On May 11, Island Housing Trust convened an Island Housing Symposium, with more than 125 people attending. The Symposium was sponsored by institutions and individuals across MDI, and brought together community leaders from local government, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to consider housing solutions. Wonderful speakers and an energetic audience shared their experiences and strategies to address the housing need.

Our first ever Housing Symposium was a great success," said IHT Executive Director Alison Beane. “We infused the conversation with information from knowledgeable experts and heard from the community about their concerns and hopes for the future.” Speakers included labor economist John Dorrer, Philippe Jordi of the Island Housing Trust of Martha’s Vineyard, Kevin Bunker of Developers Collaborative, and IHT Board Member and Data Analyst, Kyle Shank.

Kendra Michaud and her son were delighted by the reception they received at Ripples Hill. Before Kendra had even purchased their house, the neighborhood threw potlucks and gatherings for the Michauds to meet the other families. “The connections with the families helped make the move a smooth process,” said Ms. Michaud. “The way they welcomed us was very meaningful and we were so excited to move into our new home.”

Kendra had received other signs that MDI would make a great place to live and work. When she interviewed at MDI High School for a position teaching science, she was won over by the teachers and students at the school. “I met a bunch of people that day,” she recounted, “but the one who most struck me was the student who gave me the tour of the building. He was so positive and he kept referring to how wonderful the teachers were. I got to see the high school through his eyes and it made an impression.” Kendra was also aware that many of the MDIHS teachers had been in their positions for a long time—a good sign that MDI wasn’t a high turnaround school. “It seemed like an ideal fit for me; I left with a good feeling about moving here.”

When her final semester as a graduate student in Science Education at the University of Maine came to an end, Kendra and her son moved to the Island and rented a place in Northeast Harbor. Kendra wanted to buy a house, but knew it was going to be hard to find a place that was affordable on MDI. At the high school in the Fall, a co-worker and IHT homeowner recommended...
IHT Board Member and Data Analyst Kyle Shank formulated an Employee Housing Needs Survey to identify the current needs and demands for affordable year-round housing for our island employees. IHT released this survey in an open-access format, using multiple outreach channels to target on-island employees. We had over 360 respondents representing more than 75 different employers—an adequate sample size and cross-section of the year-round employee base on MDI.

Kyle Shank presented the results at IHT’s Island Housing Symposium in May. The highlights of his summary include:

- Over 85% of respondents are in the market for a home with a purchase price below $250,000. However, the median listing price for homes currently for sale on MDI is $392,500.

- Approximately, 33% of year-round employees on MDI live off-island; 70% of these off-island year-round employees would prefer to reside on MDI.

- There are few significant demographic differences between on-island and off-island employees.

The take-away is that the mismatch between supply and demand for workforce housing on MDI is significant. Addressing the issue will require increased public support, consideration of changes in development restrictions, tactics like tax-incremental financing and special assessment districts, and strong partnerships. Our hope is that together as a community we can expand upon this survey with more data to help inform and advance the future of workforce housing on MDI.

**Off-Island Responses: Barriers To Relocation**

- Nearly 4 out of 5 off-island respondents stated that they cannot find a home within their price range.
Kristin and Duncan Holley and their daughter moved into the ninth and final house in phase II of IHT’s Ripples Hill neighborhood in Somesville earlier this year. The Holleys had dreamed of building a house and the opportunity to be involved in the plans for their home, plus the attraction of the friendly neighborhood, made Ripples Hill a fit for the family.

Duncan had grown up visiting MDI as a child and when he and Kristin began dating in their 20s, they visited the island together. After they were married and living in DC, the couple decided they wanted a change of pace and MDI quickly moved to the top of their short list. In 2004 the couple moved to the island in search of a different lifestyle. They found it.

For Duncan, that meant finding work with the cruise ship industry. Duncan manages a team of 35-40 guides and pier staff whom he trains and works alongside. During the winter he prepares for the season from home and in the spring through the fall he is outside on the pier interacting with staff and visitors. It is a “nice balance,” he says, “and challenging.” His crew will do 1,100 tours of the island this season. For Kristin, who holds a Masters Degree in Social Work, adapting to MDI meant initially telecommuting as a Medical Case Manager before transitioning to a career in Education. She is currently an Educational Technician in the middle school at MDES. Like many people on MDI, Kristin holds two jobs and is also working as an Esthetician and Makeup Artist in Northeast Harbor.

The Holleys were introduced to the neighborhood at Ripples Hill through a co-worker of Kristen’s. “We were over here all the time,” said Duncan. Kristin eventually said, “We really should just live there.” At that point, they were living in Bar Harbor, in a neighborhood without children. They considered buying a resale that had come on the market at Ripples Hill, but they hesitated because Duncan had dreams to design his own home. When the opportunity to build at Ripples came up, giving them some flexibility to make decisions about the exterior details and interior layout, they decided to buy.

“We were lucky that we were the last house—we got to see what worked in other people’s homes,” said Duncan. “We learned what we liked and what we didn’t. We got to offer some input and we also had the opportunity to put on a metal roof, which is great. That should last long enough to be my daughter’s problem.”

The Holleys are pleased to be living amongst friends who share their belief that housing must remain affordable on MDI so working people can live on the island. Their daughter is happy too said Duncan, “Almost everyday after school, she comes home, does her homework, and she’s out the door to play with the children in the neighborhood.”

IHT began Phase I of its Ripples Hill Workforce Subdivision in 2008. This year, the Holley’s house completed Phase II, bringing the total to nine houses in the neighborhood. “The impact Ripples Hill has had on the MDI community, the Mount Desert Elementary School, and its residents is beyond what we had hoped,” said IHT Executive Director Alison Beane. “We are very proud of Ripples Hill and its success.”
Dorrer shared trends in local workforce demographics and housing costs to emphasize the growing need for affordable rent and homeownership opportunities on MDI, while Jordi, described similar challenges for his island.

In addition to recounting Martha’s Vineyard’s successful apartment rental initiative, Jordi detailed the 2012 Massachusetts Community Preservation Act that created a community investment tax credit, which he described as a “game-changer” in developing affordable workforce housing on Martha’s Vineyard. “It was great to hear Philippe speak about tax deductible and credit donation programs and a transfer tax on property sales that create fund for housing projects,” said Southwest Harbor Selectman Ryan Donahue.

Bunker described his organization’s success in driving down land costs and implementing public incentive programs around the state of Maine, and Shank presented the results of IHT’s 2017 Housing Needs Survey of 360 employees across the island. (See Survey Results, p. 5.) Additional panelists included Hannah Pingree, who shared successes from North Haven Sustainable Housing; Liza Fleming-Ives, who presented financing pathways through the Genesis Community Loan Fund, and Planning Director Bob Osborne, who spoke about challenges in Bar Harbor.

In two sessions, between speaker presentations, Caroline Pryor moderated questions and comments from the audience. Kevin Bunker reflected back to the audience his confidence in the MDI community to address the housing problem. In response to one question, Bunker replied, “Can a development project in Bar Harbor get local and municipal support? Hearing the first ten minutes in this room...I’ve been in a lot of rooms and a lot of towns and I think the answer to that is ‘yes.’”

Board President Ted Koffman also voiced his confidence, “Working together we can bridge the housing gap in one generation and rebuild MDI’s year-round community.”

Please join us on Tuesday, July 11th from 6:00-7:00 pm at the Northeast Harbor Library to learn about and discuss solutions to the housing problem on MDI. We will share highlights from this spring’s Island Housing Symposium, including the results of IHT’s 2017 Housing Needs Survey, and provide an opportunity for conversation about housing on MDI. There will be refreshments following the event. For more information, contact Clara Baker at 207.244.8011.
In operation since 1902, Bar Harbor Savings and Loan is a true community-centered bank with just one location in Bar Harbor for the past 115 years. With a mission that includes an “emphasis on single family affordable homes,” BHSL has been partnering with Island Housing Trust to put working individuals and families in houses. “Our philosophy is to help people save money first and then assist them with loans to get families into affordable and middle-income housing,” said CEO Bill Weir. “That is why BHSL and IHT have worked so well together. By doing extra work counseling our applicants, we are able to serve more working people and help keep them on the island.”

**Bar Harbor Savings & Loan**

BHSL and IHT’s work together includes 13 Homeownership Assistance Program projects and one resale at IHT’s Ripples Hill Workforce Subdivision. BHSL pre-approved these applicants and lent them money for the purchase of their houses. All 14 houses will remain affordable in perpetuity for working households on MDI under IHT covenants.

Tim, Tom, and Pete Gott’s father, Doug, founded what is now Doug Gott & Sons in Tremont in 1967. The company then worked in excavation and gravel and later transitioned from gravel to concrete in 1978 when the need became apparent in the community. The Gotts’ business model is strengthened by family—the three brothers own 400 acres on the island together; Tim and his wife, Beth, run Gott’s Disposal; and Tim and his daughter, Jennifer Grey, co-own Gott’s store.

The family’s success is also the result of an ability to recognize opportunity where there might be a need to fill. Early on, Tim Gott saw that housing on the island was a need he could meet. He has created 5 subdivisions and 70 lots in his career. Much of the land he purchased he secured in order to sell back to Doug Gott & Sons. As he puts it, “if you own the land, you have a better chance of doing the work.”

Tim also experiences the need for affordable housing first hand among his employees, and supports IHT in its mission. “We have 45 people who work with us,” said Tim, “and only half of our employees live on the island. People like to be close to their jobs, but the cost of land prevents them from living on the island. I am looking forward to finding ways to work with Island Housing Trust in the future.”

Doug Gott & Sons

In 1929 Clarence Cook Little established what is now The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor on land donated by family friend, George B. Dorr. A Harvard-trained scientist, Little created the first inbred mice strain and established that cancer was a genetic disease rather than an infectious disorder. In 1929, Jackson Laboratory started with one small, 1400-square-foot building and fewer than 20 employees; today, the Lab has over 750,000 square feet of working space and around 1,300 employees in Bar Harbor.
According to Senior Director of Facilities Services John Fitzpatrick, JAX supported IHT’s Symposium because, like so many other businesses and institutions in the area, it appreciates the importance of attracting and retaining employees who can live and work on the island. “What we have seen at JAX is very similar to the data that was presented at the [Island Housing] Symposium,” said Fitzpatrick. “Thirty years ago, 80-85% of our employees lived on the Island or in Trenton; now over 65% live off island.”

The impact is considerable, according to Fitzpatrick. JAX subsidizes a transportation program that busses 160 employees from as far away as Bangor and Milbridge each day. In addition to allowing employees to more economically commute to work, the program also succeeds to help offset the environmental toll of the fuel used by individual commuters. JAX must also consider how the distance affects the Lab in bad weather and emergencies, particularly as it relates to the organization’s commitment to the most ethical and humane care for its mice.

The Laboratory has made progress to implement its own plan to acquire housing near the Bar Harbor campus. In the last ten years, it has acquired several single and multi-unit properties to provide housing options for post-doctorate and graduate students who might otherwise turn down their positions for lack of housing. As Fitzpatrick commented, “And that is just addressing that one small population of our employees.”

The Jackson Laboratory has grown its employee base nearly 25% since 2000 and it continues to expand. In addition to its Bar Harbor location, JAX has sites in Sacramento, California, Farmington, Connecticut, and soon, in Ellsworth, where it will bring on additional space to house mice. Said Fitzpatrick, “With the Ellsworth site fully developed, we are looking at an employee number of 340, of which approximately ⅔ will be new hires. When Ellsworth is fully established, JAX predicts a net growth of around 230 new employees.”

Mike Rogers is a resident of Mount Desert and owner of LARK Studio in Bar Harbor. Six years ago, Rogers purchased an IHT home in the Ripples Hill Community, just one year after he and his wife and daughter moved to MDI. Two years ago, he and his business partner, Robert Krieg, established LARK Studio (Landscape Architecture of Rogers and Krieg) and now have projects of all types and sizes throughout New England.

Some of the larger projects LARK is currently working on include two parks they are designing in Boston. In Maine, they have worked with The Jackson Laboratory, The American Mountain Club, private estates and residences, and currently, they are working on a streetscape design for Cottage Street to make it safer, better looking, and more pedestrian-friendly. “We have a diverse skill and style set in the office, so we can mix and match to what our clients needs and wants are,” said Rogers. “We have done very modern projects, Maine-style, English and Japanese Gardens, and a host of ecological restoration projects. We have been very fortunate.”

Rogers generously credits IHT with much of his good fortune. “IHT allowed me to live on the Island,” said Rogers. “It created a great atmosphere for my family to grow up at Ripples Hill, enabled me to stay on the island, start a local business, and now give back to the organization that allowed me to do all those things.” Beyond LARK’s support of our recent Symposium, Rogers volunteers on IHT’s Program Committee and has contributed design work on IHT projects.
she considered Ripples Hill. Kendra was soon introduced to the Horvath family, who were selling the house she would buy, and before long she and her son were embraced by the families in the neighborhood.

There are a lot of pluses about living at Ripples Hill for the Michauds. “It is a great place for my son—so much is happening and he can play outside and I don’t have to worry. The families work together to pick up a child or be at the bus stop to meet them. We are able to help each other a lot.” Kendra also appreciates that Ripples Hill is a distance from the road. “You can get away from the busyness of the Island when you are at home. You feel removed from the summer traffic and noise. It is a beautiful place.”

Kendra is grateful that she could secure an affordable house on MDI. “I understand that it is extremely difficult for people who live on the Island to purchase a house. It means a lot to me, as someone who works in the community,” she said. “Working with IHT allowed me to own a house and I really appreciate that.”

Kendra Michaud’s house is the fifth successful resale of an IHT property. As with the other four, the resale formula worked as planned and Ms. Michaud agreed to the same affordability covenants that ensure that the property remains affordable in the future. All IHT homeowners must meet eligibility requirements that include earnings from employment on the Island, an income of 160% of area median income (AMI) or less, qualifying for a mortgage, and agreeing to live in the house year round.

Thank You For Your Support.
Island Housing Trust has created a new opportunity for our community to support increased home ownership opportunities for MDI’s workforce. Our new Porch Light Circle is a great way for our neighbors to become a part of our mission, joining friends and neighbors to help keep our Island communities vibrant year-round.

Please consider joining our Porch Light Circle with a donation of $25 or more. To celebrate, and say “thank you,” our first members will be entered in a raffle for a porch swing, donated by McEachern & Hutchins, Inc.