

CHAT

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY AGING TRANSITIONS

Community ASSESSMENT

————— FOR THE —————

TOWN of SOMERSWORTH

GREATER SEACOAST COMMUNITY HEALTH



PUBLISHED: OCT 2022

Table of Contents

Introduction and Framework.....	3
CHAT Outreach Process	3
Community Zoom Forums	4
Survey.....	4
Postcard Art Activity	4
Community Profile	4
Livability Principle #1 - Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	6
Data	6
Strengths.....	7
Opportunities.....	7
Livability Principle #2 - Transportation	8
Data	8
Strengths.....	9
Opportunities.....	9
Livability Principle #3 – Housing	10
Data	10
Strengths.....	10
Opportunities.....	10
Livability Principle #4 – Social Participation.....	11
Data	11
Strengths.....	12
Opportunities.....	12
Livability Principle #5 – Respect and Inclusion	13
Data	13
Strengths.....	13
Opportunities.....	14
Livability Principle #6 – Work and Civic Engagement	14

Data	14
Strengths	15
Opportunities	15
Livability Principle #7 – Communication and Information.....	15
Data	15
Strengths	17
Opportunities	17
Livability Principle #8 – Community and Health Services	17
Data	17
Strengths	18
Opportunities	18
Next steps	18

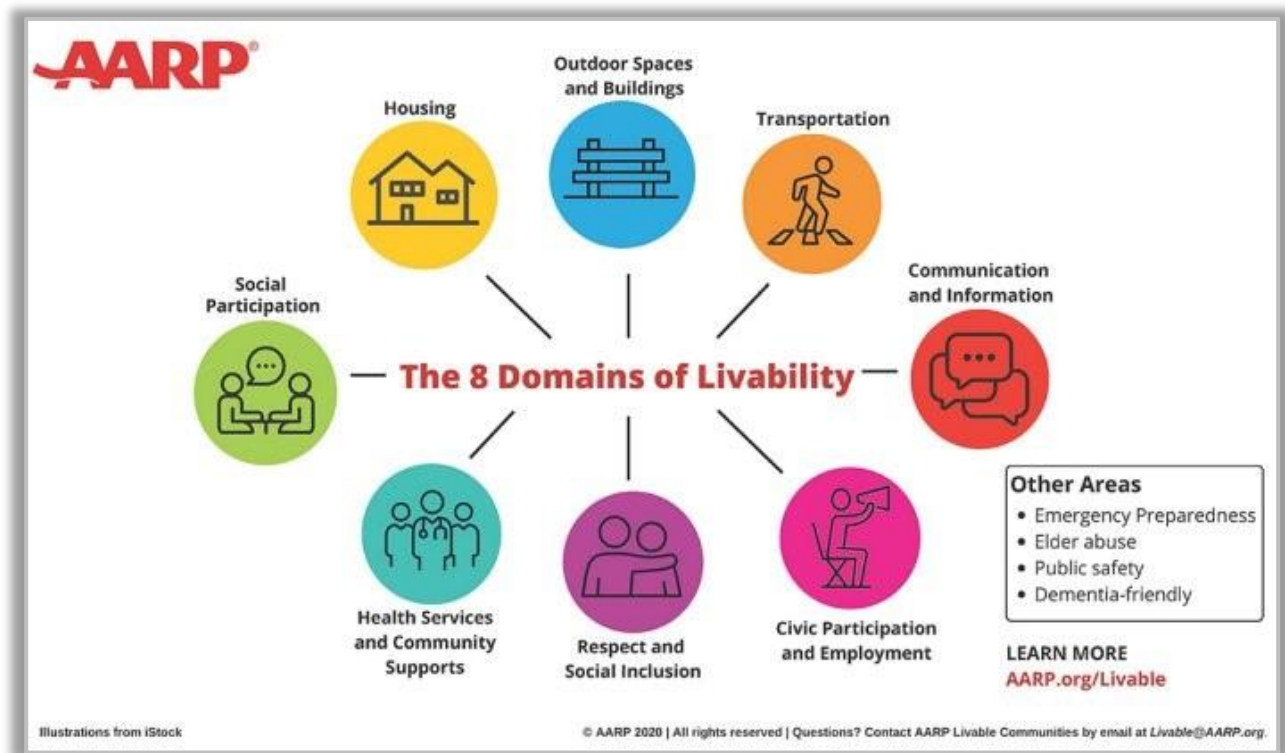
INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK

[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 Somersworth on June 16th, 2021.

SURVEY

Launched in early 2021, the CHAT online survey was distributed through multiple regional outlets, directly to residents via Facebook postings, through the community forum, in the City's weekly newsletter and at Covid-19 vaccine clinics, and between town staff and residents. The response rate was exceptional, with engagement from 32 respondents who live, play, and work in Rochester.

POSTCARD ART ACTIVITY

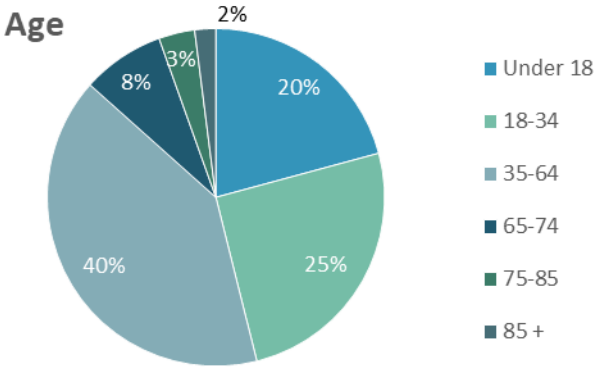
With the pandemic, SRPC and SCPHN brainstormed creative ways to engage people and give them a different outlet for expressing themselves. SRPC staff designed and printed postcards that prompted individuals to draw (paint, collage, etc.) or write what it means to age as you play, live or work in each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

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Somersworth is part of Tri-City area along with Dover and Rochester. The population as of 2020 is 11,844. The Hilltop City is the smallest of the Tri-Cities and the smallest geographic area of the thirteen cities in New Hampshire. Somersworth became a city in 1893. Throughout the 19th century Somersworth's location on the Salmon Falls River was home to carpentry, marble, textiles, sawmills and piping industries. Although the city's population declined as it entered the 20th century, it has found new life as a diverse community and home to the Little Indonesia Community Center. Like many New England communities, Somersworth in the past, relied on one big employer. Home to General Electric for more than 70 years, the city was dubbed the "meter capital of the world." In 1964, the city boasted the highest average annual wage in the state. As the workforce at GE dwindled, from north of 3,000 to south of 300 by the time it sold the plant in 2015, the city's economic fortune followed a similar route. Today, Somersworth boasts a historic downtown surrounded by residential neighborhoods. The downtown area is the focus of many revitalization efforts and has a vibrant and diverse community. It has residents of all ages, a strong community energy, access to shopping and transportation and healthcare and an abundance of public recreation areas.

https://healthyagingdatareports.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NHCommunityProfiles/NH_Towncode217_Somersworth.pdf

Total Population	11844
Median Age	36.9
Total Housing Units	5127
Number of Jobs in Town	6,150
Life expectancy	78.1 - 79.1



Sex



LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #1 - OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

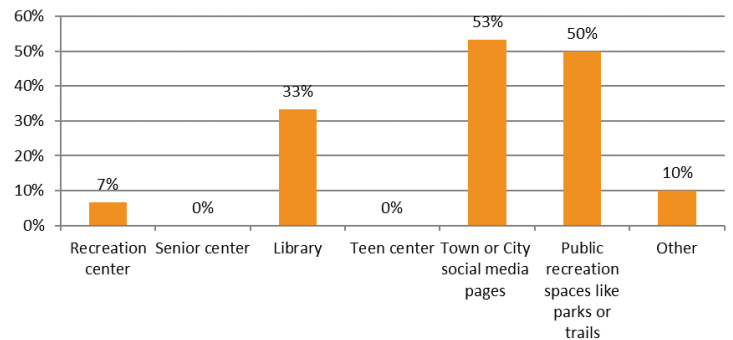
“People need public places to gather — indoors and out. Green spaces, seating and accessible buildings (elevators, zero-step entrances, staircases with railings) can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages.”¹

DATA

Recreation Site Type	Number of Sites
Beach	0
Boating Access	1
Community Garden	0
Disc Golf Course	0
Dog Park	1
Fishing Access	0
Golf Course	0
Gym	0
Open Space and Trails	5
Park	3
Playground	5
Pool	0
Rail Trail	0
Skatepark	0
Skating Rink	1
Sledding Hill	1
Sports Fields and Courts	10
Total	27

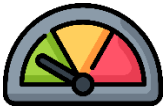
Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	0
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	4
Libraries	5
Medical and Health Care Facilities	6
Governmental Services	5
Non-Governmental Services	0
Fire and Police Stations	2
Schools	7
Total	29

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



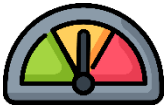
11% of land in Somersworth is conserved.





STRENGTHS

- **Character** – Unique and historic buildings add to the character of downtown Somersworth.
- **Public Library** - The Somersworth public library is a great gathering spot with a lot of resources.
- **Schools all open for public use** - The Town's schools are used for social activities and community events.
- **Community gym** - The Somersworth Housing Association has a community gym.
- **Recreation options** - Somersworth has multiple parks including a dog-park, noble pines playground and ball fields, the Riverwalk, Jules Bisson Park and playground, and Malley Farm.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Advertising Recreation** - Some additional advertising of the many recreation spaces would be helpful, as some can be hidden. Wayfinding signage was noted as a recent goal and may be useful for this purpose.
- **Highlight and utilize the river more** - The Salmon Falls River is an integral part of the community and could be highlighted better. Enhancing the Riverwalk or creating a paddle dock may increase usage.
- **Public Gym** - Somersworth currently has no public gym, investing in a gym would provide a benefit to the whole community.
- **ADA accessibility** - Most buildings are accessible, but the library is not, the City is currently working with Place Works studio in Portsmouth to create a design plan to make it more accessible which would be helpful and allow access to more residents.

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

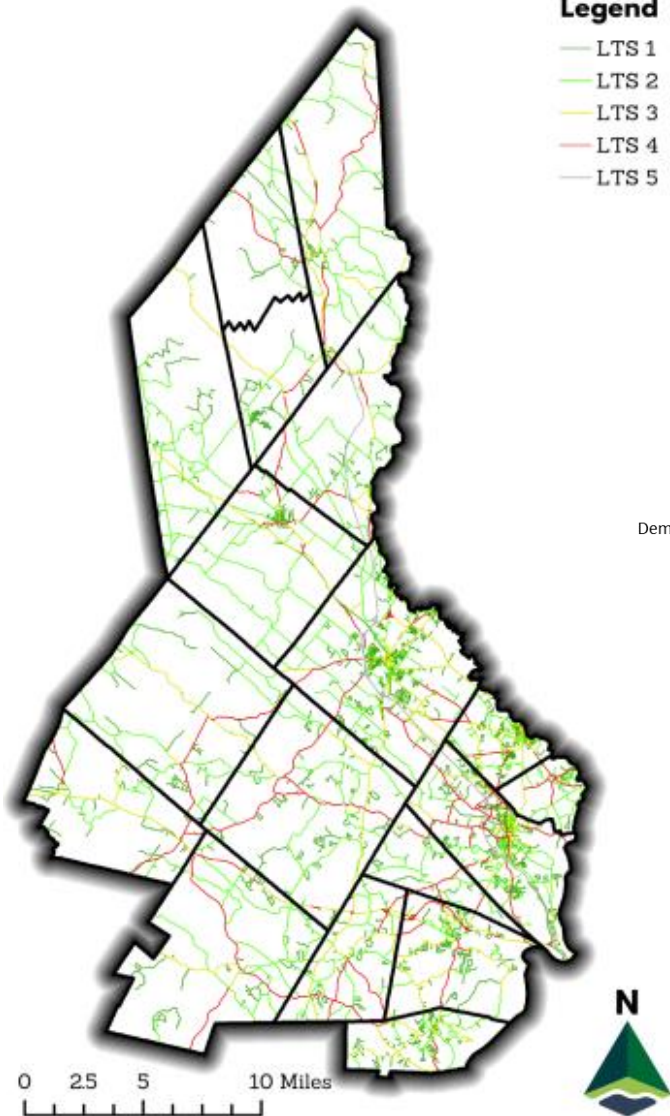
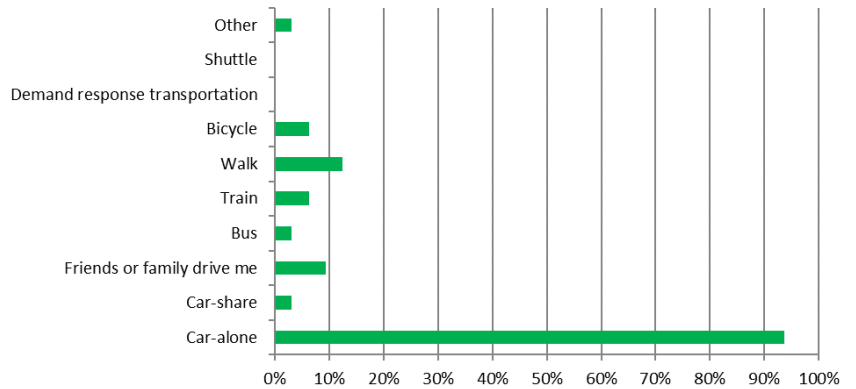
Legend

- LTS 1
- LTS 2
- LTS 3
- LTS 4
- LTS 5

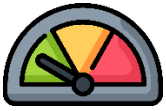
LTS Rating	LTS Rating Description	Population Class
LTS 1	Lowest stress; suitable for all riders	Kids and Beginners
LTS 2	Lower stress; suitable for adults with some experience	Willing but Wary Riders
LTS 3	Moderate stress; suitable for those who ride regularly	Comfortably Confident Riders
LTS 4	High 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?

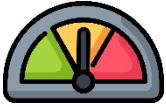


COAST Routes (including ADA On-Demand Transit)	3
Wildcat Routes	0
Demand Response Transit	Yes



STRENGTHS

- **Transit Access** - Somersworth has access to the COAST bus and benefits from large box stores on Route 9 which is on the bus route.
- **Location** - Somersworth is connected easily to other towns and cities.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increased Transportation for elderly residents** - More elderly transportation to and from stores, hospitals, and doctor's offices would benefit the community.
- **Increased walkability** - Some sidewalks and handicap ramps need work to make the city more walkable.
- **Public Seating** - Other than downtown there aren't public benches for residents to either congregate or rest on. More public benches and seating areas would help this.
- **Public Restrooms** - Other than restaurants and public buildings there are no public restrooms. Installing additional public restrooms would help with both residents and visitors.

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

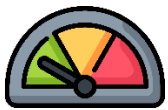
■ Single family ■ Multi-family ■ Mobile Home



Own vs Rent



5,127 total housing units in Somersworth.



STRENGTHS

- **Varied Housing Options** - Somersworth has a good mix of available housing, and some residents noted that it is more affordable than surrounding communities.
- **Somersworth Housing Authority** – The Somersworth Housing Association is appreciated for their service to the City’s residents.
- **Senior Living Options** - There is a variety of senior living options for the aging population to choose from.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increased market rate housing** - Some residents noted that they would like to see more market-rate housing.
- **Opportunities to rehabilitate older buildings** - Somersworth has a lot of older buildings that could be rehabilitated. The City is working to bring developers into the downtown area; some survey respondents said that increasing attention on old buildings instead of new builds may help with affordability.

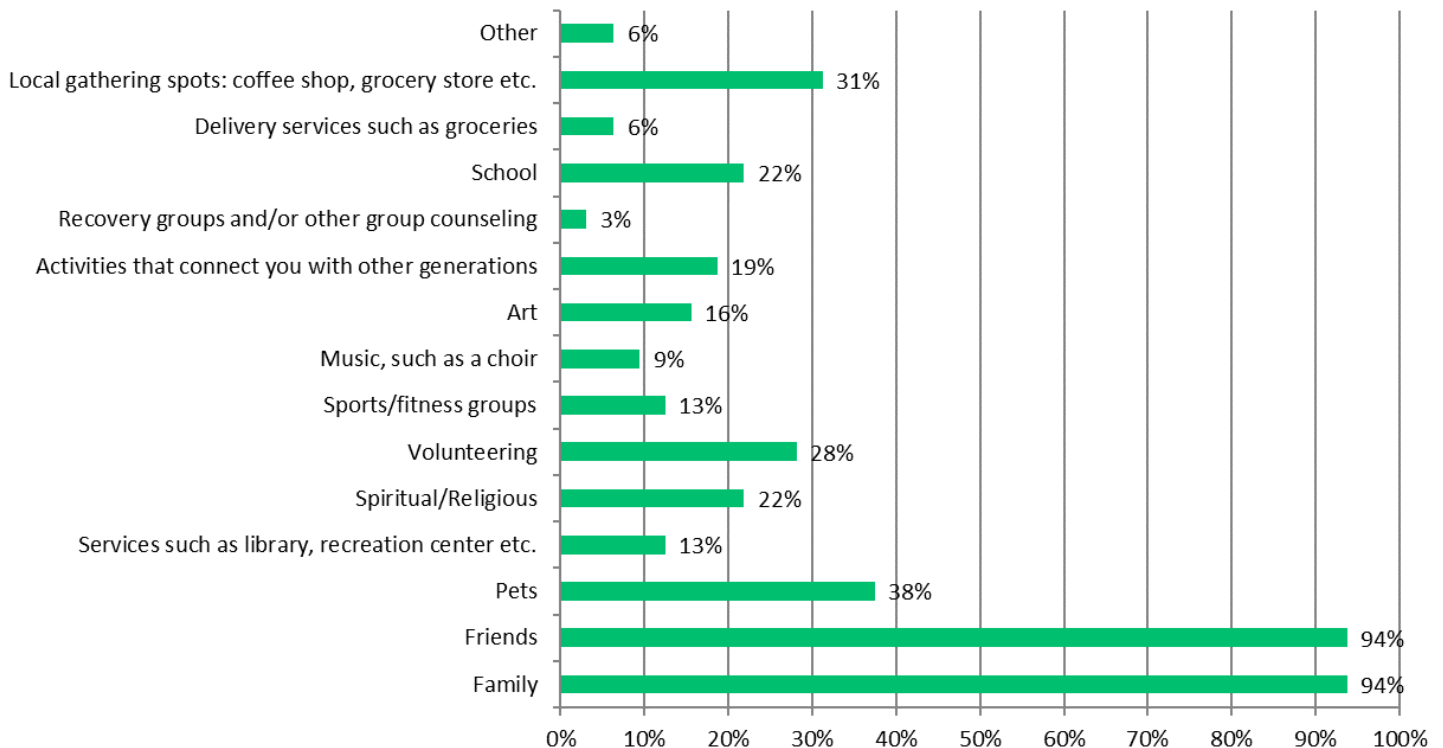
- **Finding new sources of revenue** - Increasingly high taxes can cost people their homes or prevent them from moving to Somersworth. Finding a way to give tax relief particularly to aging residents would benefit the community.
- **Increased housing options** - Some affordable housing geared toward the elderly would be helpful, especially in more central locations so that they could walk or take the bus.
- **Affordability** - Over 50% of survey respondents stated that housing affordability is their main concern in staying in the community.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #4 – SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

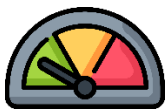
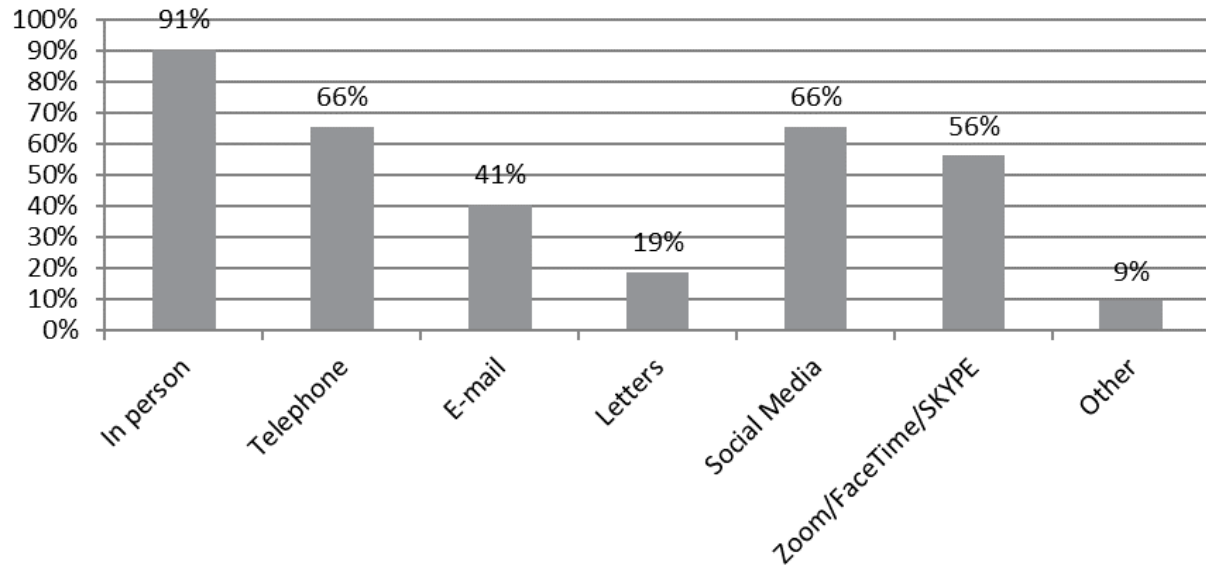
“Regardless of a person’s age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combated by having opportunities to socialize and the availability of accessible, affordable and fun social activities.”^{iv}

DATA

What are your main social interactions?
Check all that apply



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



STRENGTHS

- **A lot of diverse community volunteers** - People are engaged in volunteering or boards and commissions, a lot more in comparison to cities of comparable size.
- **Community Passion** - residents are passionate about the City the schools and Somersworth Youth Connect do a lot of volunteering and community building.
- **Good local community organizations** - Somersworth is rich with active community organizations and holds many community events every year. Some examples include the Food Truck Festival, the Children's Festival, the Pumpkin Festival, the Indonesian Festival, and the Christmas Parade.
- **Public Spaces** - With Covid a lot of people walk through the cemeteries. During spring, summer and fall, more people are on the river in kayaks and canoes.



OPPORTUNITIES

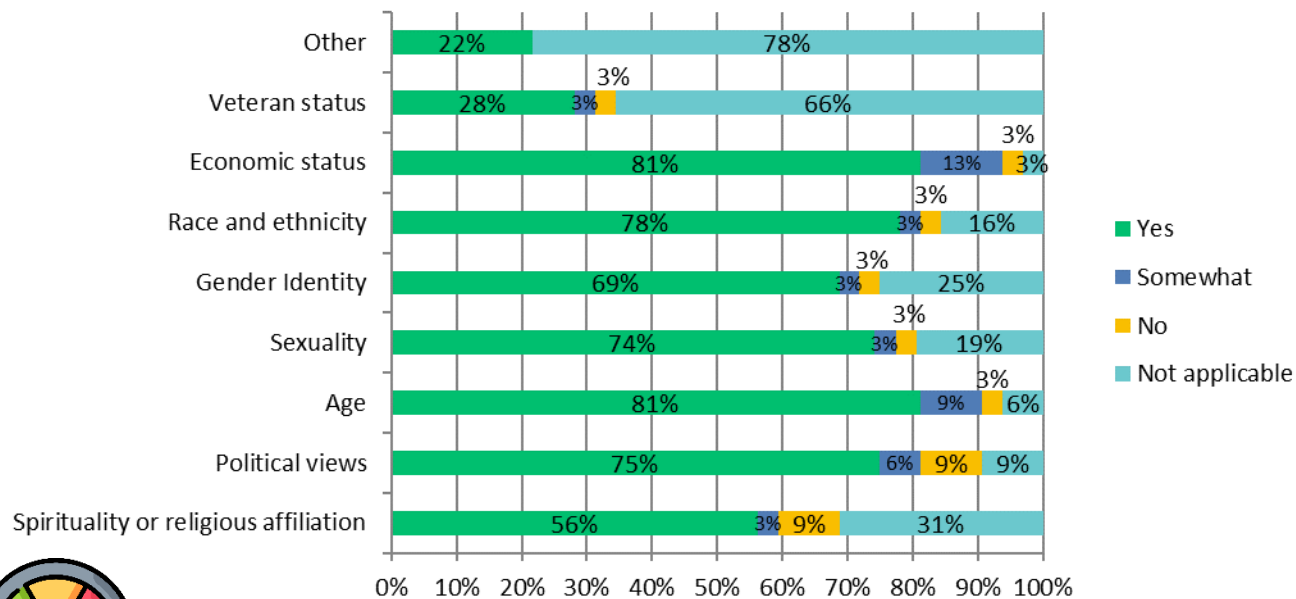
- **Increased organized activities** - More focused programming and organized activities for residents of all ages would be appreciated. (survey)
- **Communications about organized activities** - increased advertising and communication about local activities could get more people involved (survey)

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

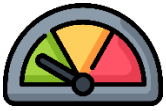
DATA

Do you feel accepted in your community with regards to:



STRENGTHS

- **Diverse Population** - Somersworth has a large Indonesian population that have become very engaged in the community. The first “Little Indonesia” welcoming center and storefront was opened in 2020. (Forum)
- **LGBTQ+ Population** - The City is recognized as a leader in inclusion for this population and the mayor and many council people are included in this population. (survey)
- **Community Celebrations** - There are many organized community celebrations year-round. Some of these are the Indonesian Festival and Flag raising for Pride month. (forum)



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increase Communication about Diverse Events** - More visibility and communication about community events shared with a greater population would increase inclusion and participation for all community members.
- **Utilize Existing Community Groups to Share Information** - There are already existing community groups and networks that can be used to share information and highlight opportunities for community engagement. (forum)

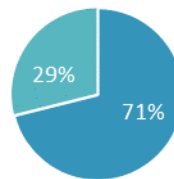
LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #6 – WORK AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

“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	\$66,663
	Income Inequality (Gini Index)	0.37
	Low income households	19.38%
	High income households	1.60%

Ballots Cast

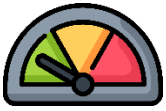


■ In-Person ■ Absentee



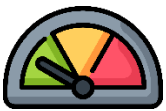
6,.150 total jobs in Somersworth.

* This data is from the 2020 general election



STRENGTHS

- **Good Location** - Somersworth is well located to afford residents a wealth of employment opportunities. It is close to the seacoast, has a number of major employers such as Velcro, Marketbasket, Walmart, regional hospitals, and allows for workers to travel to Boston easily. (Survey)
- **Great Community** - There is a close community that looks out for one another. It is family friendly and there a lot of community volunteers, both young and older. (Forum)
- **School Community** - Many survey respondents mentioned the school system and community around schools as reasons for choosing Somersworth as a place to live. (survey)



OPPORTUNITIES

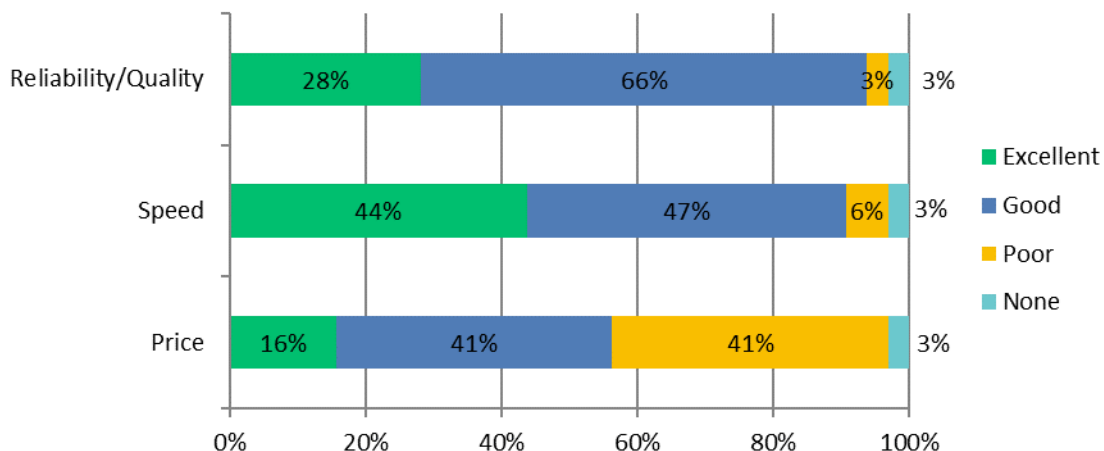
Student Involvement- Somersworth youth connection does a lot of volunteering with students. If there was a campaign to showcase the benefits of volunteering, it could go a long way to increasing the number of student volunteers.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #7 – COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

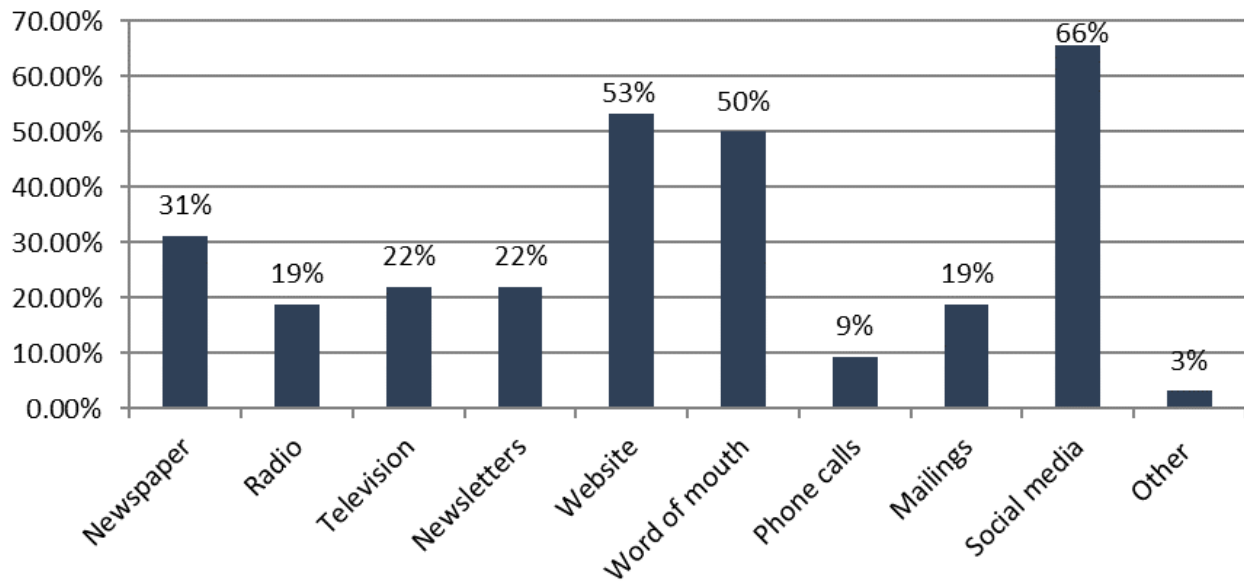
“We now communicate in ways few could have imagined a decade ago. Age-friendly communities recognize that information needs to be shared through a variety of methods since not everyone is tech-savvy, and not everyone has a smartphone or home-based access to the internet.”^{vii}

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.

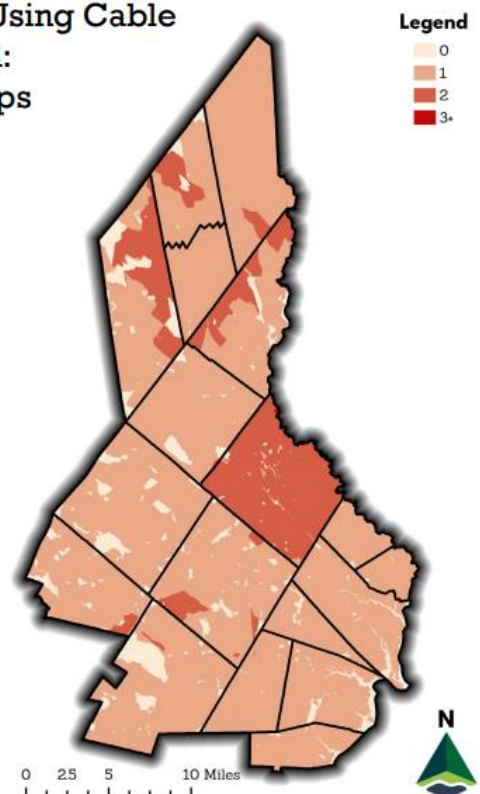


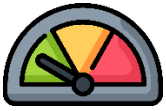
Broadband Access

Providers Using Fiber
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps



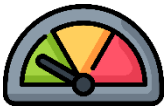
Providers Using Cable
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps





STRENGTHS

- **Newsletter that City Hall sends out** – keeps residents up to date on City happenings and is appreciated. (Forum)
- **Social Media local pages** - There are several Facebook community pages attached to Somersworth such as Somersworth Recreation, What’s Happening Now Somersworth? These all work to keep residents connected and informed. (Survey)



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Better Advertise Communications from the City** - Although the City sends out a newsletter, not everybody can access it because of internet either familiarity or lack of connection. If there were one person to do all the communication, it could be more consistent and reach more people.

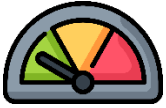
LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #8 – COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES

“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

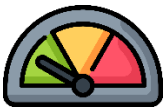
Healthcare and Aging Services	Number of Sites
Assisted Living Sites	1
Nursing Homes	1*
Senior Centers	0
Primary Care Providers	131*
Hospitals	0
Community Health Centers	0
Home Health Agencies	9
Memory Cafes	0
Dementia Support Group	0
Total	142*

Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	0
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	4
Libraries	5
Medical and Health Care Facilities	6
Governmental Services	5
Non-Governmental Services	0
Fire and Police Stations	2
Schools	7
TOTAL	29



STRENGTHS

- **Good location for health services** - Located In between two hospitals plus the “medical mile”. Somersworth has plenty of opportunity and access to all healthcare. (Survey)
- **Good access to excellent facilities** - Wentworth Douglas is part of Mass General and Goodwin Community Health provides excellent service for all residents (Survey)
- **Focus on youth care** - There are discussions of in school health care services that would further a healthier mission. Somersworth Youth Connection also works on this connection. (Forum)
- **Homeless population is recognized** - The City acknowledges this population and is actively trying to find ways to help them. They have opened a winter shelter with Dover and Rochester for the 21-22 Winter season with ongoing negotiations for a permanent one. (Survey)



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increase transportation options to health services**-Investing in transportation services particularly for the aging population would make this a more livable community.
- **Advertise Transportation Services**- Many services such as Triplink are not widely known about. A City campaign to raise awareness could be a huge help.

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>

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- 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>