding, and prioritizing the protection of coastal roads, bridges, and access points to beaches and waterways. Respondents also expressed concerns about erosion, sea level rise, and the impact of climate change on coastal communities and infrastructure.

- Respondents emphasized the importance of protecting natural habitats, wetlands, marshes, and watershed areas to mitigate flooding, maintain water quality, and preserve biodiversity. Respondents expressed concerns about saltwater intrusion, habitat degradation, and the need for sustainable management practices to conserve ecosystems. Recommendations included:
 - Restricting development in flood-prone areas.
 - Prioritizing wetland protection.
 - Enhancing the resilience of natural systems against climate impacts.

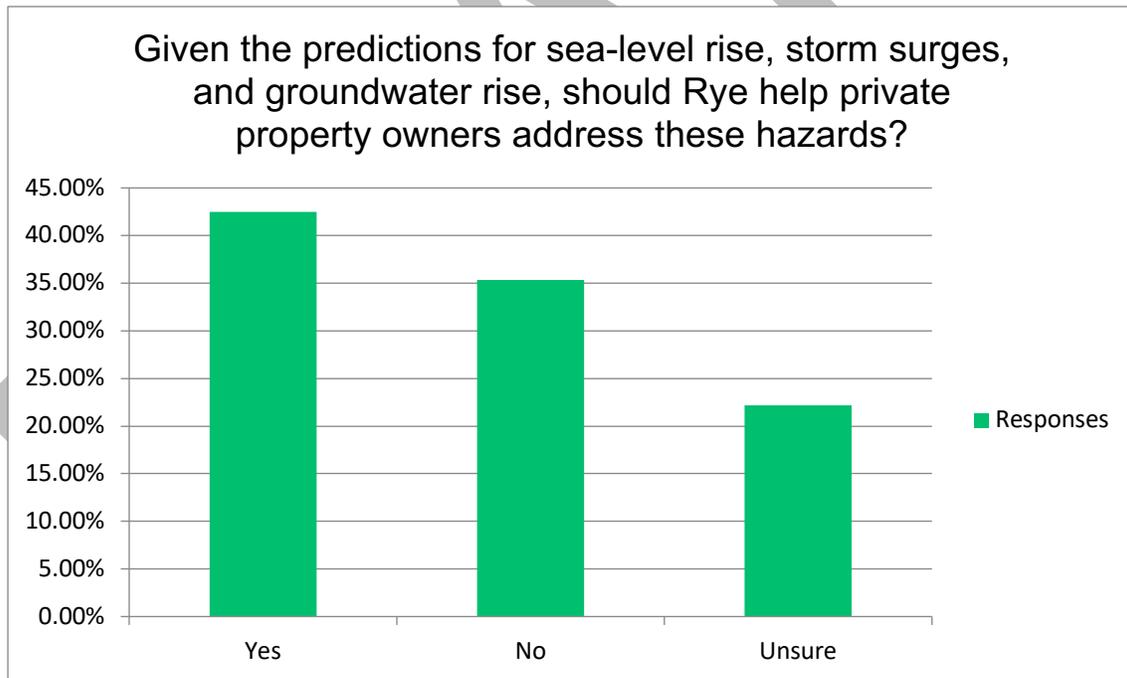
Given the predictions for sea-level rise, storm surges, and groundwater rise, should Rye help private property owners address these hazards?

Answered: 280

Skipped: 40

- Respondents appear to be split on whether the town should assist private property owners in addressing sea level rise hazards. About 43% of respondents think Rye should help, 35% do not, and 22% are unsure.
- Of the respondents that answered yes, the following themes were identified:
 - Many respondents emphasize that property owners should bear primary responsibility for protecting their own properties from hazards associated with climate change, such as sea-level rise and storm surges. Some indicated that they reject the idea of using taxpayer money to financially assist private property owners, arguing that property ownership in flood-prone areas entails inherent risks that individuals should manage themselves.
 - Many respondents identified the need for stricter building codes, zoning regulations, and enforcement to ensure that property owners take appropriate precautions and bear the costs of mitigating hazards on their own.

- Some respondents suggested that the town could assist private property owners by providing education, information dissemination, and guidance on mitigating risks associated with climate hazards. Recommendations included providing resources, workshops, and seminars to educate property owners about available options, and promoting best practices and measures to protect property from sea-level rise, storm surges, and groundwater rise.
- Some respondents expressed the desire for limited or indirect assistance from the town such as facilitating access to state and federal grants, providing guidance on obtaining permits for seawall repairs, or negotiating with vendors for preferred pricing on services related to hazard mitigation.
- Other suggestions provided by respondents included exploring options for partnerships with neighboring communities, leveraging collective resources, and advocating for external funding sources to support hazard mitigation efforts.



What other issues and opportunities are you aware of related to natural hazards and coastal impacts?

Answered: 106

Skipped: 204

The top issues and opportunities respondents identified related to natural hazards and coastal impacts include the following:

- Enforcing strict building regulations and zoning ordinances to prevent construction in vulnerable coastal areas prone to flooding and erosion. Some respondents called for limiting variances and special exceptions granted to property owners and developers, especially in relation to wetland buffer zones and flood-prone areas. Some respondents suggested mandating the elevation of structures in at-risk areas and requiring property owners to contribute to the costs of updating water and septic systems.
- Improving the resilience of infrastructure, including roads, sewer lines, and seawalls, to withstand the impacts of natural hazards such as flooding and storm surges. Some respondents identified the need to upgrade and maintain existing infrastructure, including the installation of larger culverts, the reinforcement of sea walls, and the rerouting of water and power lines. Others mentioned included the need for proactive measures to address erosion, beach replenishment, and the protection of critical infrastructure assets, like cell towers.
- Proactive planning for climate change and future predictions including sea-level rise, storm surges, and the degradation of natural habitats, on coastal communities like Rye. Respondents highlighted the need for proactive measures to address the predicted impacts of climate change on water quality, freshwater resources, and public health. Some respondents noted the need for increased awareness, education, and action to prepare for and mitigate the long-term effects of climate change on the environment and community infrastructure.
- Respondents also stressed the importance of community preparedness, adaptation, and collaboration in addressing the challenges posed by natural hazards and coastal impacts.

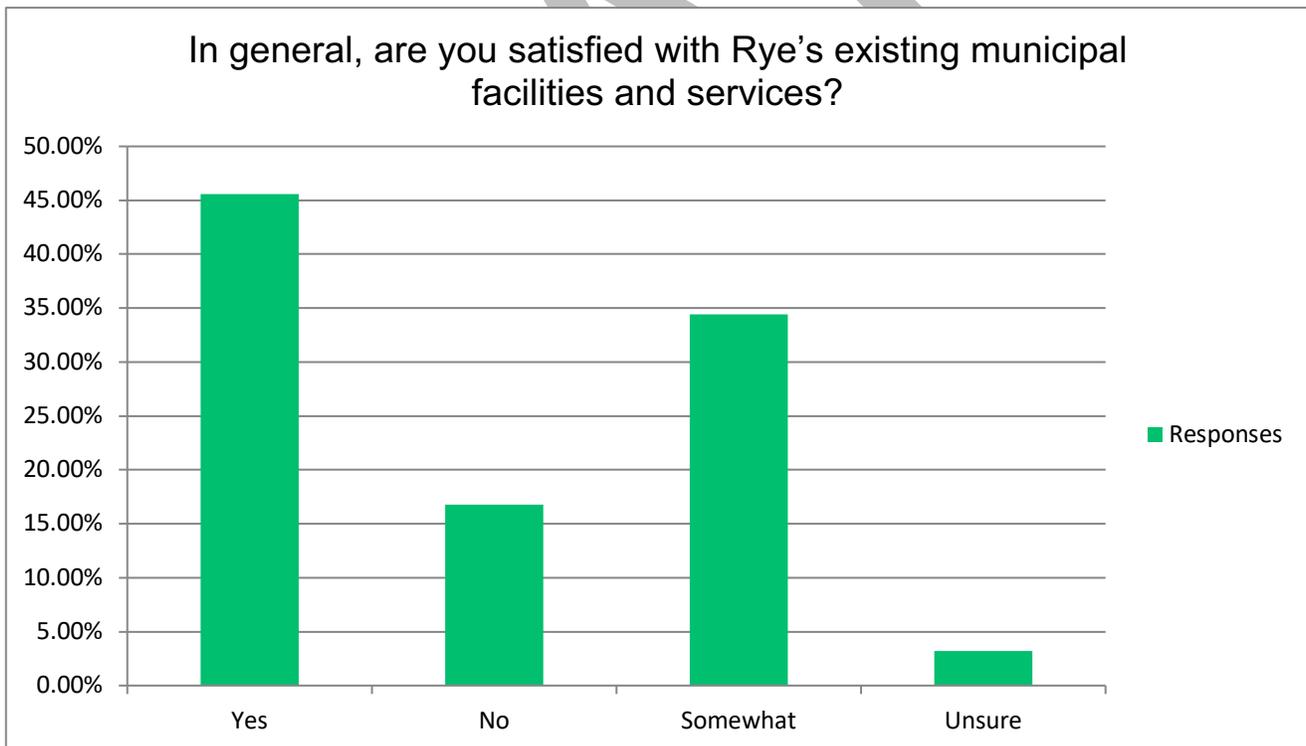
Municipal Operations and Organization

In general, are you satisfied with Rye’s existing municipal facilities and services? Facilities including town-owned buildings and sites such as the library, town offices, athletic fields, etc. Services include those services provided by the town, including waste management, public safety, sewer, parks and recreation programming, etc.

Answered: 250

Skipped: 70

- Most respondents are satisfied with Rye’s existing municipal facilities and services at about 46%.
- However, 34% are somewhat satisfied, and
- About 17% are not.



Are there specific municipal facilities or services that you think need improvement in the coming years? If so, what kinds of improvements?

Answered: 164

Skipped: 156

The following municipal facilities or service improvements respondents mentioned included:

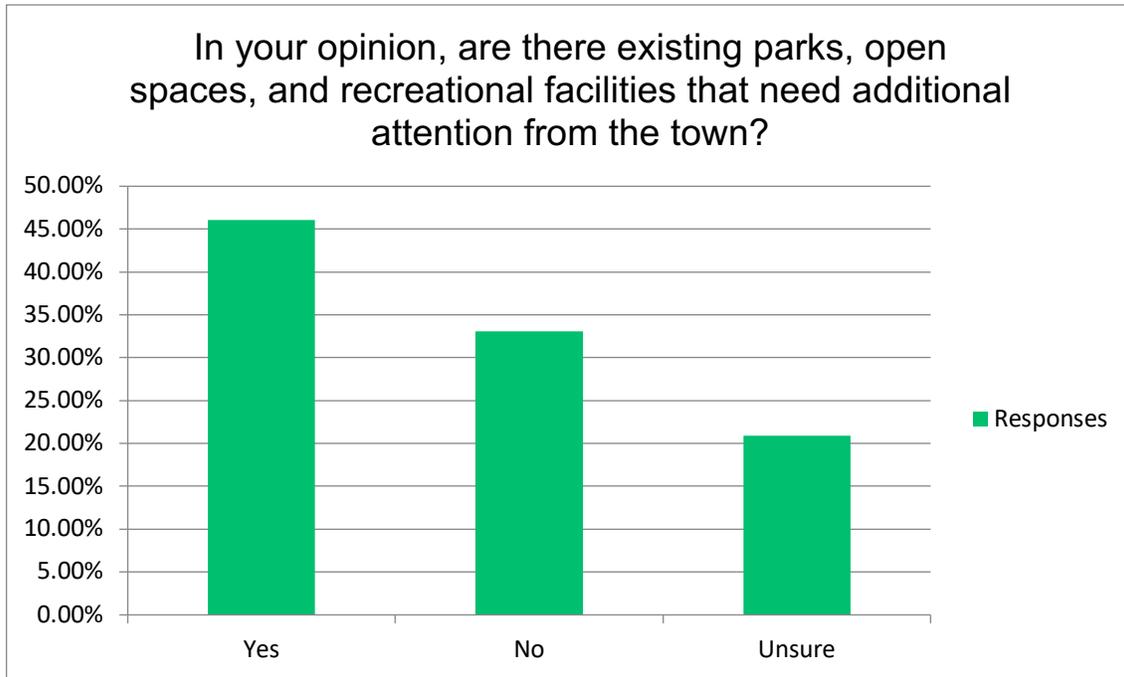
- The renovation, restoration, and improvement of the original Town Hall building, including adding features for community use and restoring historic character.
- Improved recreation facilities, including the construction of a community center or a dedicated recreation building. Some mentioned upgrading recreational fields and adding indoor spaces for various activities.
- Water quality protection, water treatment, and sewer upgrades
- Improvements to Rye's waste management facilities, such as the recycling center, and suggest measures like better traffic flow, expanded recycling options, and better handling of hazardous waste.
- Expansion of the Library including enhancing its facilities and increasing community programming.

In your opinion, are there existing parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities that need additional attention from the town?

Answered: 239

Skipped: 81

- 46% of respondents believe there are existing parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities that need additional attention from the town.
- Whereas a third (33%) do not, and
- About 21% are unsure.



If yes, what needs to be addressed, and what improvements would you suggest?

Answered: 119

Skipped: 201

Respondents identified the following needs and improvements for Rye’s existing parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities:

- Maintenance and improvement of existing facilities rather than adding more property. Suggested improvements include upgrading the Recreation Department buildings to permanent buildings, upgrading the library common, more funding and investment for the Rye Recreation Department, and proper maintenance of the little league and softball fields.
- Better guidance and enforcement of beach and dog-friendly policies.
- Infrastructure and access improvements to the following facilities:
 - Expand Goss Farm to include recreational activity, parking, and trails
 - Improvements to Parson’s Field and to the roadway entrance to be better utilized as a community gathering space.
 - Improvement to Rye’s trail network, including parking areas and trail heads, and consideration of walking bridges in wetlands/wet areas.

More trail maintenance and public education and promotion of Rye's trails were identified as a need.

- Pirate's Cove beach improvements including accessible restroom facilities, trash receptacles, and year-round access.
- Some respondents expressed a desire for the addition of recreational facilities and amenities such as:
 - A public indoor recreation facility and outdoor courts.
 - New basketball court, indoor or outdoor pickleball courts.
 - More recreation facilities for children such as a pump track and splash pad.
 - A softball field, tennis courts, bike paths, public restrooms.
 - More recreation activity in the winter.

Currently, Rye's town government is managed by the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator. Many town governments benefit from the added oversight and structural organization of a Town Manager. Do you feel the town of Rye would benefit from such a position? What advantages or disadvantages do you see?"

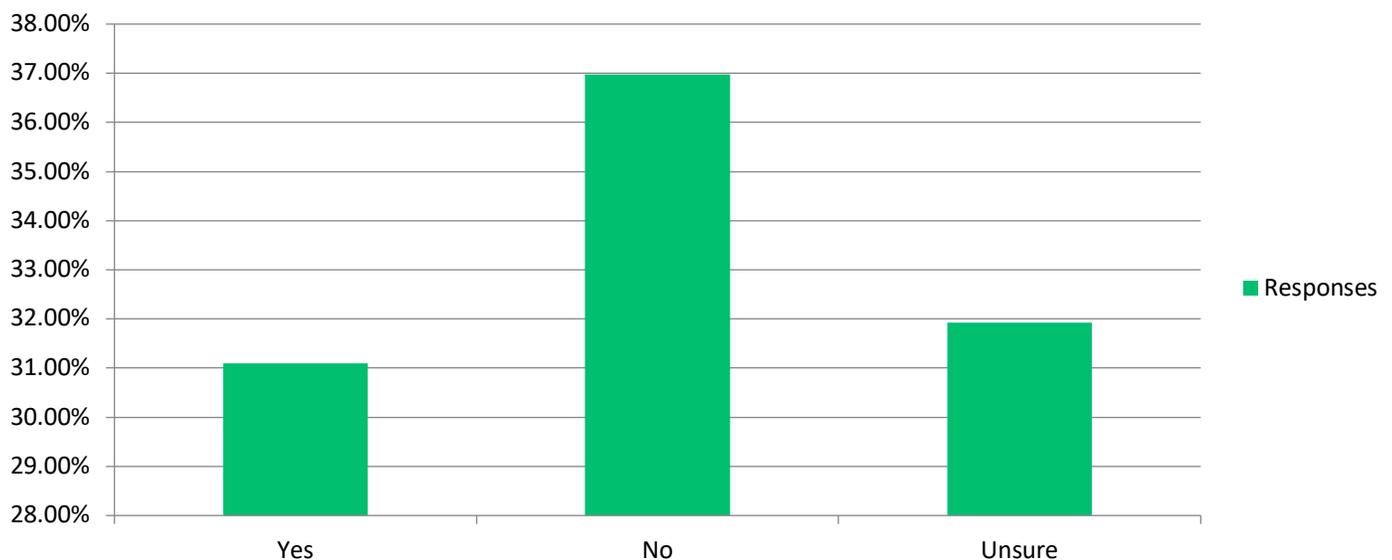
Answered: 283

Skipped: 82

- Respondents appear to be split on if Rye would benefit from a Town Manager position as about 37% do not think the town would,
- 32% are unsure, and
- 31% would support a Town Manager position in Rye.
- Respondents identified the following disadvantages of having a Town Manager Position in Rye:
 - Loss of direct voter control over town affairs.
 - Uncertainty about the necessity and cost-effectiveness of hiring a Town Manager, including concerns about the associated salary and additional staffing.
 - Lack of clarity about the differences between a Town Manager and a Town Administrator and how the role would integrate into the existing government structure.
- Respondents identified the following advantages of having a Town Manager position in Rye:

- Improved long-term planning and oversight for the town's development.
- Enhanced coordination among department supervisors for more effective governance.
- More accountability and professionalism in managing town affairs.
- Overall, many respondents indicated the need for further evaluation and examination of a Town Manager position with requests for more information, cost-benefit analysis, and clarity on the specific duties and responsibilities of a Town Manager. Respondents suggested exploring alternative governance structures, such as expanding the Select Board or reevaluating the current roles and functions within the town administration. Some indicated the importance of hiring a qualified and experienced individual for the town manager position, if deemed necessary, to ensure effective management and leadership.

Currently, Rye's town government is managed by the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator. Many town governments benefit from the added oversight and structural organization of a Town Manager. Do you feel the town of Rye would benefit from such a position?



What other issues and opportunities are you aware of related to Rye's municipal buildings, properties, and services?

Answered: 121

Skipped: 199

Respondents identified the following issues and opportunities related to Rye's municipal facilities, services, and properties:

- Modernization and renovation of existing municipal buildings, particularly the Town Hall and Public Safety building, including HVAC upgrades, better meeting space, and improved elevator access. Some respondents identified needed improvements to recreational facilities, including the installation of a recreation center.
- Concerns and suggestions related to sustainability and environmental issues such as drinking water quality protection, energy efficiency, and solar panel installations. Some respondents mentioned the opportunity for regional cooperation and the sharing of resources for sustainability.
- More recreational opportunities, activities, and programming for various age groups, particularly children and young adults as well as the need for better utilization of existing community spaces to provide these services, such as the school gymnasiums and libraries.

Appendix A: Survey Monkey Report – Community Forum/Online Tool

DRAFT