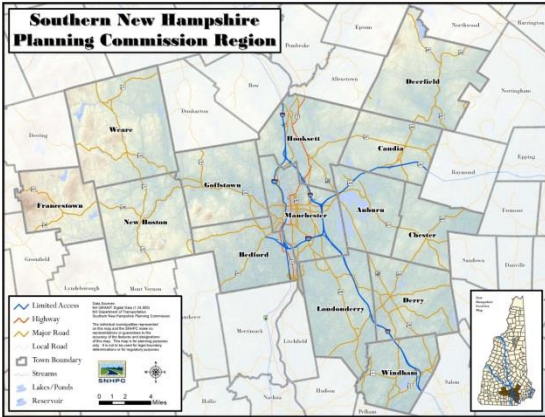


Southern NH Planning Commission's Becoming Age-Friendly Program Program Summary of Phases I and II

What would an Age-Friendly Community look like, what sort of services would be available, and how would residents of all ages be able to enjoy their community to its fullest? These are the sorts of questions that staff at Southern NH Planning Commission (SNHPC) are tackling with assistance from community champions and partnering agencies.



SNHPC Region

opportunities, and roadblocks within four land use planning categories: Transportation, Housing, Recreation, and Economic Development.

We heard stories that illustrated the needs of younger and older generations. Stories like: *I just retired and I have no idea what I'm going to do. There are no housing or transportation options in my town. I don't want to be isolated, but I still want to live in the town where I watched my family grow up. What will I do when I can't drive anymore?* Young adults shared that affordable housing was difficult to find, and that rural communities had little to attract millennials, especially good-paying jobs.

There are many commonalities between younger and older adults, such as concerns about affordable housing and social engagement, but number one on the list is transportation. Whether in rural communities or in larger suburban settings the most common statement was, *"If you don't drive, you can't exist in this town."*

Assessments involved community conversation as well as multiple surveys. SNHPC collaborated with AARP, Alliance for Healthy Aging (AHA), and Manchester Regional Area Committee on Aging (MRACOA) to create targeted surveys. These efforts focused in on

the four target areas listed above: transportation and accessibility, housing (trends, diversity, and

For this program, the term "age-friendly" recognizes the needs for people of all ages, but giving special consideration to New Hampshire's growing senior population and declining millennial population.

PHASE I: Age Friendly Assessments: In 2016, SNHPC received funding through the Tufts Health Plan Foundation, NHDOT, AARP, and others to conduct age-friendly assessments in each of its

14 communities. These assessments sought to raise awareness and examine assets,

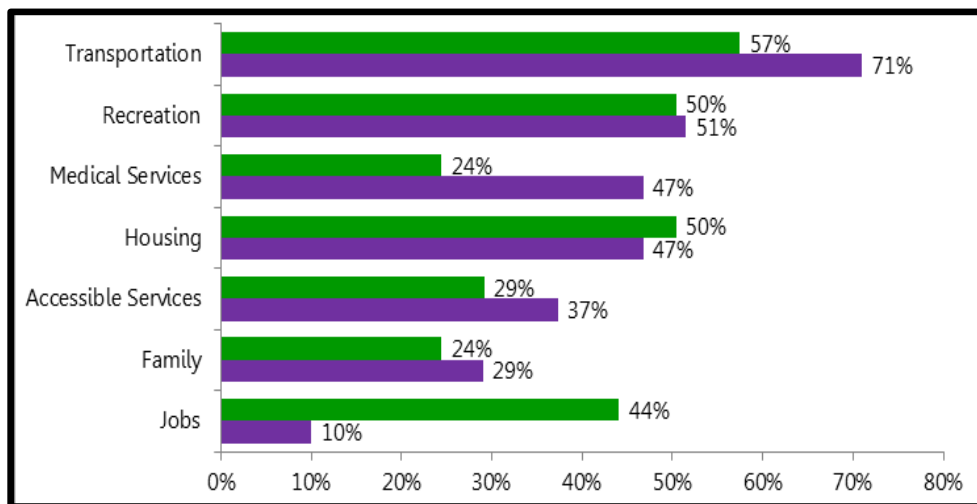


Community Conversation: Weare Public Library

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regulations), recreation and social engagement, and business and economic development. The following is a synopsis of this effort.

- **Transportation** was residents' top concern. Generally speaking, seniors were concerned with being unable to get around when they can no longer drive themselves, and millennials desired transportation options. Walkable, bike-able neighborhoods were something all generations desired, but that are currently lacking in nearly all of SNHPC's towns.
- During the community assessments and the resident survey, many people claimed that there is not enough diversity in **housing choices** in their respective communities. Regardless of age, a common concern was in finding affordable housing, especially in rural communities. Most seniors want to age-in-place but are concerned on multiple levels about how they might manage it. While seniors are struggling with downsizing, young adults are trying to figure out affordable options.



From 2017 resident survey of SNHPC region, Question: What is your biggest concern as you age? : (Millennials – green; Seniors – purple)

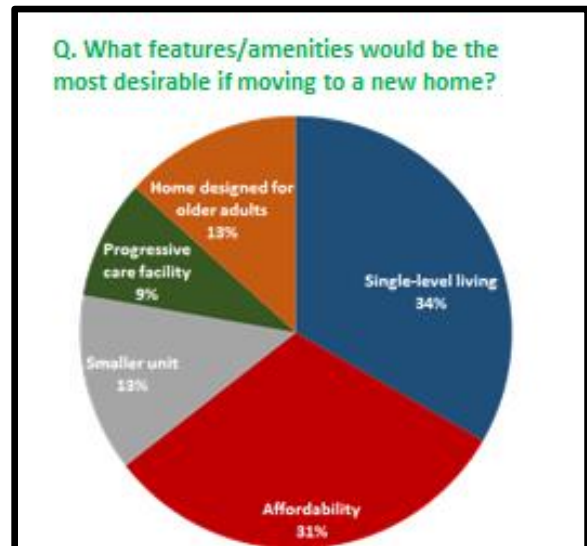
- There is no shortage of **recreation** opportunities in the region. Many town libraries and parks and recreation departments provide opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in unique programming. In every community, residents loved to talk about their community's walking or snowmobile trails, unique partnership programs, and of course intergenerational events such as Heritage Festivals. Common roadblocks described included not knowing what was going on in town, especially once kids were out of the school system, not enough venues or room for expansion, and no senior center or place to connect with friends.

Southern NH Planning Commission's Becoming Age-Friendly Program Program Summary of Phases I and II

- Most communities in the SNHPC region feel there are a lack of **businesses** and employment opportunities. Existing businesses may want to ask themselves, how is our business catering to the growing senior population? Furthermore, how are we attracting young talent to work in our industries? SNHPC is very interested in creating an age-friendly business network that considers accessibility and amenity elements as well as utilizing talents from both populations to grow local businesses.

PHASE II: Age Friendly Pilot Programs: The focus of Phase II was to address age-friendly concerns discovered during the assessment phase through unique programming opportunities. An essential part of the process was SNHPC's outreach to communities. The governing bodies of each of the Commission's fourteen communities was visited and provided with copies of their community assessments, a short synopsis of the program to date, explanation of age-friendly communities, and an invitation to participate in the Phase II Pilot Program. The Commission encouraged communities to identify issues related to the four focus areas (transportation, housing, recreation, or economic development) and to create reasonable projects related to these topics.

Two of the community pilot programs centered on transportation and housing. In Goffstown, community leaders—including the Town Manager, Planning Director, and staff from the Goffstown Library and Parks and Recreation Departments—worked together to strategize with the region's transit agency (MTA) to expand outreach to existing transit services for seniors. In regards to housing, the focus was on creating outreach materials to explain the allowance for accessory dwelling units (ADU). Goffstown leaders understand that through ADUs residents might live longer in their homes by creating a source of additional income, enable their adult child to return home, or provide a caregiver a fully functioning (separate but together) housing option.



The Town of Chester has attracted a considerable amount of new construction over the past five+ years, but residents noticed that much of the housing was large, two-story "McMansions". SNHPC was asked to assist the town in examining resident opinions on housing options that might steer future zoning amendments. SNHPC worked with community leaders to invite residents to a local charrette in which housing options were examined and participants could vote on whether or not they could envision various

Southern NH Planning Commission's Becoming Age-Friendly Program Program Summary of Phases I and II

types of housing being built in Chester. This survey would direct planning staff and the Planning Board on the types of housing that might be supported for future zoning amendments. Another focus of the Chester pilot program was to survey residents regarding the existing transit service in the community. The results of this effort indicated that while most people are unaware of existing transit services in town like the Cooperative Alliance for Regional Transportation (CART), they would be willing to use them.

The third pilot community, Bedford, invited the SNHPC team to work with town staff and residents to develop an age-friendly survey on multiple topics (transportation, housing, recreation and engagement, and economic development). This would provide anticipated Master Plan update efforts guidance toward creating age-friendly elements in multiple chapters and guide age-friendly growth for the next 10 years.



SNHPC Staff conducting survey at Bedford's Farmer's Market

Regarding the SNHPC age-friendly business pilot program, to date four businesses have participated in the assessment program. As participation was light, the team focused its efforts on developing an age-friendly business atmosphere. The SNHPC team researched age-friendly business efforts in US and Canadian cities. From this the team developed a criteria checklist with categories in design and atmosphere, customer service, products and services, environmental sustainability, and employee benefits. Unlike the case studies researched, the checklist developed was meant to address concerns that younger and older adults might have. Specific elements within each

category were intended for businesses to consider incorporating into their business environment in order to become more age-friendly. Commission staff presented the concept to multiple business stakeholders at local and state levels to get feedback and make adjustments. It is anticipated that in the next phase, the team will continue outreach efforts in promoting

What is an Age-Friendly Business?

An age-friendly business or organization is committed to creating a welcoming environment and providing great service for people of all ages and abilities.



**Southern NH Planning Commission's Becoming Age-Friendly Program
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and utilizing the criteria list as a tool in creating age-friendly businesses.

Phase III: Pilot Program Continuation: SNHPC, with the continued support of its funders, is able to keep the age-friendly conversation going on multiple levels through unique outreach efforts. To be sure, the growing interest in addressing needs for both senior and millennial populations in the region and the state is palpable. In Phase III, SNHPC will continue outreach efforts with local, regional and state agencies and partners. The Commission will once again invite communities and businesses to participate in the pilot programs. Also, the Commission will develop a targeted statewide approach in sharing the lessons learned with fellow regional planning commissions and other interested stakeholders.