

# CHAT

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY AGING TRANSITIONS

## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

FOR THE

## TOWN OF MILTON

GREATER SEACOAST COMMUNITY HEALTH



PUBLISHED: OCT 2022

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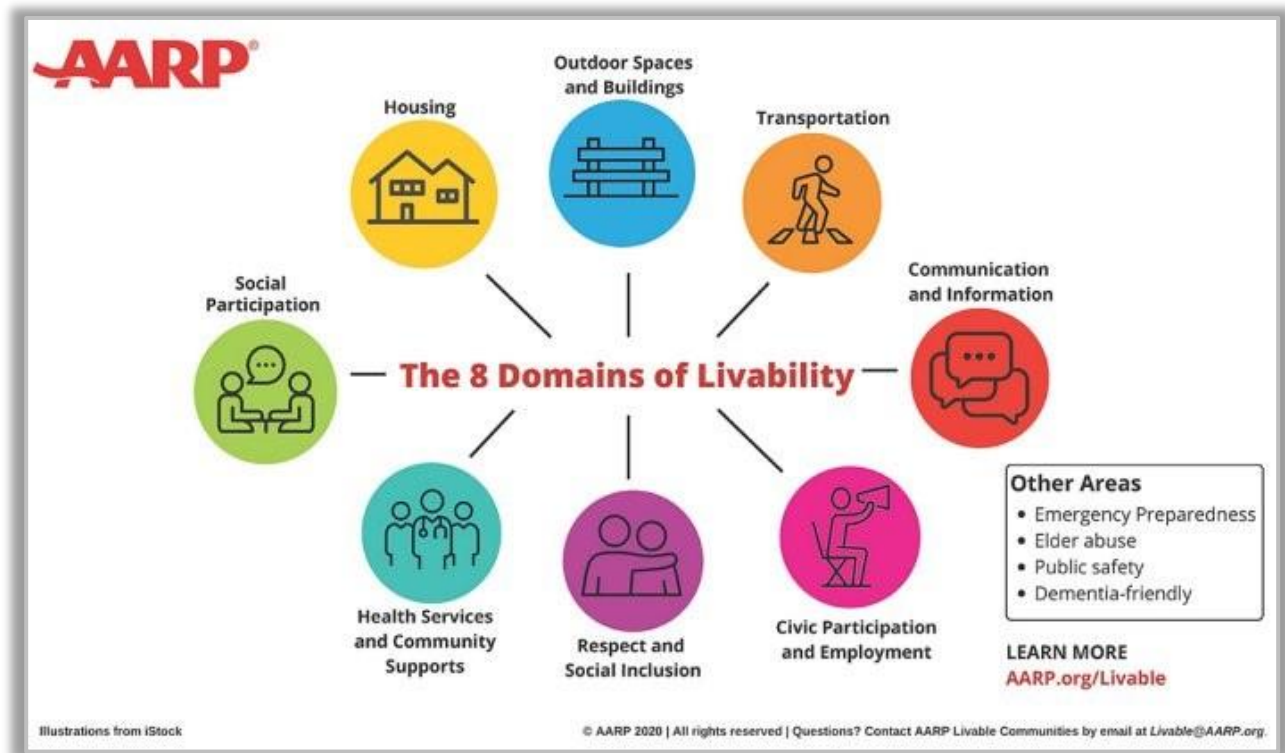
## INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK

[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 community Zoom Forum for the Town in addition to the surrounding communities of Brookfield, Farmington, Middleton, New Durham, and Wakefield on April 7, 2021. These communities were invited to the same forum given the geographic connection through the Explore Moose Mountains grassroots tourism initiative.

## **SURVEY**

Launched in early 2021, the CHAT online survey was distributed through multiple regional outlets, through social media, and shared with those who participated at the community Zoom forums. Six Milton residents responded to the survey. This information was supplemented with data from a survey sent to Explore Moose Mountain area businesses.

## **POSTCARD ART ACTIVITY**

With the pandemic, SRPC and GSCH 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 with community draft assessment reviews by community representatives. Draft review and additional comments were provided by Bruce Woodruff, contracted town planner. The assessment was also review by recreation director, Karen Brown.

## **COMMUNITY PROFILE**

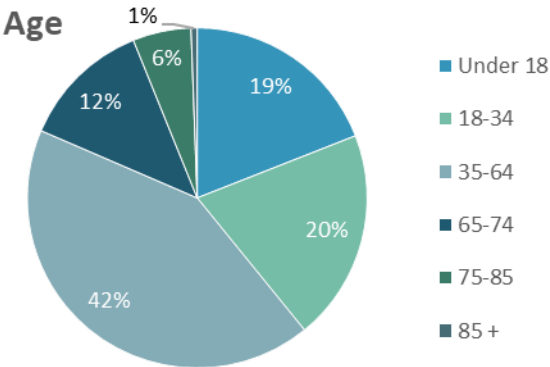
Milton is a seasonal home to many vacationers that travel to their summer residences on the Three Ponds and surrounding areas each year. The principal villages, Milton, and Milton Mills, combine to encompass twenty-seven thousand acres with a population of 4,617.

Residents see the trails and recreational opportunities as some of the Town's greatest assets, while also noting important entities like the library, and community service organizations like Community Partners.

The community is accepting of those of different backgrounds and people feel like they can reside in Milton and have reasonable access and commutes to their jobs.

The outreach process, combined with supplementary data analysis, was used to outline the many ways in which Milton 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.

<b>Total Population</b>	4617
<b>Median Age</b>	46.8
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	1811
<b>Number of Jobs in Town</b>	651
<b>Life expectancy</b>	83.9



**Sex**



**LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #1 - OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS**

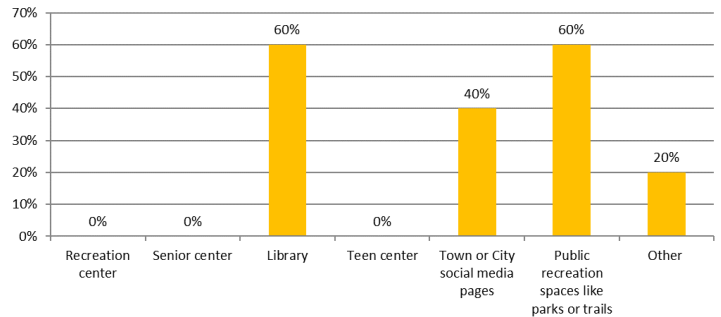
“People need public places to gather — indoors and out. Green spaces, seating and accessible buildings (elevators, zero-step entrances, staircases with railings) can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages.”<sup>i</sup>

**DATA**

Recreation Site Type	Number of Sites
Beach	1
Boating Access	1
Community Garden	0
Disc Golf Course	0
Dog Park	0
Fishing Access	0
Golf Course	0
Gym	0
Open Space and Trails	6
Park	3
Playground	2
Pool	0
Rail Trail	0
Skatepark	0
Skating Rink	0
Sledding Hill	0
Sports Fields and Courts	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

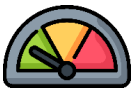
Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	1
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	5
Libraries	2
Medical and Health Care Facilities	2
Governmental Services	2
Non-Governmental Services	0
Fire and Police Stations	3
Schools	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

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



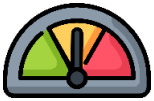
**24%** of land in Milton is conserved.





## STRENGTHS

- **Rural character** - Residents like the rural character in Town, which is in part due to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the land in town being conserved.
- **Natural beauty and resources** – People appreciate the Town’s natural resources like Milton Three Ponds and the Branch River.
- **Public recreation** – There are ample public recreation opportunities in Town such as Plummer’s Ridge Forest & Farm Hiking Trails, Three Pond Park Playground, the Town Boat Launch, and Mount Teneriffe Preserve.
- **The Farm Museum** – This cultural and historic asset includes agricultural exhibits, displays and collections in addition to a working farm run out of two adjoining farmsteads situated on 50 acres on Plummer’s Ridge. The Farm Museum hosts many events and programs, like its annual pie contest.



## OPPORTUNITIES

- **More recreation activities** – Increase current recreation opportunities so people can take advantage of the awesome natural resources in Town. The Town could leverage its recreation department and entities like Moose Mountain Regional Greenways.
- **Lack of public restrooms** –The Town could use centrally located public restrooms for visitors and residents who spend time downtown.
- **Greater variety of dining options/restaurants** –Milton currently has a few restaurants in its downtown, like the Pizza Nook and the seasonal The Pink House, but increasing options could benefit both residents and potential visitors.
- **Activities that leverage rural charm** – This could take place in the way of a wilderness guide company that does paddle sports rentals along the Branch River, or an entity that organizes x-country ski in areas like Casey Road Conservation Land.
- **Strengthening the travel map of disparate small business destinations** - Further strengthen the travel map of disparate small business destinations i.e., bakery of a discerning taste, sugar houses, modest cultural entities, etc. This service is currently provided by Explore Moose Mountains, a grassroots initiative to promote THE WONDERFUL in Milton and surrounding towns. The Town could further leverage this resource.

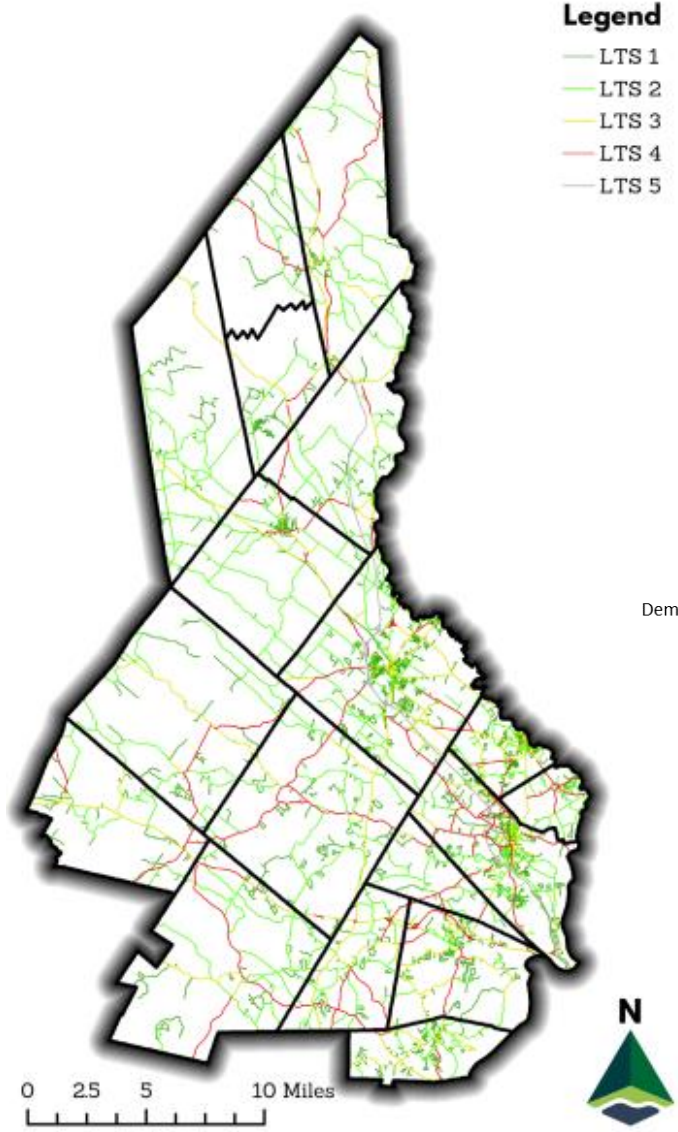
“MILTON’S COMMUNITY SURVEY SAID TRAILS/RECREATION IS THE TOWN’S GREATEST STRENGTH.”



**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).”<sup>ii</sup>

**Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress**

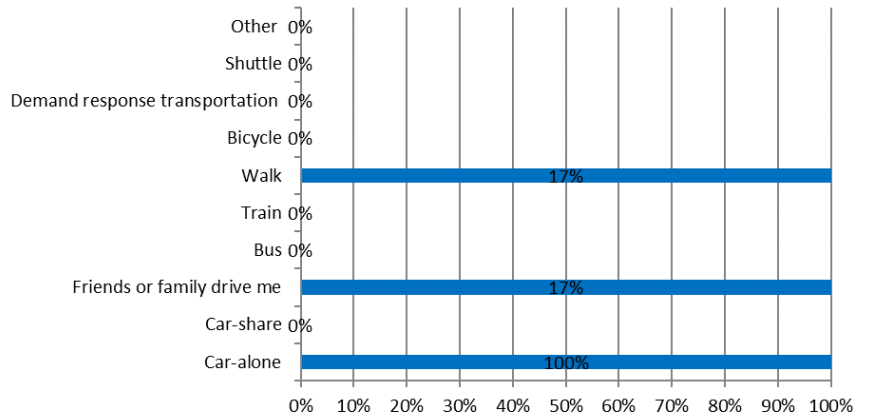


**DATA**

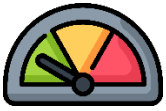
LTS Rating	LTS Rating Description	Population Class
LTS 1	<b>Lowest stress;</b> suitable for all riders	Kids and Beginners
LTS 2	<b>Lower stress;</b> suitable for adults with some experience	Willing but Wary Riders
LTS 3	<b>Moderate stress;</b> suitable for those who ride regularly	Comfortably Confident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

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?

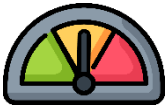


<b>COAST Routes (including ADA On-Demand Transit)</b>	0
<b>Wildcat Routes</b>	0
<b>Demand Response Transit</b>	Yes



## STRENGTHS

- **Access to the Spaulding Turnpike** – Milton has two exits off Route 16, which provide access to the Seacoast and White Mountains. This also increases access for resident commuting, and more visitors coming to Town.
- **Community Rides** – “The Alliance for Community Transportation (ACT) offers curb-to-curb non-emergency medical transportation called Community Rides. Community Rides is open to older adults (60+) or individuals with a qualifying disability who live within ACT's 38-town service area, which includes Milton. Trips are provided only to destinations within the 38-town service area as well. Community Rides is meant to serve as a "provider of last resort" for people who aren't eligible for other services such as COAST ADA Paratransit, Portsmouth Senior Transportation, or Rockingham Nutrition & Meals on Wheels Senior Shuttle.”<sup>iii</sup>
- **Two distinct compact village areas with services** – Milton and Milton Mills both have established centers with services that require less vehicle miles for those services. Within a 2-mile strip of Route 125 you can access the Town Hall, elementary and middle/high school, restaurants, a church, the American Legion, a gas station, fire and rescue, and the town beach. In Milton Mills, you can access the library, post office, Ira Miller’s General Store, a church, Waumpeck Park, and the Music Mill in a four-block radius.



## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increased and affordable public transportation or rideshare** – With the aging population, residents vocalized the need for increased public transportation options that are affordable. While COAST Bus provides transportation to surrounding communities like Farmington and Rochester, it does not serve Milton. Reliable transportation options are important for those that do not drive alone. This could be visualized in creative ways like network of volunteer drivers or rideshare for seniors, and the community in general, or by leveraging ridesharing options through resources like the CommuteSmart NH online and mobile app.
- **Sidewalk improvements** – There are opportunities to improve the Town’s current sidewalk network like those between Milton Pond Park and up to the old Marina/across from Dunkin’ Donuts. Alternative transportation and ride sharing options – It is challenging to get an Uber or Lyft ride in Barrington. Where these aren’t realistic options, there are alternatives volunteer rideshare programs, or promoting carpool matching on the CommuteSmart NH Mole and Web App.

“TRANSPORTATION IS IMPORTANT,  
ESPECIALLY FOR THE ELDERLY. MORE  
BUS SERVICES, ESPECIALLY NORTH OF  
DOVER, IS A REAL NEED.”

## 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.”iv

### DATA

#### Housing Stock

■ Single family ■ Multi-family ■ Mobile Home



#### Own vs Rent



**1,811** total housing units in Milton.



### STRENGTHS

- **Affordable housing options** - According to the CHAT online survey 33% of respondents would stay in Town due to good and affordable housing. There are more affordable options for those looking to buy a home in comparison with nearby Dover and Rochester.
- **Variety of housing types** – According to the 2019 ACS 74% of housing stock is single family, 10 % is multi-family and 16% is manufactured housing. Homeowners account for 88%, where 12% rent.



### OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increase in affordable housing stock** – There could be a greater variety of housing options at different prices considering that 17.63% of Milton residents are considered low income.
- **Increased housing options for the aging population** – There are currently no options for assisted living, nursing homes, and independent senior living in Town.
- **More lodging for visitors to the Town** - There is limited lodging, including very limited short-term rentals, for those visiting Town. More lodging could entice tourism and visitors.

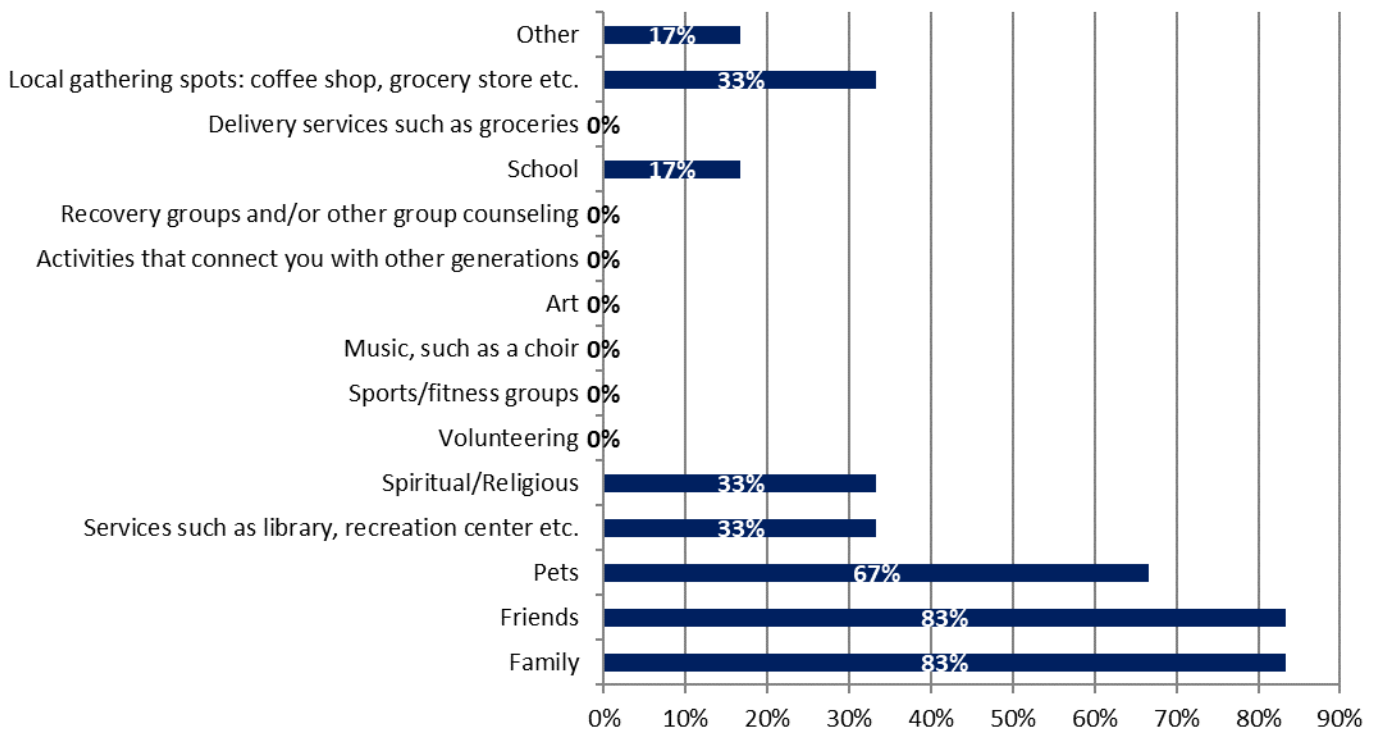
“THERE SHOULD BE MORE OPTIONS FOR 55+ WHILE MAINTAINING THE RURAL SETTING, [MILTON IS] RUNNING OUT OF ROOM “

**LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #4 – SOCIAL PARTICIPATION**

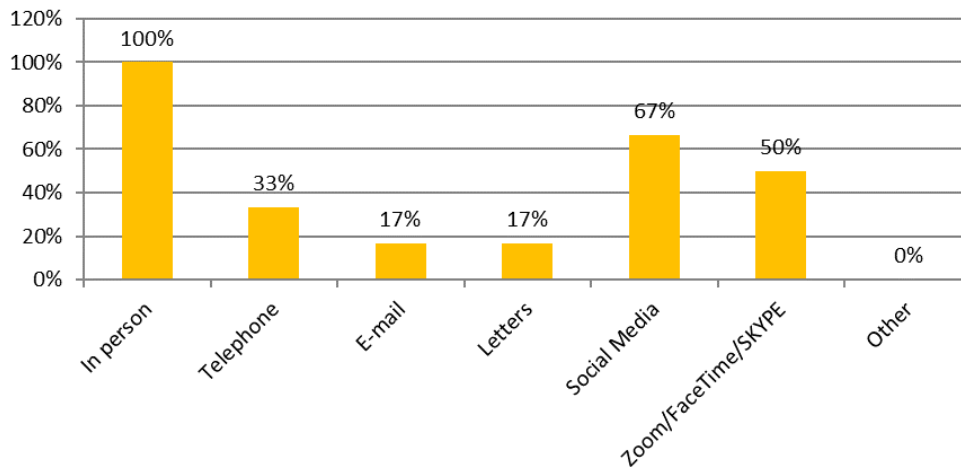
“Regardless of a person’s age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combated by having opportunities to socialize and the availability of accessible, affordable and fun social activities.”<sup>v</sup>

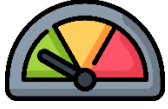
**DATA**

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



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

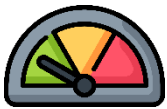




## STRENGTHS

- **Milton Recreation Department** – This town’s recreation department regularly sponsors many social events for various age groups such as the Winter Carnival, Summer Kick Off, and Trunk or Treat at the Milton Town Beach.
- **Social outreach efforts** – The Recreation Department does a good job encouraging social participation by engaging via internet and print media. The Recreation Department has a Facebook page where it posts regularly to an audience of ~1,000.
- **The Milton Free Public Library** – This public institution is an important community service. It holds various events like an annual gingerbread contest, Lego club, and outdoor story time.

“THE TOWN’S RECREATION DEPARTMENT DOES [A] GOOD JOB”



## OPPORTUNITIES

- **More community activities** – There could be more activities for the community to socially engage with each other. There could be potential for the Town’s Recreation Department to partner with local grassroots tourism initiative Explore Moose Mountains on new events.
- **Regional activities for seniors** – There is a need for regional activities geared towards senior populations. The Recreation Department does hold senior bingo and regular senior meals, but there is an opportunity to increase programming for seniors.
- **Revitalization of Milton Mills** – This could provide for unique tourism and social participation opportunities if it were envisioned through things like building a brewery and opening a bed and breakfast.
- **Rehabilitation and envisioning of the area’s “small town” attraction** – Promote Milton’s small-town attractions to entice visitors. This service is currently provided by Explore Moose Mountains (EMM), a grassroots initiative to promote THE WONDERFUL in Milton and surrounding towns. The Town could further leverage EMM’s services.

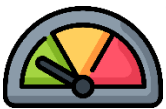
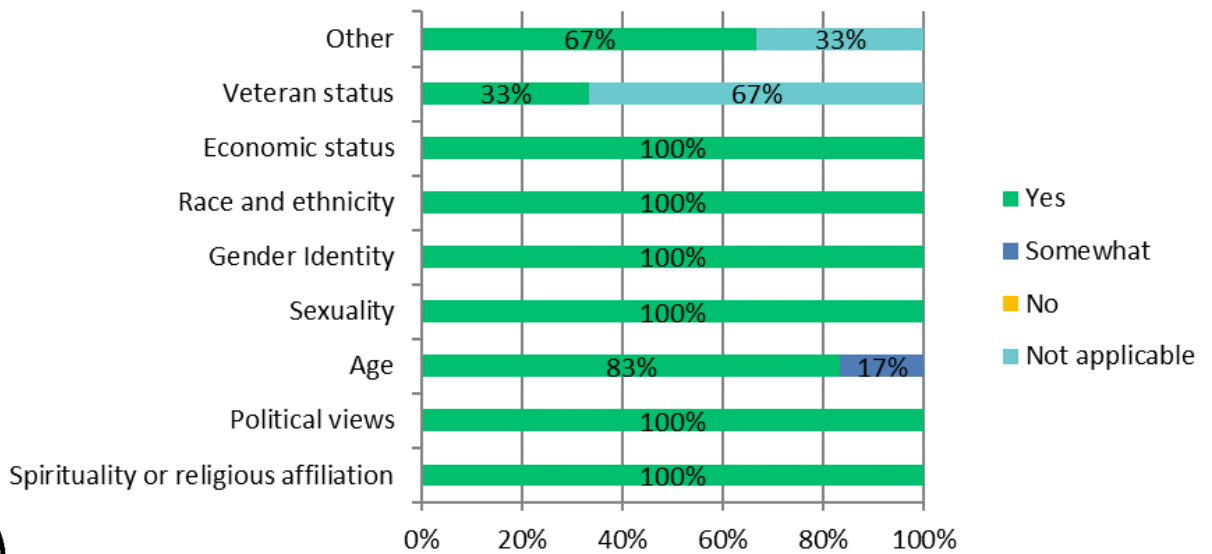
“[MILTON NEEDS] MORE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES FOR SENIORS. MILTON CURRENTLY HAS NO PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES FOR SENIORS.”

## 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.”<sup>vi</sup>

### DATA

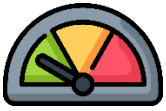
## Do you feel accepted in your community with regards to:



### STRENGTHS

- **Acceptance in the Community** - Residents feel accepted in terms of the spirituality, politics, age, sexuality, race, and economic status in Milton, as expressed on the CHAT online survey.
- **Strong Recreation Department** – This department is socially inclusive, getting the word out for events for all age groups. Milton Recreation holds senior bingo, and lots of family events like Breakfast with Santa and an annual Easter Egg Hunt.

“THERE IS A NEED FOR REGIONAL ACTIVITIES GEARED TO SENIOR POPULATION, SUCH AS TRIPS, RECREATION, AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS.”



### OPPORTUNITIES

- **Plan senior trips and events** – There is a need for more activities for senior activities considering that 19% of the Town’s population is over 65.
- **Intergenerational connections** – There is a missed opportunity for events that focus on bringing together older and younger generations. Clubs or groups could encourage youth to interact with senior populations.

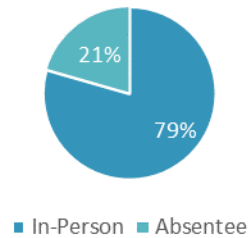
### LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #6 – WORK AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

“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.”<sup>vii</sup>

### DATA

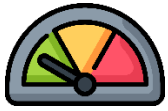
<b>Income</b>	Median Household Income	\$70,788
	Income Inequality (Gini Index)	0.35
	Low income households	17.62%
	High income households	2.70%

### Ballots Cast



**651** total jobs in Milton.

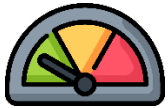
\* This data is from the 2020 general election



## STRENGTHS

“MORE EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS  
WOULD HELP ALLEVIATE CONCERNS  
ABOUT GROWING OLDER IN MILTON”

- **Proximity to jobs** - According to the CHAT online survey, residents of Milton feel like they have access and proximity to jobs. Milton has two exits off Route 16, which provides access to the Seacoast and White Mountains. This also increases access for resident commuting, and more visitors coming to Town.
- **Emma Ramsey Center** - This building is a hub of civic engagement and is utilized by many civic and social groups like the Recreation Committee.
- **Voter Participation** - 67% of registered voters from Milton voted in the last presidential election.
- **Educational events** - The town hold's opportunities for education and civic engagement, like the “A Local Timber Harvest Workshop” held in Dec. 2021.



## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increased employment options** – There is the potential for more employment options in Town. Currently the largest businesses in Town are Index Packaging (157 employees), the Town of Milton (132 employees), and the Milton School District (115 Employees).
- **Need for a greater workforce population** – Businesses in Milton are looking to hire new people and need a workforce with certain skillset. The Town could encourage area businesses to connect with training programs at the Rochester campus of Great Bay Community College.
- **Zoning adjustments for business** - Zoning and local regulations are seen by some to be barriers for new businesses. There is an opportunity for modified zoning to allow more business in town, and the Economic Development Committee has a goal to, “Encourage a positive regulatory environment towards business”<sup>viii</sup>

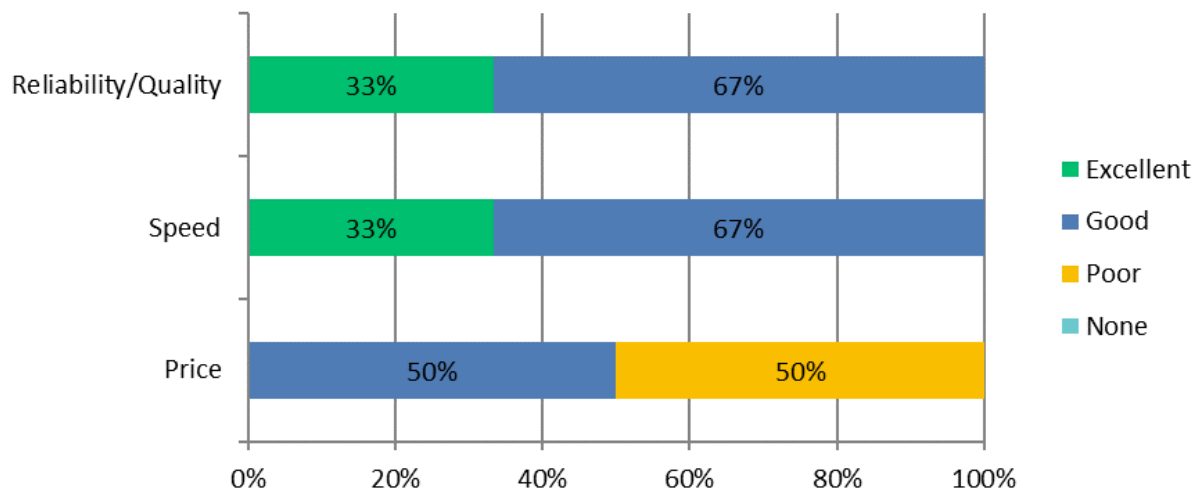


## LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #7 – COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

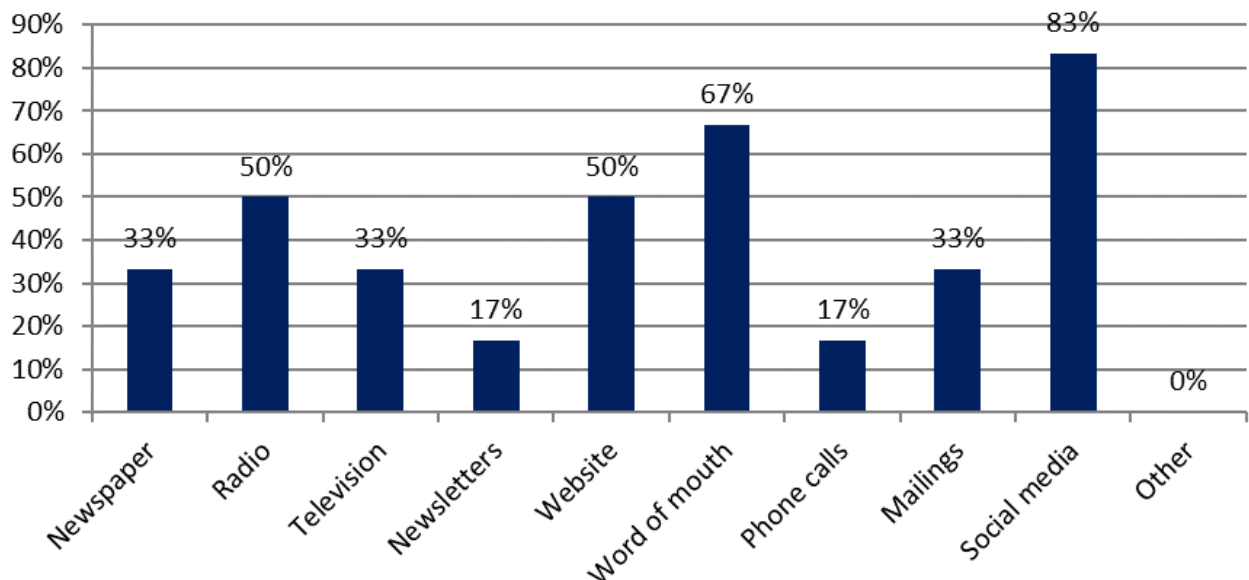
“We now communicate in ways few could have imagined a decade ago. Age-friendly communities recognize that information needs to be shared through a variety of methods since not everyone is tech-savvy, and not everyone has a smartphone or home-based access to the internet.”<sup>ix</sup>

### DATA

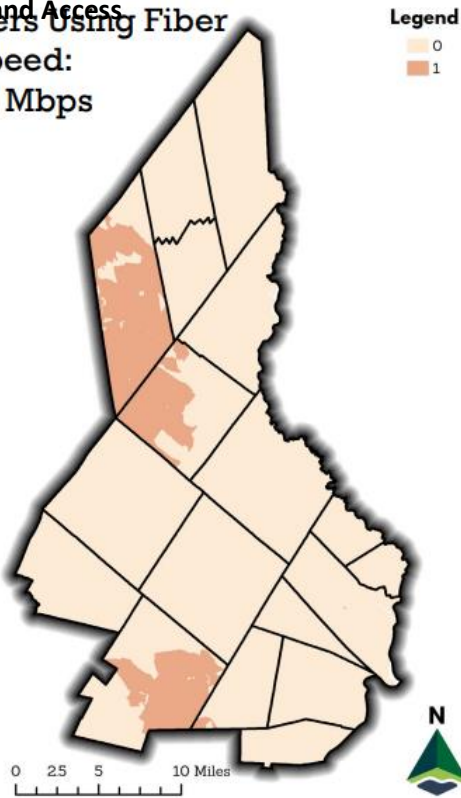
How would you rate your internet access in regard to? Please select none if you do not have internet access.



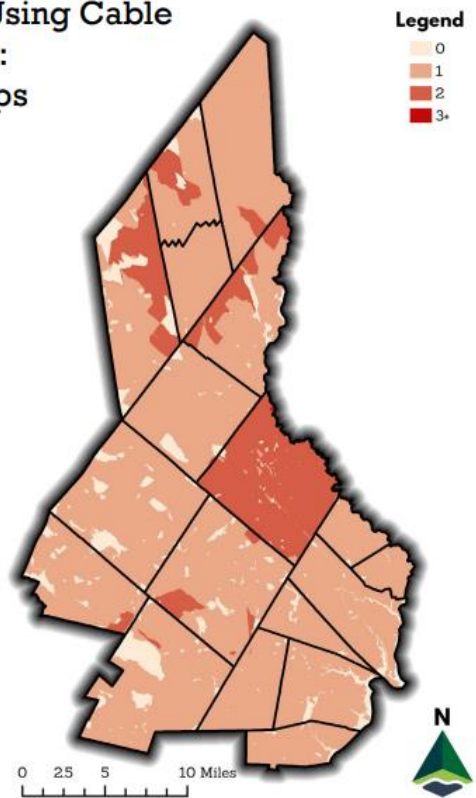
How do you learn about community news and activities? Check all that apply.



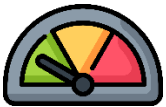
**Broadband Access  
Providers Using Fiber  
Min. Speed:  
100/20 Mbps**



**Providers Using Cable  
Min. Speed:  
100/20 Mbps**



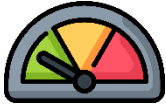
**“THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE COMMUNICATION WITH SENIOR RESIDENTS.”**



**STRENGTHS**

- **Reliable internet** –As expressed on the CHAT online survey, 99% of residents say they have good or excellent internet speeds.
- **Facebook town groups**– While not maintained or interacted with by the Town, town Facebook groups like “Milton NH Community News” and “Our Milton home “prove to be popular sources of what is going on in Milton.
- **Town Recreation Department Facebook page** – The Town’s Recreation Department maintains an active Facebook page.
- **The Milton Town Gazette** – The town’s monthly newsletter covers community news, events, workshops, gathering, meeting notices among other information.

- **Monthly reports from Town departments** - To increase communication between residents and municipal department heads, each department releases a monthly report to the Board of Selectmen, by their second meeting of the month. Residents may find these reports on the Town of Milton Website.<sup>x</sup>



## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Text or phone alerts** - This could be useful for important news updates from the community, and especially for times like the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Increased communication with senior residents** – Find an appropriate medium for having stronger communications between the town and senior residents.
- **Regional news source** – Milton and surrounding towns (Farmington, Wakefield, Middleton, etc.) could share resources and collaborate to share local news.
- **Info in a central community location** - There could be a central location for people to get information, like a bulletin board in the Town center. This could complement the letter sign with info outside Town Hall.
- **Better visibility for existing business** – Towns could help share information about businesses in town. This is another opportunity for the Town to leverage the 6,000+ followers that Explore Moose Mountains (EMM) has on its Facebook and Instagram accounts. EMM is providing this service currently.
- **Internet upgrades** – While residents see the internet as reliable, there are opportunities for residents to have better, more reliable broadband services.

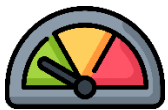
## LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #8 – COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES

“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.”<sup>xi</sup>

### DATA

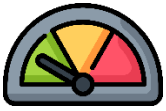
Healthcare and Aging Services	Number of Sites
Assisted Living Sites	0
Nursing Homes	0
Senior Centers	0
Primary Care Providers	0
Hospitals	0
Community Health Centers	0
Home Health Agencies	4
Memory Cafes	0
Dementia Support Group	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>

Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	1
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	5
Libraries	2
Medical and Health Care Facilities	2
Governmental Services	2
Non-Governmental Services	0
Fire and Police Stations	3
Schools	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>



### STRENGTHS

- **The Milton Free Public Library** – This public institution is an important community service. It holds programming like a children’s clothing swap, provides free services for downloading eBooks, provides discounted museum passes, alongside free books, and computer access.
- **Community Partners** – A designated Community Mental Health Center, CP offers a wide variety of behavioral health and developmental services across the lifespan to individuals and families living in Strafford County.
- **Milton Recreation Department** – Provides services to seniors through programming like its senior lunches and dinners. They also promote services in neighboring communities, like Rochester via the Milton Town Gazette.



## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Increased medical services** -There are currently only a few medical services in the area. 66% of residents that took the CHAT online survey were concerned about the lack of medical services in Town.
- **Food delivery** – This type of service could be increased and could be beneficial in response to the pandemic.
- **Medical center in the area** – There is a need for a local medical center.

## **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.

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

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

<sup>iii</sup> <https://communityrides.org/community-rides-0>

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

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

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

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

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.miltonnh-us.com/economic-development>

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

<sup>x</sup> [https://www.miltonnh-us.com/sites/g/files/vyhli916/f/uploads/2021gazette\\_september.pdf](https://www.miltonnh-us.com/sites/g/files/vyhli916/f/uploads/2021gazette_september.pdf)

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