



Age-Friendly Community Assessment: Town of Goffstown



Photo: Town of Goffstown

August 2017

Town of Goffstown

Age-Friendly Community Assessment



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.



Photo: SNHPC



Community Snapshot

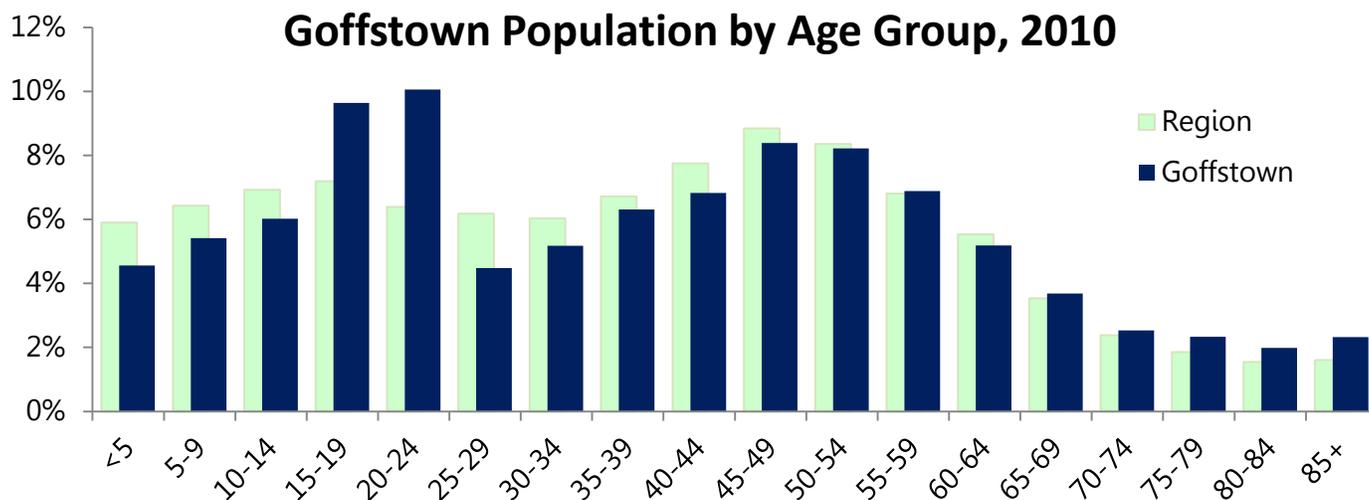
Goffstown, NH is in Hillsborough County, abutting the towns of Dunbarton, Hooksett, Bedford, New Boston, and Weare, as well as the City of Manchester. It was incorporated on June 17, 1761 and is named for Colonel John Goffe, an early settler, soldier and civic leader.



The first settlement was on the north bank of the Piscataquog River in what is now Grasmere Village, the seat of the town government for more than 100 years.

Goffstown Village grew up around the falls on the Piscataquog River where local industry developed because of the availability of water power. Pinardville developed rapidly in the era of the electric trolley car as a residential suburb for employees of the mills in the City of Manchester. The steam railroad also played a part in creating the Town's nodular pattern of development with stations at Grasmere, Shirley Station, Goffstown Village and Parker Station. To date, Grasmere, the Village, and Pinardville exist as three distinct areas of town. With a 2015 population of 17,831, Goffstown is the 14th largest municipality in NH, and ranks 5th in the SNHPC region.

Goffstown Population by Age Group, 2010



Goffstown's population closely reflects that of the region but is notable for the proliferation of individuals in the 15-19 and 20-24 cohorts, undoubtedly due to the presence of Saint Anselm College in town. There is also a slightly higher percentage of 65+ individuals as compared to the rest of the region.



What is the community doing well?

- Goffstown offers a variety of “cozy neighborhoods.”
- The rail trail is a huge asset, and considerable draw.
- Multi-generational events such as Old Home Day, SpringFest, BerryFest, and the Giant Pumpkin Weigh-off & Regatta are sources of town pride.



Where is there room for improvement?

- Village sidewalks are “deceptively difficult” to navigate for seniors, especially those in wheelchairs.
- There aren’t many choices for a first-time homebuyer.
- A centralized information source for town happenings/events would be very beneficial.



Transportation & Connections

Highlights:

- Downtown walkability rated 8 of 10 by participants (if able-bodied).
- Walkability ratings for neighborhoods varied too much to rate. For wheelchair-bound individuals, it averaged 4 or 5 of 10.
- Main Street corridor is being redone this summer (\$1.1 million project).
- The town’s partnership with MTA for on-demand rides has been a success thus far.

Assets (in no particular order):

- Rail trail is a huge draw.
- St Joseph Cmty Services/Meals on Wheels.
- Partnership with MTA (on-demand rides)
- New sidewalk from St Anselm to Pinardville
- Town’s Master Plan & regs call for connectivity
- Rideshare services (Uber & Lyft) are being used more and more

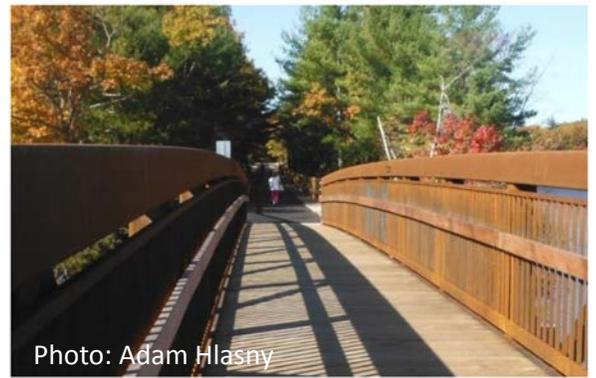


Photo: Adam Hlasny

Barriers/Opportunities:

- Continued improvements on rail trail
- Disconnected sidewalk system; could be better links to trails
- Lack of walkability, especially away from the village
- Poorly-designed intersection at Elm/Main/High/N Mast
- More could be done to entice millennials to settle in Goffstown, i.e. a non-motorized connection to Manchester (to commute to professional jobs)

Basic Data:



Miles of town roads

137



WalkScore

51 of 100



Rail Trail

5.5 miles



Nearest Interstate

8 miles

Access to Internet:

Broadband Coverage:

- WiFi available at town office, library, schools, etc.
- Connection speed rated as good; no issues mentioned



Housing¹

Highlights

- Many residents have a hard time finding affordable housing
- Goffstown's housing mix is better than most towns'
- In last five years, mostly single-family dwellings have been built, but also apartment buildings off Moose Club Park Road

Assets:

- Veteran & Elderly tax exemptions
- Zoning allows for multiple housing types, including mixed-use

Barriers/Opportunities:

- Two-acre minimum zoning
- Nursing homes typically very expensive
- Shared homes exist, but many skirt around fire code
- No housing services offered to residents (i.e. weatherization assistance)
- Barriers to recognizing the need for more affordable housing:
 - Lack of available land
 - Land costs (est. \$80k/acre)
- Disabled/universal design considerations haven't yet come forward
- Manufactured housing exists; Medville community is 300+ units
- Some workforce housing behind Rite-Aid
- Creation of reduced-size homes

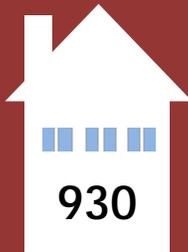


"The average price of new builds is \$300,000 - they sell as soon as they're built."

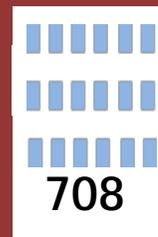
– **Goffstown resident**



Single Family Units



2-4 Units in Structure



5+ Units in Structure



Mobile Homes and Other Housing Units

¹ Source: US Census, American Community Survey 2011-15



Recreation & Engagement

Highlights:

- Multigenerational opportunities include Police & Fire Explorers' programs, touch-a-truck, internships, and a senior volunteer program
- Piscataquog River & Glen Lake are great recreational opportunities
- The library is a community resource that offers programming for all ages

Assets (in no particular order):

- Town Departments: Multiple programs, especially Parks and Recreation, Fire Department, and Police Department
- YMCA
- Coming attraction: athletic complex adjacent to DPW
- Schools: St Anselm College, Goffstown HS, Mountain View MS, Elementaries
- Downtown hardware store – new butterfly garden
- Many good medium-sized meeting facilities
- Rail trail
- Uncanoonuc Mountains/trails
- Parks & athletic fields: Barnard, Roy, etc.
- Churches/Salvation Army
- Crispin's House Coalition for Youth
- Project champions: library, parks & rec, etc.
- Goffstown News, Edge
- Community TV station @ high school
- Active scouting programs
- Osher Institute for Lifelong Learning (OLLI)



Barriers/Opportunities:

- A senior coordinator would be extremely helpful
- No movie theatres
- Standalone community center or larger meeting/event facility
- A centralized information source for town happenings/events
- Schools are extremely busy; not much room to add new events
- Library hasn't got the funding to expand



Business & Economic Development

Highlights:

- The lack of gas lines, sewer and water stunts development possibilities; until the town invests in a utility corridor, the town will not get larger anchor development
- Higher-paying jobs would attract more millennials; currently, they are lured to significantly higher pay scales 45 minutes to the south in Boston. Without transit to Boston, they move away

Assets (in no particular order):

- Apotheca Café – gathering place for all ages
- Sully's Superette
- Goffstown Ace Hardware
- Hannaford
- The Trestle Tavern
- Plenty of Chinese, pizza, salons, landscapers
- Saint Anselm College



Barriers/Opportunities:

- NIMBYism (i.e. 'Not In My Backyard')
- New businesses need more of a helping hand (i.e. more active Chamber of Commerce involvement)
- Disconnect between two sides of village/lack of communication
- Us vs. Them mentality, village vs. Pinardville; "Pinardville is on its own."
- Some felt that impact fees are too high (this was debatable)
- Consider impact fees to improve schools, as they are near or over capacity
- Reinvigorate Main Street program



Partnerships

- Police/fire internship programs
- Elementary schools/Parks department
- Library - teen/adult programs
- Crispin's House/ HS/ MS/volunteer ops
- Salvation Army/church
- Lion's Club – Springfest at high school
- Historic Society/Old Home Day
- Berry Festival
- Many, many others!

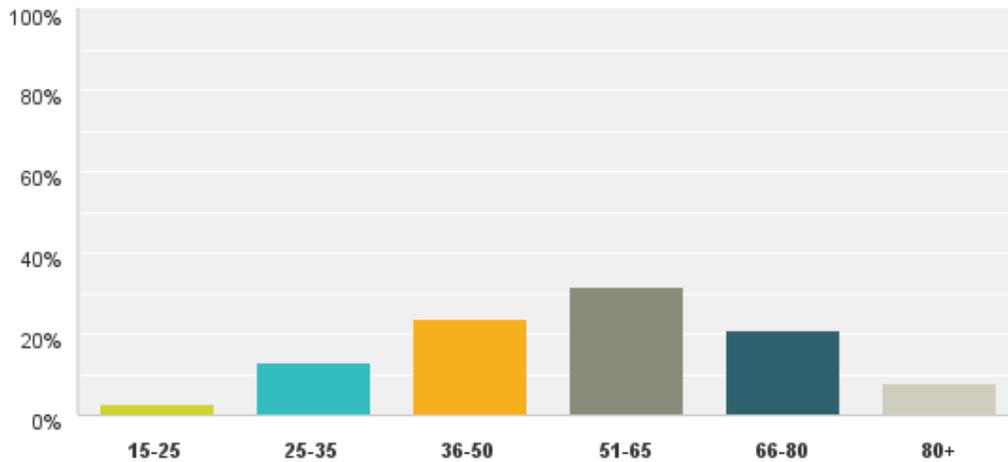




Survey Says...

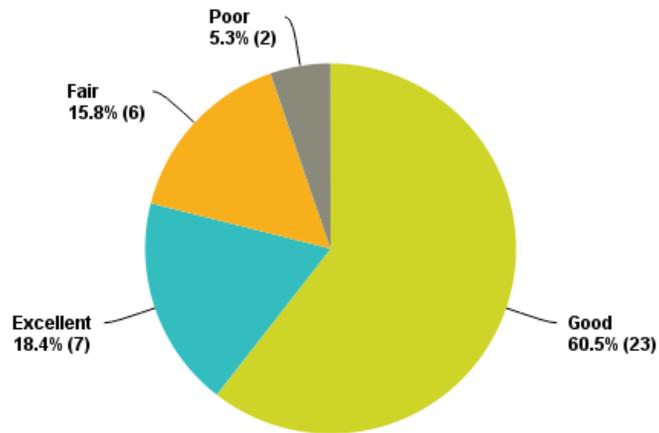
From February through April of 2017, The Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) embarked on a “Becoming Age-Friendly” program. A resident survey was hosted by SNHPC and sponsored by AARP, Tufts Health Plan Foundation, and the City of Manchester to gather ordinary citizens’ input on topics including recreation, transportation, housing, and beyond. A total of 641 responses were received, including 38 from Goffstown.

What is your age?



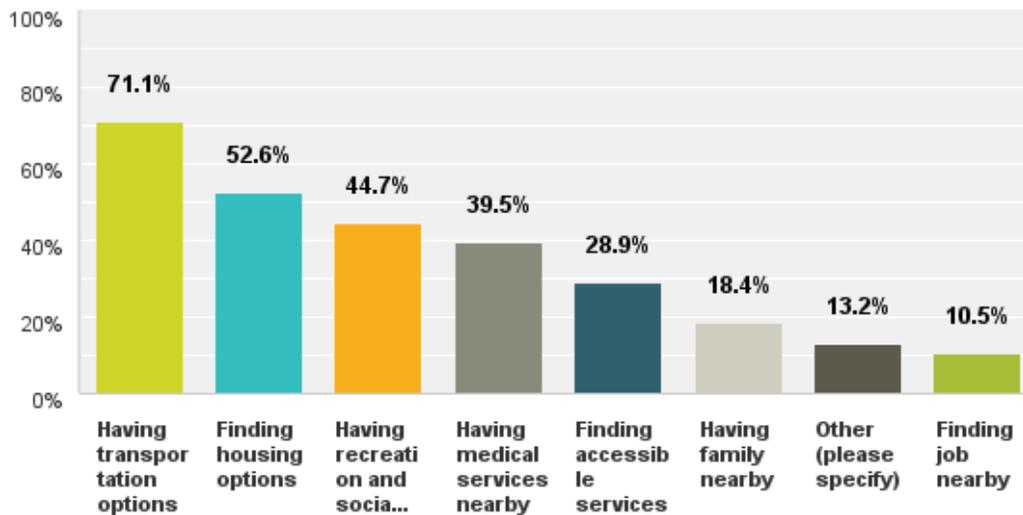
There was a fairly diverse range of respondent ages, but the majority came from the 51-65 age bracket

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



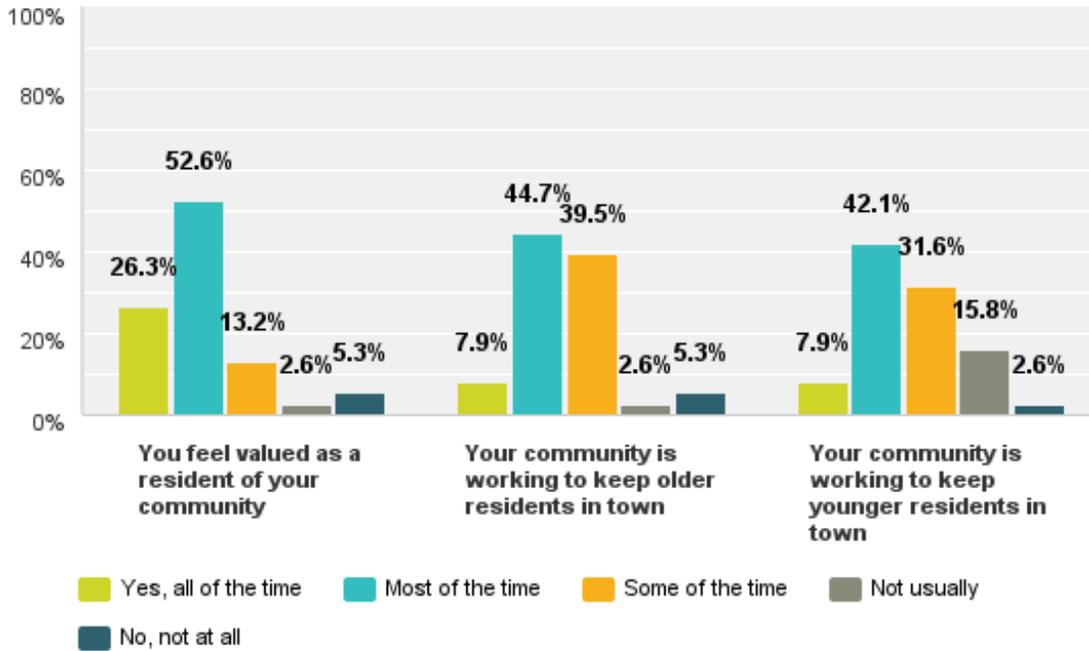
The vast majority (79%) agreed that Goffstown was either a “good” or “excellent” place for people to live as they age. Only two respondents (5.3%) deemed it a poor place to age.

What concerns you most about aging in your community?



Transportation and housing were the biggest concerns, a trend seen in many SNHPC communities. Nearly half of respondents also said having recreation and social engagement opportunities in Goffstown was a major concern about aging there.

Check all that apply for the following statements



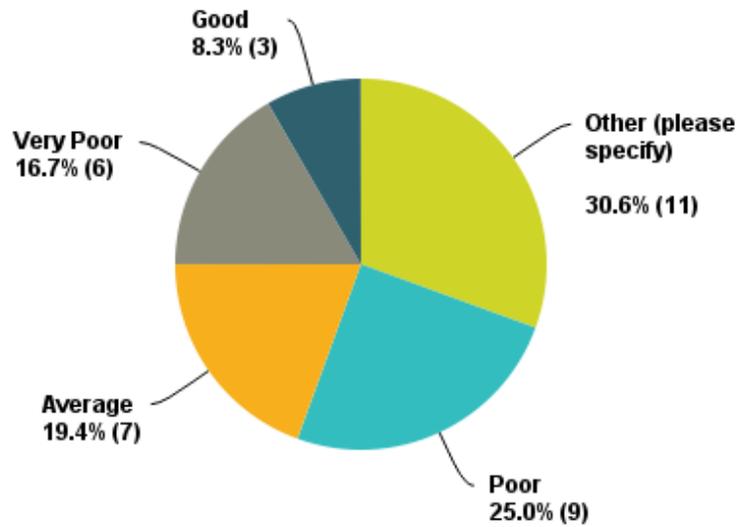
While 79% of residents feel valued as a resident of Goffstown most or all of the time, only 50% felt that the community was working to keep younger residents in town most or all of the time. 18.4% responded “not usually” or “not at all” to this question.

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



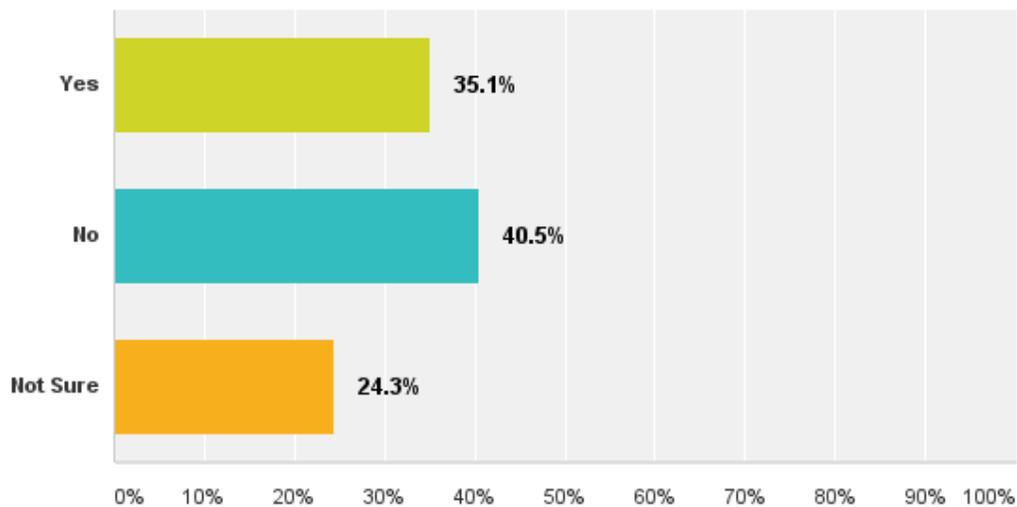
Taxes and affordability were mentioned most, followed by transportation, housing options, and cost of living.

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



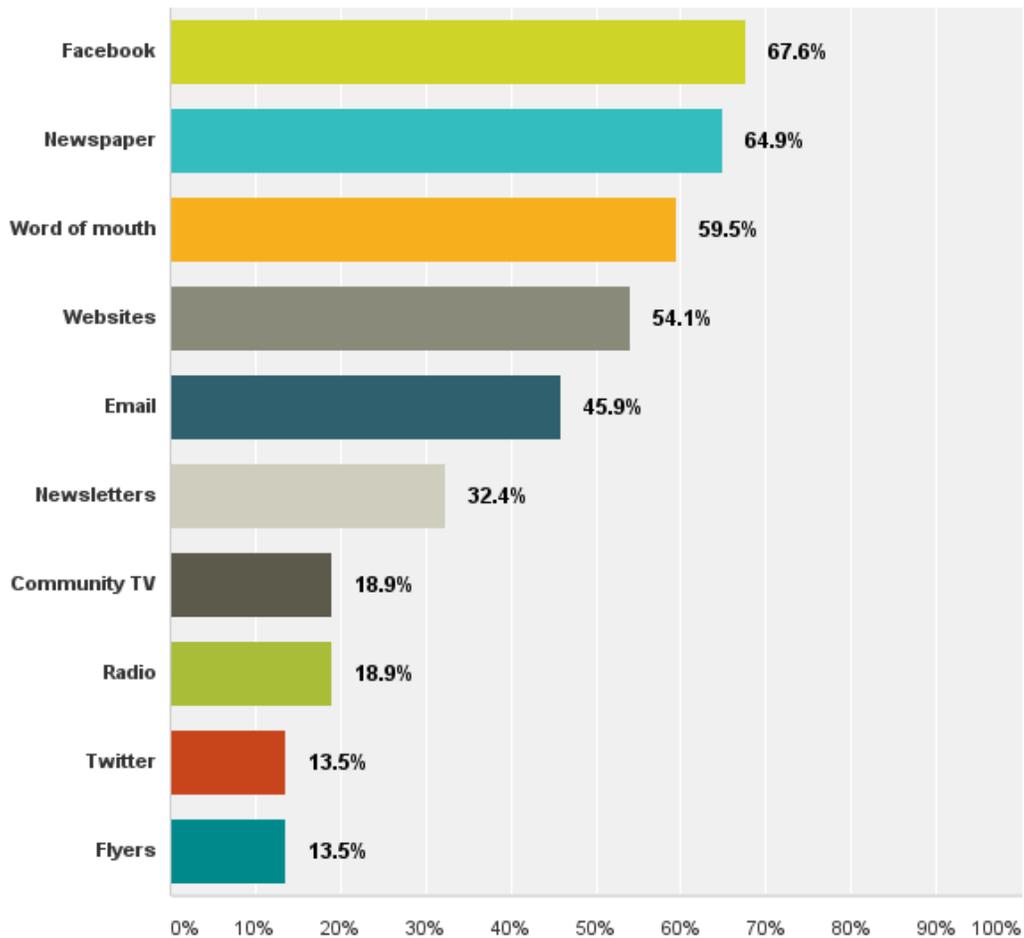
In terms of transportation options, only 8.3% responded "good"; 41.7% responded "poor" or "very poor", mirroring trends seen in nearly all SNHPC communities.

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



Only 35.1% of respondents thought the community offers appealing alternatives if one wanted to move into his/her first unit or a smaller home.

How do you find information about community services & events?



Facebook proved to be the #1 method of finding information about community services/ events. However, traditional outlets such as newspapers and word of mouth ranked higher (64.9% and 59.5%, respectively) than websites (54.1%) or email (45.9%).

While deemed important by several focus group attendees, only a small portion of residents surveyed found community TV (18.9%) a top source of town information.



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/JSA, Inc.	NH Builders Association
Alliance for Healthy Aging	NH Center for Public Policy Studies
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
Manchester-Boston Regional Airport	Service Link
Manchester Chamber of Commerce	Southern New Hampshire University
Manchester Community College	Stay. Work. Play.
Manchester Public TV	Transport NH
Manchester Regional Area Committee on Aging	Union Leader
Manchester Transit Authority	UNH Institute on Disability
Manchester Young Professionals Network	UNH Manchester

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

Jonathan O’Rourke	Sandy Whipple
Rick Wilhelm	Dianne Hathaway
David Pierce	Sue Desruisseaux

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

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