



**SURVEY OF BLOCK ISLAND, R.I.**

**Prepared for**

**The Block Island Land Trust**

**October 2019**

## **Methodology**

One hundred thirty-seven residents in Block Island, Rhode Island were interviewed in a random sample taken October 10-14, 2019. Respondents were screened for residency on Block Island, Rhode Island. The sample was balanced according to all known demographic factors. All interviews were conducted by telephone and by the Kitchens Group Internet survey site. With the adjustment for a small universe, the margin of error for this survey is  $\pm 7.0\%$ , with a 95% confidence level.

## **Attitudes toward Open Space on Block Island**

### ***Do you favor or oppose protecting more open space on Block Island?***

<b><i>strongly favor</i></b>	<b>70%</b>
<b><i>somewhat favor</i></b>	<b>18%</b>
<b><i>somewhat oppose</i></b>	<b>8%</b>
<b><i>strongly oppose</i></b>	<b>3%</b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b>1%</b>

An overwhelming majority of Block Island residents favor protecting more open space, with 70% strongly favoring it. This response is even higher among residents whose homes are valued between \$1-1.5 million dollars.

### ***At the time, would you say Block Island is...***

<b><i>being developed too fast and we need to discourage some growth</i></b>	<b>47%</b>
<b><i>developing at a rate that is good for the community</i></b>	<b>45%</b>
<b><i>not developing enough and growth needs to be encouraged</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b>7%</b>

A Plurality of residents say Block Island is being developed too fast and needs to be discouraged. This response tends to be higher among voters over the age of 65, registered voters, and residents whose homes are valued between \$1-1.5 million dollars. Forty-five percent of residents think the Island is developing at a good rate. This response is higher among 35-65 year old residents, those earning between \$50,000-\$100,000, year long residents and those residing there less than six months a year, and those residents whose homes are valued between \$1.5-2 million dollars.

**How concerned are you about the effects of climate change on Block Island's ecosystem and infrastructure?**

<b>Very concerned</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>somewhat concerned</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>not really concerned</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>unsure</b>	<b>1%</b>

Eighty-five percent of Block Island residents express concern about the effects of climate change. An even higher percentage of residents over the age of 65, those earning between \$50,000-\$100,000, and residents whose homes are valued between \$1-1.5 million dollars express their concern.

**Attitudes toward Other Block Island Issues**

***The Town has enacted ordinances banning plastic bags and balloons on Block Island. Do you support or oppose expanding Town regulations to discourage use of other single-use plastics such as straws, Styrofoam, water bottles and non-recyclable food containers?***

<b>strongly support</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>somewhat support</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>somewhat oppose</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>strongly oppose</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>unsure</b>	<b>1%</b>

Eighty-four percent of Block Island residents support expanding regulations discouraging the use of plastic straws, water bottles, and non-recyclable food containers. An even higher percentage of residents over the age of 65, those earning between \$50,000-\$100,000, and women support the expansion of the ordinances.

***Do you support or oppose the Town's effort to create a new Harbor facility?***

<b>strongly support</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>somewhat support</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>somewhat oppose</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>strongly oppose</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>unsure</b>	<b>27%</b>

Fifty-three percent of Block Island residents support creating a new harbor facility. An even higher percentage of residents between the ages of 35-50, 12 month residents, registered voters, and residents whose homes are valued between \$1-1.5 million dollars support a new harbor facility.

***Do you support or oppose the Town's effort to get the State to change the laws to restrict pesticides on Block Island?***

<b><i>strongly support</i></b>	<b>54%</b>
<b><i>somewhat support</i></b>	<b>18%</b>
<b><i>somewhat oppose</i></b>	<b>10%</b>
<b><i>strongly oppose</i></b>	<b>6%</b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b>12%</b>

Seventy-two percent support restricting pesticides. Support is even higher among residents between the ages of 51-65, those earning between \$50,000-\$100,000, 6-8 month residents, 9-12 month residents, registered voters, and women.

**Attitudes toward Lyme Disease and Deer Population**

***How concerned are you about you and your family's exposure to tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease?***

<b><i>Very concerned</i></b>	<b>70%</b>
<b><i>somewhat concerned</i></b>	<b>24%</b>
<b><i>not really concerned</i></b>	<b>6%</b>

Ninety-four percent are concerned about tick borne diseases. An even higher percentage of 6-8 month residents and 9-12 month residents say they are very concerned.

***Would you support or oppose reducing the deer population on Block Island, even if that means using lethal means to do so?***

<b><i>strongly support</i></b>	<b>72%</b>
<b><i>somewhat support</i></b>	<b>16%</b>
<b><i>somewhat oppose</i></b>	<b>5%</b>
<b><i>strongly oppose</i></b>	<b>3%</b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b>4%</b>

Eighty-eight percent supports reducing the deer population on Block Island. An even higher percentage of residents over the age of 65 and 6-8 month residents fall into the “strongly support” category.

***In order to reduce the deer population on Block Island would you support the following measures:***

***allowing weekend hunting***

<b><i>yes</i></b>	<b><i>48%</i></b>
<b><i>no</i></b>	<b><i>42%</i></b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b><i>10%</i></b>

A plurality of residents is in favor of allowing weekend hunting. This response is higher among residents over the age of 65, those earning more than \$100,000, residents living on the island fewer than six months, non-registered voters, and those whose houses are valued between \$500-1 million dollars. Opposition is higher among 51-65 year old residents, 12 month and 6-8 month residents, and registered voters.

***managed hunts***

<b><i>yes</i></b>	<b><i>90%</i></b>
<b><i>no</i></b>	<b><i>5%</i></b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b><i>5%</i></b>

Ninety percent favor managed hunts. This response is consistent across all subgroups.

***baiting***

<b><i>yes</i></b>	<b><i>67%</i></b>
<b><i>no</i></b>	<b><i>19%</i></b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b><i>15%</i></b>

Once again, an overwhelming majority favors this practice with even stronger support coming from men and registered voters.

## **Attitudes toward Block Island Trust Goals**

***Money raised from the real estate transfer fee goes to the Block Island Land Trust for open space protection. I am going to read you some of the things the Land Trust is doing with these funds. Please tell me if you think each of these goals is important or not important to you.***

***to buy land to protect the scenic rural views and landscapes on Block Island***

<b><i>very important</i></b>	<b><i>71%</i></b>
<b><i>somewhat important</i></b>	<b><i>20%</i></b>
<b><i>somewhat unimportant</i></b>	<b><i>1%</i></b>
<b><i>not really important</i></b>	<b><i>6%</i></b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b><i>1%</i></b>

Ninety-one percent believe it is important for money from the real estate transfer tax be used to protect scenic views and landscapes. This response is even higher among 6-8 month residents, those living on the island fewer than 6 months, non-registered voters, and those whose homes are valued at more than 2 million dollars.

***to provide a safe habitat for many types of birds, as well as rare and endangered plants and animals***

<b><i>very important</i></b>	<b><i>71%</i></b>
<b><i>somewhat important</i></b>	<b><i>22%</i></b>
<b><i>somewhat unimportant</i></b>	<b><i>3%</i></b>
<b><i>not really important</i></b>	<b><i>5%</i></b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b><i>0%</i></b>

Ninety-three percent believe it is important for money from the real estate transfer tax be used to provide safe habitat for birds and endangered plants and animals. This response is even higher among 9-11 month residents, those whose incomes are between \$50,000-\$100,000, and voters over the age of 65.

***to buy land which could be used for recreational purposes such as walking, fishing, and bird watching***

<b><i>very important</i></b>	<b><i>57%</i></b>
<b><i>somewhat important</i></b>	<b><i>33%</i></b>
<b><i>somewhat unimportant</i></b>	<b><i>3%</i></b>
<b><i>not really important</i></b>	<b><i>5%</i></b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b><i>1%</i></b>

Ninety percent believe it is important for money from the real estate transfer tax be used for recreational purposes. This response is even higher among 35-50 year old residents, those whose incomes are between \$50,000-\$100,000, and those whose homes are valued at more than 2 million dollars.

***to buy land which could be used for parks and outdoor sports like baseball and soccer***

<b><i>very important</i></b>	<b>23%</b>
<b><i>somewhat important</i></b>	<b>36%</b>
<b><i>somewhat unimportant</i></b>	<b>21%</b>
<b><i>not really important</i></b>	<b>18%</b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b>1%</b>

Fifty-nine percent believe it is important for money from the real estate transfer tax be used to for parks and outdoor sports. This response is even higher among 12 month residents and 35-50 year old residents.

***to purchase open space on the island to keep it from being developed***

<b><i>very important</i></b>	<b>67%</b>
<b><i>somewhat important</i></b>	<b>16%</b>
<b><i>somewhat unimportant</i></b>	<b>7%</b>
<b><i>not really important</i></b>	<b>7%</b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b>3%</b>

Eighty-three percent believe it is important for money from the real estate transfer tax be used to purchase open space on the island to keep it from being developed. This response is even higher among voters earning more than \$100,000.

***to protect clean freshwater resources***

<b><i>very important</i></b>	<b>89%</b>
<b><i>somewhat important</i></b>	<b>7%</b>
<b><i>somewhat unimportant</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>not really important</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b>1%</b>

Almost one hundred percent of Block Island residents believe it is important to protect clean freshwater resources.

***to protect low-lying lands and land adjacent to the coastal wetlands that are vulnerable to flooding and sea level rise***

<b><i>very important</i></b>	<b>62%</b>
<b><i>somewhat important</i></b>	<b>22%</b>
<b><i>somewhat unimportant</i></b>	<b>6%</b>
<b><i>not really important</i></b>	<b>7%</b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b>3%</b>

Eighty-four percent believe it is important for money from the real estate transfer tax be used to protect low lying lands. This response is even higher among 9-11 month residents and those whose homes are valued between \$1-1.5 million and more than 2 million dollars.

***to provide land for agriculture***

<b><i>very important</i></b>	<b>15%</b>
<b><i>somewhat important</i></b>	<b>46%</b>
<b><i>somewhat unimportant</i></b>	<b>20%</b>
<b><i>not really important</i></b>	<b>17%</b>
<b><i>unsure</i></b>	<b>2%</b>

Sixty-one percent believe it is important for money from the real estate transfer tax be used to protect agriculture. This response is consistent across all subgroups.

**Attitudes toward Affordable Housing**

***Do you feel the availability of affordable year-round housing on Block Island is a serious problem or not?***

<b><i>Very serious problem</i></b>	<b>44%</b>
<b><i>Somewhat serious problem</i></b>	<b>33%</b>
<b><i>Not really serious problem</i></b>	<b>14%</b>
<b><i>Not a problem</i></b>	<b>5%</b>
<b><i>Unsure</i></b>	<b>4%</b>

Seventy-seven percent thinks the availability of affordable housing is a serious problem. This response is higher among residents with housing valued between \$1.5-2 million and more than 2 million.



**Block Island has met the state's requirement of providing 10% affordable housing.**

**Do you think there still needs to be more affordable ownership housing built?**

<b>yes</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>no</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>unsure</b>	<b>11%</b>

A strong majority of voters think there still needs to be more affordable ownership housing built. This response is higher among 35-50 year old residents.

**Do you think there still needs to be more affordable rental housing built?**

<b>yes</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>no</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>unsure</b>	<b>10%</b>

A strong majority of voters also think there still needs to be more affordable rental housing built. This response is consistent across all subgroups.

**Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:**

**I think the size of houses being built on Block Island are too big and are changing the character of the island.**

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>2%</b>

Seventy-six percent of Block Island residents agree with this statement with 41% strongly agreeing. This response tends to be higher among 9-11 month residents.

**The Town, Land Trust, and others should work to protect land that is vulnerable to flooding and sea level rise.**

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>5%</b>

Eighty-one percent of Block Island residents agree with this statement with 55% strongly agreeing. This response tends to be higher among 6-8 and 9-11 month residents, those earning between \$50,000-\$100,000, and those with homes valued between \$1-1.5 million.

***While tourism is important, there are too many visitors to Block Island.***

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>3%</b>

Sixty-nine percent of Block Island residents agree with this statement with 38% strongly agreeing. This response tends to be higher among residents over the age of 65 and those with homes valued between \$1.5-2 million.

***The Town should find a way to ban rental mopeds from the island.***

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>59%</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>1%</b>

Eighty percent of Block Island residents agree with this statement with 59% strongly agreeing. This response tends to be higher among 6-8 month residents and those with homes valued over 2 million dollars.

***I would support spending taxpayer dollars to pay for a solution to ban mopeds.***

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>3%</b>

Seventy percent of Block Island residents agree with this statement with 46% strongly agreeing. This response tends to be higher among 35-50 year old residents, those earning between \$50,000-\$100,000, and those with homes valued between \$1-1.5 million.

***The town should create its own Port Authority which can give Block Island control of its harbors and regulate the points of entry on the island.***

<b><i>Strongly agree</i></b>	<b>48%</b>
<b><i>Somewhat agree</i></b>	<b>18%</b>
<b><i>Somewhat disagree</i></b>	<b>7%</b>
<b><i>Strongly disagree</i></b>	<b>11%</b>
<b><i>Unsure</i></b>	<b>16%</b>

Sixty-six percent of Block Island residents agree with this statement with 48% strongly agreeing. This response tends to be higher among residents whose homes are valued between \$1-1.5 million and \$1.5-2 million.

***Growth, development and overcrowding are hurting the quality of life on Block Island.***

<b><i>Strongly agree</i></b>	<b>42%</b>
<b><i>Somewhat agree</i></b>	<b>29%</b>
<b><i>Somewhat disagree</i></b>	<b>16%</b>
<b><i>Strongly disagree</i></b>	<b>8%</b>
<b><i>Unsure</i></b>	<b>5%</b>

Seventy-one percent of Block Island residents agree with this statement with 42% strongly agreeing. This response tends to be higher among 9-11 month residents.

***We owe it to our children and grandchildren to do more to protect the scenic views and landscapes on Block Island.***

<b><i>Strongly agree</i></b>	<b>66%</b>
<b><i>Somewhat agree</i></b>	<b>26%</b>
<b><i>Somewhat disagree</i></b>	<b>5%</b>
<b><i>Strongly disagree</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>Unsure</i></b>	<b>1%</b>

Ninety-two percent of Block Island residents agree with this statement with 66% strongly agreeing. This response tends to be higher among voters over the age of 65 and those with homes valued at more than 2 million.

***The Town should continue to resist expansion of marinas in New Harbor.***

<b><i>Strongly agree</i></b>	<b>63%</b>
<b><i>Somewhat agree</i></b>	<b>16%</b>
<b><i>Somewhat disagree</i></b>	<b>10%</b>
<b><i>Strongly disagree</i></b>	<b>5%</b>
<b><i>Unsure</i></b>	<b>6%</b>

Seventy-nine percent of Block Island residents agree with this statement with 63% strongly agreeing. This response tends to be higher among 6-8 and 9-11 month residents and those with homes valued between \$1-1.5 million.

**Organizational Ratings**

***I am going to read you a list of some groups. How would you rate the job they are doing in terms of protecting the environment or determining land use policy on Block Island.***

***The Nature Conservancy***

<b><i>excellent</i></b>	<b>59%</b>
<b><i>good</i></b>	<b>30%</b>
<b><i>only fair</i></b>	<b>9%</b>
<b><i>poor</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>recognize name/can't rate</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>don't recognize</i></b>	<b>0%</b>

Eighty-nine percent of Block Island residents give the Nature Conservancy positive ratings. This response is higher among 12 month residents and residents earning more than \$100,000.

***The Town Council***

<b><i>excellent</i></b>	<b>12%</b>
<b><i>good</i></b>	<b>32%</b>
<b><i>only fair</i></b>	<b>35%</b>
<b><i>poor</i></b>	<b>10%</b>
<b><i>recognize name/can't rate</i></b>	<b>10%</b>
<b><i>don't recognize</i></b>	<b>1%</b>

Residents are divided in their opinions of the Town Council (44:45). Residents for fewer than 6 months tend to give the Council higher positive ratings while a higher percentage of registered voters and 12 month residents give the Council negative ratings.

***The Block Island Land Trust***

<b><i>excellent</i></b>	<b>54%</b>
<b><i>good</i></b>	<b>33%</b>
<b><i>only fair</i></b>	<b>11%</b>
<b><i>poor</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>recognize name/can't rate</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>don't recognize</i></b>	<b>0%</b>

Eighty-seven percent of Block Island residents give the Block Island Land Trust positive ratings. This response is higher among 9-11 month residents and residents whose homes are valued at more than 2 million.

***The Block Island Conservancy***

<b><i>excellent</i></b>	<b>54%</b>
<b><i>good</i></b>	<b>32%</b>
<b><i>only fair</i></b>	<b>11%</b>
<b><i>poor</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>recognize name/can't rate</i></b>	<b>1%</b>
<b><i>don't recognize</i></b>	<b>0%</b>

Eighty-six percent of Block Island residents give the Block Island Conservancy positive ratings. This response is higher among voters over the age of 65, 9-12 month residents and residents whose homes are valued between \$1-\$1.5 million.

***The New Shoreham Planning Board***

<b><i>excellent</i></b>	<b>8%</b>
<b><i>good</i></b>	<b>38%</b>
<b><i>only fair</i></b>	<b>28%</b>
<b><i>poor</i></b>	<b>9%</b>
<b><i>recognize name/can't rate</i></b>	<b>14%</b>
<b><i>don't recognize</i></b>	<b>3%</b>

A plurality of residents gives the Planning Board positive ratings (46:37). This response is higher among 9-11 month residents and residents whose homes are valued at more than 2 million.

**The New Shoreham Zoning Board**

<b>excellent</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>good</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>only fair</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>poor</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>recognize name/can't rate</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>don't recognize</b>	<b>2%</b>

A plurality of residents gives the Zoning Board positive ratings (46:37). This response is higher among voters between the ages of 51-65, 12 month residents, and residents whose homes are valued at more than 2 million.

**Conclusions**

The data from this survey indicates Block Island residents are passionate about protecting open space on the island. Eighty-eight percent supports protecting more open space, with 70% strongly favoring preservation initiatives. Special attention was paid to the extreme responses (strongly support, strongly agree) to the questions posed in this survey. Since the overall responses are so positive, our analysis focused on the extreme reactions in order to help prioritize and rank future goals of the Land Trust.

Likewise, environmental protection on the island is a value of the residents. Eighty-five percent express concern about the impact of climate change on Block Island's infrastructure and ecosystem. Eighty-four percent supports (69% strongly supports) expanding ordinances banning plastic bags and restricting plastic straws and water bottles in order to protect the island. Seventy-two percent support restricting pesticides. The good of the island seems to be the priority of residents.

**Block Island Land Trust Open Space Protection Priorities**

<b>Goals</b>	<b>overall response</b>	<b>extreme response</b>
• Protecting freshwater resources	97%	89%
• Safe habitat for birds and endangered Plants and animals	93%	71%
• Protecting scenic views and landscapes	91%	71%
• Buying open space to keep it from being developed	83%	67%
• Protecting low-lying lands from flooding	84%	62%

While residents believe buying land for recreational and sporting activities is important, they don't believe it is as important as preserving land for fresh water resources and protecting habitats. Even providing land for agriculture does not rank as high as buying land for preservation purposes.

### **Other Block Island Issues**

Lyme disease is of great concern to residents and 88% support reducing the deer population. Managed hunts and baiting are the two most popular means of reducing the deer population.

The availability of affordable housing is of great concern to residents but availability of rental properties versus ownership properties is a higher concern.

Mopeds are such an issue for residents, 70% are willing to spend tax dollars to address the problem.

### **Organizational Ratings**

The Nature Conservancy, Block Island Land Trust, and Block Island Conservancy receive extremely positive ratings from residents. Information/messages communicated to residents from these highly credible sources will be well received.

### **Communication Themes**

An over-arching theme for future communications should be:

We owe it to our children and grandchildren to protect the scenic views and landscapes on Block Island. Keeping open space from development; protecting freshwater resources; providing safe habitat for endangered plants and animals; and protecting vulnerable lands from flooding are ingrained values among Block Island residents.