

CHAT

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY AGING TRANSITIONS

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

FOR THE

TOWN OF DURHAM

GREATER SEACOAST COMMUNITY HEALTH



PUBLISHED: OCT 2022

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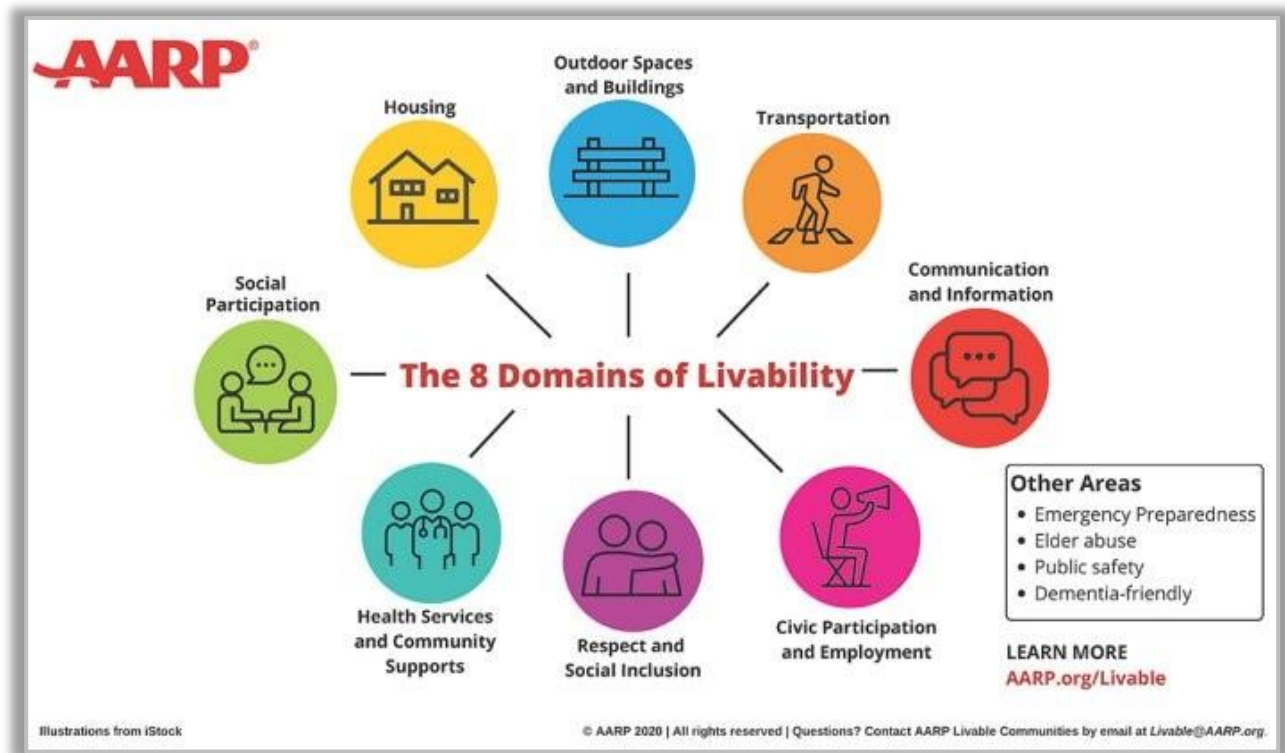
INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK

[Communities for Healthy Aging Transitions \(CHAT\)](#), a regional project, examined age-friendliness in Strafford County, as well as Brookfield, Wakefield, Newmarket, Nottingham and Northwood in Carroll and Rockingham counties, respectively. The project was funded by the Tufts Health Plan Foundation and conducted in partnership with Greater Seacoast Community Health (GSCH)'s Strafford County Public Health Network (SCPHN) program.

The project mission was to engage our communities looking at and promoting diverse, equitable, inclusive, livable environments where people can grow and thrive, regardless of age.

To achieve this mission, SRPC and partners at SCPHN designed engagement activities to understand strengths and opportunities in each community, which were framed within [AARP's eight domains of livability](#) from its [Livable Communities program](#): Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Housing, Transportation, Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, Communication and Information, and Health Services and Community Support.

The qualitative and quantitative information presented in this Community Assessment was also framed within the eight domains of livability.



CHAT OUTREACH PROCESS

SRPC and partners at SCPHN enacted a modified outreach process due to the pandemic. Most of the outreach for the CHAT project was conducted via online channels as described below.

COMMUNITY ZOOM FORUMS

Residents from across the region were invited to participate in a series of seven municipal or subregional community Zoom forums between February and June 2021. SRPC and SCPHN held a Zoom community forum with Durham on February 18, 2021. Forum participants were incredibly engaged, and project partners facilitated a productive conversation to reveal the opportunities and challenges that exist in Durham.

SURVEY

Launched in February 2021, the CHAT online survey was distributed through multiple regional outlets and to the residents of Durham via Facebook postings, at the community forum, and between town staff and residents. There was a total of 38 responses from people who live, play, and work in Durham.

POSTCARD ART ACTIVITY

With the pandemic, SRPC and SCPHN brainstormed creative ways to engage people and give them a different outlet for expressing themselves. SRPC staff designed and printed postcards that prompted individuals to draw (paint, collage, etc.) or write what it means to age as you play, live or work in each community. These were distributed at various Covid-19 vaccine clinics and a variety of other locations.

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

The above outreach strategies were supplemented by a draft review and additional comments provided from Leslie Schwartz, SRPC Commissioner and Durham resident.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

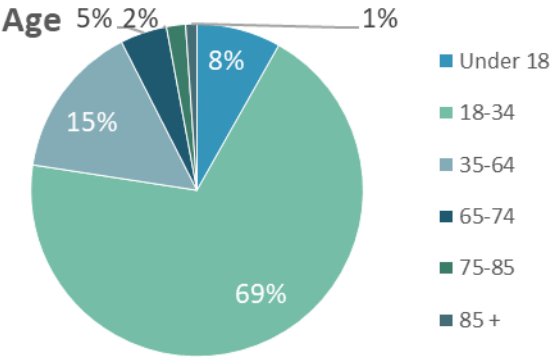
Durham, NH is a rural university town with residents representing a diverse array of backgrounds. Residents and visitors alike admire the community and choose to settle here based on the town's location along the seacoast and proximity to the region's larger cities, its expansive and preserved natural beauty, the inclusive and engaged population, and quaint New England aesthetic. Durham's natural heritage and historic infrastructure paint a scenic environment for those who live, work, and play in the area.

The town's high quality school system, vibrant Main Street and walkable downtown, variety of transportation options, mixed development patterns and progressive land use policies and projects create a host of opportunities for people to interact with their community.

UNH plays a strong role in the community through many avenues, offering technical assistance for community programs and projects, providing community services and amenities, and sharing resources and information. The student and staff population come together with year-round residents to foster a charismatic social quality, and value the relationships shared among different groups.

The outreach process, combined with supplementary data analysis, was used to outline the many ways in which Durham provides an inclusive, welcoming, supportive, and healthy environment for people of all ages, as well as opportunities for improvement. The findings are presented below in relation to each of the eight AARP domains of livability.

Total Population	16085
Median Age	20.8
Total Housing Units	3187
Number of Jobs in Town	6,728
Life expectancy	83.6



Sex



LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #1 - OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

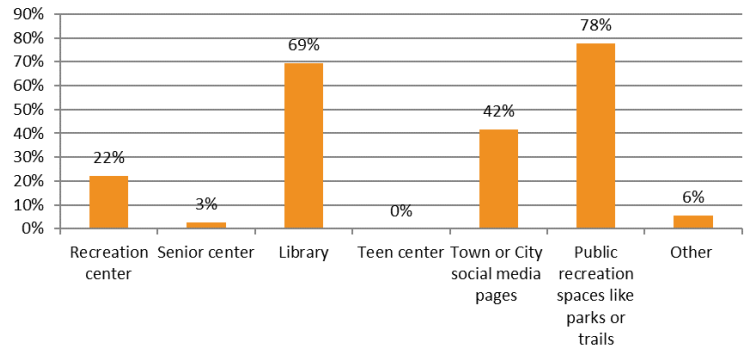
“People need public places to gather — indoors and out. Green spaces, seating and accessible buildings (elevators, zero-step entrances, staircases with railings) can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages.”ⁱ

DATA

Recreation Site Type	Number of Sites
Beach	0
Boating Access	3
Community Garden	1
Disc Golf Course	0
Dog Park	0
Fishing Access	1
Golf Course	0
Gym	0
Open Space and Trails	17
Park	4
Playground	2
Pool	0
Rail Trail	0
Skatepark	1
Skating Rink	1
Sledding Hill	1
Sports Fields and Courts	2
Total	33

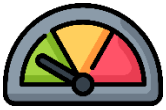
Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	1
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	9
Libraries	5
Medical and Health Care Facilities	4
Governmental Services	4
Non-Governmental Services	1
Fire and Police Stations	3
Schools	2
Total	29

Do you use any of these public spaces in your town?



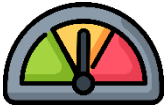
42% of land in Durham is conserved.





STRENGTHS

- **Indoor and outdoor spaces** – Approximately 70% of survey respondents enjoy the town’s library and outdoor recreation spaces like parks or trails as their top 2 public spaces. UNH public spaces are also well-liked by the Town.
- **Downtown amenities** – Residents enjoy the walkability of downtown restaurants and other service locations, and many describe the downtown as “vibrant.”
- **Conservation land** – Survey and forum participants noted moving to Durham for the open space and conservation land and revere the town’s natural beauty and trail systems.
- **College woods** – College woods was one of the most highly mentioned trail systems during the town forum that residents frequent.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Park district** – Many forum participants expressed a desire for a park space that is centrally located in town and easy to walk to, as well as areas to picnic around town.
- **Outdoor retail and dining** – Some residents expressed interest in spaces like outdoor restaurants and dining, as well as open air markets.
- **Outdoor activities** – More outdoor activities in the community would benefit residents, especially during a crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic.

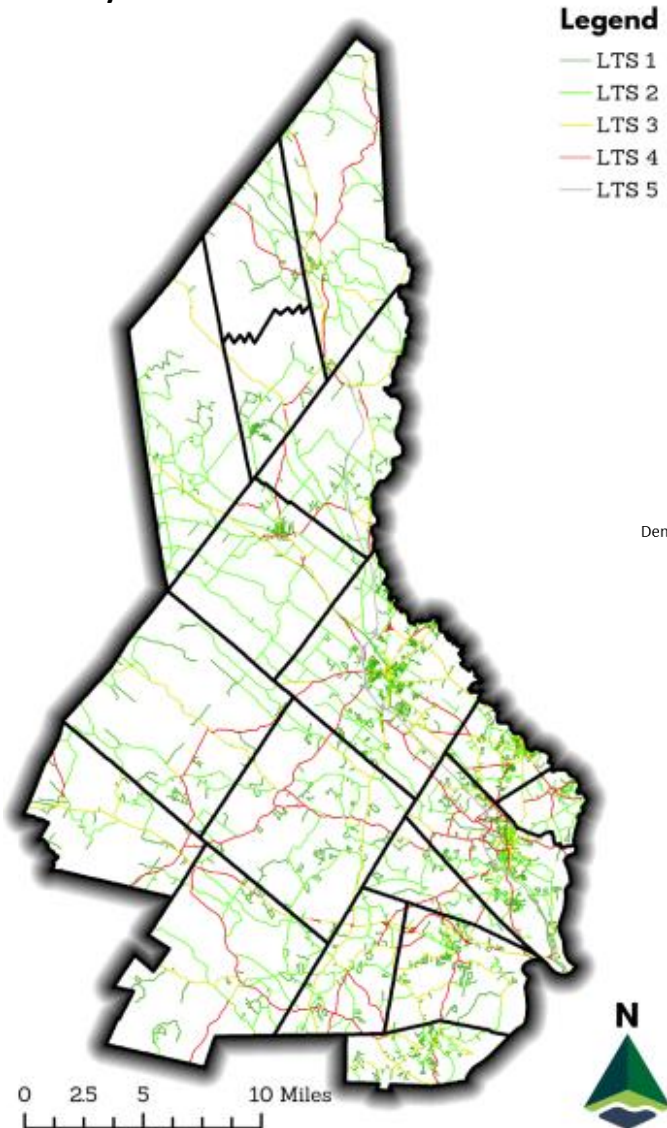
ONE FAMILY EXPRESSED ABOUT THEIR DECISION TO MOVE TO DURHAM, “OUR FAVORITE THING IS THAT WE’RE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF SO MANY USEFUL AMENITIES (POST OFFICE, PHARMACY, GROCERY STORE, ETC.) IN ADDITION TO GREAT RESTAURANTS.”

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #2 - TRANSPORTATION

“Driving shouldn’t be the only way to get around. Pedestrians need sidewalks and safe, crossable streets. Dedicated bicycle lanes benefit nondrivers and drivers alike. Public transit options can range from the large-scale (trains, buses, light rail) to the small (taxis, shuttles or ride share services).”ⁱⁱ

DATA

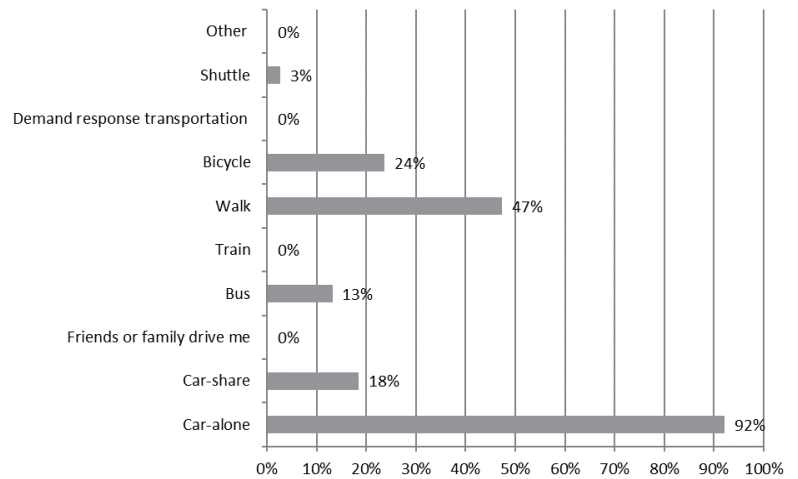
Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress



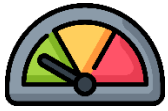
LTS Rating	LTS Rating Description	Population Class
LTS 1	Lowest stress ; suitable for all riders	Kids and Beginners
LTS 2	Lower stress ; suitable for adults with some experience	Willing but Wary Riders
LTS 3	Moderate stress ; suitable for those who ride regularly	Comfortably Confident Riders
LTS 4	High stress ; suitable for experienced riders with tolerance to high speeds and traffic	Exposure-Experienced Riders
LTS 5	Bicycles prohibited	

Source: Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress. Year: 2019. Granularity: SRPC.

How do you and your household members generally travel around for work, school, recreation, or other errands?

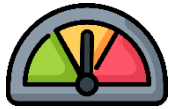


COAST Routes (including ADA On-Demand Transit)	0
Wildcat Routes	4
Demand Response Transit	Yes



STRENGTHS

- **Walkability** – Almost 50% of survey respondents walking as their main method of transportation for work, school, recreation, and other errands.
- **Wildcat transit** – Residents appreciate Wildcat Transit as a means of transportation in town.
- **Amtrak** – Many forum participants expressed immense value for the Amtrak Downeaster being in Durham and view it as a huge asset.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Non-vehicular transportation** – Non-vehicular transportation around Town could be improved through the addition of more sidewalks, bike lanes, and streetlights.
- **Park district** – Many forum participants expressed a desire for a park space that is centrally located in town and easy to walk to, as well as areas to picnic around town.
- **Accessibility** – While there are many trail options in town for residents to recreate, building boardwalks or developing other accommodations along trails would make them more accessible to people living with disabilities. Making bus stops more accessible for the aging population and people living in rural areas of town could expand Wildcat Transit ridership.
- **Transportation and aging** – Many folks within the aging population especially, would like to see additional transportation services that are not only readily available but widely promoted so to remove any perceived stigma associated with relying on such services.
- **Parking** – Residents would like if the town offered more space to park that is free or affordable, for both the long and short-term.

ONE RESIDENT SUGGESTED, “MORE PARKING TO CREATE A TRANSPORTATION-FRIENDLY PLACE TO LIVE.”

A CHANGE THAT WOULD IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION FOR THE AGING POPULATION IS, “MORE LOCAL ELDER SERVICES FOR FOLKS WHO ARE SHY ABOUT ASKING FOR HELP, ESPECIALLY TRANSPORTATION IN RURAL AREAS OF TOWN.”

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #3 – HOUSING

“AARP surveys consistently find that the vast majority of older adults want to reside in their current home or community for as long as possible. Doing so is possible if a home is designed or modified for aging in place, or if a community has housing options that are suitable for differing incomes, ages and life stages.”ⁱⁱⁱ

DATA

Housing Stock

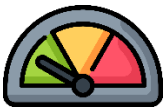
■ Single family ■ Multi-family ■ Mobile Home



Own vs Rent



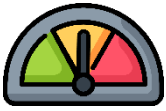
3,187 total housing units in Durham.



STRENGTHS

- **Housing stock** – Many residents chose to move to Durham for, or appreciate, the Town’s housing stock variety in rentals and opportunities to own a home.
- **Quality of life** – Residents chose to move to Durham for the quality of the neighborhoods, as well as the character of different houses in Town.
- **Student housing** – Forum participants noted an appreciation for the amount of student housing in Durham.

“MORE OPTIONS FOR SIZE DOWN LIVING SHOULD THE CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF OUR HOME BECOME DIFFICULT FOR US AS WE AGE” WOULD IMPROVE THE HOUSING SITUATION IN DURHAM.”



OPPORTUNITIES

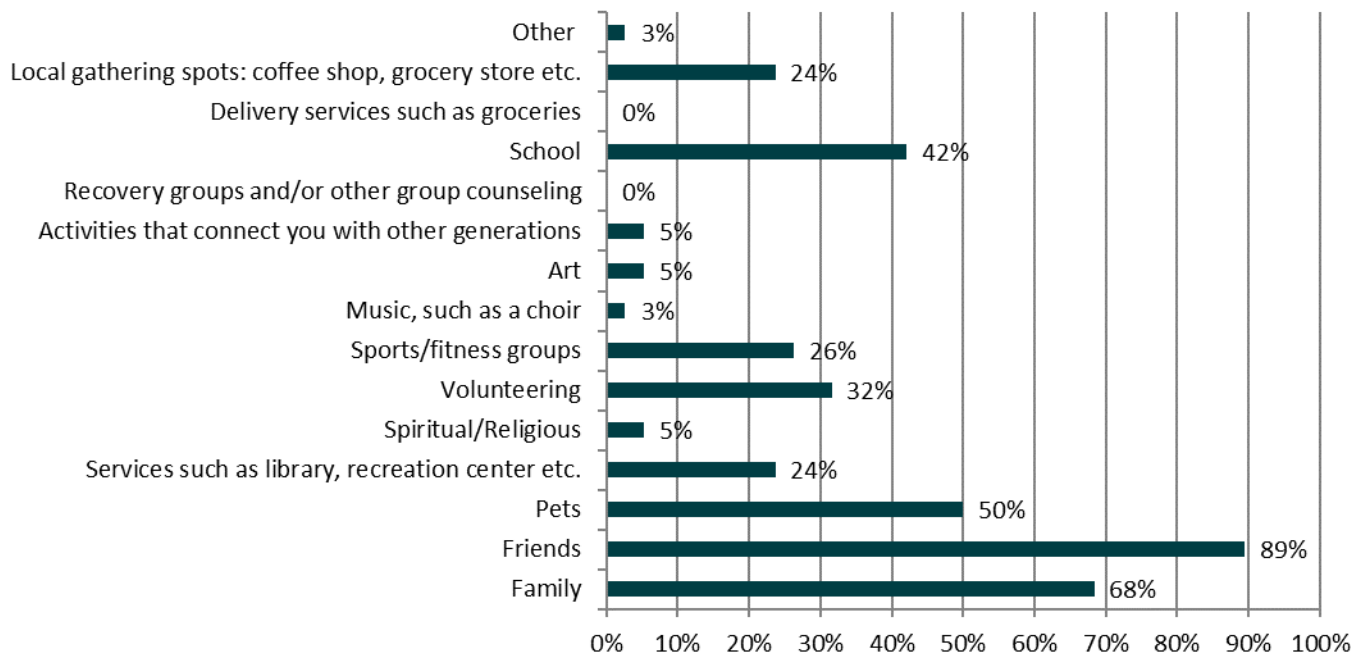
- **Affordable housing** – Most residents participating in the forum and the survey agree that there is a shortage of affordable housing in Durham. Moreover, much of the more affordable housing or rental market is targeted at university students, and residents would like to see a larger market of workforce housing, and housing for alumni, young couples and families, and the aging population. Residents feel that there is a lack of mixed housing in the “middle” range.
- **Aging in place** – Respondents’ top concern about growing older is the lack of good and affordable housing options, and the #1 reason respondents might choose to move out of Durham is for lack of good and affordable housing.
- **Property taxes** – Aging residents expressed the burden that high property taxes place on homeowners, particularly in this population, and how difficult it becomes to afford living in Durham as residents age.
- **Mixed-use development** – Residents expressed an interest in expanding mixed use development in the Town.

AND ANOTHER COMMENT SUGGESTS “MORE HOUSING! SPECIFICALLY, MORE DIVERSE HOUSING FOR A RANGE OF PEOPLE AT A RANGE OF INCOMES FOR PEOPLE ARE VARYING PLACES IN THEIR LIVES. THERE ISN'T A LOT FOR FIRST TIME HOMEBUYERS.”

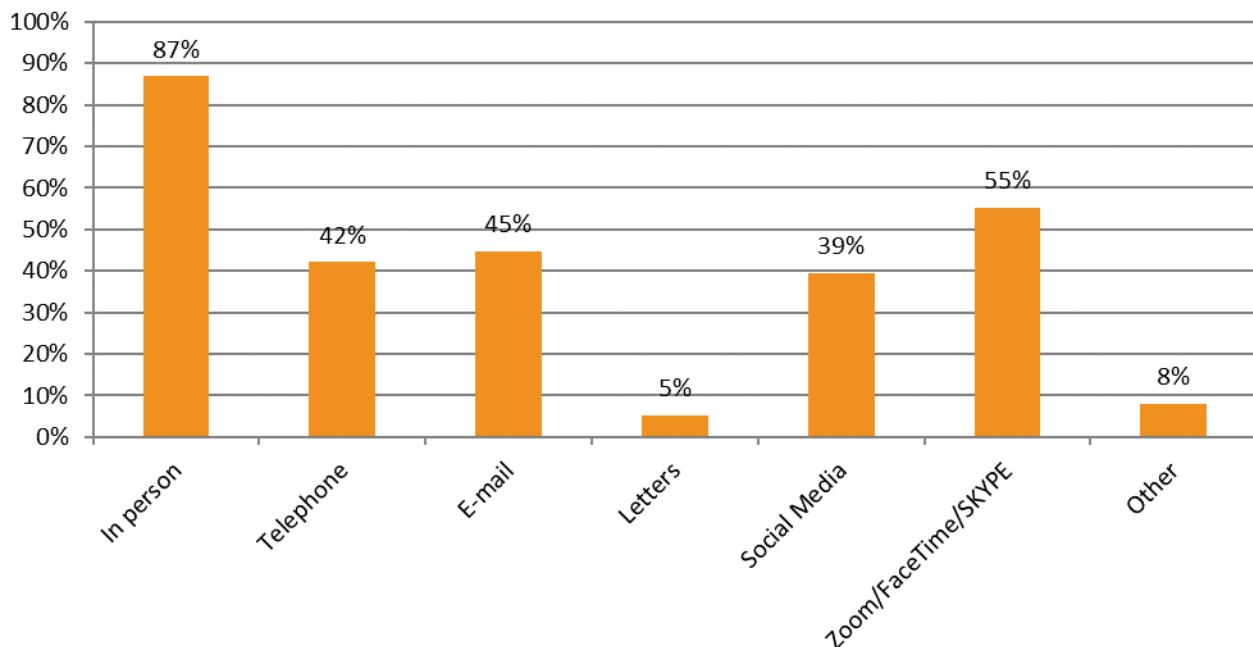
LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #4 – SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

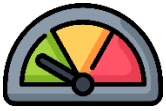
“Regardless of a person’s age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combated by having opportunities to socialize and the availability of accessible, affordable and fun social activities.”^{iv}

DATA What are your main social interactions? Check all that apply



How do you most commonly socialize? Check all that apply.

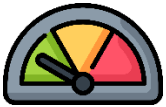




STRENGTHS

- **Types of interaction** – Friends, families, and pets are the main social interactions of survey respondents, most commonly in person or through online platforms such as Zoom, Skype, or Facetime.
- **Neighborhood groups** – Residents appreciate the strength in neighborhood groups, particularly for gathering information.
- **UNH Pool** – An abundance of survey and forum participants expressed admiration for the UNH pool as both a gathering space and outdoor activity.

**DURHAM IS A “WELCOMING
COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS HAVING
TO LEAVE HOME.”**



OPPORTUNITIES

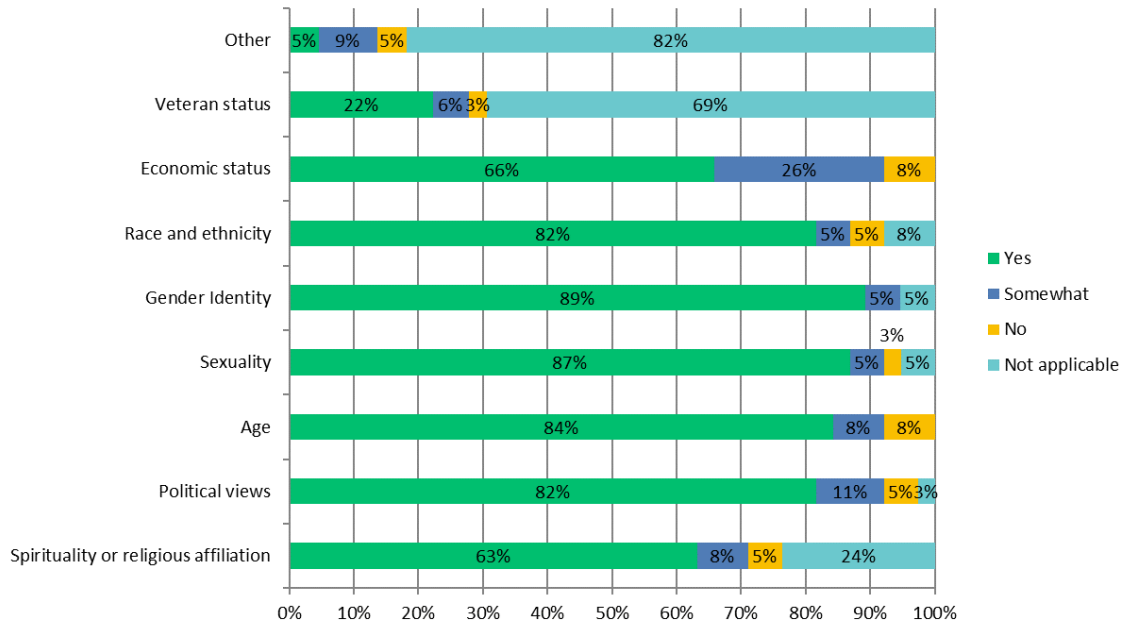
- **Student-resident interactions** – Forum participants expressed an interest in more facilitated interactions between long-time residents of Durham and the student population. Some participants suggested credit-based programs for local students to get involved with the elderly population and share stories.
- **Intrapersonal barriers** – Investing in more activities for Durham’s senior population, as well as for people who are not physically or mentally independent, could improve social participation in Durham.
- **Indoor activities** – Participants would like more indoor activities in town, particularly for kids during the wintertime.
- **Cultural activities** – Residents expressed an interest in “high quality cultural activities” such as theatre and dance, and there may be an opportunity to partner with UNH and utilize the theatre and gallery for these kinds of activities.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #5 – RESPECT AND INCLUSION

“Everyone wants to feel valued. Intergenerational gatherings and activities are a great way for young and older people to learn from one another, honor what each has to offer and, at the same time, feel good about themselves.”^v

DATA

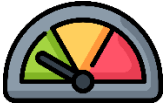
Do you feel accepted in your community with regards to:



STRENGTHS

- **Community character** – The top reason residents would choose to stay in Durham is for the character of the community, and secondly for its natural beauty and resources. Residents also appreciate the intentional communities for UNH faculty.
- **Acceptance** – The majority of survey respondents feel accepted regarding their age, race, ethnicity, economic status, political views, sexuality, and spiritual or religious affiliation.
- **Helping others** – There are many groups in town such as Mommas helping Mommas and WomanADE, which provide an informal help network for mothers in Durham as well as financial assistance.
- **Programs** – Residents appreciate the town’s parks and recreation programs.

- **Woodridge Park** – UNH students and long-term residents in Durham find Woodridge Park a good place to interact and meet others and find that students are accepting of young kids in spaces like the skate park.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Social isolation** – Approximately 80% of Durham residents that responded to the CHAT survey said social isolation was their greatest challenge faced due to Covid-19.
- **Accessibility** – Residents living with disabilities suggested building boardwalks on some of the Town’s trails. Some residents also expressed a need for more benches around town.
- **Accessing services** – Some forum participants felt that receiving community services in Town, like emergency food, is stigmatized and can cause feelings of shame or prevent residents from attaining help.
- **Neighborhood communities** – Some residents expressed interest in forming stronger neighborhood communities, and that there might be a way for these bonds to be facilitated.
- **Intergenerational gaps** – Forum participants expressed a desire for there to be a higher degree of interconnectedness among age groups in town.

REGARDING FEELING ACCEPTED IN THEIR COMMUNITY, ONE RESIDENT NOTED THEY “DID NOT FEEL ACCEPTED AS A SINGLE PARENT; OR AS A YOUNG PARENT.”

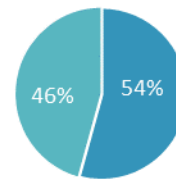
LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #6 – WORK AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

“Why does work need to be an all or nothing experience? 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.”^{vi}

DATA

Income	Median Household Income	\$81,995
	Income Inequality (Gini Index)	0.51
	Low income households	34.24%
	High income households	15.20%

Ballots Cast



■ In-Person ■ Absentee

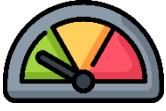


6,728 total jobs in Durham.



STRENGTHS

- **UNH** – UNH provides a variety of training options for staff.
- **Town boards** – Forum participants noted town boards and committees are very engaged, and are easy for residents to get involved in. Similarly, residents feel they have an engaged population in Durham overall.
- **Politics** – Forum participants appreciate the political atmosphere in Durham.
- **Service based groups** – Residents appreciate the ability to participate in a variety of groups like local non-profits, faith-based organizations, and women’s groups.
- **McGregor Memorial EMS** – Forum participants and survey respondents mentioned McGregor Memorial EMS as a place of employment which also has trainings available.



SOME POSITIVE FEEDBACK ABOUT WORK IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUGGESTS THERE HAVE BEEN “CONTESTED ELECTIONS, WHICH HASN’T HAPPENED IN YEARS.”

OPPORTUNITIES

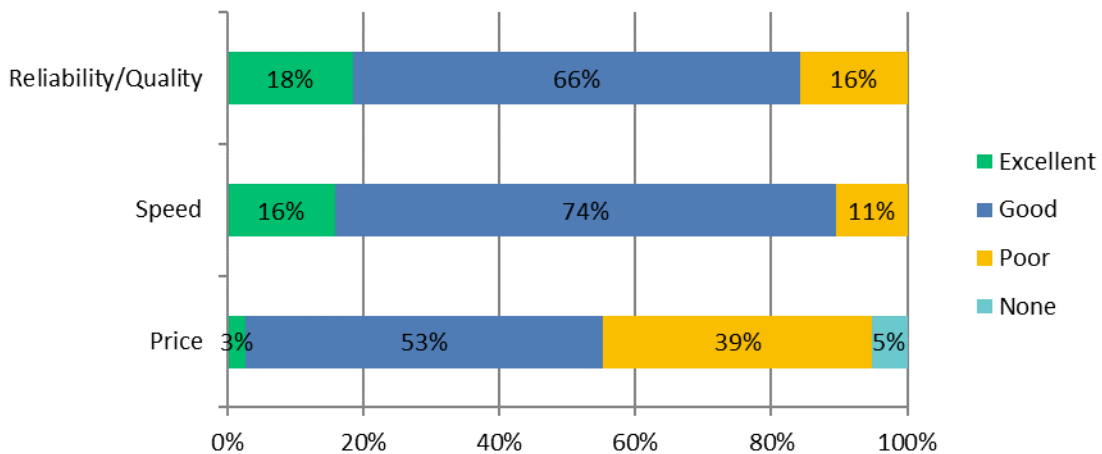
- **Commercial development** – Some residents would like to see more commercial development in town.
- **Politics** – Forum participants expressed a desire for greater emphasis on UNH students being involved in local politics.
- **Service learning** – Forum participants suggested more service opportunities for UNH students in town may help facilitate collaboration between the town and school, help to get students involved, and interact between age groups.
- **UNH and Durham** – The Town may be in a position to facilitate engagement with UNH for residents who are unsure of how to get involved but would like to.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #7 – COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

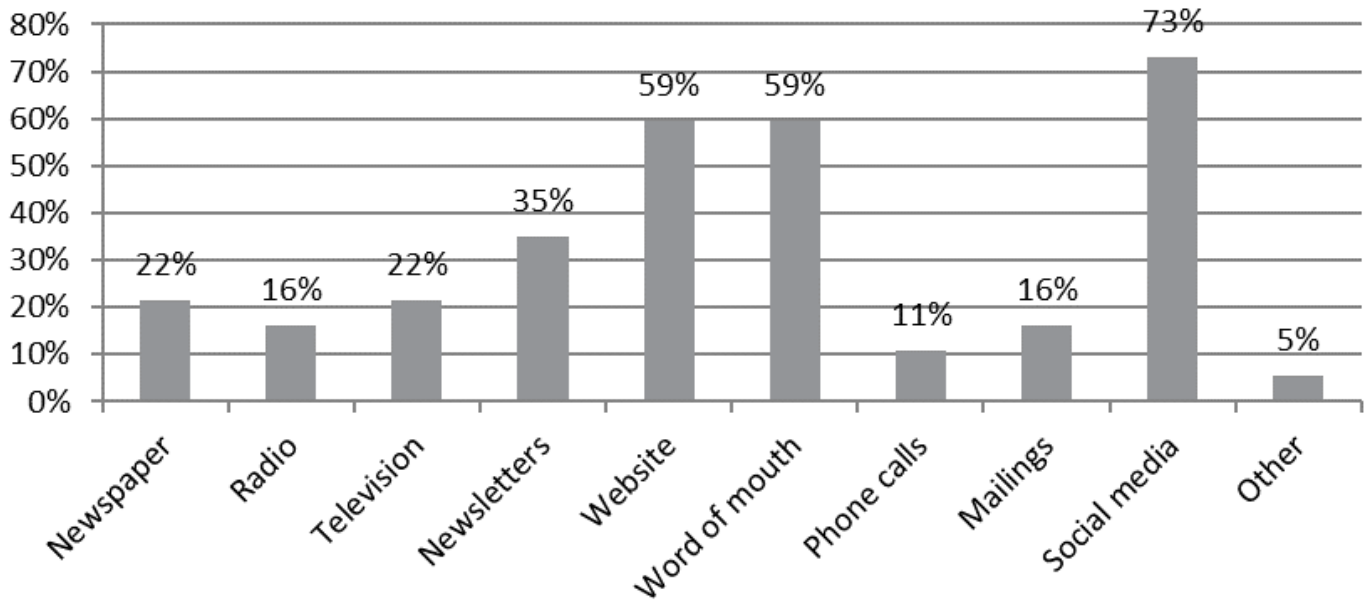
“We now communicate in ways few could have imagined a decade ago. Age-friendly communities recognize that information needs to be shared through a variety of methods since not everyone is tech-savvy, and not everyone has a smartphone or home-based access to the internet.”^{vii}

DATA

How would you rate your internet access in regard to? Please select none if you do not have internet access.



How do you learn about community news and activities? Check all that apply.

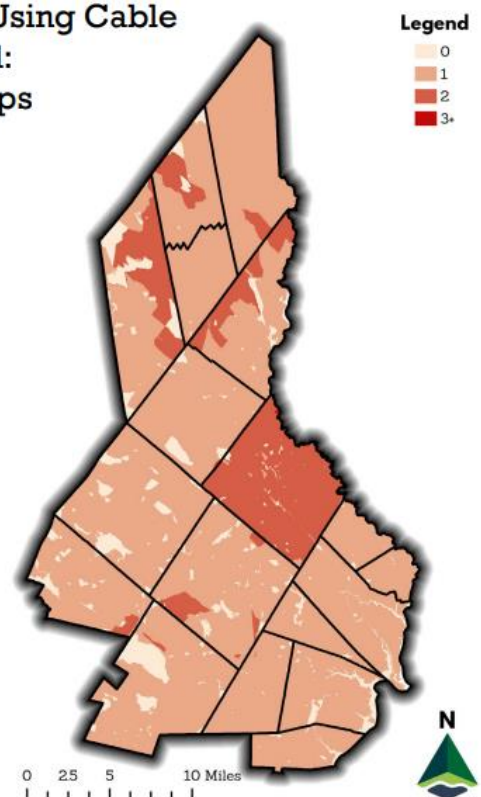


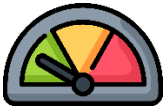
Broadband Access

Providers Using Fiber
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps



Providers Using Cable
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps

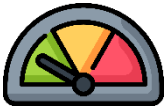




STRENGTHS

- **Social media** – Greater than 70% of survey respondents use social media to learn about community news and activities. An abundance of forum participants also appreciate the DCAT videos and live streams on social media, and use a variety of Facebook groups to stay in the know such as Celebrate Durham and Unofficial Durham.
- **School system** – Multiple residents decided to move to Durham because of the quality of the town’s school system.
- **Town website** – Forum participants were satisfied with the availability of information via the Town’s website.
- **Friday updates** – Residents use the Durham Friday updates to find out about volunteer opportunities and other information, and this communication outlet was the most mentioned outlet used by forum participants.
- **Library** – The town library was cited as a useful place to find information and engage in community activities and events.

“DURHAM AND UNH WERE NOT IN COMMUNICATION EARLIER IN THE PANDEMIC IN TERMS OF INSTATING AND ENFORCING MASK POLICY. THE LACK OF ENFORCEMENT FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HAS MADE ME NERVOUS TO SPEND A GREAT DEAL OF TIME IN THE COMMUNITY.”



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Internet access** – Expand communication that is not reliant on internet access, as nearly 40% of survey respondents indicate having poor access to internet due to price.
- **New community members** – Improve communication with new residents by developing a plan or program to make information more readily available to community members unfamiliar with the Town.
- **Physical place-based information** – Some residents expressed interest in having a centrally located digital or static board for information in town.

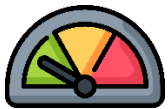
LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #8 – COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES

“At some point, every person of every age gets hurt, becomes ill or simply needs some help. While it’s important that assistance and care be available nearby, it’s essential that residents are able to access and afford the services required.”^{viii}

DATA

Healthcare and Aging Services	Number of Sites
Assisted Living Sites	1
Nursing Homes	0
Senior Centers	0
Primary Care Providers	9
Hospitals	0
Community Health Centers	0
Home Health Agencies	10
Memory Cafes	1
Dementia Support Group	0
Total	21

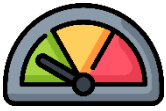
Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	1
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	9
Libraries	5
Medical and Health Care Facilities	4
Governmental Services	4
Non-Governmental Services	1
Fire and Police Stations	3
Schools	2
TOTAL	29



STRENGTHS

- **Health service usage** – About 90% of survey respondents use primary care health services, and 74% use dental services.
- **Physical activity** – Greater than 50% of survey respondents engage in some form of physical activity daily, and about 45% of respondents engage in some form of physical activity at least a few times a week.
- **Notable service providers** – Forum participants felt that UNH Health and Wellness and the local dentistry service are both assets for the town. The proximity to Wentworth Douglass Hospital is another benefit to living in Durham.

RESIDENTS EXPRESSED A NEED FOR A “SENIOR CENTER AND DEPARTMENT,” AS WELL AS “WELLNESS CHECKS/BUDDIES OR FOLLOW UP TO MEDICAL PROCEDURES FORM VACCINES TO SMALL SURGERIES” WHEN FACING CRISES LIKE COVID-19 IN THE FUTURE.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Childcare** – Residents would like a drop-off accessible daycare location in town.
- **Family care** – Nearly half of all respondents said it was somewhat likely that they would provide care to an adult loved one in the future. Two suggestions that may help to address this gap in services are to create a senior center in town, as well as bring back the Alzheimer’s Café that used to be located at the town library.
- **UNH services** – Forum participants were interested in UNH doing more for the aging population in town, particularly integrating the student population to help care for the elderly as a learning opportunity.

NEXT STEPS

Following completion of the community assessments, SRPC and SCPHN staff will solicit interest from and work with a limited number of communities to develop action plans. Selected municipalities will be able to take the information in the community assessments a step further, to identify specific implementation strategies that respond to the assessment findings and aim to enhance the community’s “age-friendliness.” Communities will be selected based upon interest and engagement in promoting age friendly communities, local support and willingness to implement recommendations, and geographic diversity. With the goal of adoption, final plans will be presented to each community. There is also the opportunity for completion of one or two pilot projects that will be selected from the action plan recommendations. Lastly, SRPC and SCPHN will publish an extensive resource guide that will be widely distributed via channels appropriate to our key audiences.

ⁱ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>

^{iv} <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>

^v <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>

^{vi} <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>

^{vii} <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>

^{viii} <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>