

Viewpoint

The more things change, the more they stay the same

By Ted Koffman

I've been involved in MDI housing issues for almost 20 years. Back in 2002, when I was part of MDI Tomorrow, a Mount Desert Islander editorial focused on the need for an island-wide housing trust to get houses into the hands of our year-round, working population. We now have the nonprofit Island Housing Trust whose mission is to promote viable, year-round island communities by advancing permanent workforce housing. I've been proud to serve as a board member of IHT since 2004. IHT has been successful, creating almost 50 housing opportunities across MDI, serving over 140 individuals with workforce neighborhood housing, down payment assistance, and other

programs. But there is more to be done.

In 2002, the median housing price on MDI was under \$200,000. Today that median price is \$657,000, necessitating a household income of well over \$150,000 to even begin to think of purchasing a house on the island. Housing prices have risen sharply in the past two years due to a variety of factors including the pandemic, inbound migration, and the rise of vacation rentals. Currently more than half of MDI's workforce commutes from off island because they can't find a place to live on MDI. School populations are decreasing as families look elsewhere for a home they can afford. Employers are having difficulty recruiting and retaining workers who can't find a place to

Currently more than half of MDI's workforce commutes from off island because they can't find a place to live on MDI.

live on MDI.

IHT has spent the last several years building a foundation. Now it's time to expand our vision and build more of the structure. To achieve that, we have announced Coming Home: IHT's Campaign for Mount Desert Island, a campaign to raise \$3.5 million to increase our impact across MDI. We've raised over \$2.6 million already. Those gifts are already in action: we'll break ground

on a new workforce neighborhood at the head of the island this fall, funds are committed and available for down payment assistance, and a new Opportunity Fund is helping us research new year-round housing possibilities. You can find out more about the solutions taking shape at islandhousingtrust.org.

Ted Koffman is a member of the Island Housing Trust Board of Directors.