



Age-Friendly Community Assessment: Town of Auburn



Photo: Auburn NH Community Group, Facebook

August 2017

Town of Auburn

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



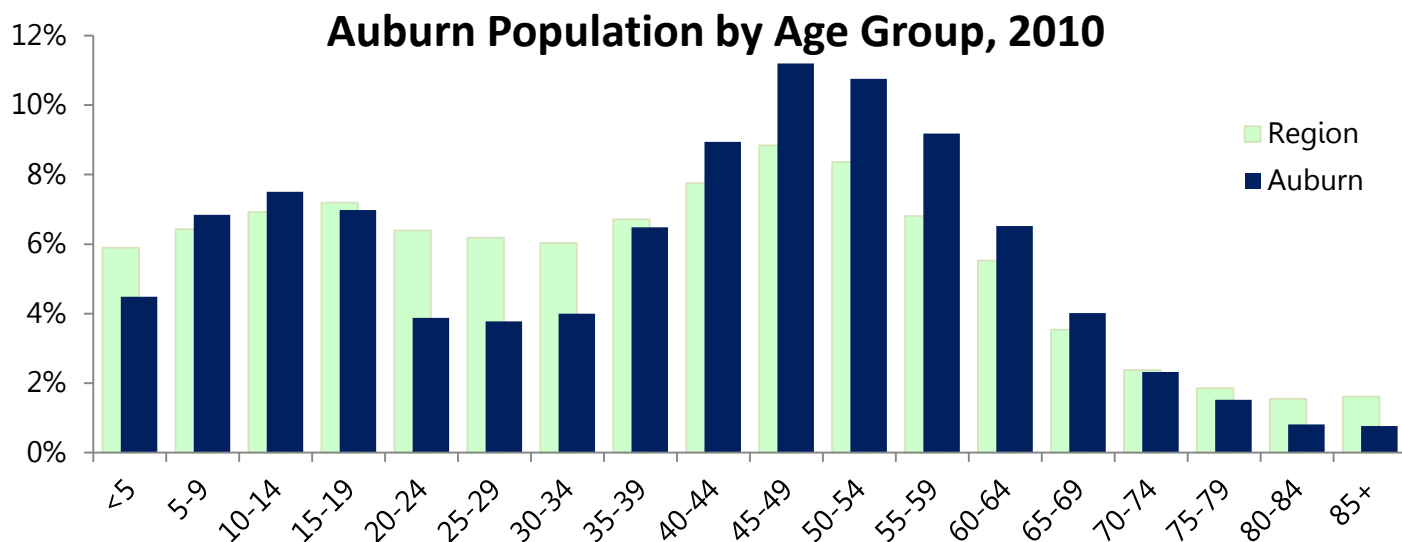
Community Snapshot

Auburn, NH is located in Rockingham County, abutting the City of Manchester and the towns of Hooksett, Candia, Chester, Derry, and Londonderry. With a population of just over 5,000, Auburn feels like a bedroom community with a hometown atmosphere. Auburn is home to Massabesic Lake, located in the middle of town and site of the Auburn Day Duck Race (pictured). The Lake provides residents and visitors with scenic views, and a taste of the defining character of NH, all while having access to NH-101 and I-93.



Photo: Auburn Historical Association, Facebook

Like many towns in the SNHPC Region, Auburn’s population is heavily concentrated in older adults. According to the 2010 Census, the majority of Auburn’s population sits between the ages of 40 to 60 years old, with 20 to 34 year olds making up only 12% of the population. As with many other communities across the state, the population of senior residents will grow in the coming years. For communities such as Auburn, finding ways to meet the needs of aging residents will require innovative plans, programs, and services.



Auburn has a higher ratio of children age 5-14 and residents age 40-69 than the regional average; however, the millennial population shrinks considerably relative to its neighbors. This decline in millennials could be from a number of factors, such as lack of housing choice, affordability, or employment options.

Community Assessment: March 24, 2017

Town staff, residents, and local organizations came to discuss recreation, transportation, housing, and economic development—about 25 people total.



What is the community doing well?

- Auburn accomplishes much with limited resources.
- Townwide volunteer participation is high across all ages.
- Auburn Village Crier – newsletter is a great example of one-stop shop for community, business, and resident info.
- Partnerships are strong in the community.



Where is there room for improvement?

- There are multiple facilities Auburn residents depend on that they must go to other towns for—groceries, gyms, coffee shops, and places for gathering; some residents would like such facilities in town.
- More venues – the library, for instance, could use more meeting space.
- A volunteer coordinator to help match willing volunteers with various community needs/events.



Transportation & Connections

Highlights:

- When asked about transportation access, all residents agreed, “If you don’t drive a car, you can’t live in Auburn.”
- Available Transportation: volunteer, or private rideshare only (such as Lyft or Uber)
- Community walkability: rated 1 out of 10 by participants (1 being the worst or lowest score, 10 the best or highest score).

Assets (in no particular order):

- Proximity to NH Route 101 and Interstate 93
- Rockingham Trail and Massabesic trails
- Close proximity to Manchester Regional Airport (11 miles)

Barriers/Opportunities (in no particular order):

- There is no fixed route transit available and lack of organized volunteers services.
- Auburn must work with NHDOT to improve walkability of roadways, especially major connectors such as NH Route 121.
- Insufficient road capacity during peak travel times has hurt businesses
- Lack of sidewalk facilities and connectivity threatens pedestrian safety
- Developing a connected trail network, especially around Massabesic Lake, would help connect neighborhoods.

Basic Data:



Mi. of town roads

70



WalkScore

28 of 100

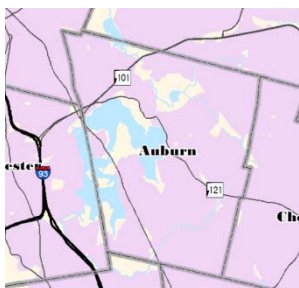


Transit available?

None



Nearest Highway
NH Route 101



Access to Internet:

Broadband Coverage:

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

Highlights

- Existing housing in Auburn is primarily single-family; however, the zoning code allows for duplexes, conversions, manufactured housing, boarding homes, and accessory dwelling units.
- Single-family homes are geared toward medium- to high-income families.
- A 2016 citizens' petition rescinded the zoning allowance to create open-space/cluster subdivisions, further reducing potential diversity in housing.
- Auburn offers multiple allowances for property tax relief.
- There is an affordable housing requirement for multi-family and senior housing.

Assets(in no particular order):

- A variety of cozy neighborhoods make Auburn attractive to live.
- Proximity to Manchester employment is a benefit.
- Auburn still has space to grow.



"Because of Massabesic Lake, it feels like there are seven communities that make up the town, and they're not connected. There's a lot of division."

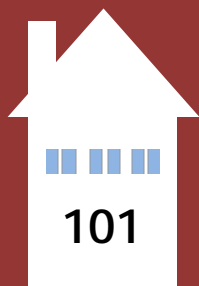
-Auburn Resident

Barriers/Opportunities(in no particular order):

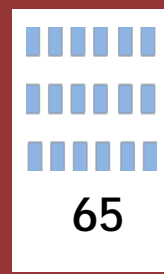
- Two-acre minimum zoning presents challenges.
- More flexibility in zoning; without open space subdivisions, Auburn's ability to meet housing demand could be challenging.
- Revisiting zoning allowances could help existing and future neighborhoods create more diverse housing.
- Lack of affordable housing, especially for first-time homebuyers and seniors wanting to downsize.



Single Family Units



*Two to Four Units
in Structure*



*Five or more Units
in Structure*



*Mobile Homes and
Other Housing Units*



Recreation & Engagement

Highlights:

- Massabesic trails and lake are very popular for outdoor activities, including hiking, biking, kayaking, and other boating.
- Auburn Historical Association Auburn Day and Duck Race: All-day celebration of Auburn, 3,000 participants, and hundreds of volunteers annually.
- Griffin Free Public Library's July book sale at Auburn Village School fills the gym and features volunteers of all ages.

Assets (in no particular order):

- Parks and recreation hosts senior dinners, BBQ's, concerts, and senior trips.
- Town Depts: there are multiple programs, especially among Parks & Rec, Fire, and PD.
- Massabesic Lake and its encompassing trail network
- Griffin Free Public Library: Knitting/crocheting club; large print collection geared toward seniors; tried a homebound program for seniors (programming is limited due to lack of space). Librarians do 1-on-1 training with seniors on how to use the Internet, computers, and e-books. Library has had some challenges reaching out to millennials in past, but has ramped up its social media outreach. Of social media outlets, Instagram has been the most popular among Auburn's young people.
- Auburn Historical Association: Multiple events, guest speakers, year-round
- Massabesic Audubon Center
- Massabesic Yacht Club
- Local Churches: St. Peter Roman Catholic, Fairhaven Baptist, First Assembly of God; Longmeadow Congregational hosts a delicious breakfast for seniors (pictured)
- Auburn Village School
- Auburn Village Crier (town newsletter – mailed and posted on the town web site); a one-stop shop for finding info for community, business, and residents

Barriers/Opportunities (in no particular order):

- A senior center is highly desired—the historical society has been working since 2009 to raise funds to adapt their museum into such a space
- Lack of trails along roads and ability for pedestrians to safely share the roads with cars
- Newspapers are still a popular way to learn information about what's happening in the community, but several residents exclaimed they do not want to pay for a Union Leader subscription, and they do not have a computer to access content online.
- The library is only 1,900 square feet, offering insufficient space to meet demand.





Business & Economic Development

Highlights:

- Many town businesses donate time or their services at a reduced rate to the Town (i.e. local electrician replacing lights at ball fields). Some of these businesses include Babb Motors and Dunkin Donuts. All hair salons offer senior discounts.
- Visiting Angels provide many services for seniors.



Assets:

- Waste Management is in Auburn—residents do not have to pay for trash since they are already in the town.
- New businesses at Wellington Commerce Park: this is zoned for commercial and light industrial, and is well-connected to the state’s highway network. Wellington Commerce Park features diverse employers that add to Auburn’s tax base, and it will soon feature an ambulatory center to benefit residents.
- The Auburn Audubon Society has a nature café; however, it does not serve coffee.

Barriers/Opportunities:

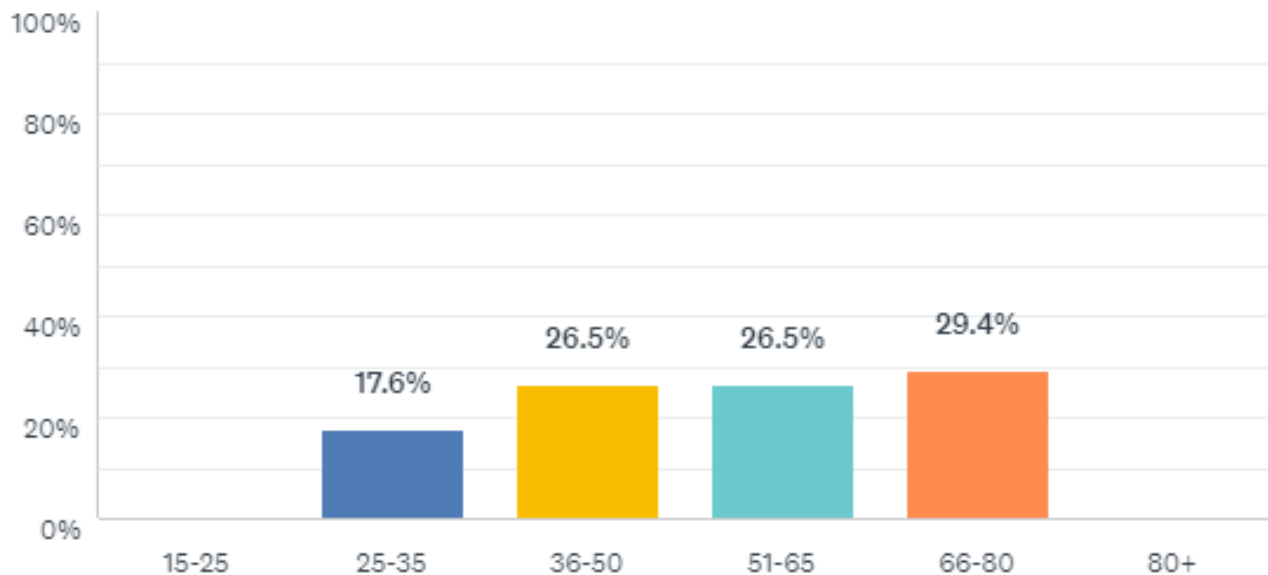
- Lack of water, sewer, and gas is an obstacle to business growth in some areas.
- There is no central business location.
- Multi-generational businesses demanded among millennials include a sports club, small grocery store, and places to meet and hang out such as coffee houses or even a community center.



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 34 from Auburn.

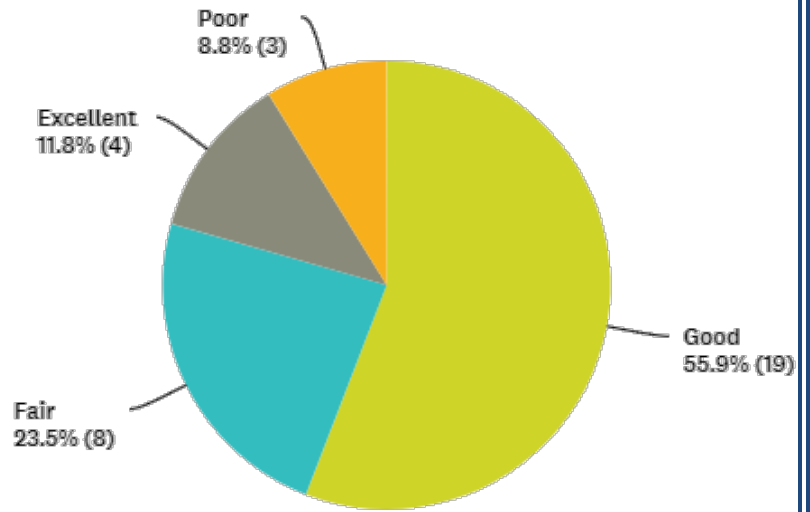
What is your age?



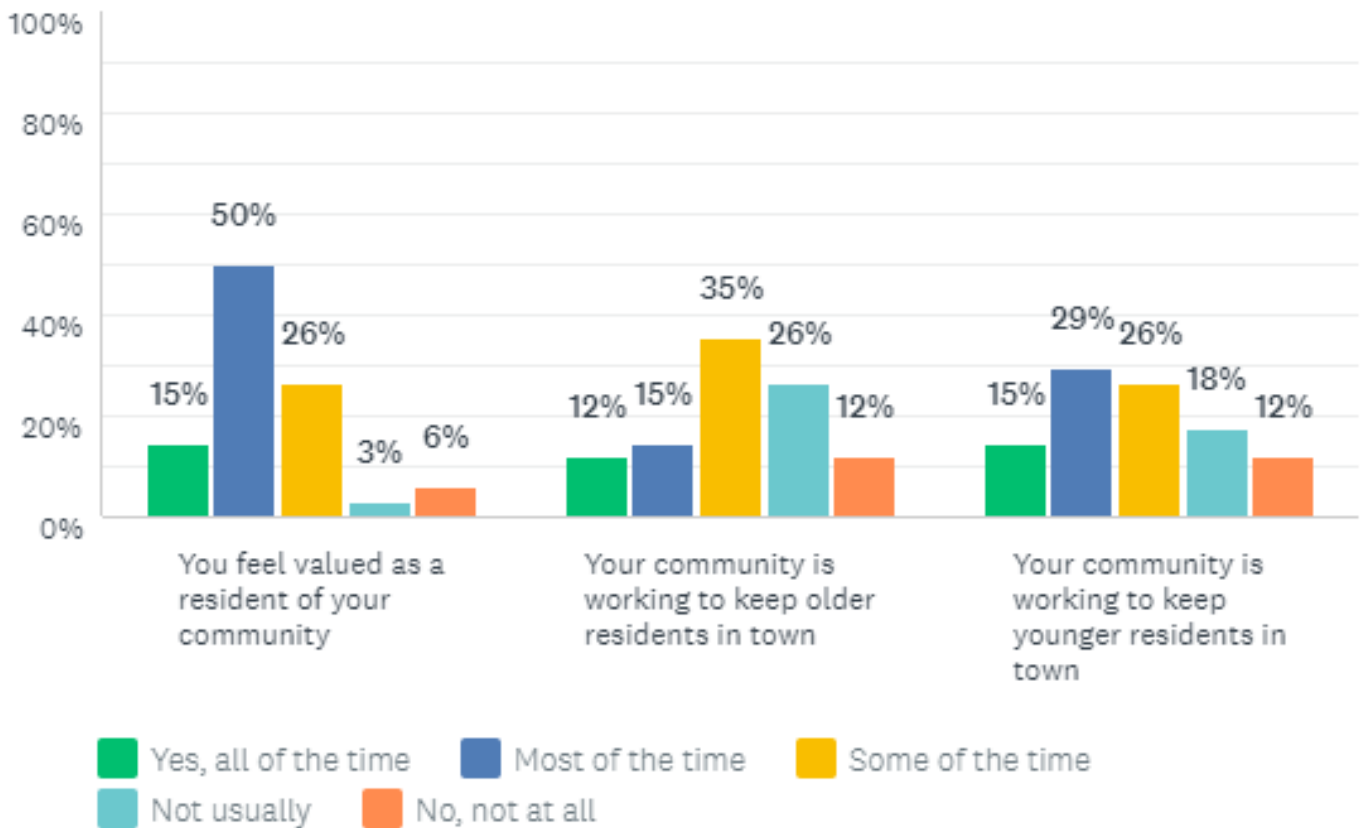
The response rates from residents aged 36-50, 51-65, and 66-80 were pretty consistent; however, there were no responses from residents aged 15-25 or 80+. This differed considerably from the regional response rates to the survey, except for millennials aged 25-35—this was slightly above the regional response rate among people from the same cohort.

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

Slightly more than two thirds (67.7%) of residents surveyed agree Auburn is a good or excellent place to live as residents age. This was above average relative to other communities in the region.

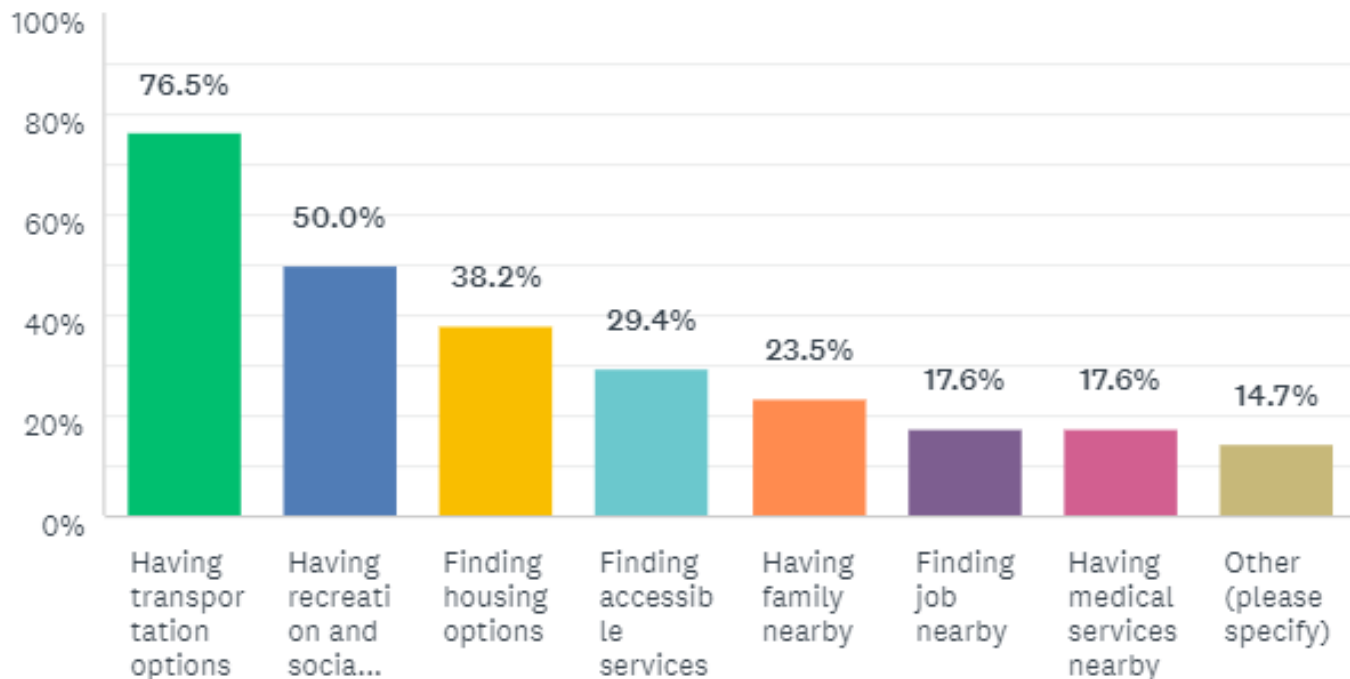


Community Value



Nearly 2 out of 3 Auburn residents surveyed (73%) feel valued as a resident all or most of the time. Based on survey respondents, Auburn residents think the community is doing more to keep millennial residents in town than older residents.

What concerns you the most about aging in your community?



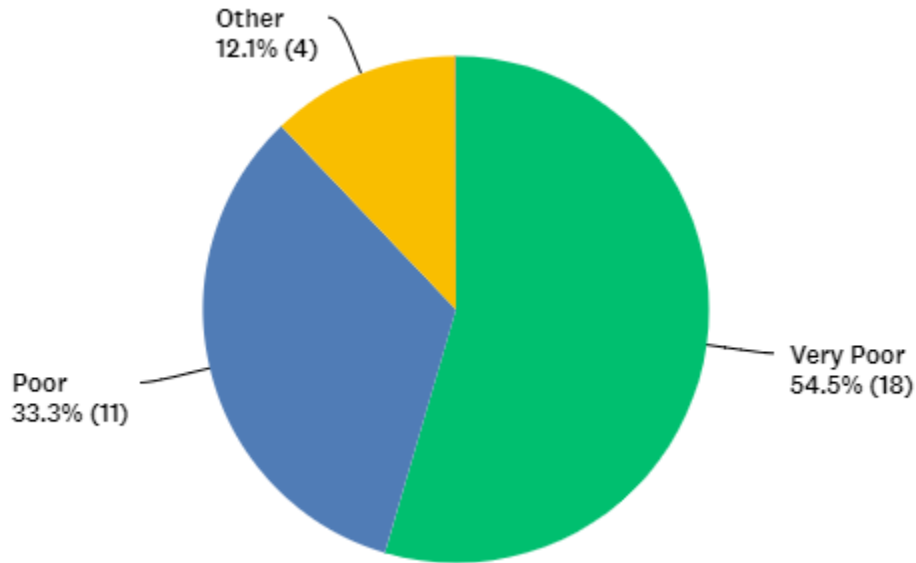
Having transportation options was by far the greatest concern about aging among Auburn survey respondents. With the remarkably limited transportation options, this is noteworthy. Having recreation and social engagement opportunities and finding housing options were the next biggest concerns. Residents noted dependence on outside municipalities for some recreation and social engagement options (especially millennials), and recent changes in the town's zoning code for open space subdivisions could further limit the housing options available in Auburn.

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

Affordable Housing Family **School Education Tax**
Support **Town**

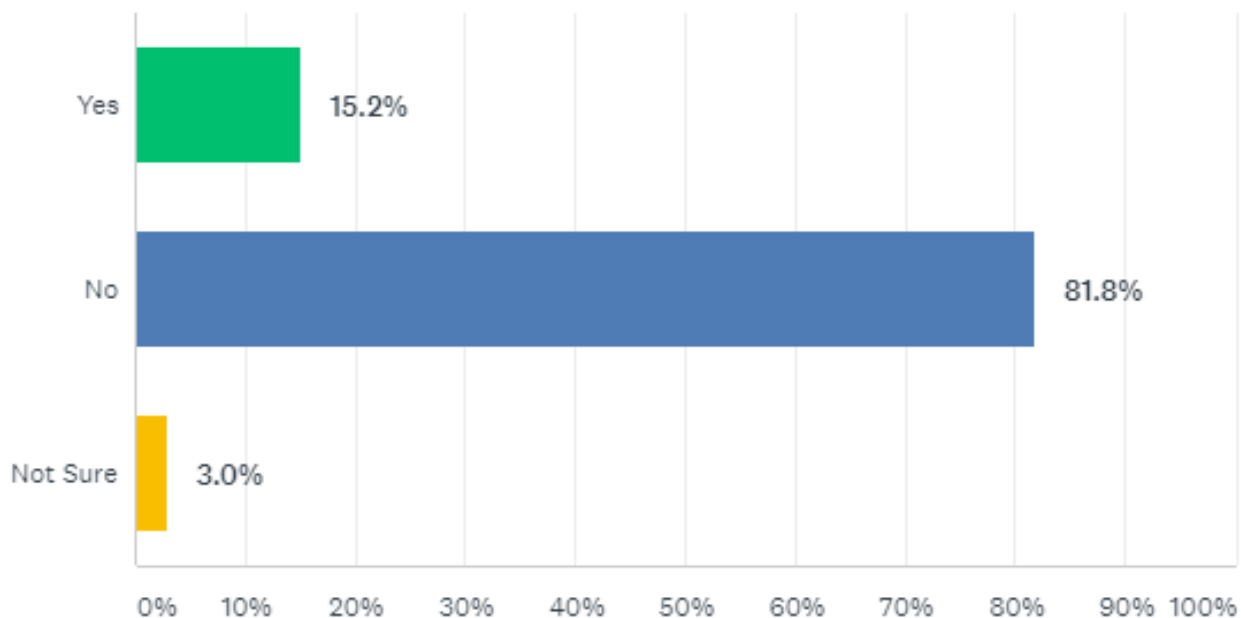
The most important change surveyed Auburn residents claimed would enable them to stay in their communities were taxes, school/education, and affordable housing options. Town residents were voting on a bond measure about funding improvements to the Auburn Village School during the time the survey was administered.

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



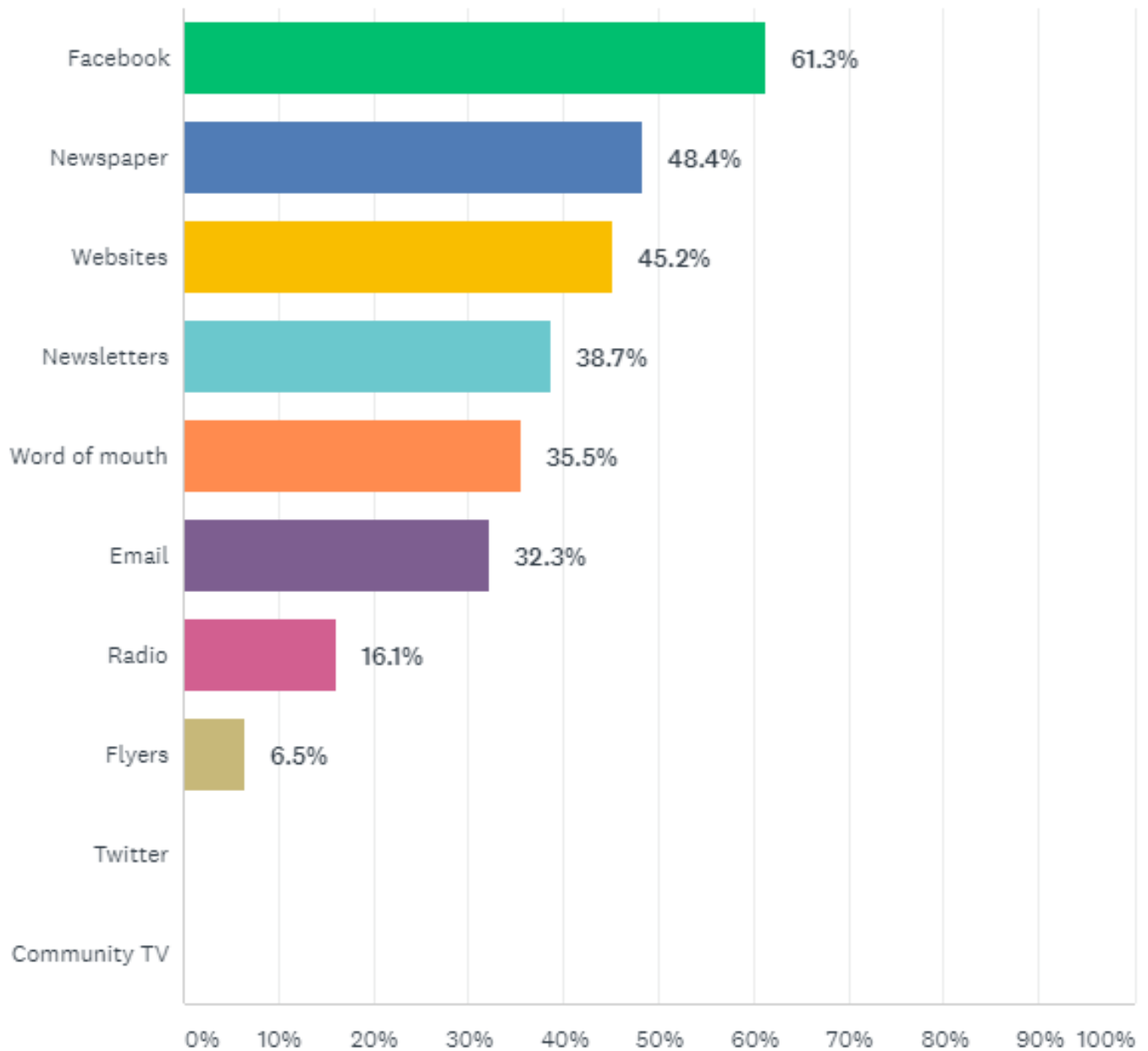
In terms of transportation options, not a single resident answered excellent, good, or average. Nearly 90% of Auburn residents responded "poor" or "very poor", which was higher than most other SNHPC communities. Without any multi-modal infrastructure, a lot of residents agree more can be done to improve transportation.

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



An overwhelming majority of residents agreed there are no appealing alternatives for Auburn residents wanting to move into a first home/unit or into a smaller home/unit.

How do you find information about community services and events?



Facebook, newspapers, and websites proved to be the top 3 methods of finding information about community services/events, followed by newsletters and word of mouth. Given that such a substantial number of respondents from Auburn learn about events through Facebook, it may be a good idea for community stakeholders to communicate more through that medium in the future—especially if they are not presently doing so.



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

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Bill Herman | Denise Royce |
| Carrie Rouleau-Cote | |

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

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| Nate Miller | Amy Kizak |
| David Preece | Linda Moore-O’Brien |

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