

Inyo County
Residential Infill Project
Community Workshop and Survey #2
Feedback Summary
June 16, 2025

Introduction

This document summarizes the feedback received from the community workshop #2 and community survey #2. Feedback will be considered and incorporated into the Inyo County Residential Infill Project.

Community Workshop #2

Community Workshop #2 was held in Big Pine (5/20/25), Independence (5/21/25), and Lone Pine (5/22/25). Approximately 12 residents attended. Key themes are summarized below.

- **Lack of services:** There's a need for more accessible services within the community.
- **Limited housing options:** The availability of diverse housing is an issue.
- **Short-term rental restrictions impact on property value:** There's a concern that STR restrictions within the County's pre-approved ADU program are negatively affecting property values. Specifically, there are concerns about the requirement that ADUs built under the County's program must be rented for terms longer than 30 days.
- **Prevalence of existing short-term rentals:** The community notes that a number of short-term rentals are already established.
- **Fire safety concerns:** Questions were raised regarding whether fire standards and overall fire safety would be thoroughly examined, especially in relation to development.
- **Water access for parcels:** There's a clarification question about infill parcels having access to water.
- **"Zero lot lines" considerations:** Questions were asked about whether "zero lot lines" would be required, and safety concerns raised about zero lot lines for properties along Main Street.
- **Consistency in setback changes:** Questions were asked about whether changes to setbacks will be applied uniformly across the board or on a case-by-case basis.
- **Cash incentives for development:** There's an interest in cash incentives for development, specifically to help offset any potential loss in property value due to new regulations or market changes.

Community Survey #2

Community Survey #2 was open from May 1, 2025, to June 6, 2025. Key themes are summarized below. A summary of responses is attached.

1. Factors for Allowing More ADUs

- **Privacy and Neighbors:** Significant concern exists about maintaining privacy for both ADU occupants and existing neighbors. This includes worries about noise, proximity, shared spaces, and the potential for discomfort if a neighbor is also a landlord.
- **Design and Setbacks:** Some believe the County should assist with acceptable design and that setbacks should generally be maintained.
- **Infrastructure Impact:** Concerns were raised about increased population leading to strain on parking, medical services (already deemed insufficient in Inyo County), volunteer fire departments, and EMS services.
- **Local Housing vs. Short-Term Rentals:** A strong desire was expressed for regulations to ensure ADUs are used for local housing, not primarily for AirBnBs.
- **Overcrowding:** Fear of turning single-family dwellings into apartment-like environments with too many people and pets on one parcel, leading to noise pollution and loss of privacy.
- **Specific Community Objections:** A very strong, repeated sentiment from one resident in Independence is against any population increase or new housing types like ADUs, apartments, or condominiums in Independence.

2. Factors for Reducing Front and Rear Yard Setbacks

- **Maintain Existing Setbacks:** A prevalent opinion is that setbacks should remain as they are, citing issues like fire safety (distance for embers, firefighter access) and existing encroachment problems in Big Pine.
- **Property Owner Choice:** Some believe property owners should retain the option to have larger setbacks if desired, especially to distance homes from noisy or dangerous streets.
- **Environmental Factors:** Consideration for water features (ponds, streams) and unstable ground to prevent flooding.
- **Quality of Life:** Concerns about overcrowding and reduced quality of life for residents with more units on a lot.
- **Aesthetics and Emergency Access:** Factors like visual clearances, fencing heights, paint colors, and emergency access to buildings are important.
- **Affordable Housing Needs:** Conversely, one comment highlights the dire need for affordable housing and suggests that reducing setbacks might be necessary to support project development.

- **Opposition to Density:** Strong opposition from Independence against any changes that would lead to increased population density or alter the small-town character.
- **Property Value Impact:** Concern that reducing setbacks could retroactively change the nature of lots and reduce adjacent property values due to increased density.

3. Potential Challenges with More Low-Density Multi-Unit Housing

- **Location of Infill Parcels:** A desire to know the specific location and ownership (private, DWP, County) of "infill parcels" to assess appropriateness. Opposition to development on large open land parcels.
- **Overcrowding and Resources:** Concerns about overpopulation in areas lacking resources like grocery stores, emergency services, and transportation.
- **Noise and Traffic:** Expected increases in noise and traffic.
- **Safety and Social Impact:** Worries about potential increases in violence and a greater need for police.
- **Construction Quality and Affordability:** Hope that new units will have good insulation for privacy and be affordable for local renters.
- **Community Character:** Strong opposition from Independence to any development that would turn it into a "mini LA" or introduce apartments/condominiums.

4. Initial Thoughts on Reusing Underutilized Buildings for Housing

- **General Support for Reuse:** Many respondents generally support the idea of utilizing existing vacant buildings to address housing shortages, recognizing that "it's already here, use it."
- **Feasibility Concerns:**
 - **Cost:** Significant concern about the prohibitive expense of renovating very old storefronts to habitable conditions.
 - **Commercial Space Loss:** One concern about losing commercial space if storefronts are converted.
 - **Aesthetics and Comfort:** Concerns about making converted spaces feel "homey" and not like a "gymnasium or post office," suggesting attention to interior design.
- **Safety:** Worries about buildings on busy roads (like Highway 395) due to noise and potential vehicle accidents.
- **Definition of "Underutilized":** A key question was raised about how "underutilized" would be defined and if property owners or the county would make this determination.
- **Incentives for Reuse:** Inquiry into whether the county would use "sticks or carrots" (fines, eminent domain vs. grants, tax breaks) to encourage reuse.

- **Opposition from Independence:** Continued strong opposition from Independence to any form of population increase or new housing types.

5. Specific Examples of Underutilized Buildings

- Most respondents did not provide specific examples, other than general mentions of "empty store-fronts on Main St." and "vacant business buildings on main streets," especially those with potential for upper-floor conversions. Chris Holt's work was cited as a positive example.

6. Challenges with Converting Specific Buildings

- **Cost:** The primary challenge identified is the potentially prohibitive cost of renovating old structures to meet habitable standards.
- **Aesthetics/Incomplete Work:** Concern about developers/owners not completing work, leading to more "ugly buildings."
- **Affordability:** Worry that even if converted, the housing might not be affordable.
- **Overcrowding:** A general concern about increased density.
- **Maintaining Small-Town Character:** A strong, emotional objection from Independence about bringing in "riffraff" and changing the small-town feel.

7. Ideas to Encourage Infill Housing

- **Support for Property Owners:** Assist property owners currently trying to build by removing "roadblocks" regarding temporary housing on their own property during construction.
- **Affordability Focus:** Emphasize understanding local income levels and current expenses (like groceries) to ensure new housing is truly affordable for service industry workers and local renters. A strong plea for secure, stable, peaceful, safe, and private homes.
- **Tiny Home Communities:** Suggestion to create tiny home communities on one-acre parcels in the Owens Valley as a solution for many residents.
- **Address Houselessness:** Recognition that new housing is desperately needed to combat shocking and distressing houselessness numbers.
- **No Development in Independence:** Continued strong opposition to any new condos or apartments in Independence.

Community Survey #2:

Residential Infill Opportunities in Big Pine, Independence, and Lone Pine

Monday, June 16, 2025

9

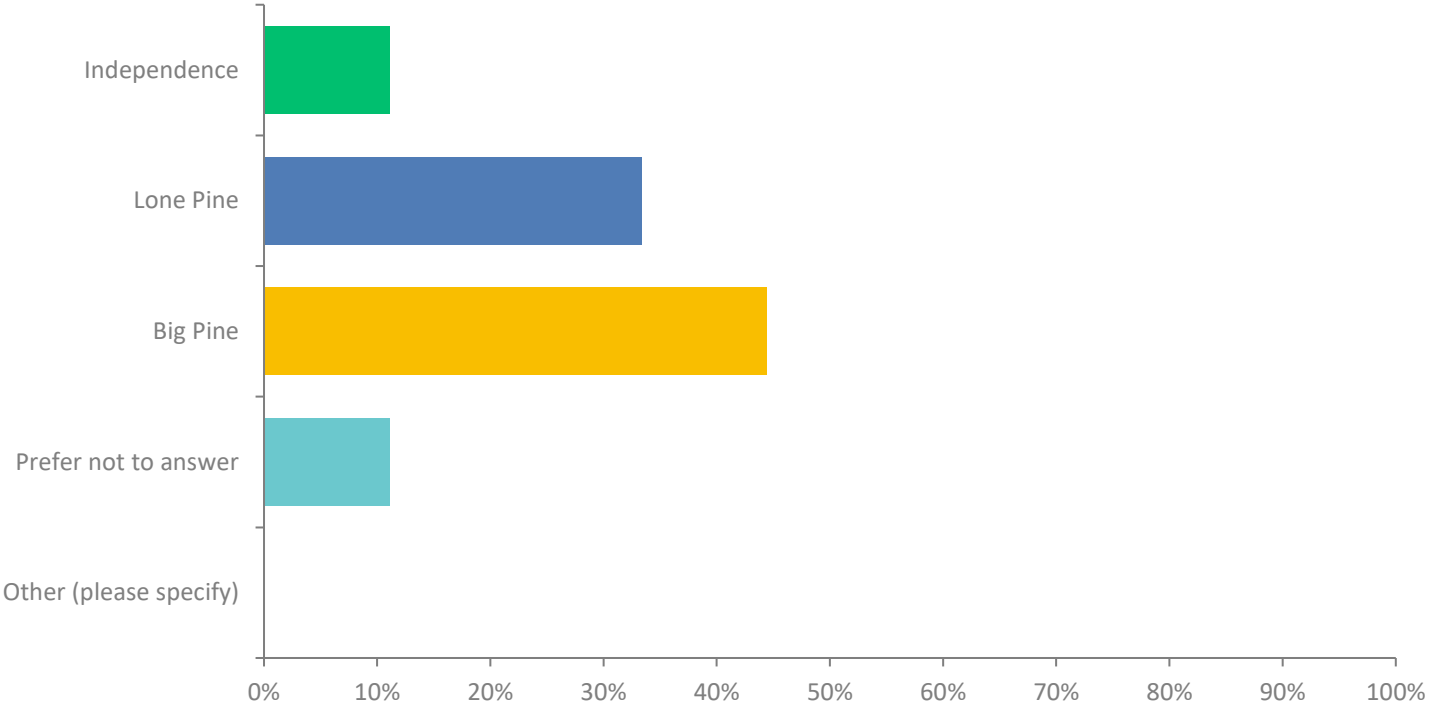
Total Responses

Date Open: 5/1/25 – 6/6/25

Complete Responses: 9

Q1: Where do you currently reside? (select one)

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



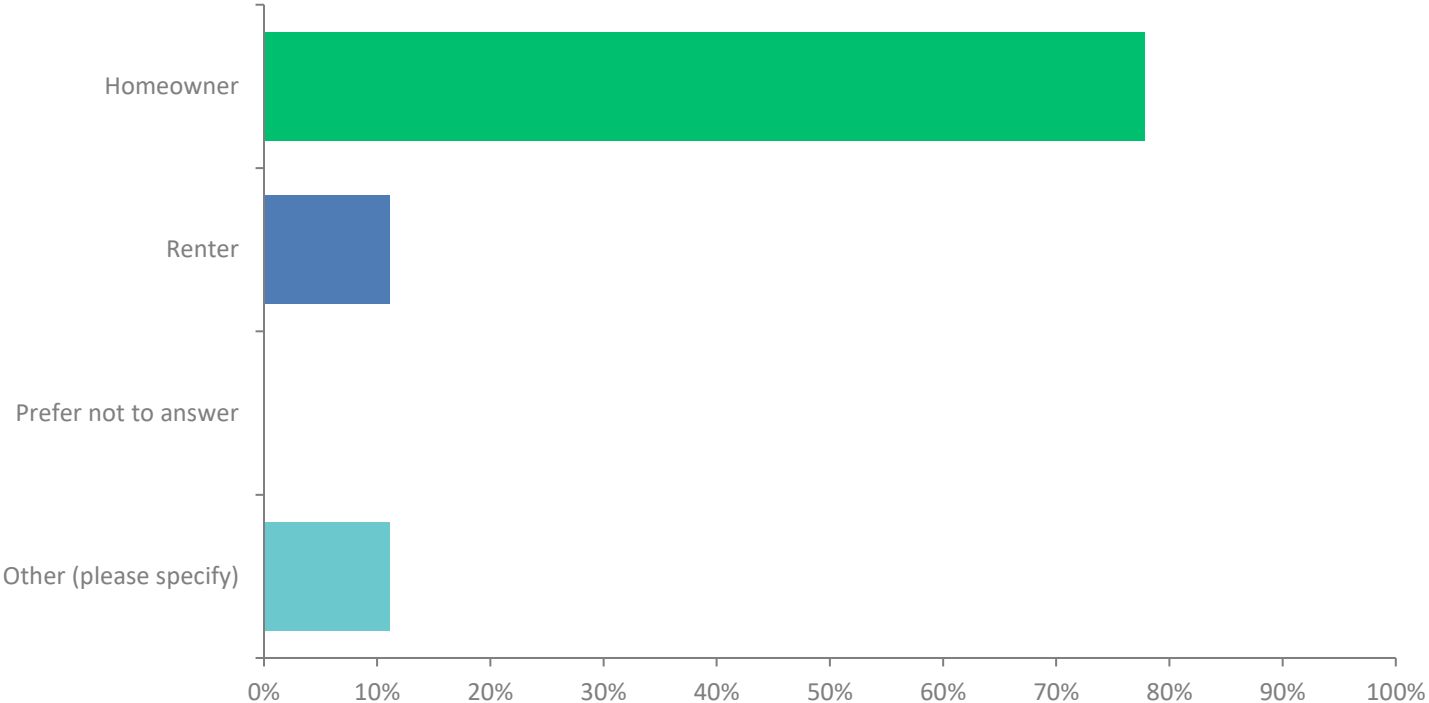
Q1: Where do you currently reside? (select one)

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Independence	11.11%	1
Lone Pine	33.33%	3
Big Pine	44.44%	4
Prefer not to answer	11.11%	1
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		9

Q2: What is your current housing status? (select one)

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Q2: What is your current housing status? (select one)

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Homeowner	77.78%	7
Renter	11.11%	1
Prefer not to answer	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	11.11%	1
TOTAL		9

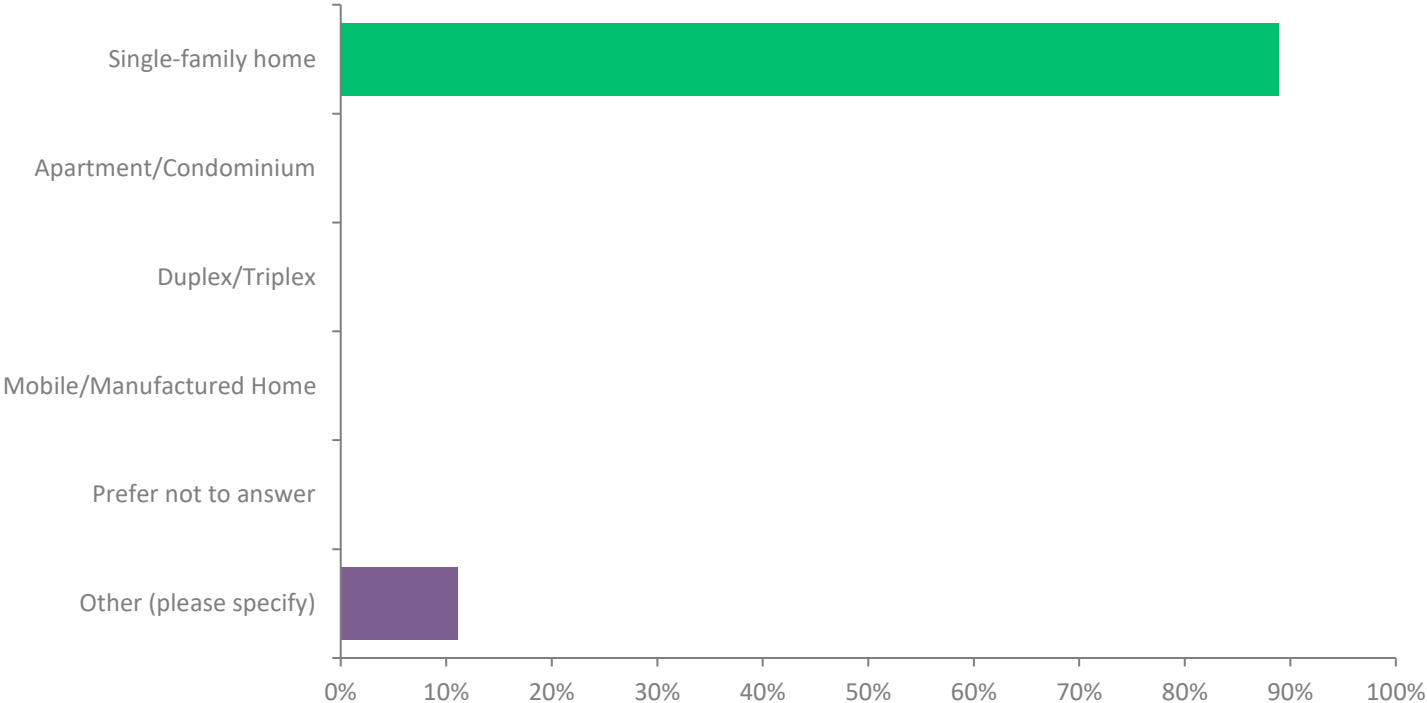
Q2: What is your current housing status? (open ended responses)

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

- Houseless

Q3: What type of dwelling do you currently reside in? (select one)

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Q3: What type of dwelling do you currently reside in? (select one)

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single-family home	88.89%	8
Apartment/Condominium	0.00%	0
Duplex/Triplex	0.00%	0
Mobile/Manufactured Home	0.00%	0
Prefer not to answer	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	11.11%	1
TOTAL		9

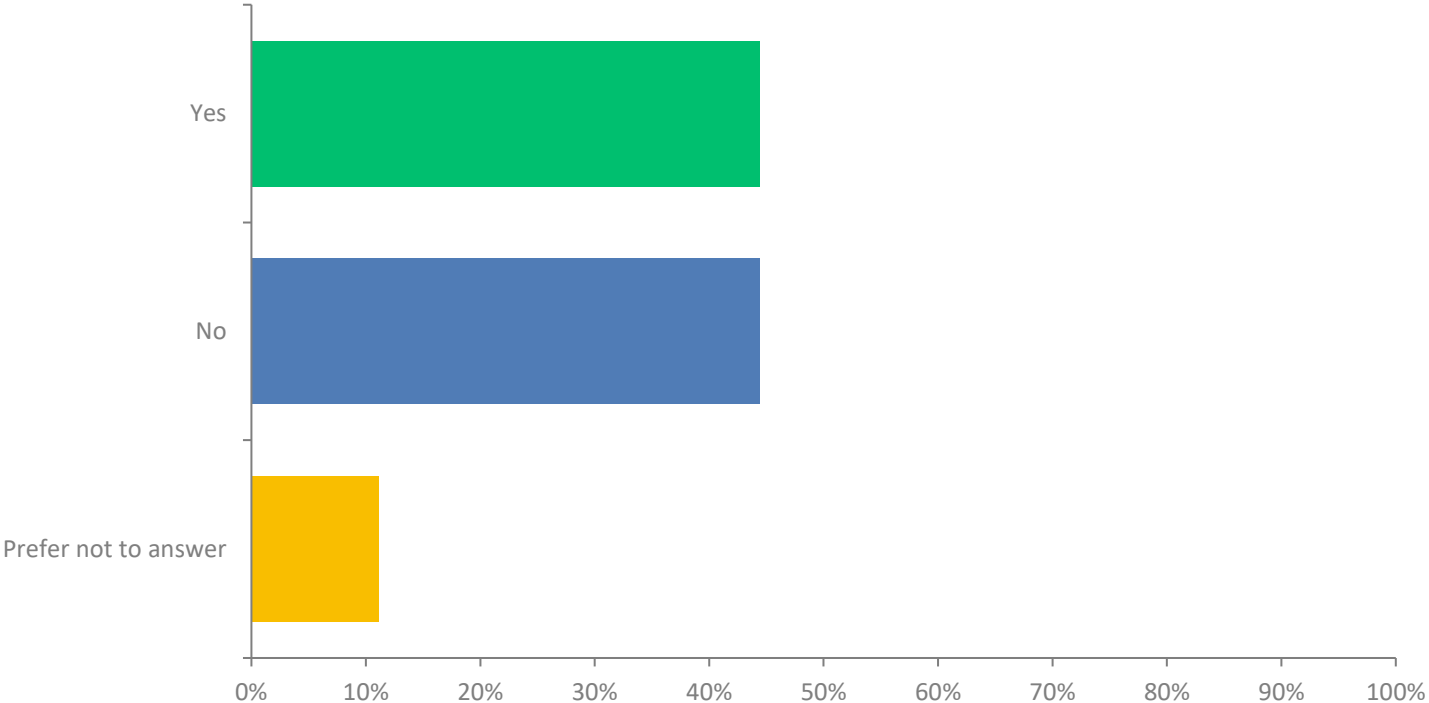
Q3: What type of dwelling do you currently reside in? (open ended responses)

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

- Car

Q4: Did you attend the community workshop held in February?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



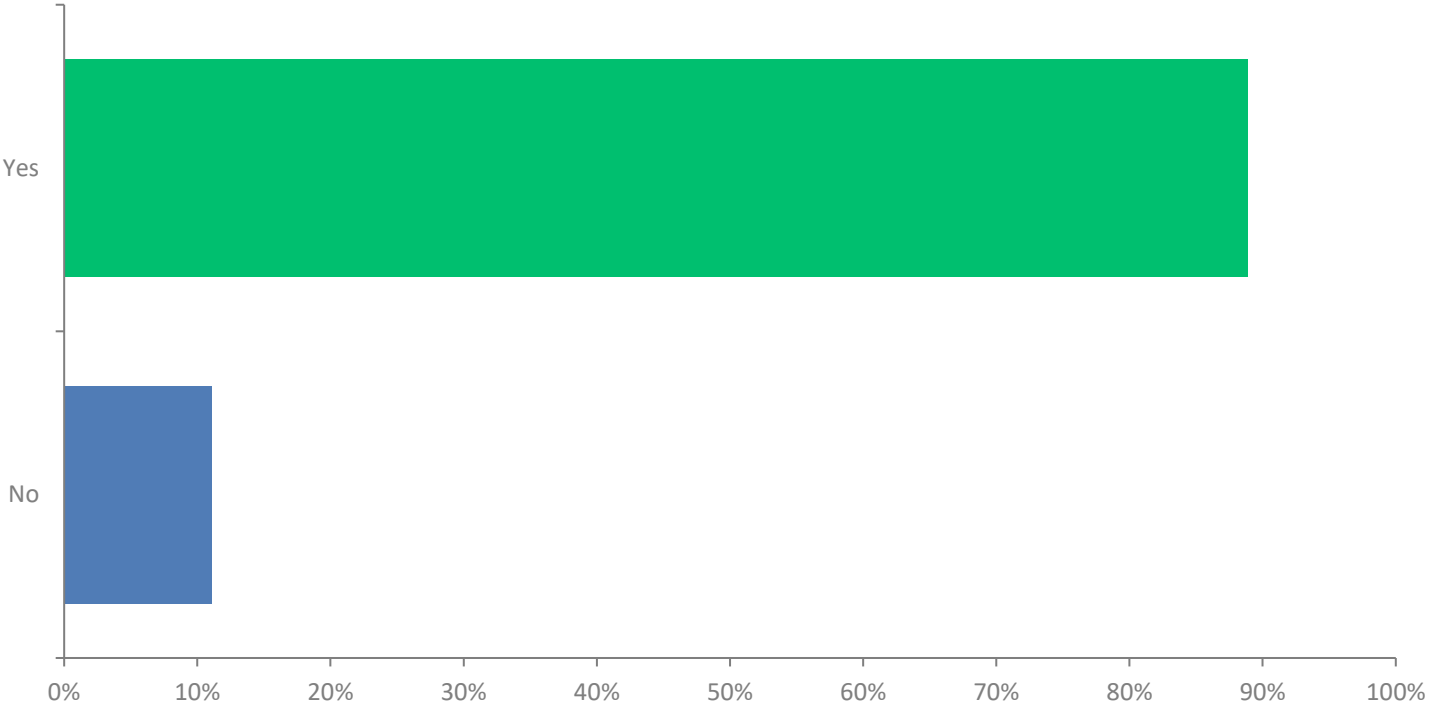
Q4: Did you attend the community workshop held in February?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	44.44%	4
No	44.44%	4
Prefer not to answer	11.11%	1
TOTAL		9

Q5: Are you familiar with ADUs?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



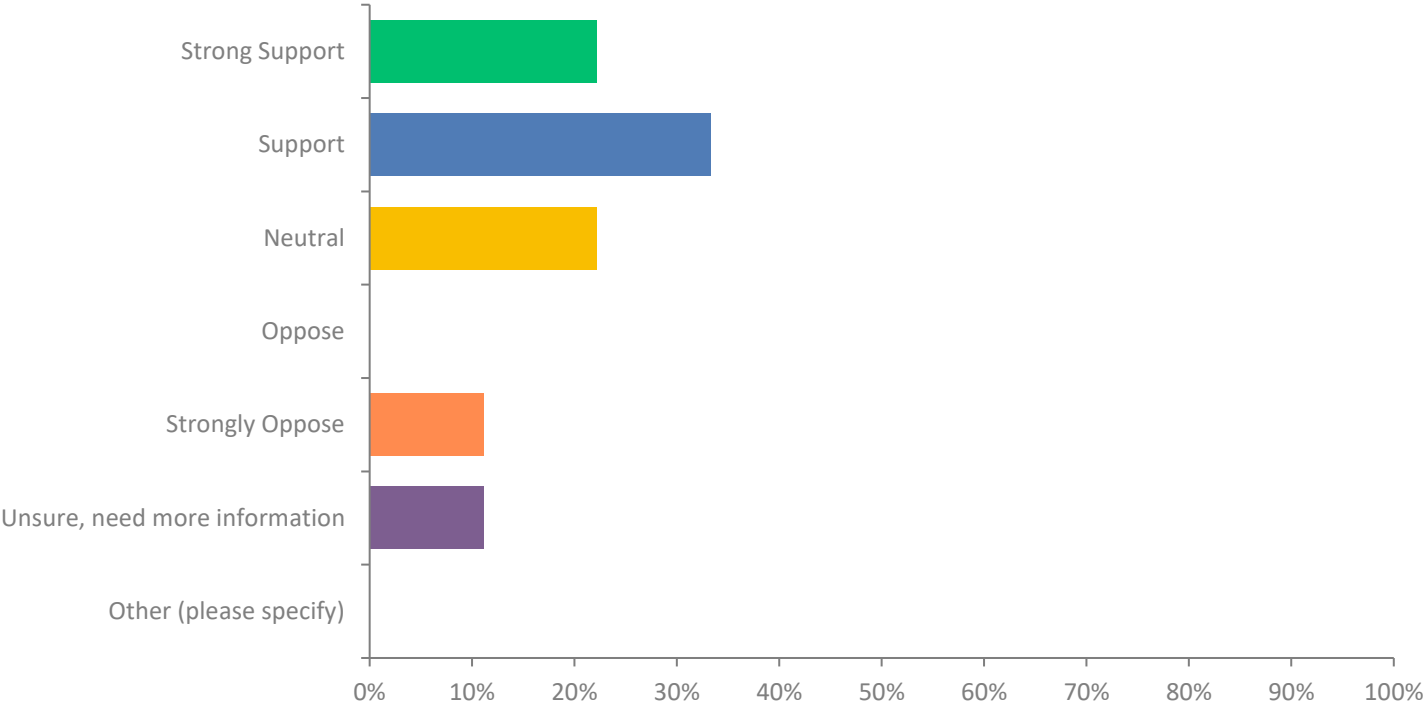
Q5: Are you familiar with ADUs?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	88.89%	8
No	11.11%	1
TOTAL		9

Q6: How supportive are you of ADUs in general?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Q6: How supportive are you of ADUs in general?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strong Support	22.22%	2
Support	33.33%	3
Neutral	22.22%	2
Oppose	0.00%	0
Strongly Oppose	11.11%	1
Unsure, need more information	11.11%	1
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		9

Q7: What factors do you think should be considered if the county were to allow more ADUs on eligible infill parcels?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

- The county should assist property owners with acceptable design and set-backs should remain when possible.
- neighbors
- I think there should be regulations to make sure most of them are used as housing for locals, not for AirBnBs. It would be ideal if they could be a good distance away from the main house, so each set of occupants can have privacy. It is very unpleasant to be able to hear your neighbors and not be able to have a private conversation in your own home or yard, let alone have your neighbor be your landlord.
- Is parking available for all units? How close to neighbors dwellings? Will it block a neighbor's access or view. Noise restrictions should be considered.
- Parking, location, population increase to specific area, impacts to volunteer fire departments and EMS services
- Currently there is only 50% or less medical services that are needed in Inyo. More people need more medical services.
- The importance of creating affordable housing for local residents who live and work in Lone Pine.
- No, just know not an independence. Build Bishop all you want to blow. Pine is already a mess. You're not gonna do that to independence.!!
- Too many people living in too small an area- noise pollution, too many pets, parking issues, loss of neighbor's privacy. You could conceivably have 12-15 people living on one residential parcel - that is deeply concerning. It in effect it's turning a single family dwelling into an apartment building. Current ADU allowance is fine, more than one is rather concerning.

Q8: What factors do you think should be considered if the County were to reduce front yard setbacks?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

- Setbacks should remain as is if at all possible.
- fear of fire. the closer, more danger of embers. Fire fighters need space
- If I am understanding this correctly, the property owner is allowed to have a larger setback if they wish. If this is true, I think this change would be ok. The property owner should be able to have their home further from a noisy/dangerous street (or whatever is at the property line) if they wish. I think water features also need to be taken into account. Buildings shouldn't be allowed to be built too close to ponds, streams, on unstable ground, etc. My neighbor had their house flood when their pond froze and overfilled one year, and it was devastating.
- Similar factors as I stated in Question #7. Have to take into consideration the quality of life each resident will experience with more units on a lot.
- visual clearances, fencing heights, specific color of paint used for buildings, access to building in case of an emergency,
- Overcrowded environment.
- There's a dire need for affordable housing for our local workforce. Do what's needed to support moving projects forward to include reducing setbacks.
- Leave independence alone. We don't want your population explosion you people want. We don't want to hear leave independence alone.!!
- Again you are retroactively changing the nature of the lot from single family dwellings into high density. I would not choose to live near high density dwellings - it most likely will reduce adjacent properties.

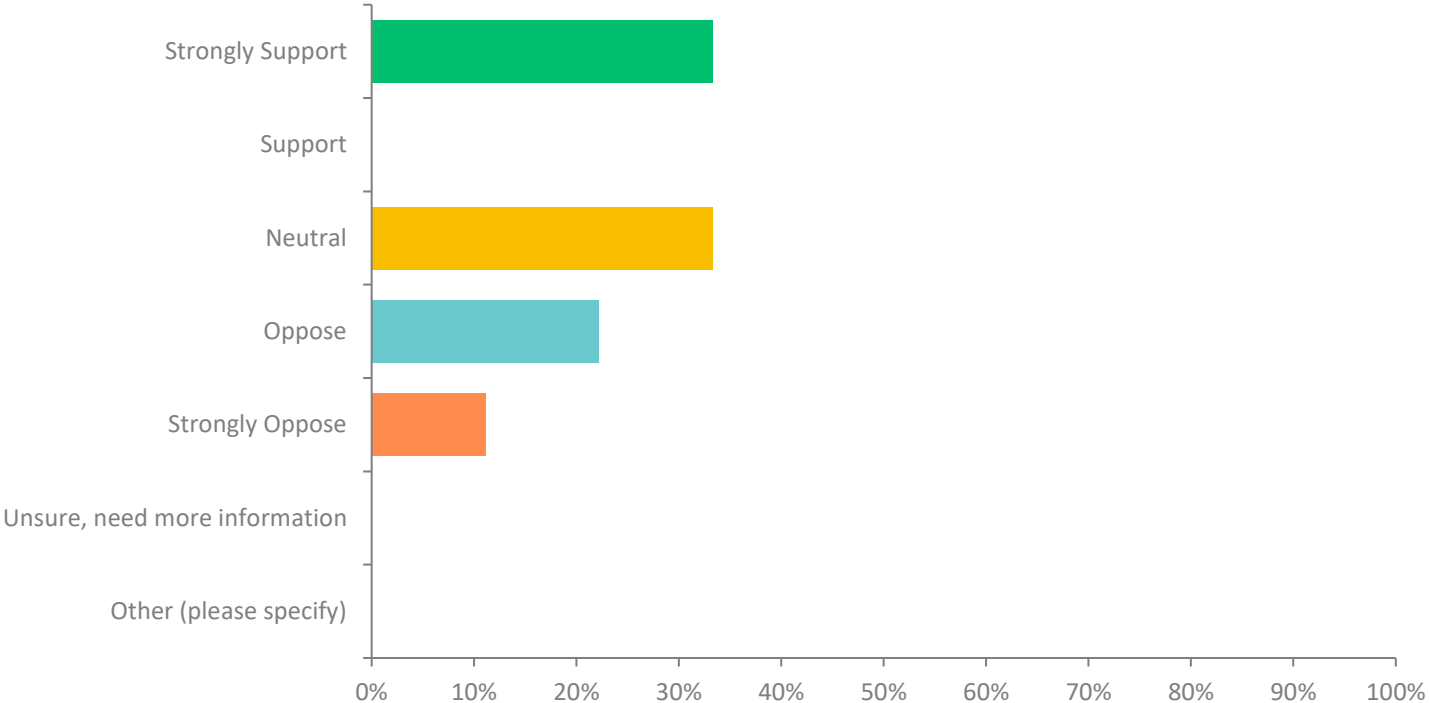
Q9: What factors do you think should be considered if the County were to reduce rear yard setbacks?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

- Setbacks should remain if at all possible. In Big Pine, encroachment on existing lots is a big problem.
- see #8
- If I am understanding this correctly, the property owner is allowed to have a larger setback if they wish. If this is true, I think this change would be ok. The property owner should be able to have their home further from the property line if they wish. I think water features also need to be taken into account. Buildings shouldn't be allowed to be built too close to ponds, streams, on unstable ground, etc. My neighbor had their house flood when their pond froze and overfilled one year, and it was devastating.
- Same as I stated in Questions # 7 & #8
- visual clearances, fencing heights, specific color of paint used for buildings, access to building in case of an emergency,
- Overcrowded environment.
- See above comment.
- Leave independence alone we don't want your population explosion here. We didn't move here for you to turn this into mini LA. We don't want it. Keep your apartment condominiums out of independence. You're not welcome here.
- See above

Q10: How supportive are you allowing more types of low-density multi-unit housing on residentially zoned, infill parcels in Big Pine, Independence, and Lone Pine?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Q10: How supportive are you allowing more types of low-density multi-unit housing on residentially zoned, infill parcels in Big Pine, Independence, and Lone Pine?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Support	33.33%	3
Support	0.00%	0
Neutral	33.33%	3
Oppose	22.22%	2
Strongly Oppose	11.11%	1
Unsure, need more information	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		9

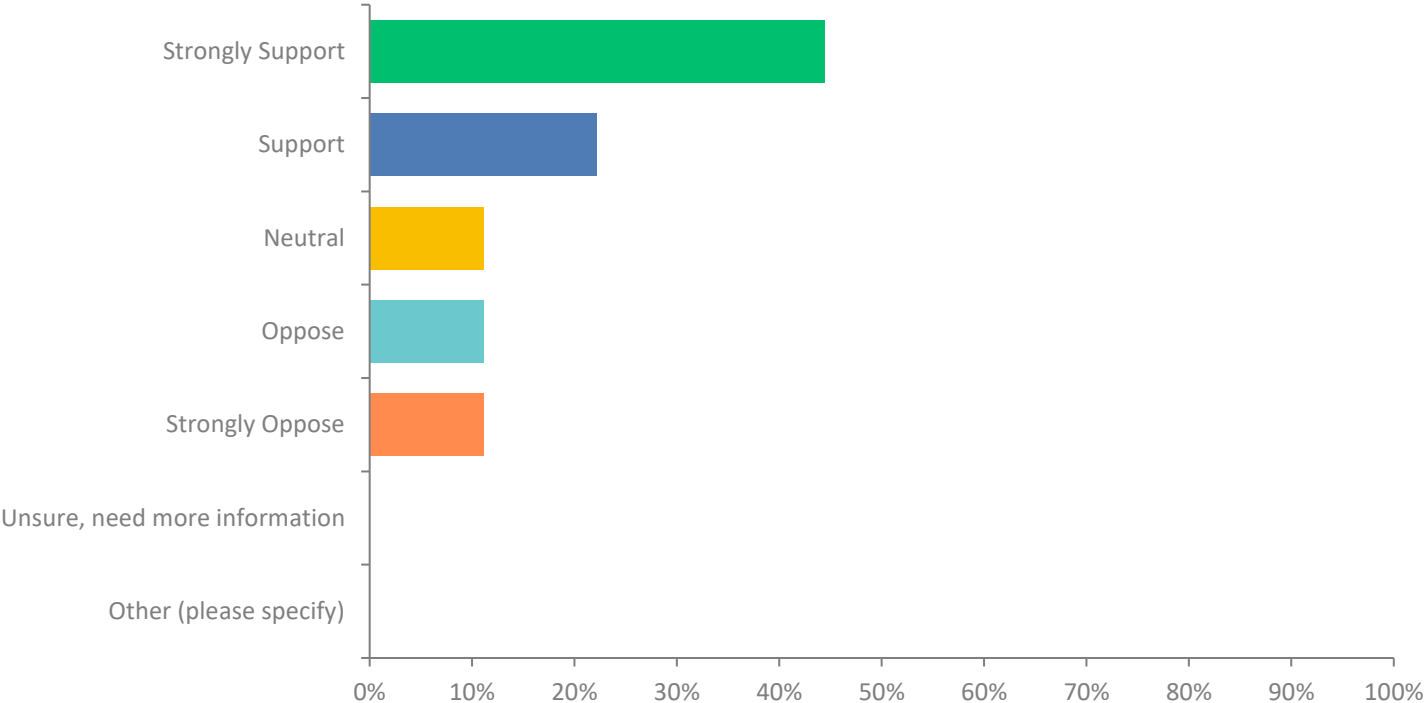
Q11: What potential challenges or concerns do you foresee with allowing more low-density multi-unit housing on these infill parcels?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

- It would be nice to know where "these infill parcels" are located. Are they privately owned? DWP owned? County owned? I don't want to see Big Pine become nothing but a bedroom community for Bishop. Absolutely no interest in seeing development on any large parcels (greater than 1 acre) of open land.
- crowded
- There could be more noise for the existing neighbors, but we desperately need more housing, so I think the benefits outweigh the costs. I hope the walls can be thick enough to provide good insulation and privacy so people don't have to feel like they are living with another family! I hope also that they can be affordable for the renters' income in these areas.
- Increased noise and traffic.
- over population in areas that do not have the resources to support it. ie grocery stores, emergency services, transportation
- Violence, insanity, need for more police. Open land all around us.
- None
- No apartment no condos no nothing you keep independence. A small town. That's why I moved here. You will not populate us.!!!
- If I am reading the mapping correctly in the planning document the Big Pine Parcel on 395 used as an example may be appropriate as multi unit housing.

Q12: How supportive are you of a program to encourage the reuse of existing underutilized buildings for housing?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0



Q12: How supportive are you of a program to encourage the reuse of existing underutilized buildings for housing?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Support	44.44%	4
Support	22.22%	2
Neutral	11.11%	1
Oppose	11.11%	1
Strongly Oppose	11.11%	1
Unsure, need more information	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		9

Q13: What are your initial thoughts on the idea of reusing underutilized buildings in Big Pine, Independence, or Lone Pine for housing?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

- It would be great if small businesses could occupy empty store fronts in Big Pine. I don't know what all the issues are, but imagine that expense of buying or renting an existing building is prohibitive.
- it's already here, use it
- I am concerned about them being on 395, as it is loud and can be dangerous. A driver drove into my work building. That is very scary, for the building itself, the home, occupants, possessions, and anyone playing or spending time outside in front of it. However, I think it would be best to have these available as housing, and people can choose to live there or not. Right now, there is not enough housing at all, let alone housing that we can afford.
- Vacant buildings are unnecessary when housing is so difficult to find here. Why not utilize existing building structures?
- safety, visual aesthetics, accessibility, loss of businesses
- None.
- Do it. It's a great idea.
- NO!
- Reusing under utilized building is too vague. I would want to know how you are defining the term under utilized. Does the building owner decide their property is under utilized or does the county? And how is the county going to encourage reuse? A stick or a carrot? Fines, penalties, eminent domain? Or Grants, tax breaks?

Q14: Do you have specific examples of underutilized buildings in Big Pine, Independence, or Lone Pine that you think would be good candidates for housing conversion?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

- Maybe some existing empty store-fronts on Main St. What Chris Holt is doing is fantastic.
- no
- No.
- There seems to be many vacant business buildings on main streets that could have at least the upper floors converted for housing.
- no
- None.
- No.
- No!
- No

Q15: What potential challenges or concerns do you foresee with converting this specific building (or buildings) into housing?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 0

- The empty store-fronts on Main St are very old, and the expense to bring them to habitable condition would probably be prohibitive.
- we need commercial space
- Making them feel comfortable and homey. I see a place for rent in Bishop that was converted and I would feel like I'm living in a gymnasium or the post office. The floors don't seem to be updated, etc.
- Costs could be prohibitively expensive due to the age of the structures.
- cost, investor/owner not completing the work and we have another ugly building to look at, lack of affordability,
- Overcrowding.
- None.
- I didn't wait 40 years to move to independence so you could populate it with riffraff. I moved here for a small town. This place does not need to be populated or filled with apartments and condominiums and crap. Keep that out of independence.!
- N/a

Q16: Share your ideas to encourage infill housing in Big Pine, Independence, and Lone Pine.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 3

- I'm sad that current Big Pine residents in the process of building a home are being thrown road blocks in the way of restrictions as to temporary housing ON THEIR property. How on earth is anyone to be able to build ADU's unless they have a place to stay?
- I encourage you to look at your expenses, and the mode income of renters in these areas, to determine what a reasonable rent amount would be. Groceries are expensive in this area. Wages of renters, I would venture to say, are low (we who work in the service industry for these tourist towns do not get paid high wages.) People who own their homes probably bought them in the '90s, when they were more affordable, or have a very different income than people who rent. I encourage this new housing, as we desperately need it. The houselessness numbers in this valley are shocking and distressing. We don't deserve to live out of our cars. We contribute to the economic success and overall wellbeing of these beautiful places. Some are kids!! Everyone deserves a roof over their head, protection from the extreme heat and cold, and a place to call a secure, stable, peaceful, safe, and private home (and yard, honestly). Thank you for encouraging new housing opportunities. I hope they can be affordable to us, and meet our needs.
- This might not be in your purview but why not create a number of tiny home communities in the Owens Valley? On one acre of land, a beautiful community could be created that would house many residents.
- None.
- N/A
- No, just know! No condos no apartments no, nothing in independence nothing!!