

Potential Next Steps

Step 1—Conduct an inventory of your community’s existing resources. Communities tend to jump into creating new resources, but often existing assets can be utilized to meet your needs. Cast a wide net when thinking about your 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.

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

- ◆ What is working well but is underutilized?
- ◆ What is working well but is overutilized?
- ◆ 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?
- ◆ What else needs to be created?

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

- ◆ Specific—make sure your goals are specific and narrow for more effective planning.
- ◆ 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 your first project. While planning is important, completing a successful project helps to galvanize a volunteer group and build support among community members. Select a project that is low cost and relatively easy to implement.

Acknowledgments

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Portsmouth’s Age Friendly Community Assessment was guided by Portsmouth’s Assistant Recreation Director, Brinn Sullivan.

The project is guided at the regional level by a Regional Steering Committee made up of municipal appointees from the six assessment communities. The Steering Committee includes representatives from select boards, town administration, senior services, parks and recreation, public libraries, and planning and development. The committee also benefits from the expertise of a range of agencies focused on one or more of AARP’s Eight Domains of Livable Communities such as transportation, housing, respect and social inclusion, home care, and public health.



Portsmouth Age Friendly Community Survey

Planning for the needs of older residents now and into the future

What characteristics make Portsmouth a great place to grow up and grow old? What can Portsmouth do to better address the needs of older residents? In 2022 Portsmouth was one of six communities that worked with the Rockingham Planning Commission to conduct an Age Friendly Community Assessment with funding from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation and AARP NH.

The term “Age Friendly Community” was coined by AARP and is shorthand for communities that enable residents to thrive at every age and every stage of life. Age Friendly Communities are committed to supporting their youngest residents, oldest residents, and everyone in between; however, the focus of this project was on older residents. The assessment used a national model developed by AARP that considers Eight Domains of Livability for Age Friendly Communities, including transportation, housing, outdoor spaces and building, civic and social participation, respect and inclusion, communication, health and nutrition services, and work and volunteer opportunities.

Transportation | Health & Nutrition | Outdoor Spaces & Buildings | Social & Civic Engagement



Work & Civic Opportunities | Housing | Respect & Social Inclusion | Communication & Information

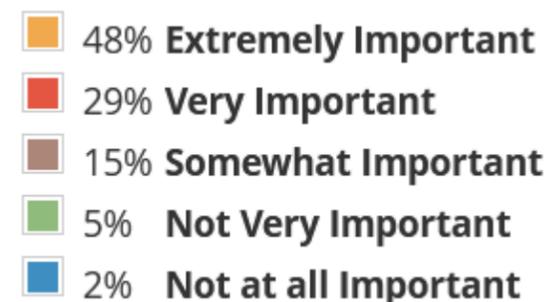
Why Does it Matter?

Portsmouth, Rockingham County, and our entire state have an aging population. According to the 2020 Census, NH is the second oldest state, 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% of the population in 2020 to over 28% by 2040. This will have impacts for workforce, housing, transportation, economic vitality, and community services.

Furthermore, findings from Portsmouth’s 2022 Age Friendly Communities survey show that residents wish to remain in the community as they age. 48% of respondents said it was “Extremely Important” to remain in Portsmouth in their 70s, 80s, and beyond while 29% answered that it was “Very Important.”

Survey Question 5. How important is it to remain in Portsmouth as you reach your 70s, 80s, and beyond?

Did you know that Portsmouth has the only dedicated senior center in the region? It’s run by a full time staff person and 6 part time employees, supported 100% by the City.



What Did We Learn?

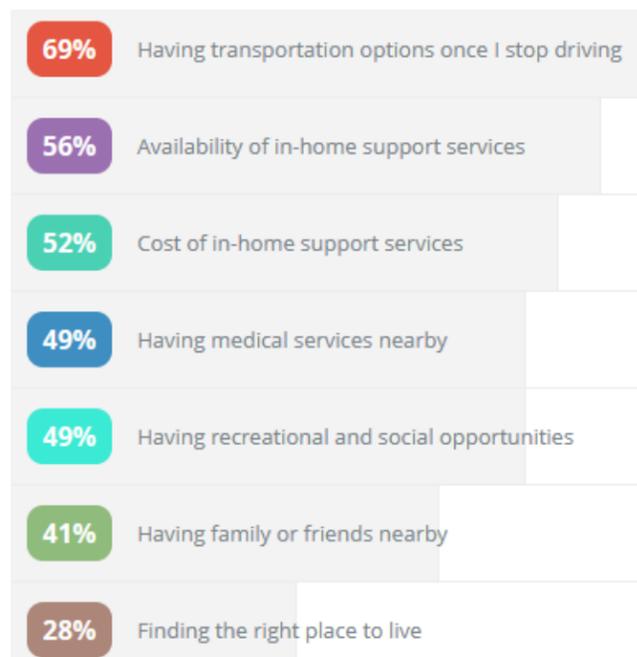
Portsmouth's Age Friendly Community Survey was adapted from a national model developed by AARP and included questions related to AARP's eight dimensions of Age Friendly Communities: transportation, housing, social engagement, outdoor spaces and buildings, work and civic engagement, respect and social inclusion, health and nutrition services, and information flow. The survey was available online and in paper format. There were 236 online responses and 54 paper surveys completed. Of the 290 people who responded, 3.9% were 54 years old or younger, 17% were 55-64, 38.3% were 65-74, 33.9% were 75-84, and 7% were 85 or older. 28.7% have lived in Portsmouth for 10 years or less and 24.3% have lived here for 41 or more years. Survey respondents were fairly evenly distributed across income levels and were representative of Portsmouth's population.

Survey Question 3. How would you rate Portsmouth as a place for people to live as older adults?



Image by Michael Roy from Pixabay

Survey Question 7. What concerns you most about growing older in Portsmouth?

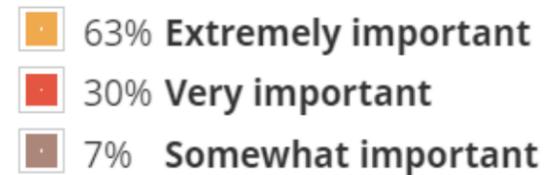


Key Theme—Transportation

- ◆ **57%** of survey respondents rated public transportation in Portsmouth as Fair or Poor. However, there are community-based transportation services available to residents. Portsmouth Senior Transportation is a service contracted by the City with their partner COAST to provide sustainable, safe, convenient, and comfortable transportation options to Portsmouth seniors and eligible adults with disabilities. COAST offers a variety of shared-ride transportation services operated by COAST staff. The survey responses suggest that more outreach should be done to make residents aware of these options.
- ◆ **91%** of survey respondents used their personal vehicle as their primary mode of travel. While this does represent the vast majority of participants, Portsmouth had the second lowest rate of respondents primarily using their personal vehicle behind Exeter at 81%. 97% of respondents in Fremont, 98% in Hampton, 99% in Stratham, and 99% in Hampstead reported using their personal vehicle as their primary mode of travel.
- ◆ **69%** of respondents were concerned about having transportation options once they stopped driving. This concern was consistent across all six assessment communities.
- ◆ **44%** of survey respondents rated sidewalks in Portsmouth as Fair or Poor. **52%** of respondents stated that bicycle safety in Portsmouth was Fair or Poor. Improvements to sidewalks and bicycle infrastructure would help residents to utilize these transportation options to a greater degree.

Key Theme—Housing & Senior Services

Survey Question 12. How important is it for you to live independently in your own home as an older adult?

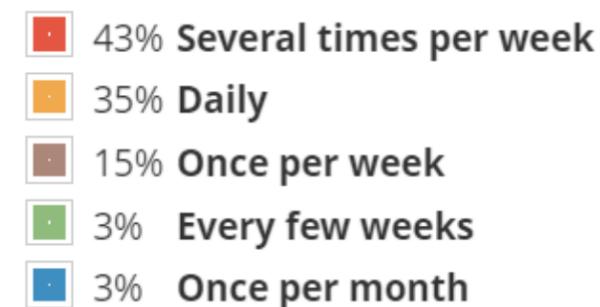


- ◆ **26%** said the amount of routine maintenance required on their home did not meet their needs very well or at all
- ◆ **56%** were concerned about the availability of in-home support services
- ◆ **52%** were concerned about the cost of these services
- ◆ Portsmouth is one of only a few communities in the region with a Housing Authority. As such, Portsmouth has a higher demand for senior housing because there is a lack of affordable options elsewhere.



Key Theme—Recreation & Social Opportunities

Survey Question 27. How often do you have contact with family & friends who you do not live with?



Survey Question 29. If you would like to have more social interaction, what prevents you from doing so?

- ◆ **28%** were unaware of activities/events that interest them
- ◆ **27%** stated scheduling conflicts
- ◆ **23%** were not interested in socializing more
- ◆ **15%** had no one to connect with
- ◆ **14%** stated mobility or health issues
- ◆ **13%** stated it was too costly
- ◆ **7%** stated lack of transportation was a barrier

Key Theme—Information Sharing, Leadership, and Communication

Survey Question 24. How do you get info about services & events in Portsmouth? (top 5 results)



Recommendations:

- ◆ Create a one-stop-shopping, central hub for information, such as a handbook of senior service organizations.
- ◆ Ensure that everyone has access to information by using both print and online communication methods.

