Independent Resident Survey Results: What is Stopping You (or Someone You Know) from Owning a Home in Pagosa Springs?

# Community Voices Regarding Current Housing Needs

What Local Factors are making housing unaffordable to our community now?

Presented by Archuleta Outreach, Rachel Suh

In April 2025, 233 Archuleta County residents participated in a rapid-response, independent housing survey designed to capture authentic community input left out of the official Housing Needs Assessment process. The results — gathered in just 7 days — reveal deep concerns about short-term rentals, regulatory barriers, infrastructure costs, and the rising presence of illegal and unsafe housing arrangements.

This community-led report combines survey findings with real-world outreach and proposes a 10-year collaborative development strategy involving local service districts, licensed professionals, and continuous public engagement. Residents are calling not just for affordability, but for long-term planning, transparency, and policies that protect working families and the integrity of the community.

## SUMMARY

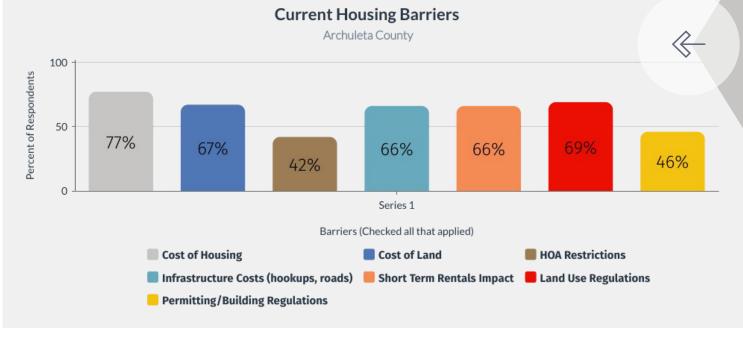
## **Questions Covered the Following Topics:**

	Local Housing Barriers
SURVEY	Image: Second state Policy Perception
QUESTIONS	Growth Impact and Concerns
	Open Response
	Demographics

## LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: BARRIERS

Resident feedback shows that housing affordability challenges are driven not only by national market forces, but significantly by local policy decisions, HOA restrictions, regulatory barriers, infrastructure costs, speculative land pricing, and the expansion of short-term rentals.

## **Question:** What issues have made it harder for you or someone you know to secure affordable housing or build a home in Archuleta County and the town of Pagosa Springs? (check all that apply)

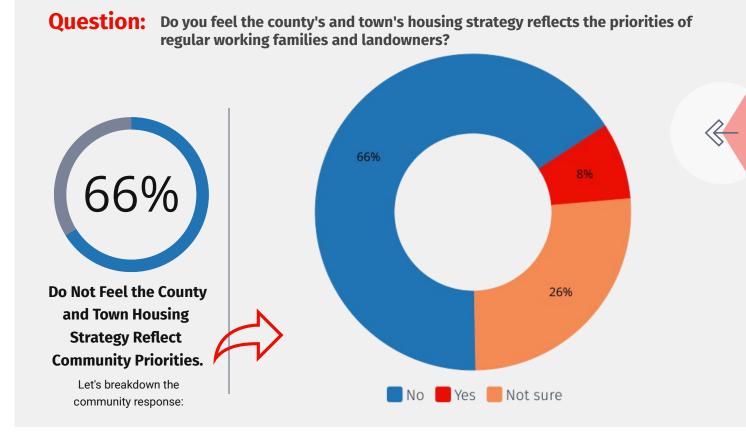


#### **KEY FINDINGS:**

## Housing Barriers

## LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: NO COMMUNITY

Over 66% of. Respondents do not feel that the County and Town Housing Strategy reflect community priorities.

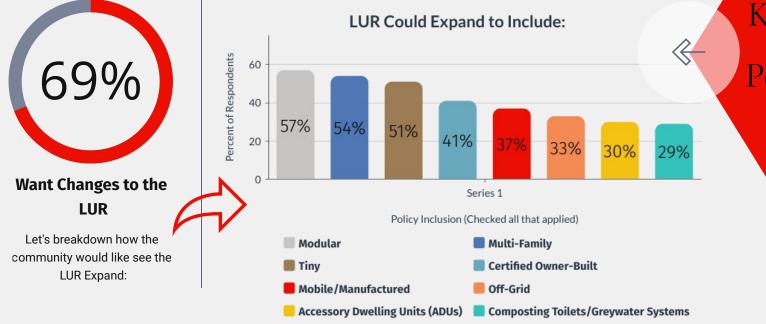


## KEY FINDINGS: Policy Perception

## LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: EXPAND THE LUR

Residents overwhelmingly support a broader range of affordable housing options, many of which are currently limited by local regulations. Modular homes, multi-family units, and tiny homes received the strongest support, alongside certified owner-built homes, mobile/manufactured housing, off-grid housing, and ADUs. Public preference clearly favors regulatory flexibility and diverse, sustainable housing choices.

Questions: Do you believe land use regulations (e.g., short-term rental regulations, building requirements, permitting process, inspection process, restrictions) make it harder to afford or build housing? What kinds of affordable housing options do you think should be allowed or prioritized? (check all that apply)

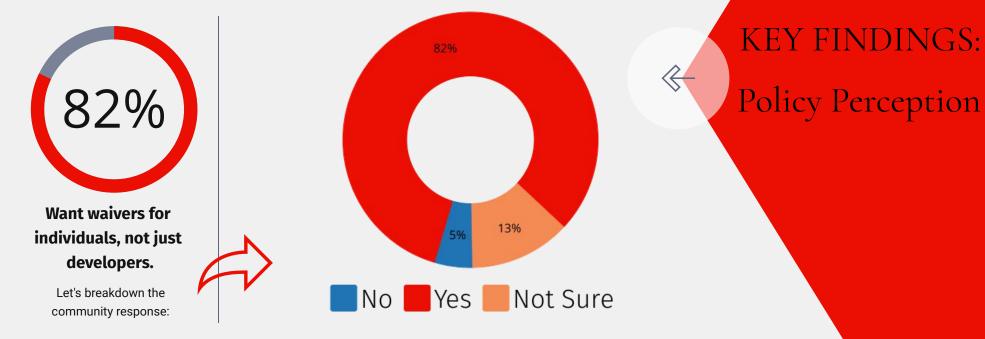


## KEY FINDINGS: Policy Perception

## LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: WAIVERS

More than 80% of residents support expanding eligibility for fee waivers and housing assistance to individuals building affordable primary residences, rather than limiting these programs to large developers. Public sentiment clearly favors empowering locals to create attainable housing.

#### **Question:** Should individuals (not just developers) be eligible for housing fee waivers and state funding if they are building an affordable primary residence?



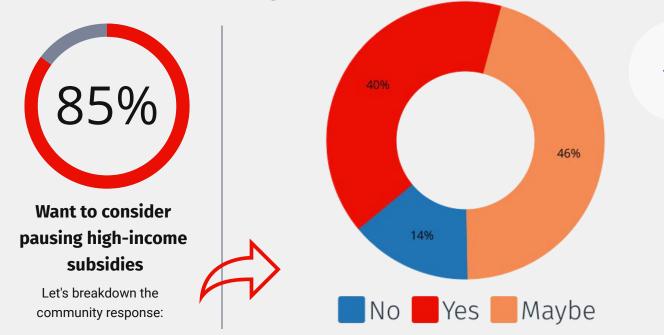
## LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: SUBSIDIES

85% of residents either support or are open to pausing subsidies for households earning over \$115,000 annually, with many respondents expressing openness to exceptions for essential workers facing housing access issues despite higher incomes. Only 14% opposed a pause outright.

## Question: Would you support a pause on the county and town considering applying for housing grants for high-income earners (e.g., \$115,000 income households) until subsidies are available to lower-income or working class families?

**KEY FINDINGS**:

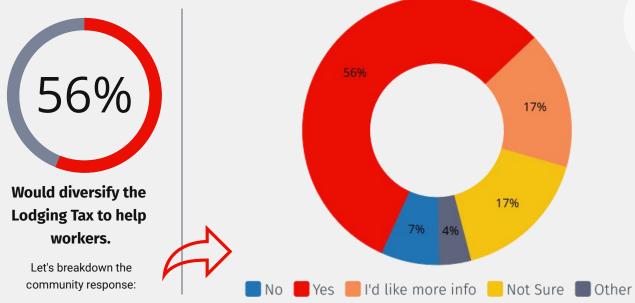
**Policy Perception** 



## LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: LODGING TAX USES

Over 50% of residents support expanding lodging tax uses to workforce housing and childcare, and another 30% expressed openness or interest pending more information. Very few residents opposed diversification outright. Public sentiment strongly favors reallocating existing tax revenues to address local needs rather than continuing to prioritize tourism marketing.

Question: Would you be in favor of the county diversifying the lodging tax from being allocated to only tourism advertising and marketing to expanding uses to subsidize workforce housing and childcare?



## KEY FINDINGS: Policy Perception

### LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: HOUSING STRATEGY

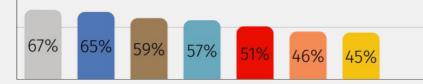
Residents clearly prioritize policies that protect local interests, limit speculative development, and support affordability for working families. More than two-thirds emphasized that housing policies should benefit locals — not developers or absentee investors.

**Question:** What do you believe should be the top priorities when it comes to local housing policy? (check all that apply)



Percent of Respondent

Let's breakdown how the community wants to see Official Housing Strategy **Community Priorities** 



Policy Inclusion (Checked all that applied)

- Policies for Locals, Not Developers
- Housing Assistance Less Than 100% AMI & Essential Workers
- Limit STRs and Speculative Investment
- Ensure affordable housing availability
- Preserve Local Infrastructure and Natural Resources
- Protect Existing Neighborhoods from Overdevelopment
- Support off-grid, low-cost, or owner-built alternatives
- Composting Toilets/Greywater Systems

## KEY FINDINGS: Policy Perception

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## LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: GROWTH IMPACT

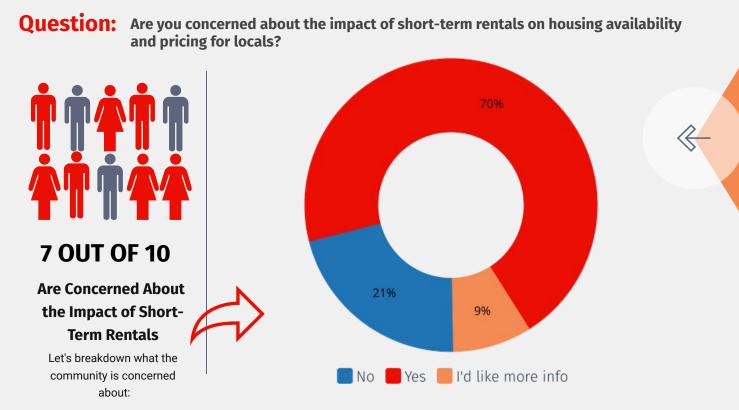
Nearly 9 out of 10 residents are concerned about the impacts of unchecked population growth, citing failing infrastructure, water shortages, traffic safety, and loss of wildlife corridors as urgent priorities. 88% of respondents listed one or more concerns.

**Question:** Are you concerned about the effects of population growth in Archuleta County and Pagosa Springs, such as: (check all that apply)



## LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: STRs

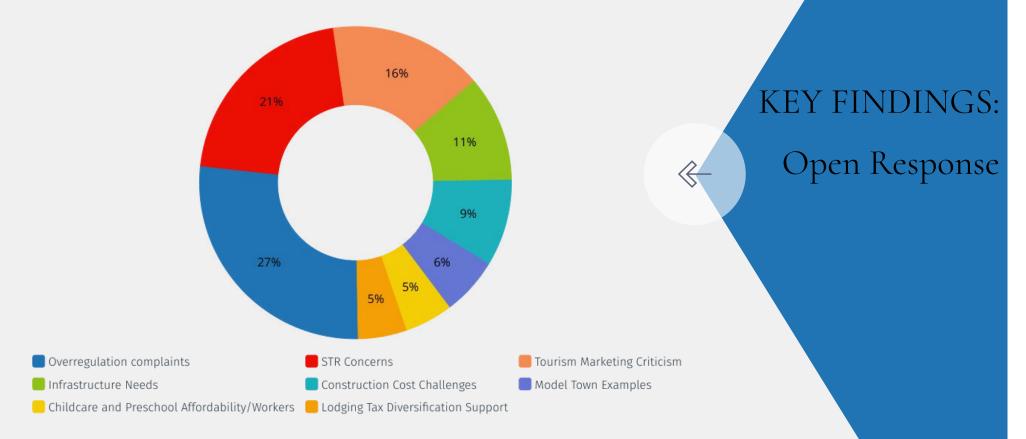
7 out of 10 residents expressed concern about the impact of short-term rentals (STRs) on housing affordability and community stability. Survey responses and open comments consistently linked STR proliferation to rising home prices, displacement of local workers, and neighborhood disruption. Additionally, several residents reported illegal STR activity and a lack of enforcement by local officials, highlighting growing frustration with the regulatory gap and perceived favoritism toward outside investors.



KEY FINDINGS: Growth Impact Concerns

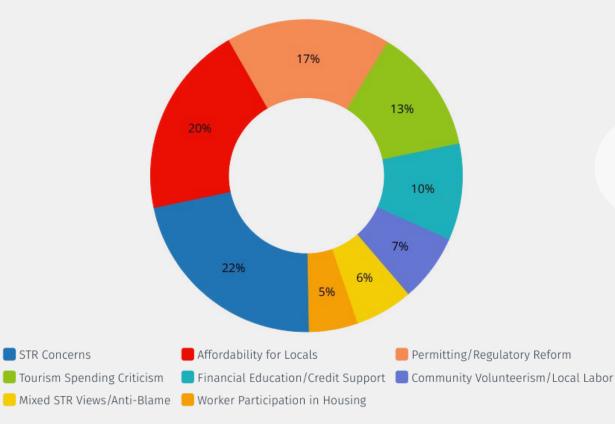
#### LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: 'OTHER' RESPONSE

Open-ended responses emphasized concerns about overregulation, STR saturation, infrastructure deficits, and the misuse of public funds for tourism promotion rather than resident needs. Many residents advocated for investment in essential infrastructure, support for local affordability, and reforms to prioritize full-time community members.



#### LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: NOTES FOR COUNTY

Residents expressed urgent concerns about short-term rentals, housing affordability, overregulation, and the misuse of public funds on tourism marketing. Many offered creative solutions — including financial education, community-led building, and stronger business accountability for local workforce housing.



KEY FINDINGS: Open Response

#### LOCAL RESIDENT VOICES: PARTICIPANTS

The average survey participant is a long-term, full-time resident aged 55 or older. Respondents represented a wide range of income levels, though the majority earned under \$75,000 annually. Most were either retired or employed full-time, and many shared personal experiences or close awareness of housing hardships affecting their families, employees, or neighbors.

Over two-thirds of respondents are homeowners, while more than one in five are renters. An additional 5% are landowners planning to build, and a small but significant group (~4%) reported unstable or nontraditional living situations — including living in RVs, staying with family, or commuting from outside the county. More than one-third (34%) of all respondents either currently need affordable housing or are worried about losing housing security in the near future. While most report stable housing now, many expressed concern for the wellbeing of others in their household or community — highlighting that the local housing crisis affects far more than just those in immediate need.

Nearly nine out of ten respondents (87.6%) are full-time residents, with another 9% being seasonal or part-time. A small number are landowners or individuals seeking to become full-time residents, affirming that this survey reflects the voices of highly invested, locally grounded community members — not tourists or outside speculators.

In short, survey respondents span a diverse set of ages and incomes, but the largest groups are older, working, or retired residents with deep roots in the area. These are not transient opinions — they are long-standing residents calling for thoughtful, compassionate, and community-centered housing solutions.

## KEY FINDINGS: Demographics

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## STRONG SUPPORT FOR WORKERS AND LOCAL POLICY CHANGES

A striking trend throughout the survey is the number of full-time residents in stable housing who nonetheless expressed deep concern for others in the community—especially low-income workers who can no longer afford to live here. This outpouring of support demonstrates that Archuleta County residents value compassion, inclusivity, and shared responsibility. Many believe strongly in protecting the people who serve the community every day—from grocery clerks to teachers, tradespeople, and service workers. Respondents consistently voiced that they do not want to see these neighbors priced out or forced to move. The survey reveals not only frustration but also hope: the desire to preserve a diverse, equitable community where everyone belongs.

Residents expressed extreme frustration with the lack of follow-through on previous housing initiatives and planning. Comments noted that local policies often prioritize future development or outside investment over current residents.

The survey also revealed:

Requests for permitting reform, zoning flexibility, and support for alternative housing types

Ongoing struggles with infrastructure access (e.g., septic, water)

Insurance inaccessibility due to wildfire risks

## KEY FINDINGS: Conclusion



## IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS AND A PLAN

**Comprehensive Strategy: 10-Year Development Plan** 

- Cross-agency collaboration (County, Town, PAWSD, Fire District, Schools)
- Engage landscape architects, planners, engineers, geo-engineers
- Mandatory public input at all planning stages (design charrettes, workshops, surveys)

Goals: align infrastructure, promote affordability, ensure disaster resilience

Community Involvement: Housing Assessment Advisory Committee

- Citizen-led oversight committee (residents, contractors, advocates, small business owners)
- Quarterly review of housing policies and code changes
- Ensure representation from extremely low- and low-income households
- Maintain transparency and evolving community input

P	ROPOSAL:
	Solutions



## IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS AND A PLAN

**PROPOSAL:** 

Solutions

#### Policy Changes: Funding and Tax Reform

Lodging Tax Diversification:

- Reallocate tourism taxes toward workforce housing and childcare
- Supported by 55%+ of residents; strong openness among others
- Logically ties tourism economy survival to worker housing

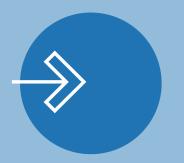
**Property Tax Solutions:** 

- Explore mill levy reductions, property tax rebates, and tax work-off programs
- Stabilize long-term homeowners, seniors, and fixed-income residents
- Proposed Archuleta County program: 100-hour work-for-tax-credit model

#### Land Use and Permitting Reforms:

- Broaden allowed housing types: tiny homes, modular, off-grid alternatives
- Create owner-certified permitting pathways
- Expand land split and shared ownership opportunities
- Lower hookup and infrastructure access costs for primary residents
- Fast-track permits for affordable housing contractors through a local registry

# THANK YOU!



#### Sources:

ndependent Survey (ArchuletaOutreach@gmail.com) ndependent Survey Executive Summary ndependent Survey Raw Data