

# Housing in Maine: Preferences, Perceptions, and MaineHousing's Role

A summary of MaineHousing focus groups conducted in October 2014

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## **National Analysis on Housing and Home Buyer Characteristics**

Recent national studies show that housing preferences and perceptions are changing. They vary among age groups, and are due in part to the impact of the 2008 recession, longer term perceptions about the economy, income uncertainty, and other issues such as energy costs. In early 2014, the National Association of Realtors released the results of a survey on *Home Buyer and Seller Generational Trends*<sup>1</sup>, which included a sampling of 148,011 recent home buyers. NAR delineated respondents by generations, and looked at what each generation preferred in a home and why, as well as what they purchased.

The survey reveals interesting differences among generations when it comes to buying a house. Generation Y (1980 – 1995) buys primarily out of sheer desire to own a home, and still commands the largest share of home buyers among all age groups. (A new trend towards renting, however, is emerging in this age group). The quality of neighborhood and the amount of time needed to commute to work are factors in where they buy. Generation X (1965 – 1979) comes in second to generation Y in the share of home buyers and they buy primarily out of desire to own, to get a larger home, or because of a job-related relocation. As we move up in age, the share of home buyers diminishes and the reasons for buying a home change. The younger baby boomers (1955 – 1964) are diverse in their reasons to buy. Multigenerational homes are sought so children and even parents share the home with the home buyer. This group is seeking cost savings as well. The older baby boomers (1946 – 1954) buy to avoid maintenance, move closer to family and friends, and seek to reduce housing-related costs.

Other studies indicate that while Generations X and Y still comprise the top home-buyer cohorts as they have historically, many are moving towards rentals. This move is being attributed to reasons including high student debt loads, desire for a more independent and flexible lifestyle, and a lasting negative impression the 2008 recession had on them. Between 2004 and 2012, the share of young adults renting rose from 50 to 58 percent<sup>2</sup>. Though low income problems are really cross generational, they are hardest on the young and old.<sup>3</sup>

With this in mind, in late October MaineHousing convened separate focus groups of most housing industry sectors – Realtors, lenders, landlords, builders and developers, and people working with older adults – to discuss Maine's housing market, share perceptions, and talk about buyer and renter preferences in housing.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.Realtor.org/sites/default/files/reports/2014/2014-home-buyer-and-seller-generational-trends-report-full.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.builderonline.com/money/gen-x-prefers-to-rent\\_o](http://www.builderonline.com/money/gen-x-prefers-to-rent_o)

<sup>3</sup> Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, *State of the Nation's Housing, 2014*.

## Executive Summary

This report is a qualitative analysis of Maine's housing market, preferences, and perceptions. Preferences in this context would include, but are not limited to, tenure, size, number of bedrooms, location, proximity to transportation and other services, and finally, affordability. The analysis relies on the focus group method with preferences discussed in the context of market segments, such as young residents, baby boomers (young and old), and older adults in Maine.

This analysis indicates that changing demographics in combination with an older housing stock, flat population growth, and an anemic economy will result in lasting changes to Maine's housing market. Buyers are getting older and the desire to rent as opposed to own is growing and overall, household formation in Maine is slow to non-existent. The market will need to focus more on change to meet needs within a large inventory of older houses as opposed to building newer houses for an increasing number of households.

The major findings of this analysis include:

1. Buyers, older and younger, do appear to have become more focused on purchasing smaller sized more energy-efficient houses.
2. Much of the existing housing supply in Maine is not matched to meet the preferences of either younger or older buyers due primarily to the location, size, and the condition of the housing itself, particularly as it pertains to heating costs.
3. There are difficult challenges in creating a more balanced housing market in Maine. These problems include slow economic growth, inadequate supply of trade workers to renovate or fix homes, a shortage of appraisers, and difficult local, state, and federal regulations.

## Changing Demographics and Housing

Maine ranks first in the United States with the highest median age of 43.6 and second in the percentage of citizens over the age of 65 at 17 percent.

The older adult community in Maine is comprised of younger and older baby boomers downsizing and more elderly individuals seeking alternative housing to their current home or seeking to have additional services provided in their existing home. The younger boomers are looking to downsize to a two-bedroom home near good transportation, essential services, and perhaps their children and grand kids. Older boomers are looking to downsize to eliminate maintenance but also to be closer to more services, including assisted living programs.

In many cases, the older boomers are leaving homes that are falling behind in terms of maintenance and this becomes problematic when it comes to selling that more rural home and getting money for the more preferable urban home. In addition, when and if they do leave that home, it adds to an existing inventory of poorly maintained and less attractive housing stock.

The typical first-time home buyer in Maine is approximately 40 years old. These buyers and the more traditionally aged first-time home buyer (20s and 30s) are looking to buy in the same urban

areas as the older adult population. However, the latter often have cash in hand and put the younger buyers at a disadvantage. The young baby boomers have better paying jobs, have owned a home, and have good credit. Also, the lack of younger workers in many areas, particularly rural areas, poses challenges for repair or rehabilitation work often needed for older, less energy efficient homes. In addition to student debt and a general lack of desire to own a home at a young age, these demographic issues contribute to the increasing demand for rentals as opposed to owned rental units for younger buyers.

### **An Older Housing Stock**

The demand for the construction of new homes is still present but is not coming from within but rather from outside the state and is most active along the coastal areas. Overall, though the housing market has improved, housing starts along with existing home sales and prices are not at pre-recession or historically normal levels. Much of the improved market of 2012 and 2013 took the better housing stock off the market leaving the less preferable stock that, again, does not meet the emerging preferences of younger or older buyers.

The older housing stock tends to be larger, often in need of repair, and is not, by today's standards, including energy efficient. The price for this stock is better, particularly for younger buyers, but may end up costing more to make the house energy efficient. The shortage of a skilled workforce to do this work and the reluctance of younger buyers to do the repair work are problems.

Builders and developers would like to build new, but the cost of building a new single or multifamily building, given the current cost of construction and difficult zoning ordinances, make purchasing a lot not attractive.

Every focus group at some point commented on the problem of Maine's existing old housing stock. A common theme that emerged was that MaineHousing could work closer with Efficiency Maine and the Maine Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs to fix up older housing stock or provide additional assistance to first-time home buyers on down payments or grants focused specifically on rehabilitating this stock.

### **Toward a Balanced Housing Market**

The economy will have to improve and result in improved incomes in order for buyers to purchase either newly constructed houses or buy and upgrade older houses. There is a need for more qualified appraisers. Currently they are difficult to find and as such can result in increased process costs. There also is a need for more working and trades people to fix or build houses.

Regulations controlling lot size and development need to be modified to fit the state's changing demographic. Such regulations make purchasing a lot and developing single or multifamily housing more costly than market value. Though credit has improved in terms of dollars available, there still needs to be further efforts made to make it easier for people to obtain that credit. Home buyers will likely need down payment assistance to help increase home sales.

## Focus Group Summaries

The following are summary results by each interviewed focus group. These are based on comments provided by individual members of the focus groups and do not necessarily represent the opinions of MaineHousing or the organizations the participants represent.

### Realtors

- **Current Housing Market**

Though it varies regionally, the overall market improved in 2012 and 2013 thus easing a lot of pent-up demand. This year, 2014, the number of units is up, but prices are flat or even down a little. Inventories have diminished from double-digit highs (over 10 months) to a current inventory of six to eight months. There's still somewhat of a wait-and-see-if-values-rise approach, but Realtors don't anticipate much appreciation for a couple of years. Buyers are no longer focused solely on interest rates and principle but are more cautious and aware of the other costs of home ownership. Buyer agents also are helping the buyer avoid buying houses with potential costs down the road in terms of maintenance, heating, plumbing repair, and others. It is still a buyer's market. There are lots of first-time home buyers out there with cash. Foreclosures are not crowding out the market as much as they had. Condominiums are moving faster. Condos are a major retirement destination. In the coastal area, they move very quickly if priced correctly. Uncertainty about where interest rates are going in addition to fears about lead, arsenic, and other potential problems with existing homes has added to the current slower market. There is a need for more entry level affordable housing. Maine needs workforce housing and it just doesn't exist.

- **Sellers Confidence**

Sellers are beginning to feel better about not selling now if they don't get the right offer. They believe if they wait a year their home will sell at a better price. Some buyers still are trying for the lower-than-asking price.

- **Housing Stock Problem**

The better stock has been taken leaving less preferable inventory. What are left are older, larger, energy inefficient houses, while there is still high demand, across segments, for smaller one-floor homes. It's not profitable enough, given the price for lots, for developers to buy and build that energy-efficient, small-footprint home. Maine needs a program to assist potential buyers of multifamily properties with rehab. Unfortunately, even if the buyer or seller can pay for the repairs, there are few contractors available to do that work. A smaller, energy efficient new house is out of reach by virtue of it being smaller, energy efficient, and new and therefore in higher demand and higher priced because they're in high demand and therefore more expensive.

- **Appraisers, Buyers Agents, Contractors and the Aging Real Estate Agent**

Buyers don't want to fix up houses and there is a shortage of contractors, particularly on the coast, where contractors only take the "cream jobs." There also is a shortage of qualified appraisers, and "comps" (comparative properties) are difficult to find. The demand for appraisers appears to be exceeding supply. In many cases appraisers are slow which drags out the process of buying. The more cautious buyer with a meticulous agent adds to this

phenomenon, often requesting “full blown” appraisals. The costs for residential appraisals are rising. The older, more experienced real estate agents are fewer than they used to be and the new, younger agents don't educate the buyer as much as they should.

- **Segments**

Older adults want a single level house and they want to be closer to shopping (within walking distance). Many don't have a lot of money, even if they sold an existing home because it didn't sell for much. Some of them end up renting instead of buying.

Demographics have changed. Empty nesters are looking to move into town, to a single-floor dwelling. Brunswick Naval Air station properties were and are being taken quickly (modest ranch homes). The split is 60% retirees and 40% first-time home buyers in the coastal area but 60 first-time home buyer and 40% retirees elsewhere. Affordability is difficult for first-time homebuyers and younger buyers in particular. Younger people, due to uncertainty in the market, are now renting. They need education about buying and managing money in general. Credit scores for younger buyers can be problematic. When they do want to buy, they want a house at an old house price with all the features of a new house. They do tend to buy old anyway and end up paying more in the long run due to energy inefficiency. Unmarried home buyers are more common.

- **The Rental Market**

This market is “on fire” right now, stimulated by the uncertainty of owning a home (a “ball and chain”) and the fact that renters may simply prefer more flexibility. There seems to be no end and the market continues to tighten. Rents are increasing.

- **MaineHousing Issues**

MaineHousing “should pay some closing costs” in foreclosed deals and should do this “to help some people out...I do know they can't and are exploring it.” Maine needs programs to help buyers. MaineHousing should highlight and advertise more of its Purchase Plus Improvement program to help people and help them pick up the remaining foreclosures, especially multi-family projects that need work. It should offer an energy efficient mortgage program. It needs to educate the first-time home buyer better (as do real estate agents) and include brokers in its efforts. MaineHousing should encourage builders to build homes for between \$150,000 and \$160,000 or work with contractors to develop rehabilitation programs. It is more difficult today for first-time home buyers to finance. “There is a need for alternate financing” options and not “these high interest flux rate” deals. MaineHousing should advertise its products more. It should also “encourage the purchase of energy efficient housing” mortgage program.

- **Code Enforcement**

Code enforcement officers aren't helpful because they can scare potential buyers away when they aren't clear about what will need to be done to overcome hurdles to fix up or change a house to their liking.

### **Older Adult Counselors**

- **Aging at Home**

Without a doubt Maine's fastest growing demographic group, older Maine residents do want to remain at home as they age. They do so for several reasons, including the comfort and familiarity of a place they've lived in for years, independence, and the ability to have pets and feel safe at home. The house also is their largest asset.

- **Impediments to Preferences**

Maine's older adult population lives in older housing stock. They want to live in a safe, preferably single floor house that is adaptable to their changing needs. However, fixed lower incomes combined with an asset (their existing home) that may not be adequately maintained make it difficult for them to move to a better home. At the same time, it makes it difficult, if not unsafe, for them to stay in their house. The price for which they could sell their existing home would not help them buy an improved house, and the cost of repairing the existing house is cost prohibitive. Even if they have the money to fix up the house, contractors are extremely difficult to find. Many existing homes are no longer easily accessible to the resident. Current programs aimed at fixing the house or rehabilitating one for energy improvements, accessibility, and other concerns are out of reach. Again, finding contractors and the problem of trusting a contractor are at play.

- **Housing Options and Emerging Trends**

Baby boomers do not want to move to a nursing home for a variety of reasons. Nursing homes are changing from having a clinical atmosphere to home-like one. They are becoming more security conscious resulting in difficulties for older adults. Extra care is being taken by providers to make sure older adults know who is visiting and when. This is due to an issue regarding trust. Very few multifamily options exist in rural areas, particularly Hancock and Washington counties. Options in general diminish in the more rural areas due both to issues of affordability and available housing. Rental housing options in general are difficult to find and are also unaffordable. In terms of buying another house, there are not a lot of new smaller houses. Many existing homes that can be purchased would need work similar to the one being sold. The construction of new housing, rehabilitation of existing housing, and modifications to local zoning ordinances could open up additional options for Maine's older adults. When and if existing homes are rehabilitated for older adults, it's the smaller units that need to be redesigned with improved utilization in mind. One need is small units with an extra sleeping area (if not a second bedroom) as older adults wish to have a space for family visits. There are a few towns in Maine that are thinking in terms of developing age-friendly communities, but only a few.

- **Age Friendly Communities and Critical Issues in Older Adult Housing**

These communities need wheelchair friendly sidewalks and longer red lights at crosswalks, as well as be located within close proximity to essential services, and have a capacity to utilize existing services such as Meals on Wheels and other resources. Transportation is particularly critical, also. Many of the needs are blocked by regulations that do not allow adding a "mother-in-law apartment" or other innovative approaches that might enhance the growth of such a community. Seniors lack the financial resources. When many older adults were



younger, they did not think much about retirement, Social Security, and other issues they face now. Their house is their nest egg.

- **MaineHousing Programs**

MaineHousing programs have more layers involved to access assistance compared to Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). DECD is much easier to work with. Newer, post-1976 mobile homes are as bad or as worse than some pre-1976 mobile homes. There are many programs and applications dealing with similar housing problems on various organizational websites making it difficult for those providers to help people. Most people looking for services are very low income and eligible for most programs. Programs are underfunded. Income guidelines for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program miss groups of people, including a narrow band of people who qualify, and there are too few vouchers. People are not applying for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefits because they cannot apply through a home visit by a services provider or they are unable to get to an office to complete application forms. If MaineHousing moved to the “categorical” method of determining LIHEAP eligibility it could save administrative costs. There is too much money in administration-related costs as opposed to assistance in LIHEAP. Maine needs a robust home-repair program. MaineHousing should examine retrofitting some existing housing units and make rooms such as baths, kitchens and other areas of a house accessible. It also should mix funding sources; one program doesn't go far enough. Cross-training among MaineHousing staff and older-adult service providers would be helpful. MaineHousing should convene groups like this more often with others and be a leader in developing adequate older adult housing and strategies. There should also be a central location for information on all housing-related programs for older adults so people can go to one place for information rather than having to check many different places for assistance options. Perhaps MaineHousing's website could host such a location.

## Lenders

- **A New Improving Market**

The market is improving and has seen a spike in construction spending with indications the newly constructed homes will sell. “There is a trend away from large homes.” New units tend to be smaller, custom built with appraisals coming in lower than construction costs due primarily to the fact that “comps” on the market are older and larger. The buyers are older (55 and up) and looking for the smaller house, with fewer bedrooms, on one floor. People making the move to construct appear to have healthy financial statements and are not typical first-time home buyers. Sales of lots also have increased after being stalled for years. Condo sales are up and, like houses, are smaller. Cash-in-hand buyers are increasing. The second-home buyer market is flat with lots of out-of-state second-home buyers in coastal and higher-end areas. Second-home buyers comprise 10-15 percent to 30-40 percent of market, depending on region.

- **Cross Generational Housing Mismatch**

Younger and older buyers appear to want smaller houses in terms of square footage and the number of bedrooms, but for differing reasons. In general, buyers appear to be savvy about energy efficiency, but the existing housing stock does not meet this requirement. Smaller,

newly built and energy efficient homes are preferred. In years past it was difficult to sell a two-bedroom house, but it is not now. Because many of the baby boomers have cash in hand to make a healthy down payment, it is tough going for traditional first-time home buyers who are more cash-strapped.

- **First-time home buyers**

They are older (30 to 40 years old) than they used to be. The more traditional, younger, first-time home buyer is well educated and mobile, and often not married. Not as many first-time buyers today in contrast to the past. In some areas, the first-time buyers actually want a house with three bedrooms but finding one that is energy efficient is difficult. They are not interested in fixer-uppers. Tougher credit standards and student debt hinder younger first-time home buyers as well.

- **Excess Inventory and Concerns About the Economy**

An excess of inventory on the market is fueling concern among buyers and is dragging down consumer optimism. These homes are not as attractive as newer homes. Mill closings and the lack of better-paying jobs and opportunities combine to further concern potential buyers. There is a need to incentivize people to buy this older housing stock by focusing on upgrading the structures. The number of trade workers is declining and the older inventory that needs work might not have a workforce ready to meet future demand.

- **Rental Housing & Mobile Homes**

The rental housing market is tight. There are rentals available for seniors but not much for other renters. Overall rental housing construction is flat but varies regionally with Portland seeing more activity but either on the higher end or lower end subsidized with a focus on seniors. Banks want 30 percent or more down on multifamily construction loans due to regulations and that's driving construction down. The cost of construction now is too prohibitive given the likely returns. Most renters will be subsidized. When many non-subsidized renters do find a decent affordable place to rent, the separate issue of utilities can render it close to unaffordable. Mobile home communities are seeing lending pull back due to regulations, and MaineHousing was the only option available for individual mobile-home buyers looking to upgrade to a new home (Pre-1976 Mobile Home Replacement Program). The price of a new mobile home makes buying an existing single family house a better option.

- **Financing**

Refinancing has been brisk, but the market is changing. People generally don't want to give up low interest rates to refinance. So, the traditional refinance market, as it was, is likely a thing of the past as interest rates begin to climb toward 5 percent. The Rural Development program is the most popular home financing with increased volume as a result of a FHA increase in premium. First-time home buyers don't have the asset base to make a down payment and haven't for a while. MaineHousing's Gift of Green was great; MaineHousing should help with some additional down payment assistance. The Purchase Plus Improvement program is good but too risky for banks because when the borrower doesn't make it work, MaineHousing wants the bank to buy back the loan. MaineHousing needs to reduce that risk.

- **Barriers and MaineHousing**

There are a number of interconnected issues ranging from current trends in household composition to lack of education relevant to managing money and understanding credit to more structural problems such as foreclosures driving down prices, a lack of qualified appraisers slowing down the process of closing while making it more expensive, and more regulations on banks which are required to justify collateral. The mismatch between desired homes and inventory and qualified buyers is an issue. MaineHousing should make sure all potential investors in Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC) activities are aware of the program. MaineHousing needs to take more of the risk in its first-time home buyer programs. It should provide a self-insured first-time home buyer program, and figure out a way to resolve the inventory problem. Perhaps a collaborative effort on the part of MaineHousing, Efficiency Maine, and the Community Development Block Grant program to obtain inventory for buyers and finance it with energy rehabilitation could be built into the deal. MaineHousing should purchase properties that meet the markets preferences in terms of proximity to services, but too large for current preferences, and convert them to duplexes or rehab them for the second-home buyer market. It should collaborate with other organizations in distressed communities facing mill closings or general tougher economic situation. MaineHousing should adjust income limits on the first-time home buyer program so that it captures potential clients that don't meet its or Rural Development's current program requirements. MaineHousing could work toward a more balanced housing market by focusing its resources toward the revitalization of distressed communities that have faced such problems as a mill closing.

### Builders/Developers

- Inventory was going down during the summer of 2014 and demand was up, but now that's reversed. Opportunity has opened for new, smaller, open concept single family housing and energy efficient homes. Urban areas (Portland) are thriving with baby boomers choosing to move there. The condo market is good, although with smaller sized units going to people often paying cash. Seniors are no longer terrified about trying to sell their homes. A boom is afoot for baby boomers and empty nesters. A movement to urban areas is evident. Permitting is down, though, hovering around 3,800 in contrast to an actual need of 4,200. At its height, permitting was 7,000-8,000 units. Construction is more expensive than the builder can recoup in market value. Demand is not where it should be in terms of units being permitted. Should be up to 4,000 units. Boomers and mover-uppers are strongest market segments.
- **Rental Market**

The rental market is tight, and prices are up. Many renters are looking for short-term renting instead of buying options. Overall, renters are of lower income although there are more people with higher incomes renting. There is an unmet need for the truly poor. Elderly often live in falling-down homes on fixed incomes. They want to obtain rentals but demand exceeds supply. The movement from homeownership to rental is due to some preferring to rent. Student debt is hindering some from buying once out of school.

- **Critical Issues**

Regulations controlling lot size, development, allowed density, and other municipal regulations cost about 40-45 percent of a budget. Lot prices and availability of land are problems. Good jobs are scarce and incomes are too low, making affordability a problem. There also is a shortage of tradespeople needed to work construction for new, fixer-uppers, or renovations, except along the coast on high-end jobs.

- **MaineHousing and Development**

The multifamily program is difficult although dialogue and flexibility are increasing to make relationships better. MaineHousing should do more for first-time home buyers in the way of down-payment assistance. It should really promote first-time home buyer education. MaineHousing needs to focus more on the needs of seniors, making it affordable for them to stay at home or move to affordable assisted living units by developing programs with home services built in.

### Landlords

- **Today's Rental Market**

The rental housing market is tight for single- family and multifamily units. Units that become available are filled quickly. There are more difficulties keeping renters in single family units due to the fact that they pay utilities. Although renting is becoming less affordable, units still get filled. It appears that renters do prefer to move to newly built low income housing developments, although there are too few of them to meet need. There is a high need for more units for seniors although needs for all segments -- older, move ups and baby boomers -- are significant. Today's renter is looking to have the electricity or other utilities paid, and in some instances they require parking spaces.

- **Issues and Concerns**

Affordability of rents is the major issue for landlords followed by tenants' behavior and problems making deposits. Finding qualified renters and state regulations and inspections for properties are also concerns. Regulations on tie downs for mobile homes are troublesome. Because mobile homes are easy, efficient, single floor, and can provide a sense of community, they are deemed a good method to house people. The tie down issue is cost prohibitive. The production of new multifamily housing is too costly to be affordable or profitable for those who develop them, and they can crowd out others providing the bulk of housing to citizens in need. MaineHousing needs to increase the amount of vouchers and the value of those vouchers. Incomes are not keeping pace with costs landlords face in keeping properties operating. Rules requiring landlords to allow pets are extreme and as a result, people who do not really need the pet have them, they make a mess and the landlord must deal with it. Pets should be allowed in rental properties but you need to limit it and eliminate the no change rule. It's costing landlords.

- **MaineHousing and Landlords**

MaineHousing can help by increasing the value of vouchers, making them more available, and by providing more consistency in inspections program. What passed for years will not pass now. It should allow the private sector to provide housing instead of building new units that are inherently more costly and end up not really helping people who need

affordable housing. MaineHousing should work harder to review regulations that are unreasonable or provide financial assistance to landlords to help them comply. Market studies should better reflect actual vacancy rates in communities where housing is being developed.

## Appendix A – Focus Group Questionnaires

### Homebuilder Questions/Issues

How would you characterize the current residential housing market for the following?

- Single family units
- Condominiums
- Rental units
- Seasonal properties/high end

What market segments are strongest now?

- First time buyers
- Move up buyers
- Boomers downsizing

What do people want in a new house today?

Which of the following are most critical issues for new housing production?

- Local and state regulations
- Qualifying buyers/mortgage money availability
- Interest rates
- Availability of land/lots
- Material prices
- Land prices
- Affordability

What are your major concerns regarding new housing production

- Now
- Looking ahead 5 years or so

Do you participate in any MaineHousing programs for housing production?

- If so, which ones and how would you rate the programs in terms of ease of use and effectiveness?
- If not, why not?

Are you targeting product to the age 55+/boomer market and if so how are you doing with it?

Are you targeting product to first time/young professional buyers...why or why not and what is the market response.

What do you see as the major impediments to a balanced housing market over the next five years?

How can MaineHousing best help achieve a balanced market over the next five years

Do you believe the changes we've seen in the residential housing market are structural or cyclical?

Is there anything else you'd like to comment on regarding housing?

### **Landlord Questions/Issues**

How would you characterize the current market for rental units?

Specifically for:

Single family units (has this grown in recent years?)

Multifamily

What market segments are strongest now?

First time renters

Move up renters

Baby Boomers/Older Adults

What do renters want in an apartment today?

Which of the following are most critical issues for renting units?

Local and state regulations

Qualifying tenants

Deposits

Tenant behavior

Affordability

What are your major concerns regarding renting and rental unit production?

Now

Looking ahead 5 years or so

Do you participate in any MaineHousing rental programs?

If so, which ones and how would you rate the programs in terms of ease of use and effectiveness

If not, why not

Are you targeting product to the age 55+/boomer market and if so how are you doing with it?

What do you see as the major impediments to an affordable rental housing market over the next five years?

How can MaineHousing best help achieve a balanced market over the next five years?

In looking back 5 years, what has been the most significant change you observed in rental housing?

Is there anything else you'd like to comment on regarding rental housing?

### **Lender Questions/Issues**

How would you characterize the current residential housing market for

- Single family units
- Condominiums
- Rental units
- Home equity/refinancing
- Repair

What are your major concerns regarding the current housing market

- Now
- Looking ahead 5 years or so

What do people want in a home today?

What do you see as the major issues in the first time buyer market?

What do you see as the major issues in the age 55+/boomer market?

What market segments are strongest now?

- First time buyers
- Move up buyers
- Boomers downsizing

What are buyers in these segments looking for in a home, in terms of size, location and other attributes?

What are the most critical issues in the current housing market?

- Qualifying buyers/mortgage money availability
- Federal/State/Local regulations
- Housing affordability for first time and move up buyers
- Appraisal standards
- Interest rates
- Availability of land/lots
- Housing supply...for first time buyers...for move ups, for boomers

Do you participate in any MaineHousing programs for housing affordability?

- If so, which ones and how would you rate the programs in terms of ease of use and effectiveness
- If not, why not

What do you see as the major impediments to a balanced housing market over the next five years?

How can MaineHousing best help achieve a balanced market over the next five years?

Would you say the changes you've seen in the housing market over the past 5 years are structural or cyclical?

Is there anything else you'd like to comment on regarding housing lending?



## **Older Adult Housing Questions/Issues (Informants)**

It is generally recognized that most older adults prefer to remain at home...is this accurate?

What are the reasons for this preference?

What are other preferences older adults have with regard to housing?

What are the impediments to this in MAINE and how are they being addressed?

What are the emerging trends for (1) nursing home care and for (2) assisted living?

Are there distinct regional patterns in older adult housing issues around the state?

What do you see as the major issues in the older adult retired/near retirement rental market?

What do you see as the major issues in the older adult retired/near retirement ownership market?

What is your sense of the local political climate and business sector support for older adult housing?

Which of the following are the most critical issues in the current older adult housing market?

Federal/State/Local Regulations

Care for older adult parents/grandparents

Transportation access

Qualifying buyers/mortgage money availability

Appraisal standards

Interest rates

Housing supply...for boomers

Do you participate in any MaineHousing programs for housing affordability?

If so, which ones and how would you rate the programs in terms of ease of use and effectiveness

If not, why not

How can MaineHousing best help achieve a balanced older adult market over the next five years.

Is there anything else you'd like to comment on regarding older adults and housing in Maine?

### **Realtor Questions/Issues**

How would you characterize the current housing market?

How would you characterize the current market for new:

- Single family units
- Condominiums
- Rental units

What are your major concerns regarding the current housing market

- Now
- Looking ahead 5 years or so

What market segments are strongest now?

- First time buyer
- Move up buyers
- Boomers downsizing

What do people want in a home today?

Which of the following are most critical issues in the current housing market?

- Housing affordability for first time and move up buyers
- Qualifying buyers/mortgage money availability
- Appraisal standards
- Interest rates
- Availability of land/lots
- Housing supply...for first time buyers...for move ups, for boomers
- Affordability

Do you participate in any MaineHousing programs for housing affordability?

- If so, which ones and how would you rate the programs in terms of ease of use and effectiveness
- If not, why not

What do you see as the major issues in the age 55+/boomer market?

What do you see as the major issues in the first time buyer market?

What do you see as the major impediments to a balanced housing market over the next five years?

How can MaineHousing best help achieve a balanced market over the next five years?

Is there anything else you'd like to comment on regarding housing in Maine?