

Nantucket Town Association
Survey about Spas and Hot Tubs in the Historic Districts
March 21, 2022

The Nantucket Town Association of the Civic League conducted a survey of resident and non-resident property owners in the Residential Old Historic zone (Town) and 'Sconset Old Historic zone ('Sconset).

Notification

Owners of record in the two zones (ROH and SOH) were notified about the online survey by mail sent to the address of record for each property. The survey link was emailed to the mailing list of the NTA and the 'Sconset Civic League. A survey link was published in DayBreak Nantucket. The link was publicly available on the Nantucket Town Association website, and responses were collected from February 15th until March 15th.

In order to ensure accurate results, respondents indicated their name and Nantucket address. 453 responses were recorded: 304 from ROH, 97 from SOH, 11 renters in SOH/ROH, and 41 who lived outside ROH or SOH, but wanted to complete the survey anyway.

Summary

Responses were overwhelmingly in favor of banning hot tubs and spas in the historic zones: 70% preferred no hot tubs or spas. SOH owners were slightly more inclined towards banning spas, with 72% wanting no hot tubs or spas, vs 70% of ROH responses. Respondents who identified as year-round residents were more likely to be anti-spa, with 75% asking for a ban. Among people who rent out their residences, 67% asked for a ban on hot tubs and spas. Of respondents outside the ROH and SOH, a smaller but still majority percentage of 61% preferred a ban in ROH and SOH.

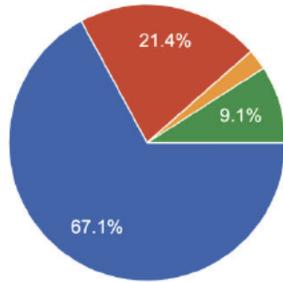
33% of all respondents believe that spas and hot tubs can have therapeutic benefits for homeowners. However, most believe pools and spas create problems. The most common concerns were noise from use (72%), mechanical noise (61%), Visual impacts (62%), drainage and stormwater management impacts (61%), and privacy impacts (58%). Light pollution and energy use were also concerns (48% and 45%). Over half of respondents felt that landscape screening required to hide spas and hot tubs can create problems (55%). 25% of respondent were neutral on this question.

79% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that hot tubs and spas are not compatible with the historic character of the ROH and SOH neighborhoods.

1.

Please select one:

453 responses

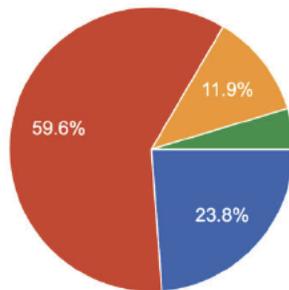


- I own property in the Residential Old Historic District (Nantucket Town)
- I own property in the Sconset Old Historic District
- I live in ROH or SOH year round as a RENTER
- I don't own property or live year round in ROH or SOH but I want to take this survey anyway

2.

Which best describes how you use your residence in the ROH or SOH?

453 responses

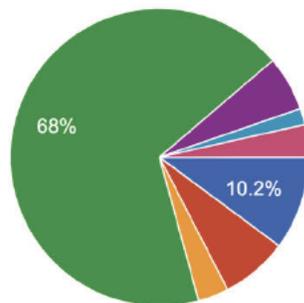


- I am a year round resident
- I am a seasonal resident (3 or more months per year)
- I live less than 3 months a year in my ROH or SOH residence
- Not applicable

3.

Please choose one.

453 responses

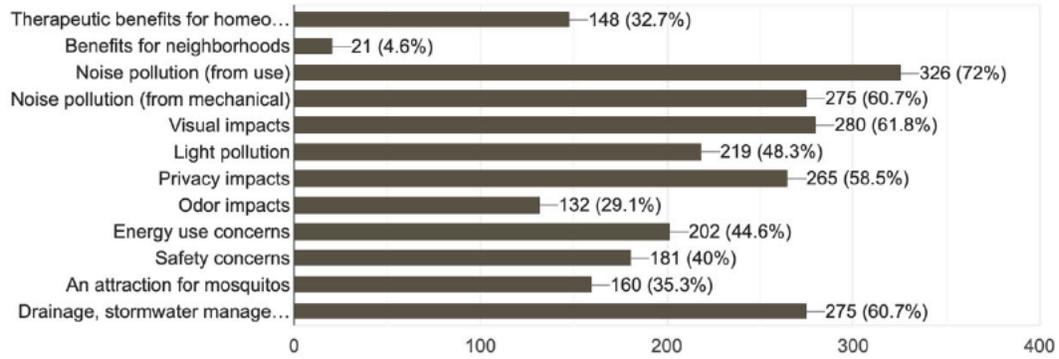


- I offer all or part of my residence for rent 8 or more weeks per year
- I offer all or part of my residence for rent 4 to 8 weeks per year
- I offer all or part of my residence less than 4 weeks per year
- I do not offer my residence for rent
- I occasionally offer my residence for rent
- I prefer not to say
- Not applicable

4.

Please select all that apply: spas and hot tubs create

453 responses



5.

Size: current code defines a spa/hot tub as 150 sq. ft of surface area (e.g. 10'x15') or less. Please choose one:

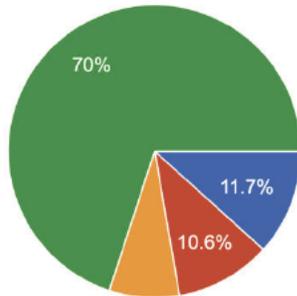
453 responses



6.

Another size consideration about hot tubs and spas is the volume of water they contain, which relates to how deep they are and how they may be ...aining more than 1000 gallons. Please chose one:

453 responses

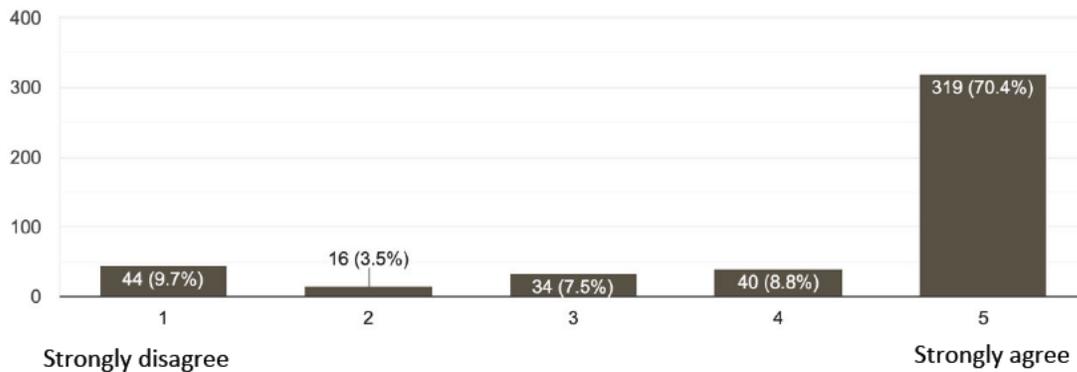


- spa/hot tubs should be limited to 1000 gallons or less.
- The amount of water in the spa/hot tub is not an important issue to me
- I don't know
- Gallonage doesn't matter because I don't want hot tubs or spas in the ROH or SOH

7.

Spas and hot tubs are not compatible with the historic character of the ROH and SOH district

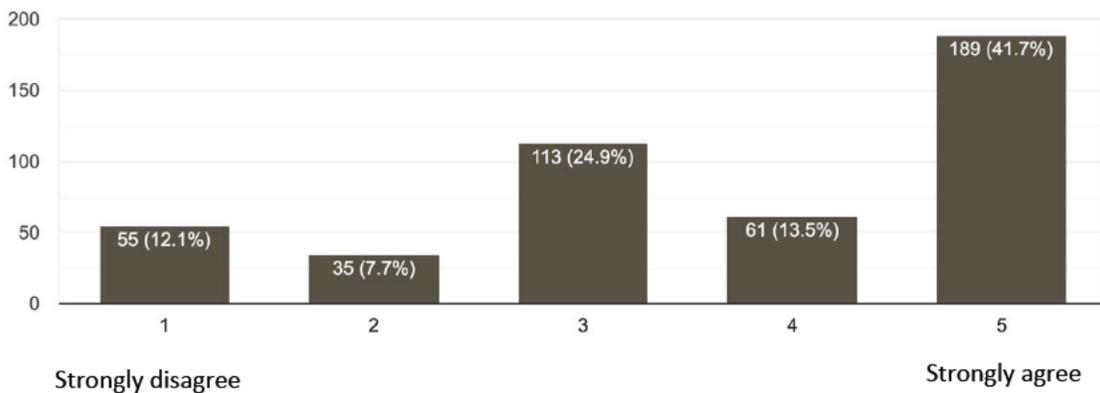
453 responses



8.

Fences, berms, and tall, dense vegetation required to screen spas and hot tubs from view can be a problem.

453 responses



Additional Response Analysis

	count
SOH respondents only	97
Size doesn't matter because I don't want hot tubs or spas in the ROH or SOH	72%
150 sq. ft. is too large for a spa/hot tub - they should be smaller	12%
150 sq. ft is too small for a spa/hot tub - they should be allowed to be larger	2%
ROH Respondents only (304 owners and 10 renters)	314
Size doesn't matter because I don't want hot tubs or spas in the ROH or SOH	70%
150 sq. ft. is too large for a spa/hot tub - they should be smaller	15%
150 sq. ft is too small for a spa/hot tub - they should be allowed to be larger	4%
All Areas - Year Round residents only	109
Size doesn't matter because I don't want hot tubs or spas in the ROH or SOH	75%
150 sq. ft. is too large for a spa/hot tub - they should be smaller	13%
150 sq. ft is too small for a spa/hot tub - they should be allowed to be larger	1%
All Areas - non-residents who rent their homes more than occasionally	75
Size doesn't matter because I don't want hot tubs or spas in the ROH or SOH	67%
150 sq. ft. is too large for a spa/hot tub - they should be smaller	16%
150 sq. ft is too small for a spa/hot tub - they should be allowed to be larger	9%
All Areas - non-residents who rent occasionally or not at all	238
Size doesn't matter because I don't want hot tubs or spas in the ROH or SOH	70%
150 sq. ft. is too large for a spa/hot tub - they should be smaller	15%
150 sq. ft is too small for a spa/hot tub - they should be allowed to be larger	3%
Respondents living outside the ROH and SOH	41
Size doesn't matter because I don't want hot tubs or spas in the ROH or SOH	61%
150 sq. ft. is too large for a spa/hot tub - they should be smaller	15%
150 sq. ft is too small for a spa/hot tub - they should be allowed to be larger	7%

Comments

29 comments asked for no change to existing limits on spas/hot tubs. Representative comments:

As long as they are well hidden, I see NO issue with a hot tub/spa
Hot tubs/spas provide physical and mental therapy for anyone over the age of 10. They have a calming peaceful effect on humans. With the rate of anxiety and mental health issues in children, teens and young adults these days, hot tubs and spa should be promoted.
i feel that if they are tastefully hidden from view and tastefully done, they are a wonderful addition for relaxation and therapy.
I think the current noise rules that are in effect, no outside noise after 10pm, are adequate
I'm fine as long as the noise associated (from use) ends at 10p
If hot tubs/spas are not visible from the street - AND they meet ALL HDC guidelines, I'm not opposed to them - any more than I'm opposed to outdoor showers, fire pits, Gazebos, etc...NONE of which can be defined as historic structures or house accessories.
The current surface area and volume limits significantly constrain the size and use possibilities for water features (e.g., if 10x15, less than a foot deep max). As such, the human noise they are likely to generate is no different than (and likely to be less than) the noise created by people otherwise socializing in back and side yards. I'm not opposed to people socializing as a general rule and there are noise standards in existence to address such gatherings.
The designs of these are very small and are well hidden into the overall property use.
The HDC is pretty vigilant about screening/modifying proposals that are out of line. I feel confident that the HDC can be trusted review and approve appropriately sized/located/screened hot tub/spa proposals. Neighbors already put up 6 foot fences and vegetation (that grows much taller than 6 feet) to screen their back yards for privacy from passersby and other neighbors. I can't see that adding a tub/spa to these protected backyards makes any difference at all to anyone other than the owner the spa. To the owner it could be a very enjoyable, therapeutic and relaxing addition. I personally have no plans to put in a tub/spa but I support the right of other to do so to enjoy their own personal property.

37 comments sought some additional limits on spas/hot tubs. Representative comments:

A regular hot tub is 300 gallons; 1000 gallons is far too much for regular 4 or 6 person hot tub
Hot tubs and spas should be relatively modest in size and not dominate the entire outdoor space
I think small hot tubs (preferably round and quiet) should be allowed for therapy. But nothing anywhere near 10' by 15'.
I think they should be for 2-4 people maximum with no outdoor lighting. They should be solely for the relaxation of the home owners. A serene soaking tub to enjoy the night sky.
I would prefer not to tell other people how they can use their property. However, I believe living in the ROH requires some degree of regulation; folks who live there need to accept this. On their face, spas and hot tubs don't seem compatible with an historic district. If spas and hot tubs are going to be permitted in the ROH, they should be small and minimize disturbances of all kinds.
If hot tubs and spas are to be permitted, there should be stronger setback requirements for their placement -- further away from shared property lines.
If hot tubs are located at rental properties they encourage late night parties and noise pollution.
One hot tub is not usually a problem; several hot tubs in a dense neighborhood results in a problem. As long as there is not way to limit the number, they should not be allowed.
smaller hot tubs in year round homes should not pose a problem

148 Comments sought a ban on spas/hot tubs. Representative comments:

1000 gallons is WAY too big for a hot tub - it is the size of a small pool or friction pool. Normal hot tub is 100-300 gallons
Bylaws are ambiguous and have resulted in residents building inappropriately sized spas which would typically be seen as plunge pools.
Come on. 150sf is not a hot tub, it is a swimming pool.
Heaters for tubs and spas are a burden on the island's electric capacity!
Historic District should remain visually appealing. Properties are close together and hot tub motors are loud without the drunk people gathering in them. I think it is not a good idea.
Hot tubs and pools should not be in ROH or SOH. Pools and Hot Tubs have made a HUGE impact on my summer life in Sconset. Even after talking to my neighbors they seem to be unconscious about how much this has effected us. I have a pool, hot tub with several outdoor speakers 20 feet from the back of my house in Historic Sconset. This is terrible that this was allowed to go through in the first place. please come and see my situation anytime.
I am challenged by noise from rentals every week next door to my house. Adding hot tubs, pools or spas would only make this even worse
I am concerned about the amount of water and discharge on the island
in a densely populated area, the noise and light pollution is terrible especially for a year round resident.
Minimal lot and setback dimensions in the historic district creates a highly intimate neighbor to neighbor setting. Spas within such an intimate setting substantively intrude into a neighbor's privacy. The introduction of a neighbor's spa substantively alters the historic context as well as the quality of life expected in such a district.
misuse of pools can cause conflicts among neighbors, negatively impacting community
Tall fences hedges and berms are inappropriate in the ROHthey are more of a suburban or countryside feature.
Their installation and especially their maintenance trucks = further strain on in-town parking
There are many restrictions on what you can do with your property in SOH/ROH to keep the historic feel (e.g., types of windows, doors, paint colors, etc.). Hot tubs would be much more out of character than many other things that are not allowed. It's something we all accept as part of living here -- the price we pay for living in such a beautiful place is that sometimes we need to compromise when we wish for something inconsistent with the flavor of the neighborhood. Personally, I think it is a reasonable trade-off and feel very lucky to live in our wonderful neighborhood.
They are too intrusive on neighbors
We have a hot tub at our off-Island residence, and know that maintenance, motor noise, and required drainage for maintenance would be an issue for the SOH area. In an area where we have been so restricted in the past to make any changes to our properties, it seems the HDC and the Town have been abandoning the desire to preserve these communities. It is very upsetting.
We have a neighbor who has a spa and it is a terrible addition to the neighborhood. Including the plantings do not offer any relief.