From Data to Decisions: A Practical Guide to Community–Driven Housing Needs Assessments

Community Engagement Survey Template

Purpose

This survey template is designed to help communities gather meaningful input about local housing conditions, needs, and priorities as part of a housing needs assessment. It emphasizes lived experience and community perspective to complement quantitative data.

Stable, accessible housing supports strong communities, and community input helps ensure that housing decisions reflect local priorities.

The survey is not intended to produce statistically representative results on its own. Instead, it is meant to elevate community voices, identify issues not captured in available data, and inform interpretation, prioritization, and next steps.

When to Use This Survey

Use this survey during the engagement phase of a housing needs assessment:

- After defining the purpose and scope of the assessment
- After identifying key stakeholders and engagement goals
- Before finalizing priorities or action steps

The survey may be used alongside interviews, focus groups, listening sessions, or other engagement methods.

How to Use This Template

This template provides a core set of questions that communities may adapt based on local context, capacity, and goals.

- Select questions that align with the decisions the assessment is intended to inform
- Keep the survey as short as possible while still meeting engagement goals
- Use plain language and avoid technical terms
- Offer multiple ways to participate where possible (online, paper, in-person support)

Communities are encouraged to adapt question wording, response options, and survey length.

Introduction (Suggested)

This survey is part of a community effort to better understand local housing conditions and priorities. Your responses will help inform a housing needs assessment and future housing-related decisions. Individual responses will be kept confidential and summarized for analysis.

Section 1: About You and Your Household (Optional)

These questions help provide context for responses. Communities may choose to include or omit demographic questions based on comfort, trust, and data needs.

1. **What best describes your current housing situation?**
   ☐ Rent ☐ Own ☐ Live with family or friends
   ☐ Temporary or unstable housing ☐ Other: _____

2. **How long have you lived in this community?**
   ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1–5 years ☐ 6–10 years ☐ More than 10 years

3. **Which of the following best describes your household?**
   ☐ Single adult ☐ Family with children ☐ Multi-generational household
   ☐ Senior household years ☐ Household including a person with a disability
   ☐ Other: _____

Section 2: Current Housing Conditions (Essential)

4. **How would you rate your current housing?**
   ☐ Very good ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

5. **Which of the following best describes your household?**
   ☐ Housing costs are too high
   ☐ Housing is too small or overcrowded
   ☐ Housing needs repairs or rehabilitation
   ☐ Housing has health or safety concerns
   ☐ Housing is not accessible for my needs
   ☐ Housing is too far from work, school, or services
   ☐ No major challenges

Section 3: Housing Affordability (Essential)

6. **Do housing costs create financial pressure for your household?**
   ☐ Yes, significant stress ☐ Yes, some pressure ☐ No

7. **If housing costs are a challenge, what tradeoffs do you make? (Select all that apply)**
   - ☐ Cut back on food or essentials
   - ☐ Delay medical care
   - ☐ Take on additional work or debt
   - ☐ Remain in housing that does not fully meet household needs
   - ☐ Other: _____

8. **Are your housing costs generally more, less, or around 30% of your gross monthly income?**
   - ☐ More than 30% of my income on average
   - ☐ Around 30% of my income on average
   - ☐ Less than 30% of my income on average
   - ☐ Not sure

Section 4: Housing Availability and Options (Essential)

6. **Do housing costs create financial pressure for your household?**
   ☐ Yes, significant stress ☐ Yes, some pressure ☐ No

7. **If housing costs are a challenge, what tradeoffs do you make? (Select all that apply)**
   - ☐ Rental housing people can afford
   - ☐ Housing that local workers can afford
   - ☐ Housing for seniors
   - ☐ Housing for families
   - ☐ Accessible housing
   - ☐ Housing for seasonal or temporary workers
   - ☐ Housing rehabilitation or repair
   - ☐ Other: _____-

Section 5: Barriers and Local Factors (Optional)

11. What do you see as the biggest barriers to improving housing in your community? (Open-ended)

_____

_____

_____

12. Are there local factors that make housing more challenging? (e.g., infrastructure, land availability, regulations, construction costs) (Open-ended)

_____

_____

_____

Section 6: Priorities and Future Direction (Essential)

Template Note: Communities may structure Question 13 as open-ended or provide a limited list of priority options.

13. Which housing issues should be the highest priority for the community to address? (Response space or checkboxes inserted by community)

_____

_____

_____

14. What changes would most improve housing in your community? (Please describe.)

_____

_____

_____

Section 7: Additional Input (Optional)

15. What do you see as the biggest barriers to improving housing in your community? (Open-ended)

_____

_____

_____

Optional Customization Modules

Communities may choose to add modules based on local context, such as:

- Workforce or employer-related housing questions
- Seasonal housing pressures
- Infrastructure or utility access
- Tribal housing or land tenure considerations
- Disaster recovery or climate-related housing impacts

Final Notes for Survey Administrators

- Surveys are most effective when paired with other engagement methods
- Be transparent about how results will be used
- Share summary findings back with participants when possible
- Avoid presenting survey results as statistically representative unless appropriate sampling methods were used.

This survey template is intended to be used flexibly. Communities are encouraged to adapt to reflect local context, capacity, and goals. Developed by MHP as part of the Housing Needs Assessment Guide.