



Age-Friendly Community Assessment: Town of Windham



Photo: SNHPC Staff

August 2017

Town of Windham

Age-Friendly Community Assessment

Prepared by the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission



Introduction

The community assessment process—part of the larger Becoming Age-Friendly program—began in early 2017. The SNHPC team visited all 14 communities in its region, engaging town staff, board members, citizens, and other stakeholders. Staff led conversations on issues that affect seniors and millennials among the following topic areas:

- Transportation & Connections
- Recreation & Engagement
- Housing
- Business & Economic Development

While attendance was robust in most towns—despite SNHPC’s efforts to engage diverse age groups—it should be noted that results from these conversations may not necessarily reflect overall town demographics. For instance, some towns’ attendees were primarily seniors; therefore, responses may naturally be more senior-oriented. Feedback gleaned from community conversations has been supplemented with sample data from a community survey that was widely distributed, and which saw 641 responses from across the region.

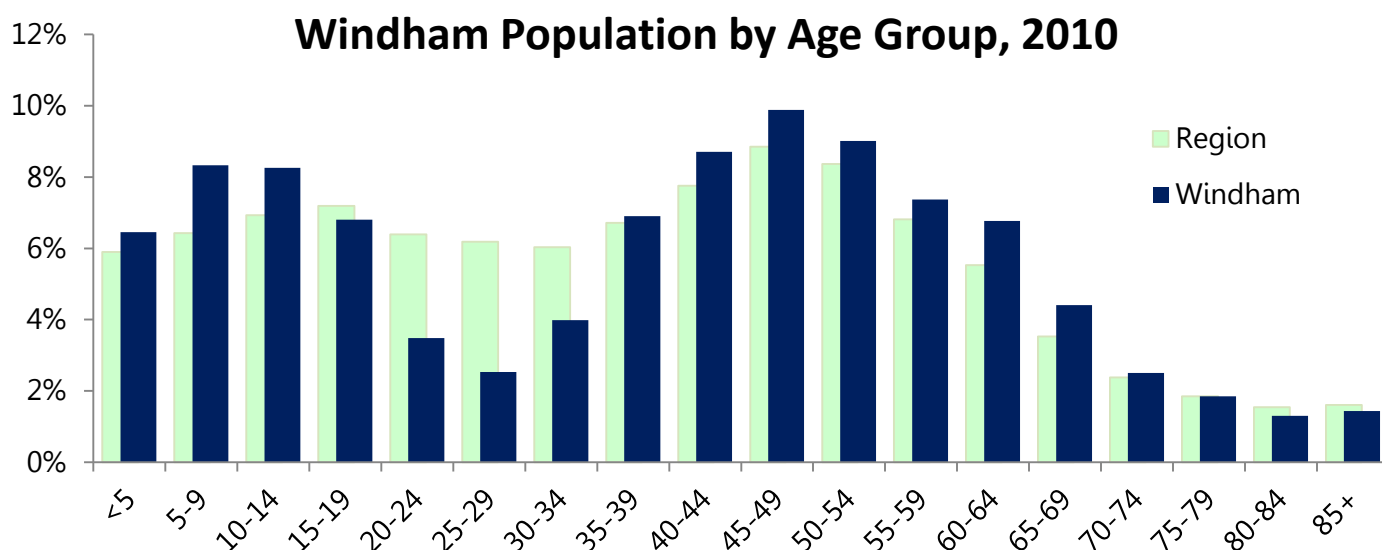
These two sources of information dovetailed to create this document: a 12-page summary of age-friendliness in each municipality, most of which came from townspeople themselves. The hope is for these documents to become a valuable resource to assess current age-friendliness, as well as to constructively evaluate what improvements might lead municipalities toward a more age-friendly future.





Community Snapshot

Windham, NH is located in Rockingham County, abutting the towns of Londonderry, Derry, Salem, Pelham, Hudson. This town was originally a parish of Londonderry, which was settled in 1719. Incorporated in 1741, Windham was the second town designated by Governor Benning Wentworth following the establishment of the New Hampshire-Massachusetts border. It was named for Sir Charles Wyndham, Earl of Egremont and Baron Cockermouth, who was a Member of Parliament and Secretary of State when the Rockingham government favored conciliation with the American colonies. Windham was the birthplace of Samuel Dinsmoor, Governor of New Hampshire from 1831 to 1834.¹



According to Census data, Windham’s 2015 population estimate was 16,100. Among neighboring towns, Windham is currently the fastest growing community with an increase of 31.6 percent between 2000 and 2014. Windham’s median age, as of the 2010 Census, is 41.8, which is slightly higher than the median age of 37.8 reported by the 2000 Census. The largest age group in Windham is currently 45 to 64 years, representing approximately 25 percent of Windham’s population. The second largest age group is 20 to 44, which represents about 20 percent of the town’s population. Between 2000 and 2010, there was a significant increase (46%) in the 45 to 65 age cohort. More significantly there was an increase of 121% in the 65 and over age group.

¹ From NH Employment Security Community Profiles, Aug. 2017

Community Assessment: April 3, 2017

[13 in attendance, including reps from Parks & Rec, Nesmith Library, town residents]



What is the community doing well?

- Community residents are actively engaged with one another through community events and **online forums** (including a welcoming Facebook group)
- **Parks and trail networks** are seen as an asset to the community
- Town departments provide **services to both seniors and millennials**
- Windham is home to one of the **top high schools in New Hampshire**, making it attractive to younger families
- Local volunteers utilize a **van to transport seniors** to local events



Where is there room for improvement?

- Roads are disconnected and lack sidewalks and bike infrastructure, making it **difficult to walk and bike around the community**
- **Limited housing choices** for first homebuyers and seniors wanting to downsize
- **Lack of water and septic infrastructure** may adversely impact future development
- There are opportunities to **diversify housing options**



Transportation & Connections

Highlights:

- Participants rated the town 1 to 2 out of 10 in terms of how difficult it is to get around without a car
- Town provides transportation for medical appointments and weekly shopping trips
- Access to major state routes is convenient, but also seen as a barrier to walkability

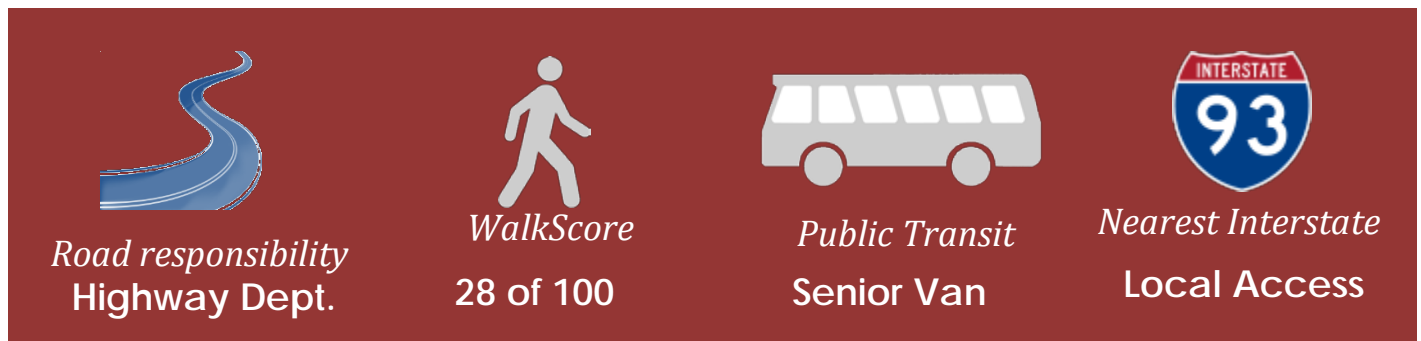
Assets:

- Rail trail and other local trail systems
- Access to major state routes: I-93, NH 111, NH 111A, NH 28
- Senior Van: The Town provides residents with van transportation to/from medical or similar appointments as well as a weekly grocery trip to Wal-Mart each Wednesday
- There is a park and ride in town with access to bus transportation to Boston
- Village Center upgrades will potentially create a more walkable & active town center

Barriers/Opportunities:

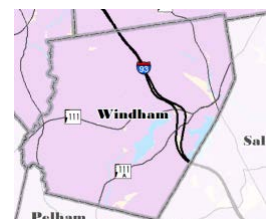
- Disconnected road system
- Lack of sidewalks and shoulders leave little space for pedestrian movement
- Subdivision regulations could be updated to newer standards to systematically enable more users of the road
- General lack of walkability outside of trail network
- Highways and state routes can be barriers to walkability
- Traffic caused by I-93

Basic Data:



Access to Internet:

- WiFi available at town office, library, and limited access at schools
- Connection speed rated as very good



Housing

Highlights

- In the last five years, mostly single-family dwellings have been built in town
- Eight workforce housing units were built in the last five years
- Plots of land are seen as very expensive

Assets:

- The town allows for a variety of housing types
- Zoning allows for mixed use
- Property tax relief for disabled and veteran residents as well as seniors with lower incomes

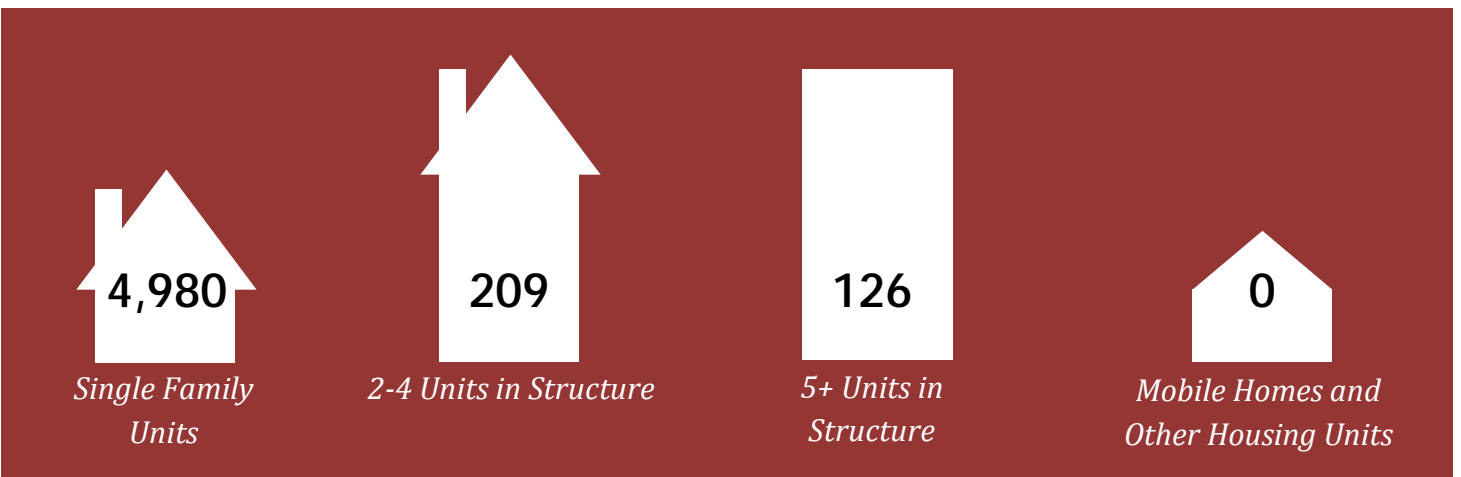


"Some seniors move back to Massachusetts because they can't afford Windham prices – Mass is more affordable"

– **Windham resident**

Barriers/Opportunities:

- Lack of sewer and water infrastructure can be a barrier to developing more diverse or denser housing options
- Limited multi-family units
- No housing services offered to residents (i.e. weatherization assistance)
- Disabled/universal design considerations have yet come forward
- Lack of affordable houses for first-time home-buyer or for seniors downsizing
- Cost of land seen as one of the reasons for lack of affordable housing





Recreation

Highlights:

- Multigenerational opportunities provided by Town Parks and Recreation Department
- Parks, conservation areas, and trail network offer residents and visitors a means of exercise, leisure, and mobility
- Residents seem to be actively engaged with one another
- Windham residents can join the Windham Seniors and utilize the Senior Center
- There are many venue options for meeting spaces, including the high school, town hall, and private venues

Assets (in no particular order):

- Town Recreation Department hosts events such as Town Day, Harvest Fest, Tree Lighting, Senior Christmas Party, Easter Egg Hunt, as well as various athletic activities
- The Senior Center is utilized most evenings by local scouting groups, the Lions Club, and other non-profit groups who have obtained permission from the President of the Windham Seniors
- Windham Seniors is a volunteer driven organization providing social and recreational needs for elderly residents by coordinating with the Windham Recreation Department to host events and provide transportation services
- Nesmith Library offers multiple programs for residents including an IT assistance program in which high school students provide help for elderly residents
- Extensive trail network
- Parks – Griffin Park, Town Beach, Tokanel Field, Nashua Road park facilities, Roger's Memorial Field, and Searles School
- Local television network offers internships and projects for high school students
- Windham NH Parents Connection is a Facebook page connecting local parents with one another
- Windham Community Band holds regular performances
- Local ponds and lakes include: Canobie Lake, Cobbett's Pond, Mitchell Pond, Outlet Seavey Pond, Rock Pond, Shadow Lake, Simpson Pond, and Skating Pond

Barriers/Opportunities:

- Town could continue to update website to make it more accessible
- Including sidewalk infrastructure in future developments would allow more residents to walk to recreation opportunities in town



Business & Economic Development

Highlights:

- Windham's Village District is zoned for mixed use
- Windham's Gateway Commercial District provides for an area of commercial development, including mixed use of retail, service, professional offices, all within close proximity to I-93
- The lack of gas lines, sewer, and water stunts development possibilities

Assets:

- Windham has a wide variety of local businesses, including: wellness and fitness, farm stands, home improvement stores, medical offices, salons, automotive repairs, arts and crafts, yoga studios, and business services
- Some of the larger businesses include: Shaw's Supermarket, Cyr Lumber, Windham Terrace Communities (assisted living facility), AJ Leizio Foods (meat distribution), AP Daily (woodworking), Park Place Lanes
- Searles Castle is a historic building utilized for event space

Barriers/Opportunities:

- Lack of sewer/water infrastructure
- Town is working to create a more walkable town center

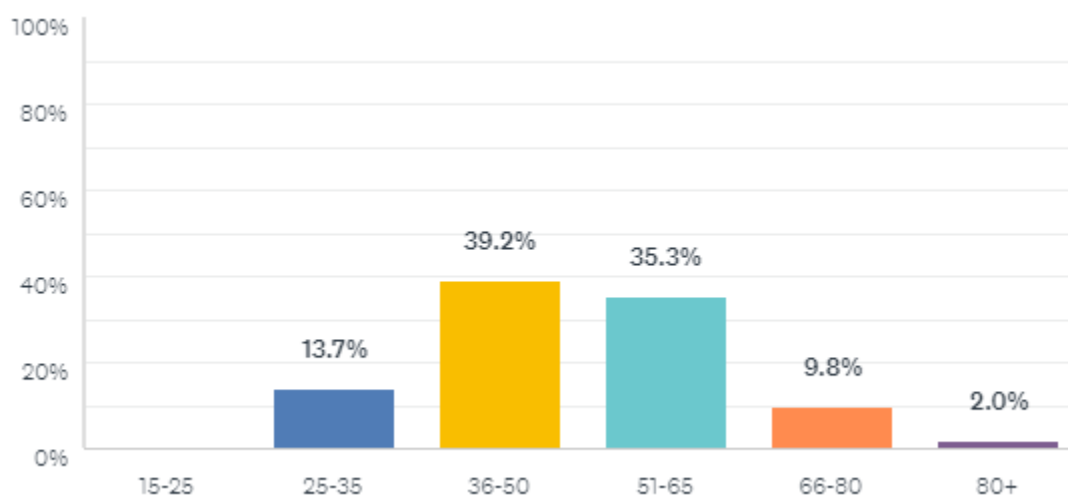




Survey Says...

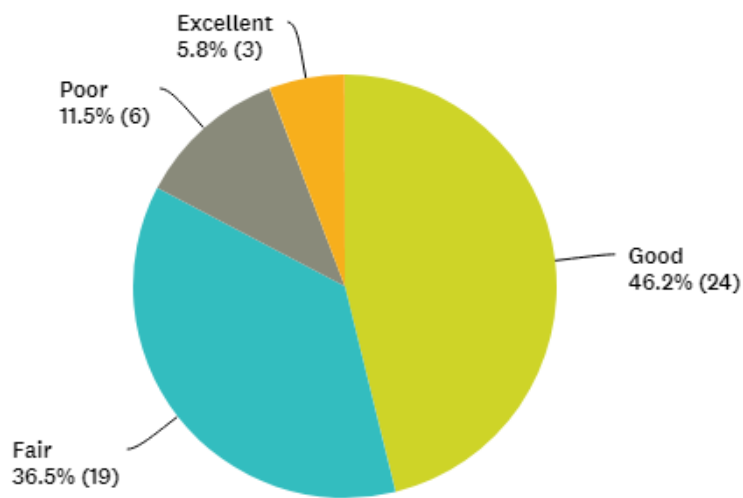
From February through April of 2017, The Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) embarked on a “Becoming Age-Friendly” program. A resident survey was hosted by SNHPC and sponsored by AARP, Tufts Health Plan Foundation, and the City of Manchester to gather ordinary citizens’ input on topics including recreation, transportation, housing, and beyond. A total of 641 responses were received, including 52 from Windham. The following is but a sample; full results are available upon request.

What is your age?



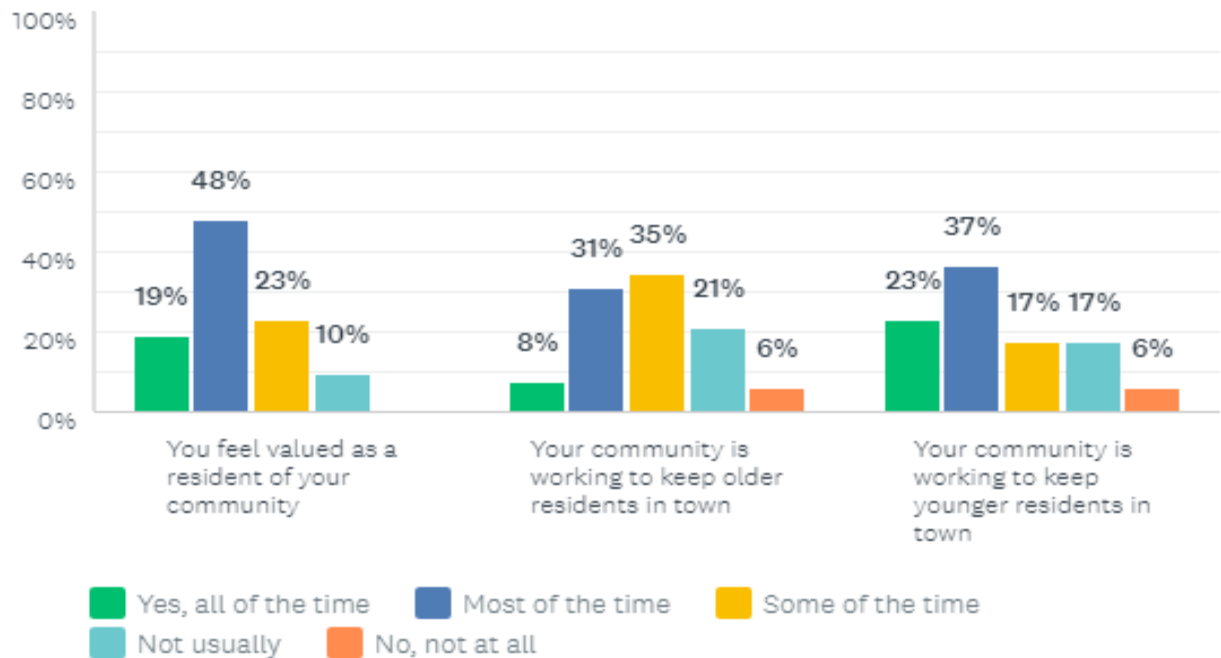
The vast majority of respondents (74.5%) were between the ages of 36 and 65, roughly mirroring the town’s population.

How would you rate your community as a place for people to live as they age?



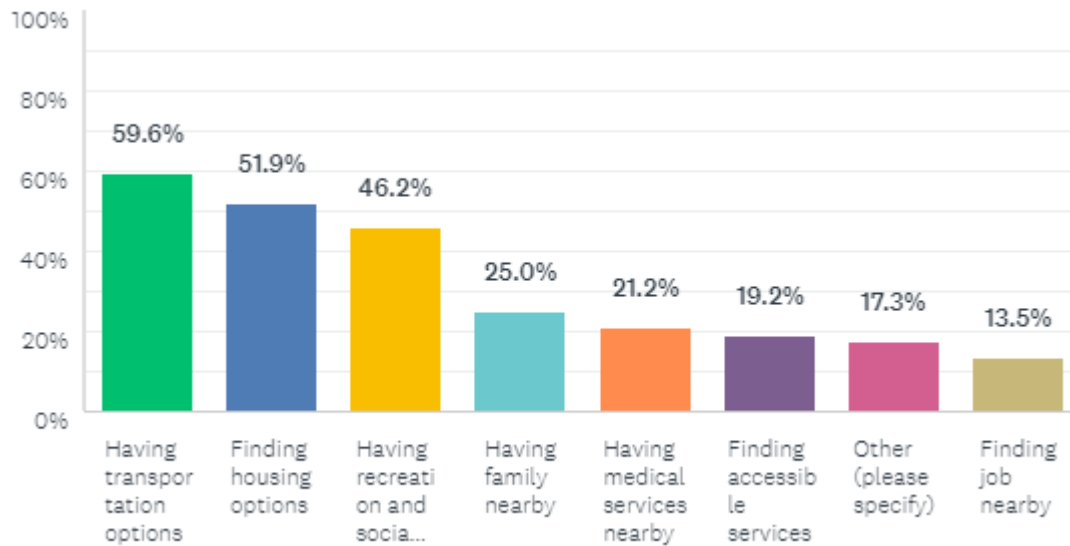
Nearly half of Windham respondents (46.2%) agreed that Windham was a “good” place for people to live as they age. 35.6% of residents rated their community as “fair”.

Community Value



The majority of respondents (67%) feel valued as a resident of Windham most or all of the time; 60% felt that the community was working to keep younger residents in town most or all of the time. From this survey, the majority of residents think that their town is working to keep older and younger residents in the town at least most of the time.

What concerns you the most about aging in your community?



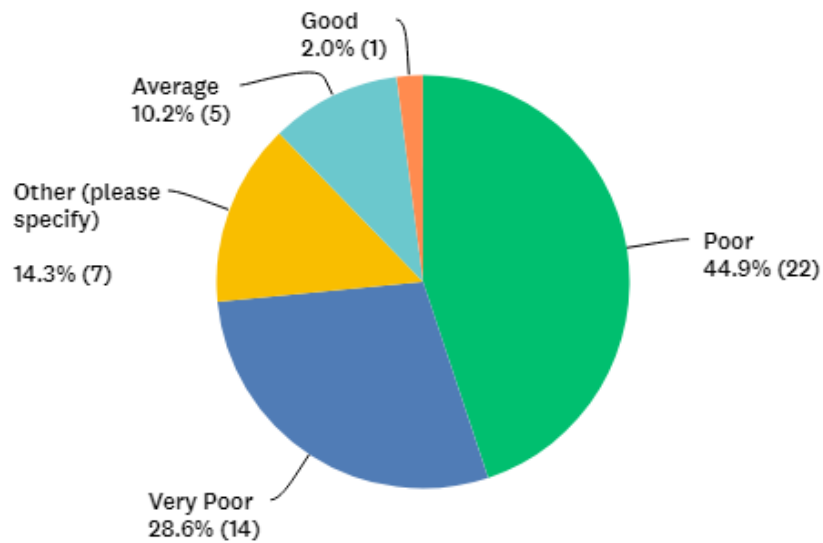
Residents of Windham are most concerned with having transportation options in their community as they age. Additionally, respondents were concerned about finding housing options that will suit them to meet their needs as they age. The third most selected concern was having recreational and social opportunities. Relative to other towns in the SNHPC region, Windham offers a variety of recreation and social opportunities. However, the disconnected sidewalk system can be a barrier to physically reaching these recreation opportunities.

What is the single most important change that would enable you to stay in your home/community?

Shopping Options Transportation Accessible
Affordable Housing Town Taxes Kids
Walkable Downtown Needed

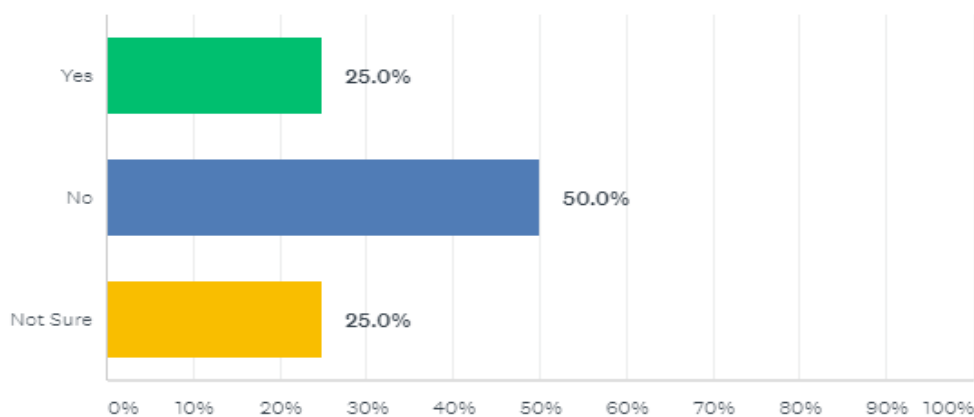
When asked what is the most important change that would enable you to stay in Windham, respondents referenced affordable housing, taxes, walkable downtown, and transportation, among others.

How would you rate your community's transportation options if you were unable to drive?



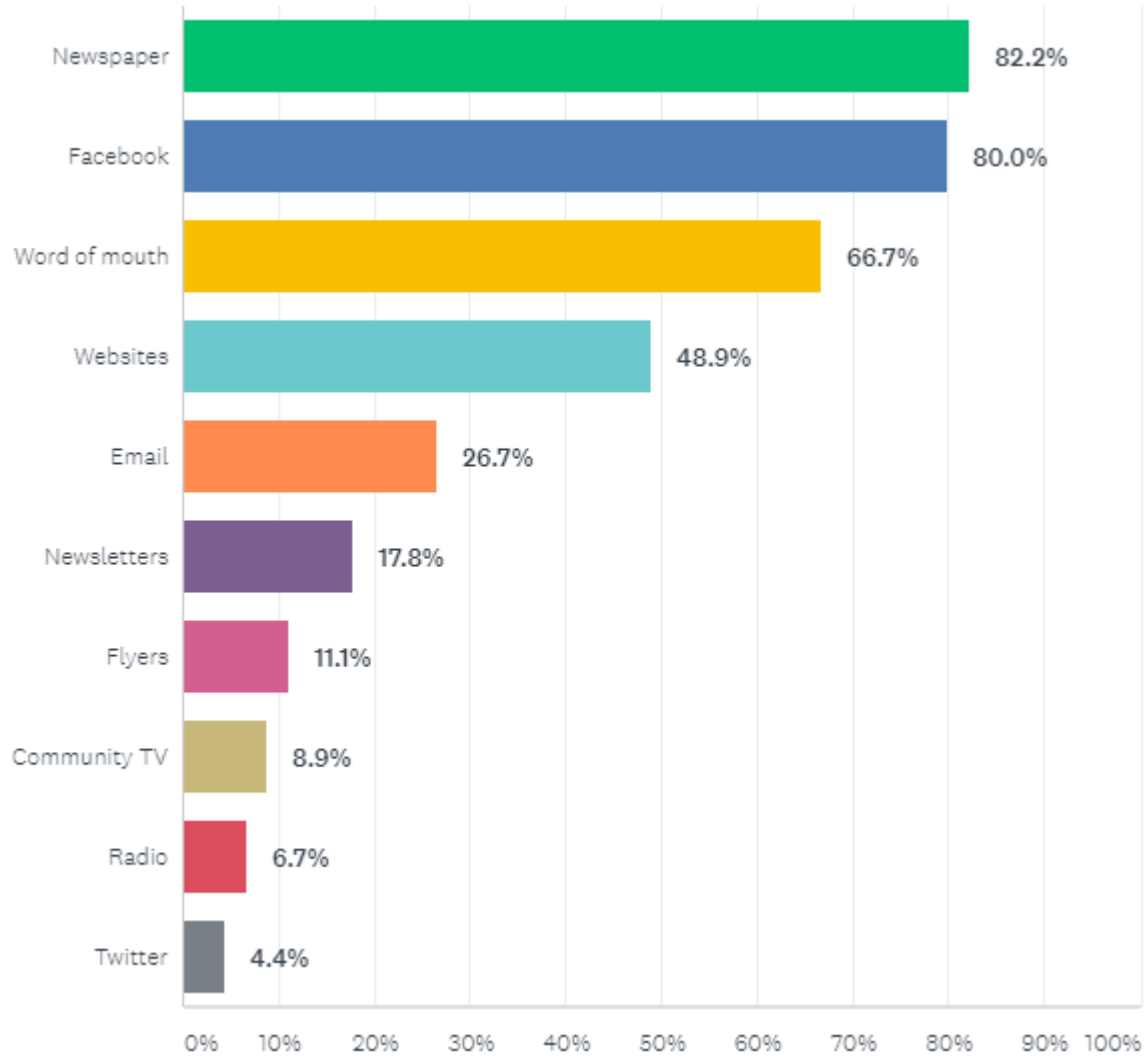
In terms of transportation options, only 2% responded "good"; 73.5% responded "poor" or "very poor", mirroring trends seen in nearly all SNHPC communities. In Windham, there are a limited number of sidewalks scattered around town. Residents who cannot drive would either have to rely on the Senior Van, family and friends, medical services that provide transportation, or utilize ride-share services such as Uber or Lyft.

Whether you wanted to move into your first home/unit or move into a smaller home/unit, does your community offer appealing alternatives?



Half of the respondents thought the community offers no appealing alternatives if one wanted to move into their first unit or a smaller home.

How do you find information about community services and events?



Newspapers, Facebook, and Word of Mouth were the most common ways residents find information about community services and events.

The Windham, NH Patch is a local chapter of Patch, and online source for local events and listings.



Acknowledgements

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Becoming Age-Friendly received regional support from many stakeholders across the Greater Manchester region, including members from the following organizations:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Access Portsmouth | Manchester Young Professionals Network |
| Alliance for Healthy Aging | NH Builders Association |
| Bike Manchester | NH Department of Health & Human Services |
| Community Caregivers | NH Endowment of Health |
| Easterseals | NH Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) |
| EngAGING NH | NH Institute of Art |
| Granite YMCA | NH Institute of Politics |
| Grantmakers in Aging | NH State Committee on Aging |
| Greater Derry Londonderry Chamber of Commerce | Plan NH |
| Infinity Realty Group | Regional Trails Coordinating Council |
| InTown Manchester | Saint Anselm College |
| JSA, Inc. | Service Link |
| Manchester-Boston Regional Airport | Southern New Hampshire University |
| Manchester Chamber of Commerce | Stay. Work. Play. |
| Manchester Community College | Transport NH |
| Manchester Public TV | Union Leader |
| Manchester Regional Area Committee on Aging | UNH Institute on Disability |
| Manchester Transit Authority | UNH Manchester |

The Town of Windham featured dozens of participants between the community assessment and the resident survey. The program’s Community Representatives from Windham included:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| David Sullivan | Rex Normann |
| Peter Griffin | |

This town report was prepared by the Becoming Age-Friendly team and staff from SNHPC:

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