



Age-Friendly Community Assessment: Town of Deerfield



August 2017

Town of Deerfield

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.



Photo: SNHPC Staff

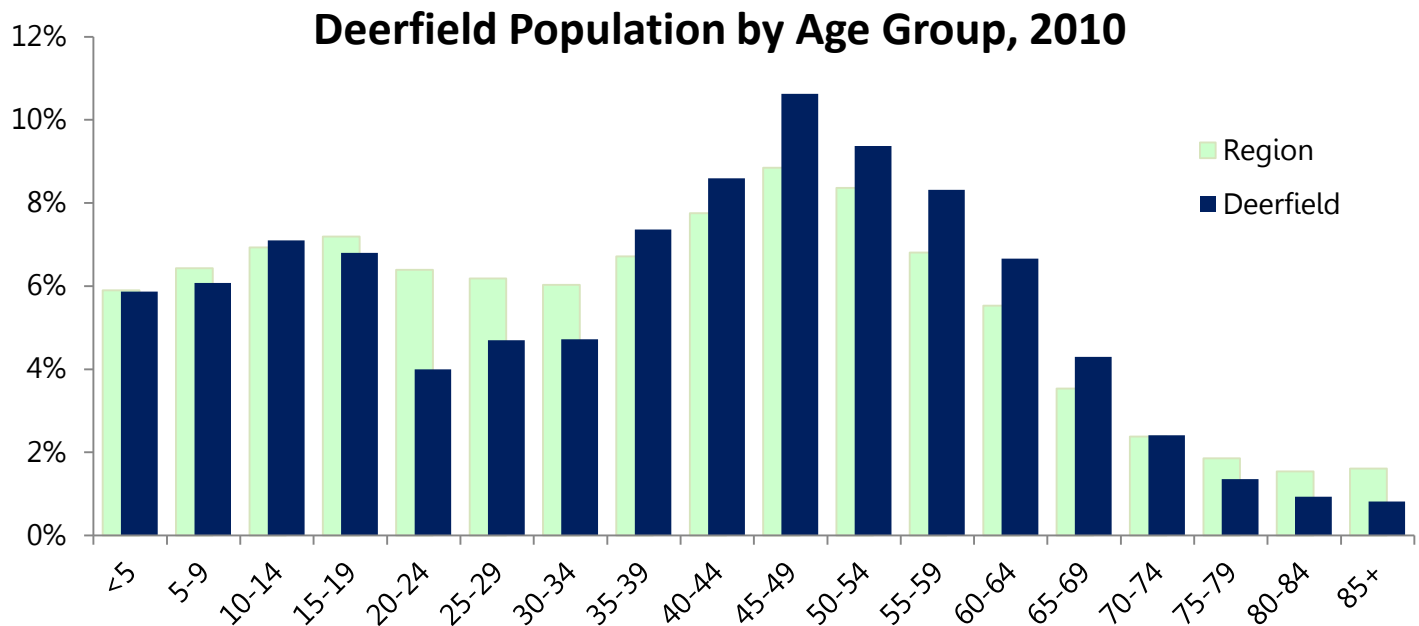


Community Snapshot

Deerfield, NH is located in Rockingham County, abutting the towns of Candia, Northwood, Nottingham, Raymond, Epsom, Allenstown, and Hooksett.

Deerfield was originally part of the Town of Nottingham, but in 1756 residents petitioned for organization as a separate parish. They were denied in 1765. While a second petition was pending, according to local legend two hunters presented Colonial Governor Benning Wentworth with a fat deer, and "Deerfield" was incorporated in 1766. Deerfield Parade, a hilltop district first settled in 1740, and located on the first postal route between Concord and Portsmouth, became the half-way stage coach stop on the route, with up to seven inns located in the district, and became the early professional, cultural and business center of the town. The first high school, or Academy, was built there in 1798, financed by local "Gentlemen". Unfortunately it burned to the ground in 1842.

Once a thriving farm community, in 1876 the Deerfield Fair was established—now billed as New England's Oldest Family Fair. It still draws huge crowds throughout its annual four-day September/October run. Deerfield today offers all the advantages of rural New England life, balanced by a diverse and progressive community with a warm, small-town feel. U.S. Census figures for 2010 list the population at 4,280.



Deerfield has a lower millennial population (15-34 years) when compared to the region as a whole. The number of middle-age residents is higher than the regional average; however, the most senior population (75+) is lower than the region. This could be due to lack of housing choice, affordability, or scarcity of elderly care facilities.

Community Assessment: March 29, 2017

[10 in attendance, including reps from Parks & Rec, Philbrick James Library, Town Clerks Office, Deerfield Community Church, Town of Deerfield Assessing, and local residents]



What is the community doing well?

- Town Parks and Recreation provides many different multi-generational programs and events.
- The town is home to trails, parks, and conservation areas cherished by residents.
- Residents are engaged and make efforts to welcome new residents to town.
- Deerfield is home to the Deerfield Fair, a regional draw sustained by local residents and businesses.
- Deerfield residents love their rural character, including their gravel roads.



Where is there room for improvement?

- Many areas of the town are too dangerous to walk or bike.
- Lack of transportation services leave residents to rely on family and friends to get around.
- Lack of water and septic infrastructure may adversely impact future development.



Transportation & Connections

Highlights:

- Residents stated that Deerfield is “at least an hour’s drive from/to anywhere.”
- Roads are disconnected and without more organized transit or volunteer ride share programs; therefore, residents must rely heavily on personal vehicles.

Assets:

- Rail trail and other local trail systems.
- Access to major state routes: NH 28, NH 107.
- Parks Department utilizes a van to transport residents to local events.
- Residents feel that roads are well-kept.
- Lamprey Healthcare Senior Transportation offers transportation for senior and disabled Deerfield residents every Tuesday and is offered for medical appointments, shopping trips or a monthly recreational trip.
- Safe to walk on Class VI and dirt/gravel roads.

Barriers/Opportunities:

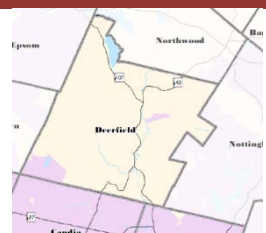
- Disconnected road system.
- Lack of sidewalks leave residents to walk on the side of roads or not walk at all.
- Dangerous to walk on state routes.
- There is an opportunity to update the town’s subdivision regulations to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists for future developments.
- Class VI roads are a barrier to connecting northern and southern Deerfield.
- The Parks and Recreation van is currently not wheelchair accessible.
- Creating a distinguishable Village Center would provide village downtown feel with walkable amenities.

Basic Data:



Access to Internet:

- WiFi available at town office, library, and at some private businesses like Nine Lions Tavern
- Connection speed rated as poor





Housing

Highlights

- In last five years, mostly single-family dwellings have been built in Deerfield.
- Minimum lot size requirement can negatively impact diverse housing developments.
- Rural NH character with many historic homes and barns – typical lot size are 3-5 acres

Assets:

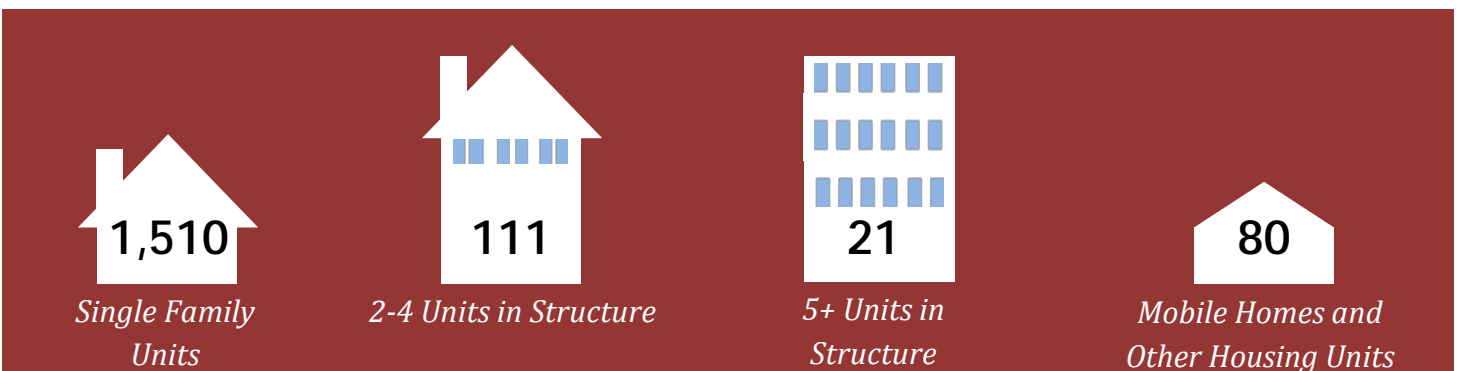
- The town allows for a variety of housing types, including single-family, two-family dwellings, seasonal dwellings, home occupation, manufactured housing, family day care home, bed and breakfast, and senior housing up to twenty units upon Planning Board approval.
- Zoning allows for mixed-use
- Property tax relief for disabled and veteran residents as well as seniors with lower incomes.
- Senior housing at Sherburne Woods.
- Assisted living facility at Inn at Deerfield.



“We will need to move to another community to be closer to medical services”
–Deerfield resident

Barriers/Opportunities:

- Lack of sewer and water infrastructure can be a barrier to developing more diverse housing options.
- No housing services offered to residents (i.e. weatherization assistance).
- Disabled/universal design considerations have yet come forward.
- Three-acre minimum lot zoning can be a barrier to developing more diverse housing.
- Although duplexes and conversions are allowed, these housing alternatives are not built due to lot requirements.
- Homebuyers and seniors wanting to downsize or have single-level living need choice.





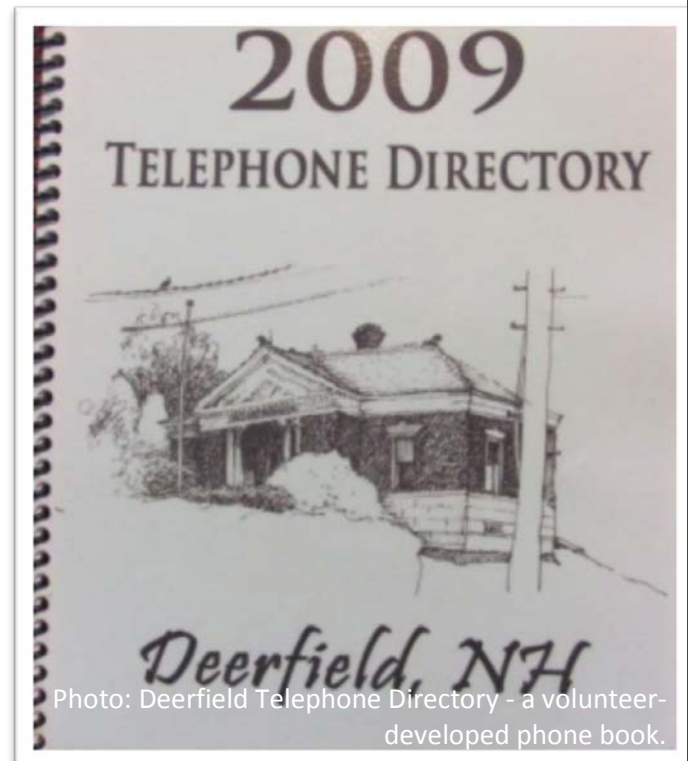
Recreation

Highlights:

- Deerfield's Parks and Recreation Department offers many multigenerational opportunities for residents and for regional visitors.
- Deerfield is home to many parks, trails, and conservation areas.
- Local volunteers organize a resident/business phone book as a means of keeping residents connected to one another.
- The Deerfield Fair is one of the Region's top attractions – many local residents volunteer their time to staff the fair.

Assets (in no particular order):

- Town Recreation Department hosts events such as crochet, chess and bridge, line dancing, youth flag football, trips for teenagers, summer day camp, summer concert series, Wellness Fair.
- Deerfield Seniors provides for social and recreational needs for elderly residents by coordinating with the Deerfield Recreation Department to host events, and transportation services.
- Deerfield Fair
- Trail Network, Town Forests
- Philbrick-James Library offers a wide array of free services including large print books, books on tape/CD; video & DVD movies, hi-speed internet and computers.
- Deerfield Community Church hosts a Senior Luncheon each month
- Deerfield Women's Club
- Deerfield Farmer's Market opens once a week during the summer.
- The town offers new residents a welcome packet with information about the town.



Barriers/Opportunities:

- Filling gaps in trail network
- There is an opportunity to utilize Parks and Recreation van for senior transportation services; although the van is currently not wheel-chair accessible
- No single community center exists in Deerfield.



Business & Economic Development



Highlights:

- The lack of gas lines, sewer and water stunts development possibilities.
- Lack of commercial businesses results in residents finding work and shopping in other communities.
- Deerfield Fair is a seasonal fair, attracting visitors from all over the state.
- The town allows limited mixed-use development.
- About 79% of residents commute to another town to work.

Assets:

- 9 Lion's Tavern
- Yannis Pizza
- Deerfield Fair (pictured)
- Penguin Mart
- American Legion
- The Cordwainer Shop, one of the larger businesses in Deerfield, has been making shoes for over fifty years

Barriers/Opportunities:

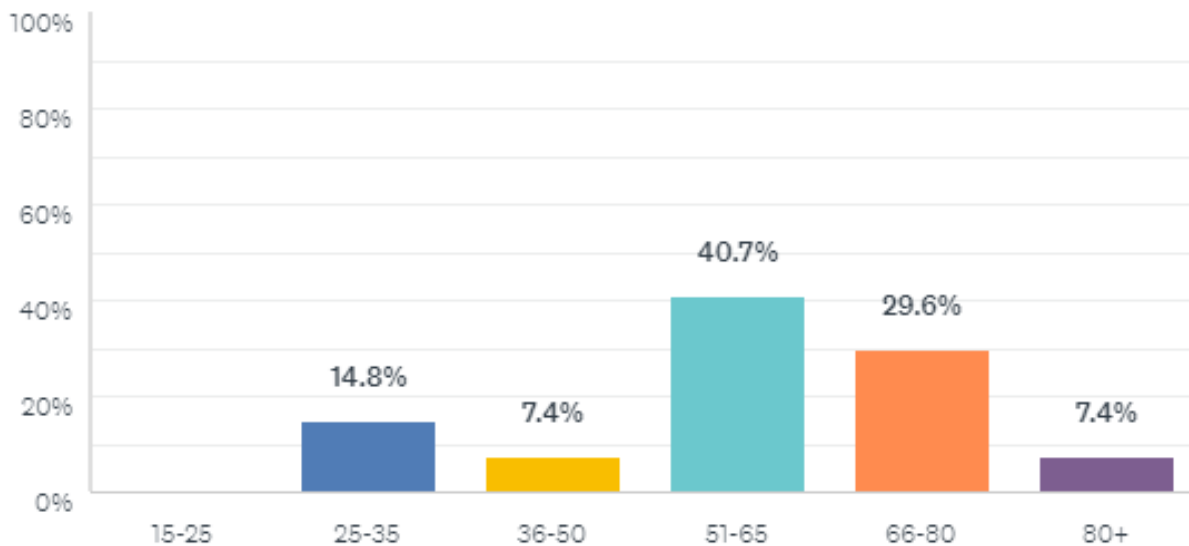
- Lack of sewer/water infrastructure
- Lack of medical services
- Lack of grocery stores
- Cell phone service is spotty
- Lack of broadband availability throughout town is a barrier to greater social connectivity
- There is no village center



Survey Says...

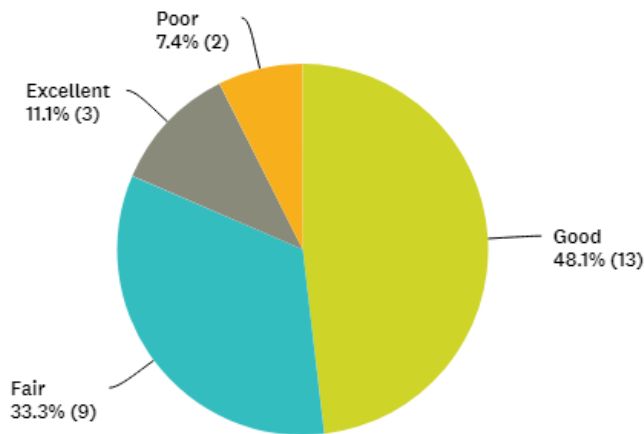
From February through April of 2017, The Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) embarked on a “Becoming Age-Friendly” program. A resident survey was hosted by SNHPC and sponsored by AARP, Tufts Health Plan Foundation, and the City of Manchester to gather ordinary citizens’ input on topics including recreation, transportation, housing, and beyond. A total of 641 responses were received, including 27 from Deerfield. The following is but a sample; full results are available upon request.

What is your age?



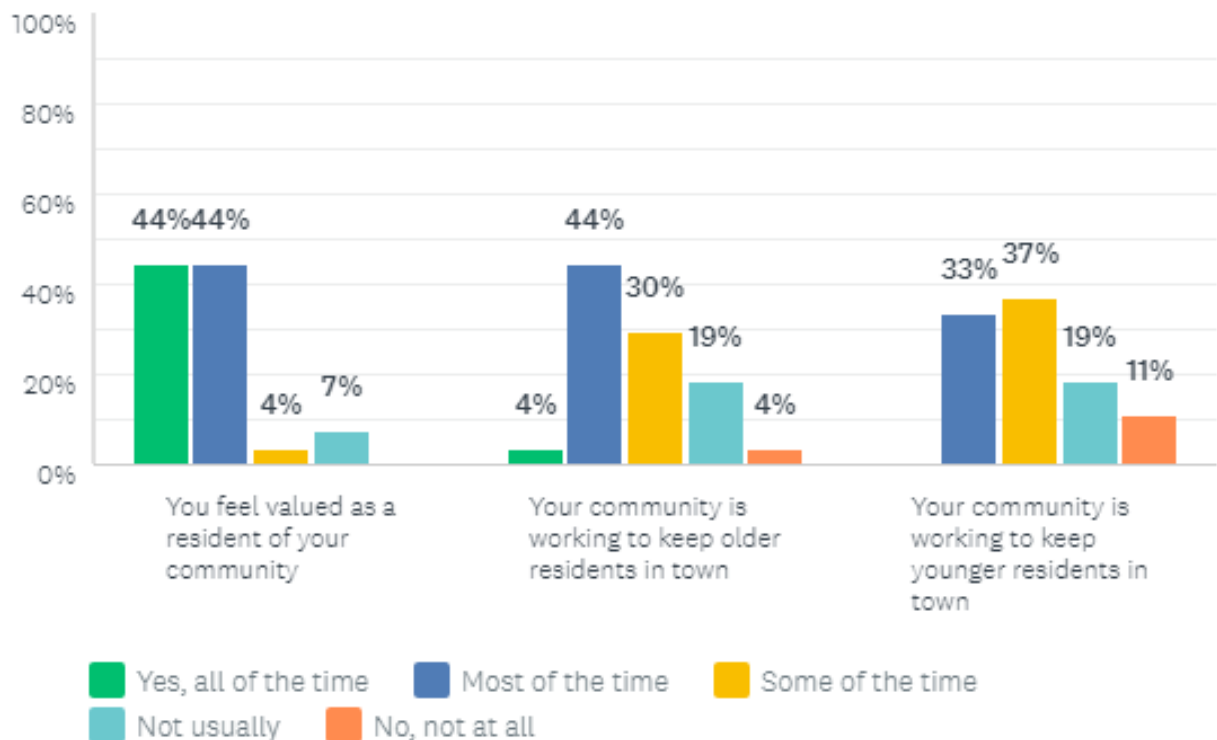
The majority of respondents were of the ages 51-80, thus the majority of the views represented in this survey are skewed towards an older population.

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



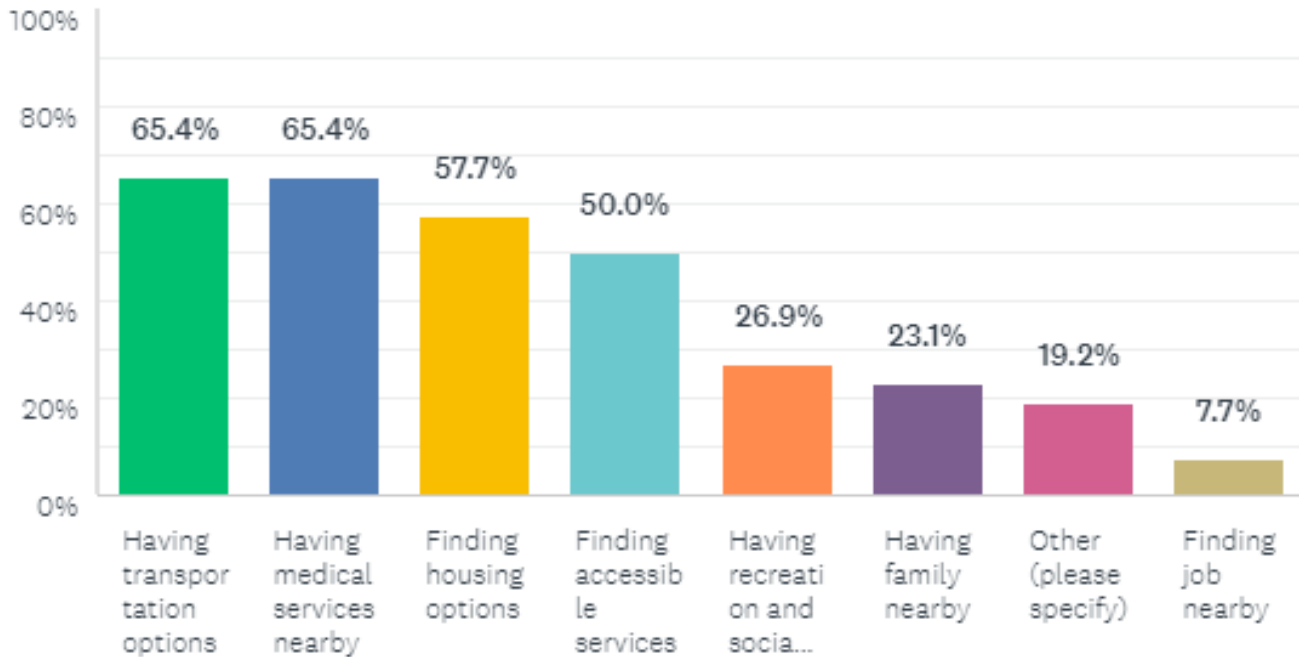
48% of respondents stated that Deerfield is a "good" place for people to live as they age. 7.4% rated Deerfield as "poor".

Community Value



The majority of respondents (88%) feel valued as a resident of Deerfield most or all of the time, 70% felt that the community was working to keep younger residents in town most or all of the time. 30% responded "not usually" or "not at all" to this question.

What concerns you the most about aging in your community?



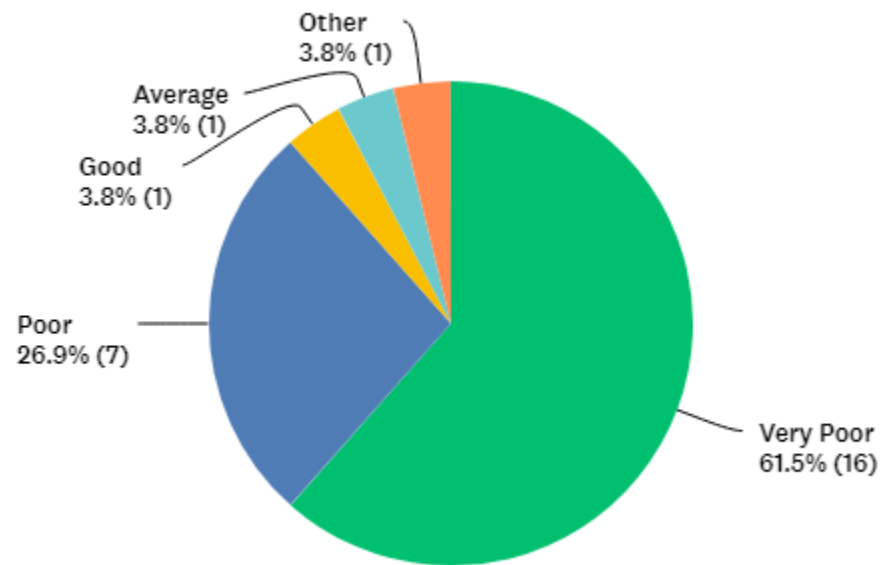
Residents of Deerfield are most concerned with having transportation options and having medical services nearby their community as they age. Additionally, respondents were concerned about finding housing options that will suit them to meet their needs as they age. While residents can use Lamprey Healthcare Senior Transportation, there is no consistent transportation services in town. Residents have to drive relatively long distances to get to medical services and grocery stores.

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

High School Seniors Access Social Connections
Transportation Assisted Living

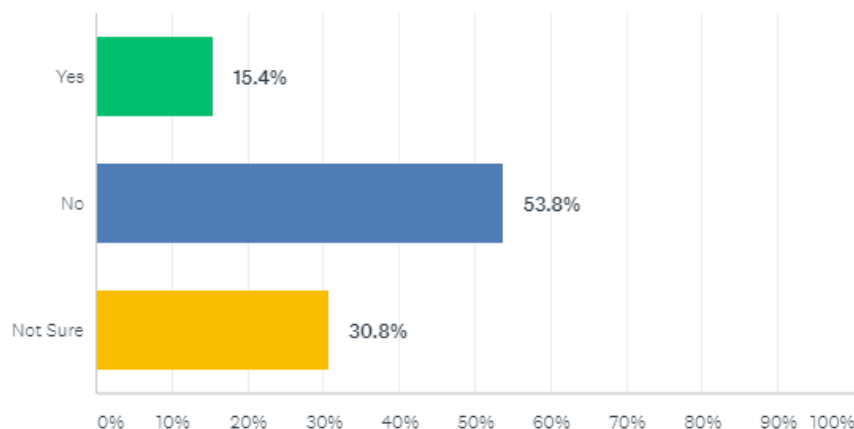
Respondents stated that transportation and access were some of the most important change that would enable them to stay in their town. Residents mentioned that having a high school would enable them to stay in their community. This was something rarely discussed in the survey or during the community assessments, however having public schools in a community is a good way to attract new, younger residents.

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



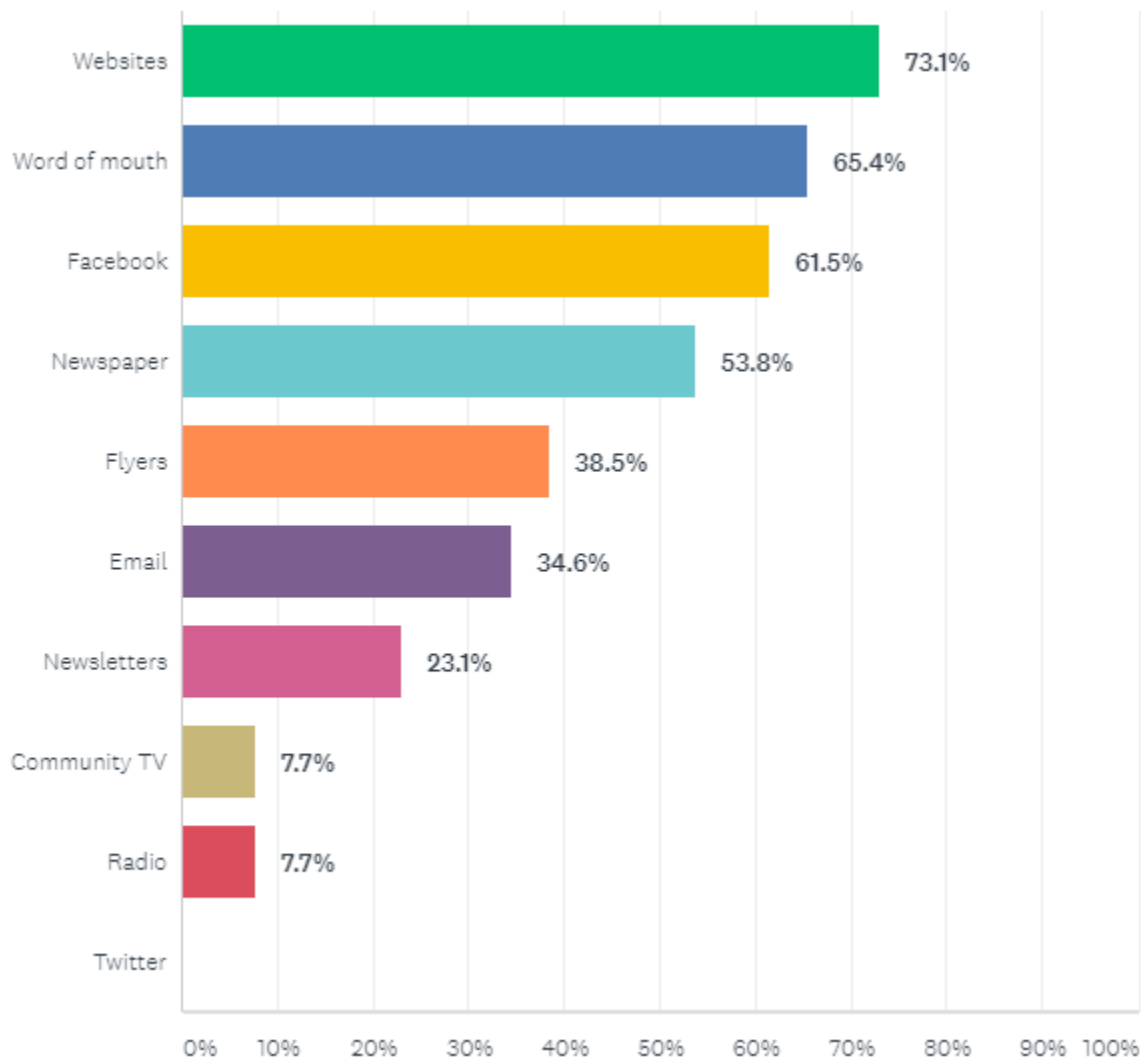
In terms of transportation options, 61.5% responded "very poor", and 26.9% responded "poor". The town has very limited bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and roads are largely disconnected. If a resident were unable to drive, they would have to rely on family and friends, or a private transportation service like Lamprey (for medical purposes) or ride-share services like 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?



Only 15.4% of respondents thought the community offers appealing alternatives if one wanted to move into his/her first unit or a smaller home. 30.8% of respondents were unsure if Deerfield had appealing housing alternatives.

How do you find information about community services and events?



Respondents stated that they receive most of their information from various websites, through word of mouth, from Facebook, and through newspapers.

Many Deerfield residents get their information from The Forum, a local online newspaper covering the towns of Candia, Deerfield, Northwood, and Nottingham.



Acknowledgements

The Becoming Age-Friendly program was administered by the *Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC)*, and funded by a grant from the *Tufts Health Plan Foundation*. The program received funding and resource support from *AARP NH* and *City of Manchester Health Department*.

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

Joe Manzi	Gary Duquette
Denise Greig	Fran Menard

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

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