



Hampstead Age Friendly Community Assessment



October 2022

Prepared for the Town of Hampstead by Rockingham Planning Commission with funding from the Point32 Health Foundation and AARP New Hampshire



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Introduction	2
What does it mean to be Age Friendly?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Community Data Snapshot.....	3
Housing	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Transportation	4
Recreation & Social Participation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Buildings & Outdoor Spaces.....	5
Respect and Social Inclusion	5
Work and Civic Engagement	6
Communication and Information	6
Health and Nutrition Services	7
Hampstead Age Friendly Communities Project.....	8
Hampstead Steering Committee.....	8
Assessment Process	8
Community Survey.....	8
Key Themes from Community Assessment	9
KEY THEME—Recreation & Social Engagement Opportunities	10
KEY THEME—Transportation Options & Support Services	12
KEY THEME—Housing Options	Error! Bookmark not defined.
KEY THEME—Taxes & Senior Services	Error! Bookmark not defined.
KEY THEME—Communication & Information Flow	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion and Next Steps	8
Step 1—Conduct an inventory of Hampstead’s existing resources.....	19
Step 2—Analyze Hampstead’s existing resources.	19
Step 3—Set Goals.....	20
Step 4—Implement A first project.....	20
Acknowledgements.....	20
Appendices.....	A-1

Introduction

New Hampshire and Rockingham County are aging. According to the 2020 Census, New Hampshire is the second oldest state in the union, behind only Maine. Between 2015 and 2040 the population aged 65 and over in Rockingham County is projected to nearly double from 48,276 to 93,319. Residents age 65 and over will increase from 19 percent of the population in 2020 to over 28 percent by 2040. This will have impacts for workforce, housing, transportation, economic vitality and community services.

This trend applies in Hampstead as well. In 2010 the Census showed 12.6 percent of Hampstead residents were aged 65 or older. Per the 2020 Census this share of residents age 65 and up has grown to 19.9 percent of the town's population (1711 older adults out of a total population of 8,607).

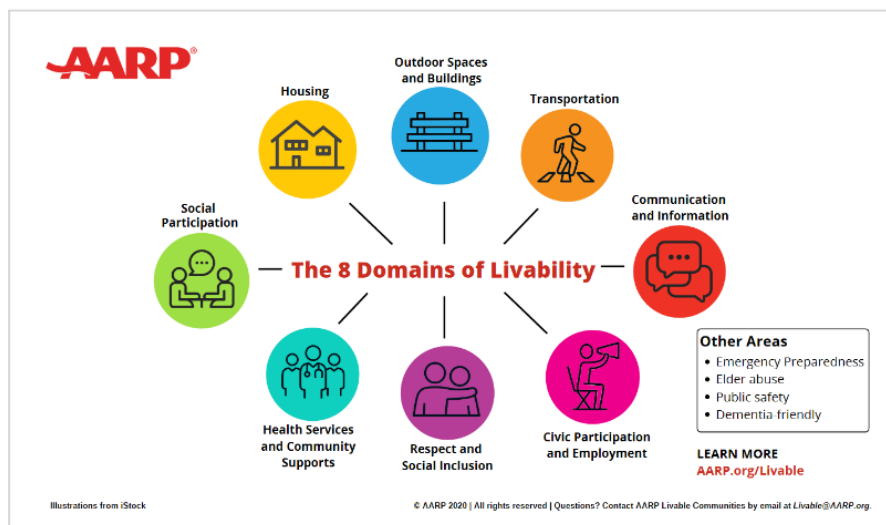
The Age Friendly Community Assessment that Hampstead undertook during 2022, in partnership with Rockingham Planning Commission and the Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels Program, is an effort to assess the needs and desires of this growing older adult population, and identify how the Town can best respond to those needs now and into the future.

The town has an opportunity currently to prepare for the needs of this growing older adult population in terms of support services, emergency services, recreational programs, housing and improving how information flows to residents. This said, it's important to see an aging population not just as a source of needs, but also as a resource - a population with knowledge, skills, and often available time to help the community.

What does it mean to be Age Friendly?

The term "Age Friendly Community" was coined by AARP to describe communities that allow residents to thrive at every age and every stage of life. Residents of all ages benefit from walkable neighborhoods, a variety of transportation options, access to services, opportunities for social activities, and housing options that are affordable and adaptable. Age Friendly Communities foster economic growth, improve public health, and enhance quality of life for all residents.

Figure 1: AARP Eight Domains of Age Friendly Communities



The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has identified eight characteristics or “domains” of Age Friendly Communities: transportation, housing, social participation, outdoor spaces and buildings, respect and social inclusion, work and civic engagement, communication and information, and health and nutrition services. Each of these elements impacts residents’ ability to thrive as they age in place in their community.

Community Data Snapshot

Each of AARP’s eight domains was considered as part of the Community Assessment, and a selection of local metrics related to each is presented below. Data are drawn from a range of sources, including the Hampstead Age Friendly Community Survey, Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, the [New Hampshire Health Aging Data Report](#) (2019), and other sources as noted.



General Demographics & Economics

Hampstead, with its 2020 population of 8,607, is the seventh largest community in the Rockingham Planning Commission region and tenth largest in Rockingham County. This said the community has a largely rural feel with a traditional New England village center, and commercial activity located primarily away from the village center along NH Route NH111 and to a lesser extent NH Route 121.

Residents age 65 and over make up an estimated 19.7% of Hampstead’s population in 2020. This includes 11.5% age 65-74, 7.4 percent age 75-84, and 0.8 percent age 85 and over. The large proportion in the 65-74 cohort reflects the bump of the baby boom generation which currently ranges in age from 58 to 76 years.

Hampstead’s population is predominantly white and non-Hispanic (95.6%), with 1.6% of the population identifying as Hispanic, 1.2% identifying as Asian, 0.4% Black or African American, and 1.6% identifying with two or more races. (2020 Census)

An estimated 4.3% of Hampstead’s total population has income below the poverty line, and this figure increases slightly to 5.7% for the population age 65 and over (ACS 2020). Among Hampstead households headed by older adults age 65 and over, an estimated 20.2% have an household income below \$20,000/year; 33% have household income between \$20,000-\$49,000, and 47% have household income of \$50,000 or greater.



Housing

AARP surveys consistently find that most older adults want to remain in their current home or community for as long as possible. Survey data from this project indicates that Hampstead residents also feel strongly about remaining in town in their own homes. This is possible if a community has housing options suitable for a variety of incomes and ages, or if homes are designed or modified for

aging in-place. Municipalities can encourage development patterns that locate housing in close proximity to services and amenities that make it easier for older adults to live independently.

Hampstead Snapshot

- Percent of residents age 60+ who own their home: 90.3% (state average 79.9%)
- Percent of residents age 60+ who have a mortgage on their home: 50.9% (State average 35.3%)
- Percent of homeowners age 65+ spending >35% of income on housing: 2.1%
- Percent of renters age 65+ spending >35% of income on housing: 29.3%
- Town has a senior tax exemption policy: Yes
- Town allows accessory dwelling units (in-law apartments): Attached Only
- Age Restricted Housing Developments: 2 manufactured housing developments, 3 apartment complexes and 4 condominium developments



Transportation

AARP estimates that nationally 1 in 5 American age 65 and over don't drive. This means that having options to get around other than driving yourself is important. Once an older residents stops driving, access to community transportation can mean the difference between living independently and needing to enter long term care. In communities where residential areas are within walking and biking distance of destinations like schools, libraries, town hall, parks or businesses, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and designated bike lanes enhance safety for all residents. Public transportation options like fixed route bus services are an important option in communities that have the density to make them efficient, but may not be practical in smaller, less densely populated communities such as Hampstead. Van services, volunteer driver programs, taxis, and family and friends play a bigger role in most smaller New Hampshire communities. Affordability is as important as the availability of these transportation services and age friendly communities ensure accessibility across all income levels.

Hampstead Snapshot

- Hampstead residents have access to transportation services from three different providers: CART, Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels (RNMOW), and Community Caregivers of Greater Derry. Each provides somewhat different service, and each has significant availability constraints.
- Walk Score: This score estimates the accessibility of community facilities by safe, low stress pedestrian facilities (sidewalks, trails). Hampstead's Walk Score is 22 out of 100
- Bike Score: This score estimates the accessibility of community facilities by safe, low stress bicycle routes (road shoulders, bike paths, trails). Hampstead's Bike Score is 28 out of 100



Recreation & Social Participation

Opportunities for accessible, affordable, and enjoyable social activities help community members to combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. Social isolation is a significant contributor to poor health, including dementia, and early mortality. Special attention should be given to ensure that recreation activities are accessible for older adults living on low incomes or with long-term limiting health conditions.

Hampstead Snapshot

- Percent of survey respondents indicating they have contact with family, friends or neighbors with whom they don't live at least several times per week: 85%
- Percentage of survey respondents noting they use the public library: 74%
- Percentage of survey respondents that utilize restaurants, coffee shops and stores: 91%
- Percentage of respondents indicating social isolation was a challenge during the covid19 pandemic: 52%
- Voter participation rate in 2018 US midterm election: 61%



Buildings & Outdoor Spaces

People need places to gather – indoors and out. It is important that these spaces, both indoors and out, are accessible to everyone. This can include anything from providing seating, highly-visible signage, and wide trails in green spaces; offering closed captioning and assisted listening devices at meetings; to equipping public buildings with elevators, zero-step entrances, and railings along staircases. While most public buildings like town halls and public libraries have been made wheelchair accessible in the years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1996, sometimes this isn't the case with outdoor facilities like parks and trails.

Hampstead Snapshot

- Percent of survey respondents rating ease of access to Town Facilities Ratings Good or Excellent: 66% (*Age Friendly Community Survey, 2022*)
- Percent of survey respondents rating ease of access at Town Facilities Ratings Good or Excellent: 63% (*Age Friendly Community Survey, 2022*)



Respect & Social Inclusion

Everyone in the community should feel valued and able to find a sense of belonging where they live. Opportunities such as intergenerational programs that allow community members to learn from

one another and honor what each person has to offer are great ways to promote respect and social inclusion.

Hampstead Snapshot

- Percent of survey respondents who Agree or Strongly Agree with statement “My Community is Welcoming to All People”: 53% (41% Neutral, 7% Disagree or Strongly Disagree)

Figure 2: Percent of survey respondents who feel accepted in Hampstead with regard to:

	Yes	Somewhat	No	N/A
Spirituality or religious affiliation	59%	12%	3%	26%
Political views	34%	35%	14%	18%
Age	64%	25%	5%	6%
Sexuality	66%	6%	1%	27%
Gender Identity	64%	4%	1%	31%
Race and ethnicity	72%	5%	2%	21%
Economic status	68%	14%	3%	15%



Work & Civic Engagement

An age friendly community encourages older people to be actively engaged in community life and has opportunities for residents to work for pay or volunteer their skills. A growing pool of retirees represents an opportunity for the community (the town itself and non-profit organizations that serve the town) to engage more residents in volunteer activities.

Hampstead Snapshot

	Hampstead	Rockingham County	New Hampshire
Total Population Age 65+	1711	55,003	245,142
Worked in the past 12 months:	21.6%	28.8%	26.8%
Worked 35+ Hours/Week	11.9%	13.4%	12.5%
Worked 15-34 Hours/Week	6.1%	15.3%	9.8%
Worked 1-14 Hours/Week	3.6%	5.2%	4.5%



Communication & Information

Outreach to older adults should be clear, well-coordinated among partner entities, and disseminated across a variety of methods to ensure it reaches all residents. Many older adults use the internet, but certainly not all, so a town can't rely solely on email, websites and social media for getting information out to older residents.

Hampstead Snapshot

- Percent of residents age 60+ who used the internet in the past month: 80.1%
- Percent of survey respondents who noted no internet-based information sources: 20%
- Percent of survey respondents noting "Not Aware of Social Opportunities that Interest Me": 39%
- Town emergency services has list of contacts for frail or homebound seniors: Yes



Health & Nutrition Services

Assistance and care should be available close to where older adults live and affordable to all income levels. Likewise, age friendly communities provide support and services to family caregivers, who are often unprepared for the role, so that they can make informed decisions. Here Hampstead residents benefit from the work of multiple regional organization such as Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels for nutrition services, Rockingham Visiting Nurses Association (VNA), and Rockingham ServiceLink, a resource and referral program established to provide information and guidance for older adults and family caregivers.

Hampstead Snapshot

- Percent of Hampstead residents age 60+ received food stamps past year = 2.1%
- Percent 60+ with an annual physical exam/check-up in past year: 87.9%
- Percent 60+ with an annual dental exam: 80.9%
- Percent Medicare managed care enrollees: 12.2% vs. 7.9% statewide
- Percent dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid: 3.8% vs. 7.5% statewide
- Percent 60+ with a regular doctor: 97.2% vs. 95.8% statewide
- Percent 60+ who didn't see a doctor when needed due to cost: 2.7% vs. 5.4% statewide
- Percent age 65+ with depression: 27.3% vs. 28.8% statewide
- Percent age 65+ with Alzheimer's disease or dementia: 8.7% vs. 12.0% statewide

Hampstead Age Friendly Community Project

In 2021, the Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels Program (RNMOW) and Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) were awarded a two-year grant from Point32 Health (formerly the [Tufts Health Plan Foundation](#)) to work with an array of partners and assist communities in the Rockingham region in becoming more Age Friendly. Age Friendly communities enable residents to thrive at every age and every stage of life, as policies and initiatives that help older residents tend to make communities more livable for all ages. The project draws on a national framework developed by [AARP](#) that has been used widely in New Hampshire in recent years. [AARP New Hampshire](#) is also a collaborating sponsor of the project. Rockingham Planning Commission worked with the following six communities in 2022 to conduct Age Friendly Community Assessments—Exeter, Fremont, Hampstead, Hampton, Portsmouth, and Stratham. Additional assessments and two local pilot implementation projects will be completed in year two of the project in 2023.

Hampstead’s Age Friendly Communities Steering Committee

The first step in Hampstead’s Age Friendly Community Assessment was to establish a local steering committee made up of town officials, staff, and residents. Members of Hampstead’s local committee include:

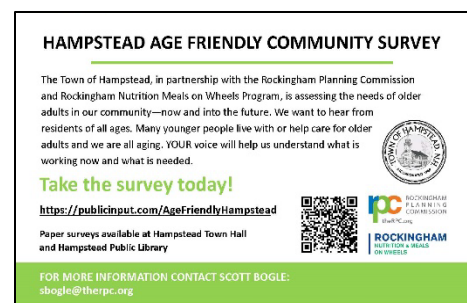
- Joe Guthrie, Hampstead Select Board
- Tina Harrington, Finance Director & Selectmen’s Clerk
- Al Davis, Commissioner to the Rockingham Planning Commission
- Jaye DiMando, Hampstead Senior Services Coordinator
- Samantha Borbone, Hampstead Resident and Home Health business owner

Assessment Process

Data for Hampstead’s Age Friendly Community was gathered through a community-wide survey, input from the Steering Committee, the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and the 2020 Decennial Census, non-profit service providers and other sources. The community survey was the largest of these input efforts.

Community Survey

Hampstead’s Age Friendly Community Survey was adapted from a national model developed by AARP. The survey includes questions related to each of the AARP eight dimensions of Age Friendly Communities, including transportation, housing, social engagement, outdoor spaces and buildings, work and civic engagement, respect and social inclusion, health and nutrition services and information flow. The core of the forty-question survey was consistent across the six assessment communities, while each community had an opportunity to add questions of local importance. The survey was primarily circulated online and online response encouraged, while paper copies were made available at Town Hall, Hampstead Public Library and several other locations in town.



HAMPSTEAD AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Town of Hampstead, in partnership with the Rockingham Planning Commission and Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels Program, is assessing the needs of older adults in our community—now and into the future. We want to hear from residents of all ages. Many younger people live with or help care for older adults and we are all aging. YOUR voice will help us understand what is working now and what is needed.

Take the survey today!

<https://publicinput.com/AgeFriendlyHampstead>

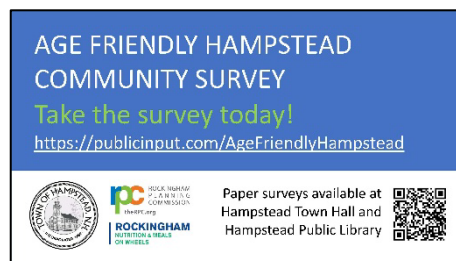
Paper surveys available at Hampstead Town Hall and Hampstead Public Library

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT SCOTT BOGLE:
sbogle@therpc.org

The flyer includes the Town of Hampstead seal, the Rockingham Planning Commission logo, and a QR code.

The survey was promoted with a range of methods including:

- Announcements at Select Board and Planning Board meetings
- Promotion on the Town website
- Promotion on local cable Channel 17
- Promotion at the Recreation Department’s senior drop-in events
- Flyers at Town Hall, Public Library, The Zone Gym.
- Postings on the unofficial town Facebook page Hampstead Community Connection
- Announcements and flyer distribution at local churches



The survey was fielded on February 23, 2022 and remained open until July 15, 2022. A total of 231 responses were received in Hampstead and 1,497 responses across the six assessment communities.

Certain questions from the survey are addressed in this summary report to illustrate key themes that emerged, while full results are included as **Appendix A**.

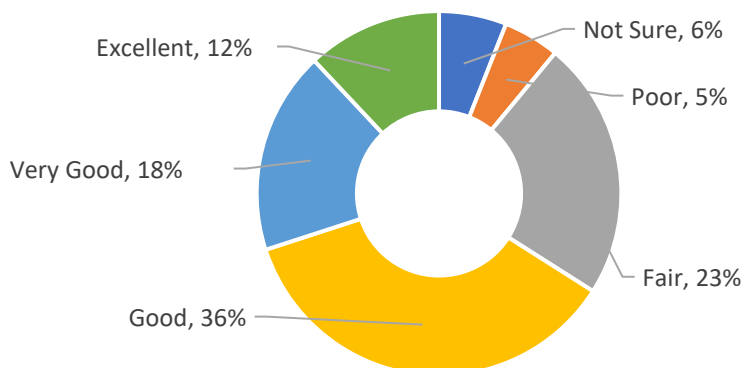
The project Steering Committee met seven times between February and November 2022 to refine the regional survey for use in Hampstead, plan survey distribution and promotion, conduct a Strengths/Weaknesses/ Opportunities/ Threats (SWOT) analysis regarding aging in Hampstead, review preliminary and final survey data and analysis, review the draft assessment report and provide feedback, and review the final Assessment Report.

Key Themes from Community Assessment

On the whole the Community Survey found that residents see Hampstead as a good place to live as an older adult, with many reasons to remain in town and age in place. The survey also highlighted opportunities for improvement to make Hampstead an even better place to grow up and grow old.

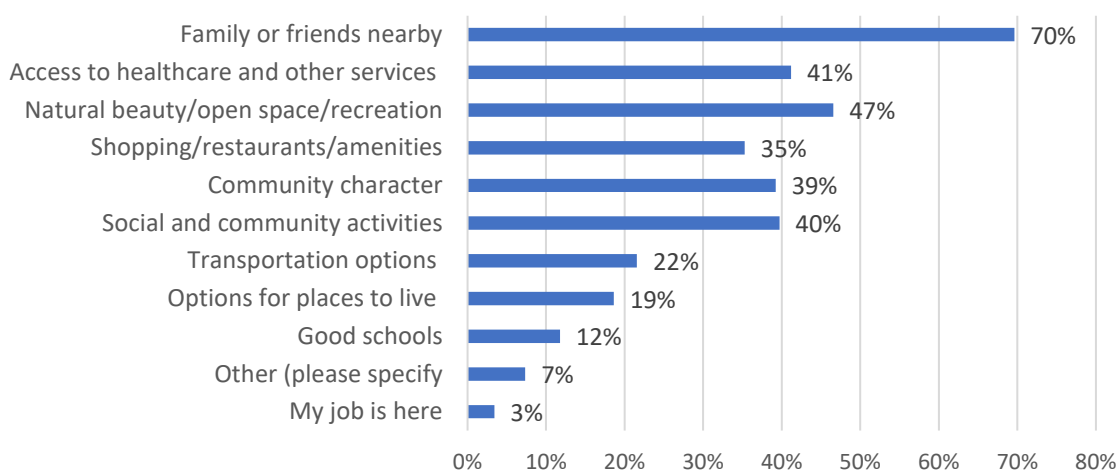
The survey started by asking respondents how they would rate Hampstead as a place for people to live as they age. Responses of Good, Very Good and Excellent made up 66% of the survey sample.

Figure 3: Question 3 – How would you rate your town as a place for people to live as older adults?



The survey also asked about aspects of living in Hampstead that residents particularly valued and would lead them to remain in Hampstead as they age. Consistent with the other six survey communities, the most common response here was having family or friends nearby, cited by 70% of Hampstead survey takers. This was slightly higher than the regional average of 68% for this response. Next most frequently cited was Natural Beauty/Open Space/Recreation at 47%. This compares to a regional average of 55% selecting this reason. The third most frequently cited reason to remain in town was Access to Healthcare and Other Services, chosen by 41% of Hampstead respondents and 57% of the regional sample.

Figure 4: Question 6 - Thinking about the future, which of the following reasons would likely keep you in your current town as you reach your 70s, 80s and beyond?



Clearly Hampstead residents value the social connections, natural amenities and other aspects of living in town, and 61% of respondents indicated it was Extremely Important or Very Important to remain in Hampstead as they aged. An additional 24% noted it was Somewhat Important to them. Together with this appreciation for the community and the lives they have built here, a number of key themes also emerged regarding ways in which conditions for aging in place in Hampstead could be improved. Five of these are described on the following pages.

Key Theme – Recreational & Social Engagement Opportunities

What We Heard

Hampstead offers a range of activities for older residents through the Public Library and the Recreation Department. Hampstead Public Library offers chair yoga, multiple reading groups, a men’s group, and technology assistance either in groups or one on one for older residents getting up to speed with new devices or software. The Recreation Program offers a senior dinner during the winter, a senior cookout in the summer, and periodic senior drop-in days at the historic Hampstead Meeting House. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the drop-in days were held once per week. These have been restarted on a once per month basis during 2022 and participation is recovering. The Recreation Program also offers a slate of senior trips through the year which are very popular. These trips were suspended during the height of the COVID pandemic but resumed during 2022.

The town offers a range of passive recreation opportunities available to residents of all ages, including the trail network at the town forest and canoeing and kayaking at Sunset Lake. Prior to COVID the Hampstead public schools put on additional performances of concerts and plays for seniors, opening final dress rehearsals to seniors and scheduling during the day rather than in the evening to make them easier for older residents to attend.

Beyond recreational activities offered by the town, other opportunities exist in surrounding communities. The Vic Geary Senior Center in Plaistow offers luncheons and other activities, and the Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels Program provides transportation for Hampstead residents to participate. Exeter Adult Education offers foreign language classes and other learning opportunities. Compiling, promoting and keeping up to date a centralized directory of recreation programs and support services for older adults offered both in Hampstead and surrounding communities is a need.

A point that came up repeatedly in the survey (third most frequent in the comments section after transportation and taxes) was desire for a community center. Among other functions this could provide a dedicated space for older residents to gather and visit, play games, participate in crafts, and host speakers and other learning opportunities. Some survey respondents suggested dancing.

“Hampstead is a wonderful town to live in. Town employees are always helpful. We do need a place that we can come together, regardless of age. We do have activities for school age kids, but nothing for older residents to come together...” – Hampstead resident comment on survey

A challenge brought up in discussion within the Steering Committee is the increasing difficulty of lining up volunteers to help organize and lead activities of this sort. In Hampstead as in most small New Hampshire towns much has traditionally been done with volunteers, but finding and retaining volunteers has become more challenging. Possible reasons include fewer households with just one full time worker such that a stay at home spouse has time to volunteer; more residents commuting long distances to jobs and therefore having less time to volunteer; older residents remaining in the workforce longer; and residents of new age restricted 55+ housing developments taking time to get connected within the community and find both social opportunities and ways to plug in and help.

“There is very little recreation offered in town for the seniors. We have to travel out of town to have our own place to socialize or sit down for a senior meal..” – Hampstead resident comment on survey

Opportunities for Improvement

- Community Center - Pursue establishment of a community center with offerings for residents of all ages, including dedicated space for senior social activities and programs. The Select Board has already established a committee to evaluate options for such a facility, whether a modification to the old town gymnasium or another site.

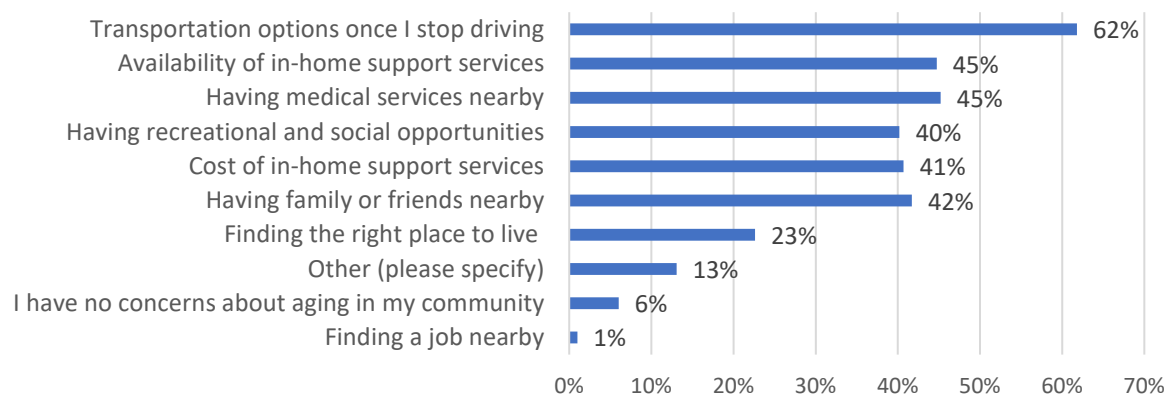
- Nonprofit Council on Aging - Pursue establishment of a Hampstead Council on Aging that can serve as local champion for addressing the range of recreational needs and other opportunities for older residents identified through the Age Friendly Community Assessment and the most recent Master Plan update. Such a Council could itself organize and sponsor activities, and could be structured as a 501c3 non-profit organization and develop supplemental private funding to support local services for Hampstead seniors.
- Look to Offerings in Neighboring Towns - Continue communication with town staff involved with senior services in nearby communities that has been established through the Regional Steering Committee for this project. Each town in the region has experimented with various recreation programs for older residents and has experience to share regarding what has worked well and what has not. Perhaps active outdoor programs such as senior walking and hiking groups such as Stratham and Hampton offer would find interest in Hampstead. Pickleball has become an exceptionally popular senior recreation offering in Exeter, Hampton and Stratham, and could be made available in Hampstead with painting and restriping one of the tennis courts behind Veteran’s Gymnasium. More services carry with them expenses, but other small towns have often found ways to limit taxpayer expense for activities through grants, use of volunteers, and user registration fees that cover activity costs.

Key Theme – Transportation & Other Support Services

What We Heard

The most frequent concern that survey respondents cited regarding remaining in Hampstead as they age was having transportation options once they are no longer able to drive (See Figure 4). This was consistently the top concern across all six assessment communities, cited by an average of 63% of survey respondents across the region. While 99% of survey respondents noted that they currently drive their own vehicle for transportation, the need for better transportation options was also the most frequent topic mentioned in open ended comments on the survey.

Figure 5: Survey Question 7 – What concerns you the most about aging in your community?



Hampstead’s low-density development pattern means that most destinations in town, such as schools, sports fields, the public library, post office, town hall or businesses are not in close proximity to where

most people live, distances can feel too long for walking or bicycling. Aside from distance, traffic stress likely also makes walking or bicycling a challenge for many residents. Each of these major community destinations is located along one of the primary state highways through town (NH111 and NH121) with minimal shoulder and no sidewalk such that traffic stress is high for walking or bicycling.

Regarding public transit or community transportation, Hampstead is actually better situated than most towns in Rockingham County. There is no scheduled, fixed-route public transit service in town - this will likely never be practical given the low density development pattern. However Hampstead is served by three non-profit transportation providers – CART/MTA, Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels, and Community Caregivers of Greater Derry. Each serves somewhat different

- CART – Trips available M-F 8:00am-5:00pm to destinations in Hampstead, Salem, Derry, Londonderry, Chester, and certain medical centers in Manchester. Fare within core service area is \$1.50 each way. Fare to Manchester is \$3.00 each way. No trip purpose or age limitations.
- Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels – Trips available to senior luncheons and activities at the Vic Geary Senior Center in Plaistow Mon-Fri as well as for medical trips in Plaistow/Haverhill area. Shopping on Wednesdays and Bingo on Tue & Thu. No formal fare, but suggested donations of \$1.00 for meal site trips and \$3.00 for other trip types
- Community Caregivers of Greater Derry – Transportation and other services provided by volunteers. Trips available primarily for medical appointments. Fare free.

A challenge in using any of the three services is lead time needed to request a ride – typically 2-4 days as each agency has limited resources in terms of vehicles and drivers and covers multiple communities. Sometimes trip need can be anticipated this far in advance and sometimes it can't. Several towns in Rockingham County have sought to address this issue with senior taxi voucher programs that partially subsidize the cost of a cab for short notice trips. These cost more to the consumer than a ride on one of the non-profit providers, and are not being suggested as a replacement for other services, but can complement other options for unanticipated trip needs. More broadly, the frequency with which transportation came up as a major need may reflect a lack of information. Townspeople's lack of awareness of services already available was a consistent theme across all six communities.

“Once you stop driving, if you don't have somebody to drive you to your designated locations, you are very limited, especially if your medical provider is in Exeter or Nashua or Manchester. .”
– Hampstead resident comment on survey

Beyond transportation services, multiple survey respondents noted a need for in-home support services other than home health care – affordable “handyman” services for minor house projects, snow shoveling or yard maintenance. Often contractors are available to do this work, but at significant costs.

“Develop a service that provides in home services, unrelated to health care, so that as our strength and function deteriorates there are people who can be available to come into the home to help for a reasonable cost...and help keep people safe and independent.”
– Hampstead resident comment on survey

For some residents the cost of such assistance is a challenge, while for others with greater means the challenge is finding someone trustworthy. This concern came up in other communities as well, with potential solutions including: 1) organizing scouts, school athletic teams or youth service organizations to provide assistance like shoveling or yard cleanup as a fundraising activity; 2) organizing other retirees with skills to assist with minor in-home projects; and 3) developing a referral list for trustworthy and affordable contractors.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Improve Information on Existing Services - Work with CART/MTA and the new Regional Mobility Manager to expand outreach on available transportation services for seniors and others in Hampstead. In years past local outreach by the town's CART Board representative resulted in a significant increase in Hampstead ridership on CART. A first step can be adding information on CART/MTA to the Senior Resources page on the town website, and noting the transportation services offered by RNMOV and Community Caregivers. Additional outreach should include paper service brochures distributed widely around town in addition to internet information, and potentially one or more information sessions at the public library. If the town desires a specific connection to a destination not currently available, this should be brought up with CART/MTA and RNMOV to explore service adjustments.
- Expand Volunteer Driver Recruitment - Work with Community Caregivers of Greater Derry to recruit additional volunteer drivers from Hampstead. The most significant limiting factor for most volunteer driver programs statewide is recruiting and retaining drivers. The more drivers available from Hampstead, the greater the opportunity to respond to trip requests from Hampstead seniors.
- Evaluate Senior Taxi Voucher Program - Explore the potential for a senior taxi voucher program to complement the existing transportation services in town with an option for short notice trips or trips outside of the hours or service area of the three current programs.
- Facilitate Access to In-Home Support Services - Explore approaches to improving low-cost, non-medical, in-home support services; whether through a senior volunteer program, youth program, or referral program for market rate contractors. This would likely need to be organized by a non-profit organization such as the proposed Council on Aging rather than the town itself.

Key Theme – Housing

What We Heard

Challenges related to housing affordability and limited options for older residents to downsize while remaining in Hampstead came up frequently in survey responses. Homeownership among residents age 60+ is higher in Hampstead than the statewide average (90.3% vs. 79.9% statewide), and higher than most other communities in the region. Likewise the share of older homeowners who spend greater than 35% of their household income on housing is lower in Hampstead than statewide (2.1% vs. 8.7% statewide). The opposite is true though for older householders in Hampstead who rent, where 29.3%

“Affordable housing to downsize into is almost non-existent which really is a concern if we want to stay local and near family and friends. – Hampstead resident comment on survey

spend greater than 35% of income on housing, as compared to a state average of 21.2%. This appears to reflect steep increases in home prices and rental prices in recent years.

The survey asked respondents if they had looked for a place to live in the past five years, or are considering changing housing in the future, and how they would rate the options available with regard to factors such as home type, layout, location, required maintenance, affordability, and, if respondents were in a retirement community, the level of acceptance they felt from other residents. For almost all factors the plurality response was “Few Available”. Multiple comments noted that age restricted housing options in town currently were either out of reach financially, or in the case of mobile home parks, not the respondent’s desired housing type.

Figure 6: Survey Question 11 – If you have looked for a place to live in the past five years, or are considering finding another place to live in your community in the future, how would you rate the options available for you related to:

	Many Available	Some Available	Few Available	None Available	Not Applicable	Don't Know
Desired type of home (e.g. single family, apartment, condo, other)	5%	11%	42%	5%	23%	14%
Design (e.g. single floor living, width of doors, few or no steps to get in)	3%	21%	33%	5%	19%	19%
Location near places I want to go	6%	23%	31%	6%	21%	14%
Maintenance I’m willing to take on (e.g. lawn, raking, snow clearance)	5%	18%	33%	6%	21%	17%
Affordability within my budget	2%	19%	36%	13%	16%	13%
Sense of acceptance (if looking for an assisted living or other retirement community or neighborhood)	1%	16%	24%	7%	29%	23%

Diversifying the town’s housing supply came up frequently in public input in 2021 for the most recent update to the town’s Master Plan and is a key goal in the Master Plan. The plan establishes an objective to “Evaluate the existing stock of housing within Hampstead to identify gaps in housing diversity based on factors such as size, cost, housing type and age restrictions.” A number of survey comments in particular noted desire for affordable housing options for seniors within walking distance to the town center or the public library.

“We are retired in our early 70's and would like to move to a single family house in a quieter location in our town as we live near a state highway. Our house is older, and we want to move to a house that needs less maintenance. However, since we are on a fixed income and sale prices for houses have increased, we feel there are few options.” – Hampstead resident comment on survey

Opportunities for Improvement

The action items from the draft Master Plan represent key next steps for the town in expanding the diversity of housing options to meet the needs of a growing older adult population:

- Regional Housing Needs Assessment - Review the results of the RPC Regional Housing Needs Assessment to determine potential changes to zoning regulations that are necessary
- Zoning Changes to Support Broader Housing Options - Evaluate what changes can be made within zoning regulations to diversify housing types within the constraints of natural resources and infrastructure capacity. Particular attention should be on ensuring an adequate supply of affordable housing.

Key Theme – Tax Rate vs. Services for Seniors

What We Heard

Concerns about increasing property tax rates and the impact of this on elderly residents with fixed incomes were the second most common theme in the written comments on the survey, offered by 35 survey respondents. This was second only to comments about transportation need. These tended to focus on the unusually high portion of the total tax rate that goes to the school system since the establishment of the Hampstead School Administrative Unit (SAU). Taxes were mentioned much more frequently in Hampstead than in any of the other five assessment communities, including Exeter which has a higher rate. Hampstead's total tax rate in 2021 of \$22.75 per thousand dollars of assessed value was fifth highest in Rockingham County. Hampstead led the county in the percentage of the total tax rate going to schools, at 83.6% between the municipal and statewide education components and 12.5% for municipal services.

"It would help to give property tax relief to elders who are not at the poverty level but who struggle to pay ever increasing taxes while living on a fixed income."

– Hampstead resident comment on survey

Hampstead does have an Elderly Property Tax Exemption program available to low/moderate income older homeowners under RSA 72-39-a. In 2021 the household income to qualify was \$35,000 or less if a single person or \$50,000 or less if married or head of a household. A separate asset limit of \$100,000 (aside from primary residence) applies. Once qualified, property owners aged 65-74 receive an exemption on the first \$150,000 in assessed value. This steps up to \$200,000 for owners 75-79, and \$230,000 for owners aged 80 and over. According to records from the NH Department of Revenue Administration 73 homeowners in Hampstead applied for and received the exemption in 2021.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Improved Senior Services to Balance the Scales - As much as commenters noted discontent with the overall tax rate in town, the companion message was that the vast majority (83%) of local tax revenue goes to support the school system with relatively little available for services for older residents. While the town allocating additional funding to expand services for older residents will

itself have an impact on property taxes, a small increase for this purpose may be seen as an acceptable step to balance the scale so seniors receive more for their tax dollars.

- **Resources for Senior Services Beyond the Property Tax** - An additional revenue tool that New Hampshire towns have available, but relatively few use, is the supplemental vehicle registration fee of up to \$5.00 enabled under RSA 261:153. Proceeds from this fee must flow to a Municipal Transportation Improvement Fund and can be used to support a range of local transportation needs including road improvements, transit or senior transportation, and sidewalk improvements. The town may keep up to 10% of the fee proceeds for administrative purposes, and allocation of the Improvement Fund is wholly under local control. This provides a readily understood local mechanism outside the property tax to fund transportation needs. Exeter has used this mechanism for over a decade to fund senior transportation programs including public transit, a volunteer driver program and a senior taxi voucher program.

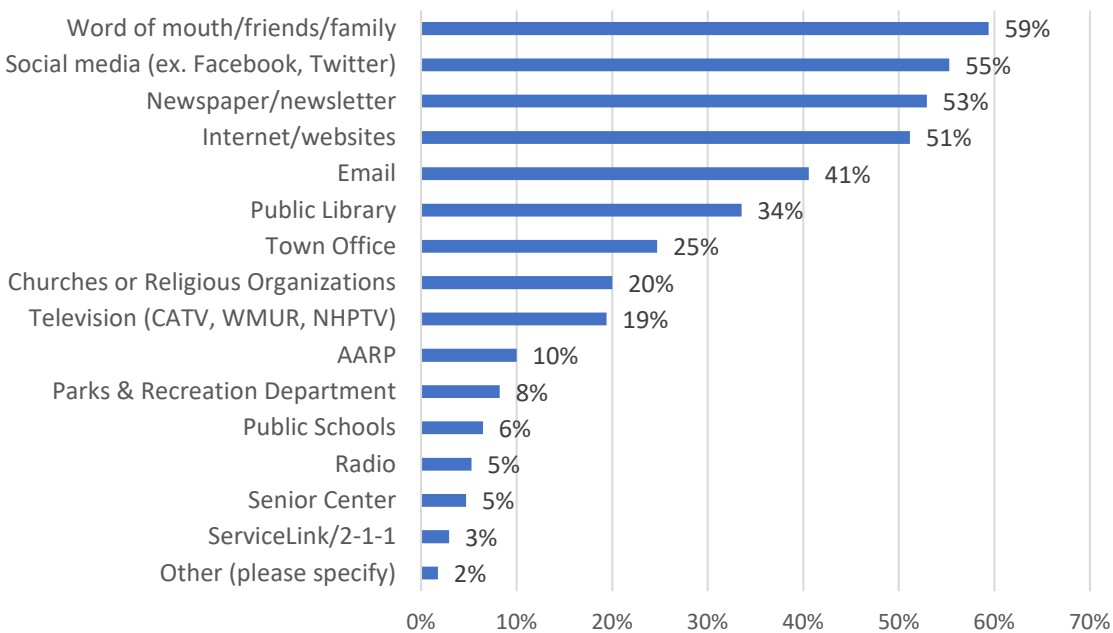
Key Theme – Improve Information Flow

What We Heard

The final theme, one heard consistently across all six of the assessment communities, was the need for improving information flow to older residents. Survey comments indicate that many residents are not aware of services already provided by the town or by regional nonprofit agencies.

The Community Survey included two key questions that touch on information flow. The first asked residents how they receive information about activities in town. The most common response, in Hampstead and across all six assessment communities, was “Word of Mouth/Friends/Family”, cited by 59% of Hampstead respondents.

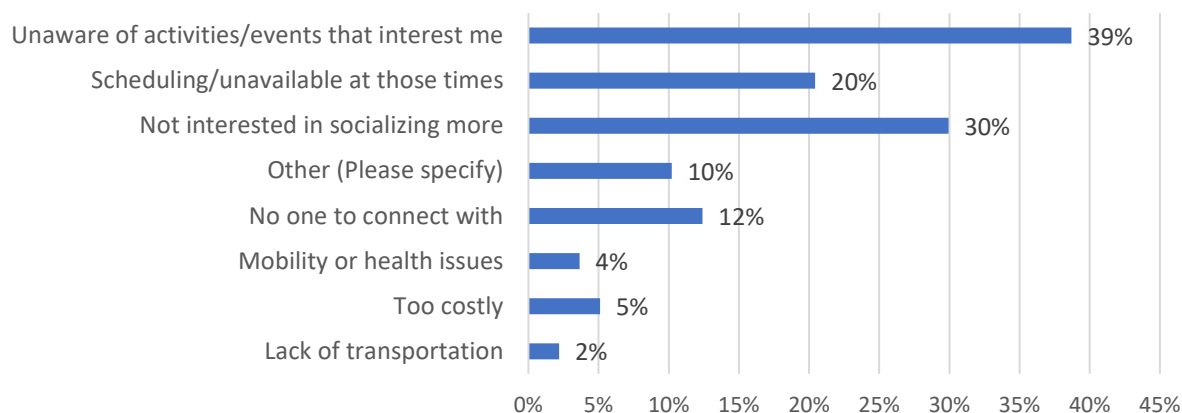
Figure 7: Survey Question 22 - How do you get information about services or events in your community?



The next most common responses in Hampstead were Social Media (55%), Newspaper/Newsletter (53%), and Internet/Websites (51%). Remaining information channels all dropped below fifty percent. Of 190 respondents to this question, 38 (20%) selected no information sources using the Internet. This is an important reminder that a significant percentage of older residents are not necessarily online and gather information from more traditional sources like newspapers, word of mouth, television, radio, the town offices or public library.

Question 24 on the survey asked if respondents would like to socialize more than they currently do, what holds them back. The most common response to this question was that people were unaware of social and recreational activities in town that interested them. Given the consistency of this response across towns we see this as highlighting an opportunity to improve information flow to older residents.

Figure 8: Question 22 - If you would like to have more social contact with others, what prevents you from doing so?



“A free newspaper or monthly publication listing activities, day trips, place to congregate (Senior Center?). – Hampstead resident comment on survey

Opportunities for Improvement

- Senior Resource Directory - Compile and promote a directory of recreation programs and support services for older adults offered by the town of Hampstead, by neighboring communities if those programs are open to non-residents, and by regional organizations. It is important that this information be available in hard copy through town hall and the public library as well as online as a significant share of older residents do not regularly use the internet.
- Contact List for Older Residents – Hampstead Police and Fire Departments maintain a list of vulnerable older residents to check on in the event of natural disasters or other emergencies. While this list cannot be used for other purposes, the town and/or the proposed Council on Aging should work to compile a contact list for all residents age 65 and up. This could be developed with an opt-in form mailed with local tax bills or otherwise distributed, and could identify those older residents

who wish to receive information via the internet vs. in paper copy. Recognizing the cost of large paper mailings, this could make information distribution more efficient, reaching those with internet access electronically and reserving paper mailings on senior programs and services for those not online.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This Age Friendly assessment aims to build awareness of and support for community-led initiatives that support the needs of older adults in Hampstead. The feedback gathered for this report is intended to be utilized by local leaders, elected officials, town departments and community organizations in their planning and decision-making processes. Creating change in a community starts at the local level where local government, businesses, organizations, and residents all play a role in cultivating a livable community, one where younger and older people can and want to live, work and play.

While this Assessment Report serves as the final product for Year 1 of the Age Friendly Communities program, it is hopefully just one early step in Age Friendly work to take place in Hampstead. During year two of the project, the Rockingham Planning Commission will provide technical assistance to two of the six Year 1 assessment communities with implementing a local project identified through their local assessments. The RPC encourages Hampstead to review the goals and ideas that were voiced by residents through the survey to identify potential projects that could be implemented in Year 2.

The following are potential next steps that the Town could pursue to continue helping residents thrive at every age and stage of life.

Step 1—Conduct an inventory of Hampstead’s existing resources. Communities tend to jump into creating new resources, but often existing assets can be utilized to meet current needs. Cast a wide net when thinking about the community’s resources. They should include everything from individuals who have skills and expertise they can share; physical infrastructure like meeting spaces, walking trails, and park benches; to services such as transportation assistance, meal delivery, and in-home healthcare.

Hampstead already has a variety of people and resources dedicated to making the town an inclusive and accessible place for people of all ages and abilities. The town is fortunate to have energetic town staff as well as local community champions working together to address the needs of older adults in the community. Hampstead should continue to promote and increase awareness of its existing community resources.

Step 2—Analyze Hampstead’s existing resources. For each resource identified in your inventory, ask the following questions:

- What is working well but is underutilized? Those who know about these resources like them, but not enough people know they exist.
- What is working well but is overutilized? These are resources that may have a long waiting list or simply not enough capacity to meet demand.
- What is working well in another town that could be replicated in our town?

- What is working well but is at risk of falling apart? For example, this could be a resource that's being spearheaded by a single person and if that person leaves there is no one else to take it over.
- What else needs to be created? Communities should ask this question last to ensure that they are using their existing resources first.

Step 3—Set Goals. Goals should have the following SMART characteristics:

- **Specific**—make sure your goals are specific and narrow for more effective planning. You should use action words to state exactly what you'll do.
- **Measurable**—define what evidence will prove you're making progress and reevaluate when necessary.
- **Achievable**—make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a certain timeframe.
- **Relevant**—ensure your goals align with your values and long-term objectives.
- **Time-bound**—set a realistic timeline and end-date for your goals and prioritize tasks accordingly.

Step 4—Implement a first project. While planning is important, completing a successful project often helps to galvanize a volunteer group and build support among community members. Select a project that is low cost and relatively easy to implement. Based on the themes identified from the community survey, there are several activities identified here that Hampstead can pursue to help it become a more age-friendly community. Low hanging fruit include steps to improve information flow to older residents on recreation programs and support services available through the town and regional nonprofit organizations. Expanding the current Senior Committee into a broader Council on Aging would be more challenging but can establish a foundation for more ambitious goals such as establishing a new Community Center.

Acknowledgements

The Rockingham Planning Commission and Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels Program thank the Hampstead Steering Committee members for their time and effort in helping to develop this age friendly community assessment. We hope the information provided in this report helps inform and advance efforts to make the community a more livable place for people of all ages and abilities. We look forward to continuing this critical conversation in Hampstead and the region and supporting communities in their work to become more Age Friendly.

Our community will endeavor to have recreational, lifelong learning, enrichment opportunities, and social activities for all age groups.

- Hampstead Master Plan (2022)