

CHAT

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY AGING TRANSITIONS

Community ASSESSMENT

FOR THE

CITY of DOVER

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
ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK	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.....	13
Opportunities.....	13
Livability Principle #5 – Respect and Inclusion	14
Data	14
Strengths.....	14
Opportunities.....	15

Livability Principle #6 – Work and Civic Engagement	15
Data	15
Strengths	16
Opportunities	16
Livability Principle #7 – Communication and Information.....	17
Data	17
Strengths	18
Opportunities	19
Livability Principle #8 – Community and Health Services	19
Data	19
Strengths	20
Opportunities	20
Next steps	20

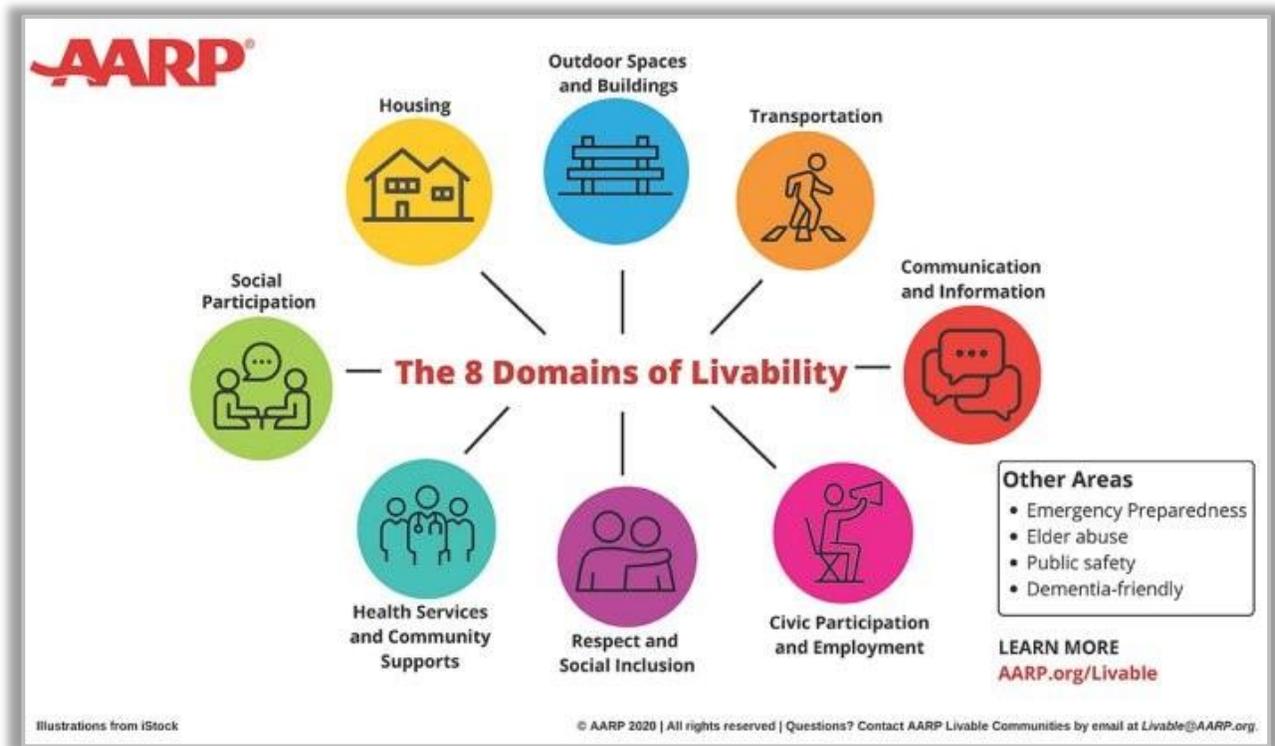
INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK

[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 robust community Zoom forum with Dover on March 25, 2021. This session allowed SRPC staff to receive valuable feedback from Dover residents and municipal volunteers.

SURVEY

Launched in early 2021, the CHAT online survey was distributed through multiple regional outlets, directly to Dover residents through social media, and shared with those who participated at the community Zoom forums. Dover also shared it via its weekly Dover Download e-newsletter. 179 Dover residents responded to the survey.

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, to the Dover Teen Center, 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 David Landy, SRPC Chair and city planning board member, and Donna Benton, city planner.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Dover is one of New Hampshire's youngest and most prosperous communities where its revitalized and thriving downtown reflects its history as a mill town. With a population of 31,795, the median age in Garrison City is 36.1, the youngest in the region outside of Durham (which is an outlier considering the UNH student population).

Dover is a vibrant city with a great sense of community encouraged through transparent communication from city government and multiple community events. The City maintains Facebook and Twitter accounts and sends out periodic updates like the Dover Download and a Planning e-newsletter.

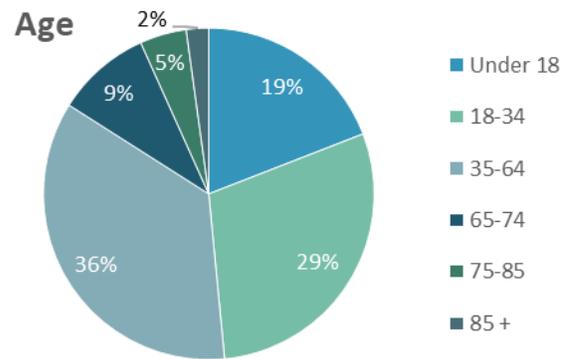
Dover's biggest event, Apple Harvest Day, sees thousands of attendees each year and on a more regular schedule the community is engaged by institutions like the Dover Public Library, Woodman Institute, Adult Learning Center, and its robust recreation program, to name a few.

A variety of housing options provide for those at different stages in their lives and the City is actively responding to the housing demand with creative approaches like adaptive reuse of old buildings. The school systems in Dover are high quality, including the City's new state of art high school which was built in 2018.

The City’s accessibility is noted by residents who comment on its walkability, the abundance of sidewalks, and the hub for public transportation at the City’s Transportation Center. Residents and visitors also have access to great medical care with Wentworth Douglass Hospital and a variety of other medical services in Dover.

The outreach process, combined with supplementary data analysis, was used to outline the many ways in which Dover 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	31,795
Median Age	36.1
Total Housing Units	13,489
Number of Jobs in Town	18,192
Life expectancy	75.5 - 80.9



Sex



LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #1 - OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

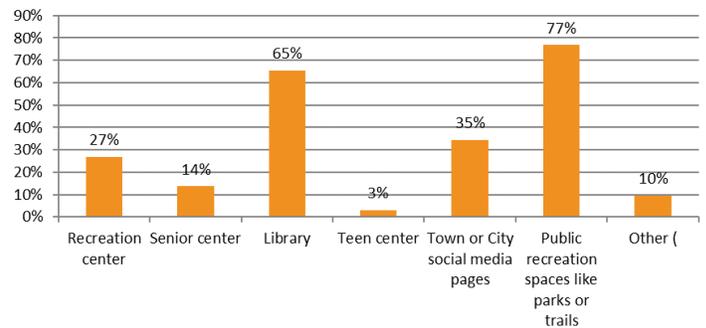
“People need public places to gather — indoors and out. Green spaces, seating and accessible buildings (elevators, zero-step entrances, staircases with railings) can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages.”¹

DATA

Recreation Site Type	Number of Sites
Beach	0
Boating Access	3
Community Garden	1
Disc Golf Course	1
Dog Park	1
Fishing Access	1
Golf Course	0
Gym	2
Open Space and Trails	6
Park	10
Playground	13
Pool	2
Rail Trail	10
Skatepark	1
Skating Rink	2
Sledding Hill	2
Sports Fields and Courts	12
Total	67

Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	3
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	20
Libraries	7
Medical and Health Care Facilities	20
Governmental Services	4
Non-Governmental Services	9
Fire and Police Stations	4
Schools	9
Total	76

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



20% of land in Dover is conserved.





STRENGTHS

“[We moved to Dover] to live in a vibrant active seaside city with friendly people and access to hiking, biking and kayaking whenever we want.”

- **Recreation assets** – Dover has an abundance of recreational opportunities including the Jenny Thompson pool, Pickleball Courts, the Dover Community trail, and many public parks in key areas. Many take advantage of these awesome resources.
- **Dover Public Library** – The City’s library serves as a community center for social activities. The library has ample meeting space and community rooms. holds educational webinars, family activities, and provides rentals outside of books, music and DVDs (like toys, equipment to convert photos to digital, etc.)
- **Outdoor dining** – The outdoor dining that resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic creates vibrancy in the City’s downtown. Some establishments even maintained this year-round, like Garrison City Beerworks.
- **McConnell Center** – Previously a school, the McConnell Center now hosts a daycare center, restaurant, office space, adult learning and senior centers, and recreational gym space.



OPPORTUNITIES

“Lots of good recreation, parks and a great downtown”

- **Cochecho River** – This City should take greater advantage of this asset running through the heart of Dover’s downtown whether with additional adjacent trails or increased access to the river itself.
- **Balanced conservation and residential lands** – The City should ensure that when adding housing stock, conservation space and undeveloped land is still maintained. The City’s Transfer of Development Rights Ordinance is a great start.
- **Ensure sidewalk safety with outdoor dining** – It is important that the City understand how outdoor sidewalk dining effects sidewalk safety and accessibility.
- **Accessibility beyond the downtown** – Central Dover provides opportunities for access to services, recreation, etc. but other city neighborhoods don’t have that same access. How can the City incorporate this in their planning?
- **Lack of public restrooms** – The City could use centrally located public restrooms for visitors and residents who spend time downtown.
- **Seating at recreation sites and public transportation routes** – More benches could be beneficial along areas like the Community Trail.

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

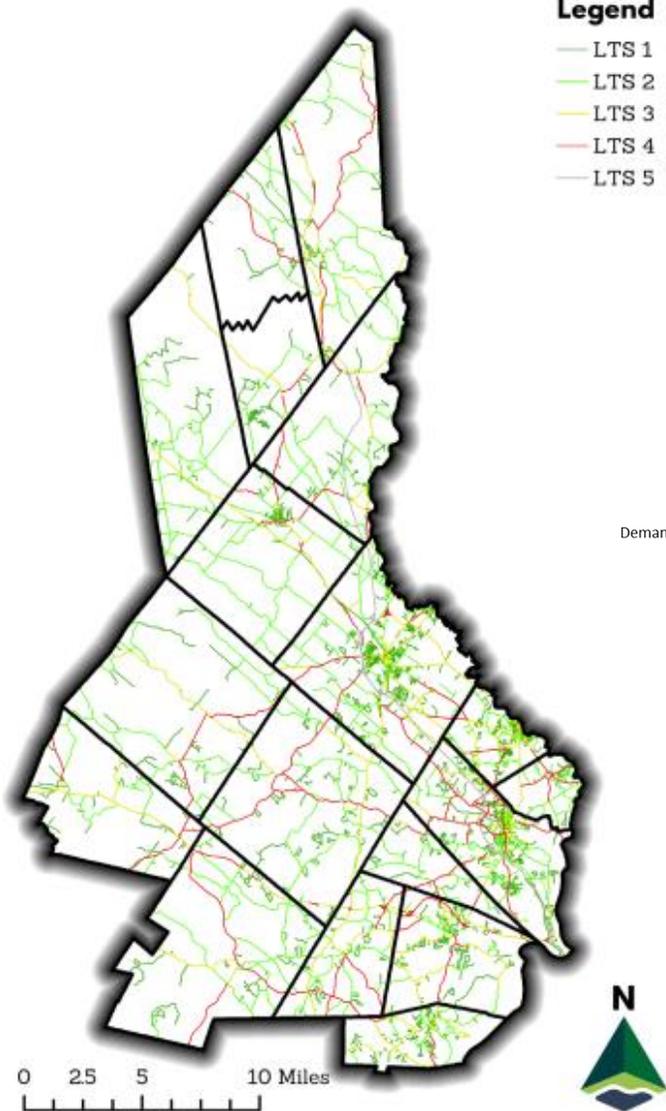
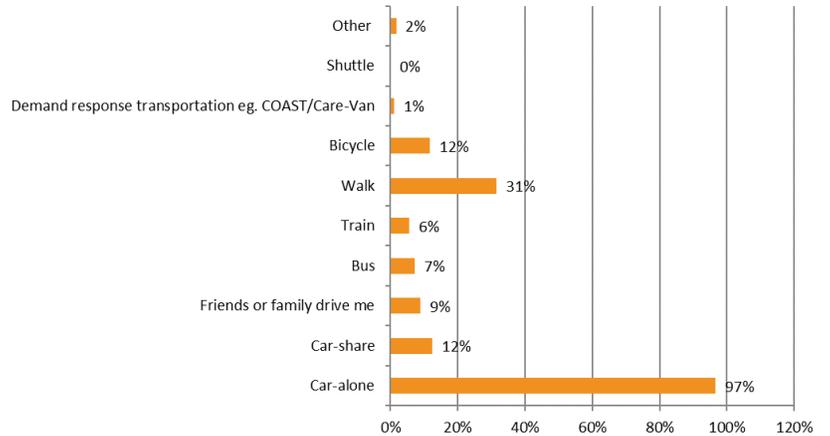
Legend

- 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)	6
Wildcat Routes	2
Demand Response Transit	Yes



STRENGTHS

- **Public transportation** – The City has perhaps the greatest range of transportation options when compared with the rest of the planning region. This includes six COAST bus routes that run through Dover, the Amtrak Downeaster which provides access to Boston and Portland, and Wildcat Bus which connects Dover with the University of New Hampshire and other surrounding towns.
- **Walkability** – 59% of Dover CHAT online survey respondents rated the City sidewalks as good when offered the options of excellent, good, neutral, poor, and terrible.
- **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 Farmington. 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."iii
- **COAST's ADA Paratransit** – This COAST service is intended for individuals who are unable to use accessible fixed –route services due to their disabilities. It is an origin-to-destination transit program that requires pre-approval. It is operated as a shared-ride program, operating in the same areas on the same days and during the same hours as the fixed-route bus system. This includes the City of Dover.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increased public transportation** – With the aging population, residents vocalized the need for increased public transportation options. This was expressed in terms of increased frequency of bus pickups and more routes, and services like care vans for medical appointments, all with an emphasis on affordability.
- **Increased bicycle safety** – While the City has taken measures to increase bicycle safety like sharrows and bike lanes, this effort can be expanded so that riders feel safer.
- **More sidewalks** – The downtown core has a good network of sidewalks, but this is not seen in abundance in areas outside the downtown. Residents were concerned about the navigability of brick sidewalks.

I don't anticipate staying in Dover once I retire or age. There are not enough services. I know this for a fact because I volunteered with Ready Rides. There were so many seniors that could not get rides to appointments.

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



13,489 total housing units in Dover.



STRENGTHS

- **Variety of housing stock** – Dover has a good mix of housing options. 63% of Dover CHAT online survey respondents live in a single-family home, 8% in a multifamily, 17% live in apartments, 8% in a condo, and 2% in independent senior living.
- **Responding to demand** – There is very limited vacancy in Dover and more housing is continuously being built in response. In 2019, the City had the region’s second highest number of building permits (outside of Rochester).
- **Creative solutions to housing demand** – Dover is addressing availability, variety, and the affordability of the housing stock through creative zoning and proactive planning. The City is using adaptive reuse of existing and sometimes historical buildings. Dover is the first community in the state to allow two Accessory Dwelling units per household and has taken measures to increase the housing stock.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Property taxes** - The most vocalized concern on the CHAT online survey and from the community Zoom forum was the high property taxes and how what will affect people as they age.

- **Price range variety** – While there are a variety of housing types in Dover, the range of pricing options for housing is slimmer. This is a big concern for those looking for smaller, more modest housing options as people age.
- **Balanced future development** – There are concerns that the City is becoming too “built up.” It is important to people that the City government think about how to add housing stock while also maintaining conservation space and undeveloped land.

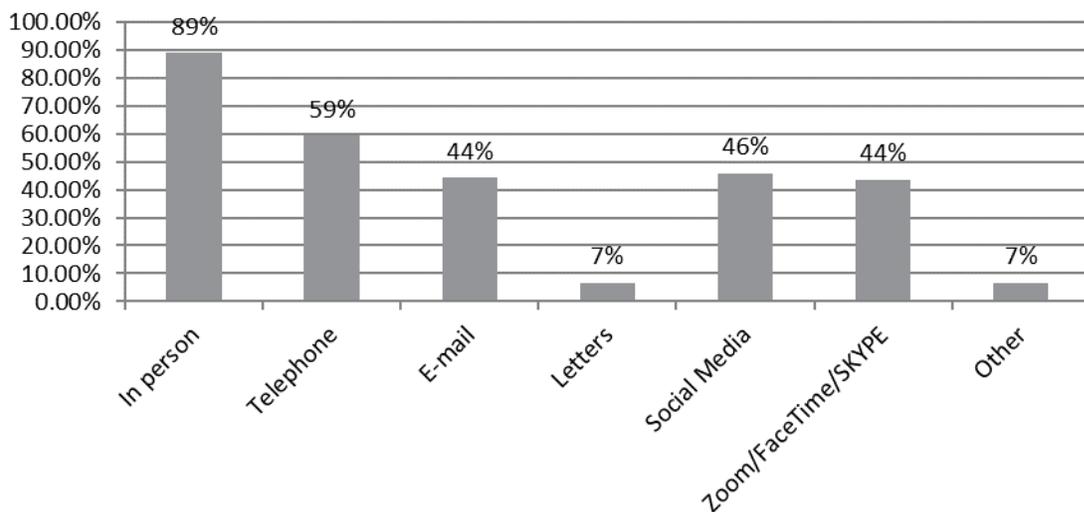
"Encourage developers to think about multi-age projects, not just for Gen Z or Boomer aging in place, but cooperative models like those around the country."

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #4 – SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

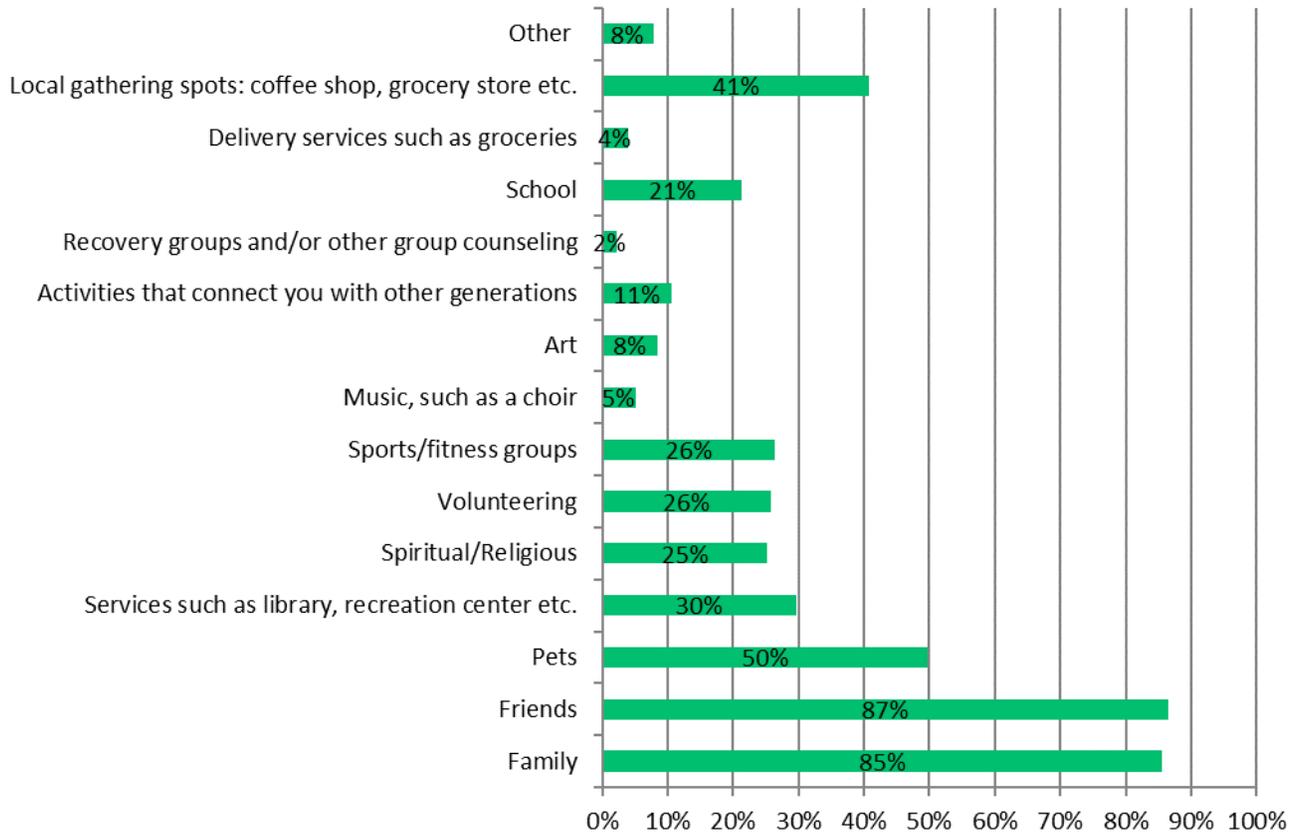
“Regardless of a person’s age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combated by having opportunities to socialize and the availability of accessible, affordable and fun social activities.”^v

DATA

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



What are your main social interactions? Check all that apply





STRENGTHS

"Good chamber of commerce... seems to involve a whole lot of different people, [the City and Chamber carries out] lighting up the streets, festival of trees, ..., apple harvest festival,.."

- **Great sense of community** – The City has a small, close-knit feel.
- **Community events** – Frequent opportunities for community gatherings are appreciated by residents and increase quality of life. Apple Harvest Day was of note to those attending the Community Zoom Forum, and in the CHAT online survey.
- **Community programming** – Dover benefits from the Cocheco Arts and Music Festival schedule, the robust Library programs (knitting group, educational talks, dungeons and dragons) and the extensive list of recreational programs through the Dover Recreation Department.



OPPORTUNITIES

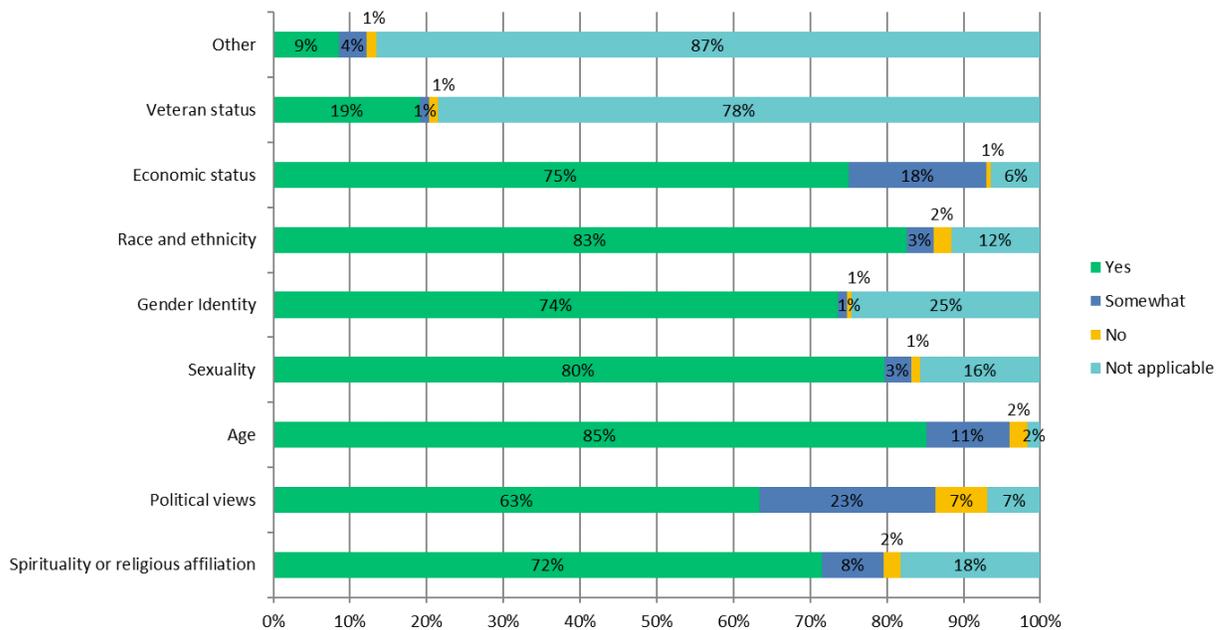
- **Increased events** – Residents would like to see more events to encourage social participation and gathering.
- **More centralized volunteering/opportunity hub** – Residents would like a better way to know what is going on in the City and how they can get involved.
- **Expansion of the walking group project** – This was mentioned a few times as a way for people to connect and recreate.

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.”^{vi}

DATA

Do you feel accepted in your community with regards to:



“I live here because I love the people here. I find being around compassionate people who care about their neighbors to be the most valuable thing here.”



STRENGTHS

- **Acceptance in the community** – Dover residents feel accepted in terms of their spirituality, politics, age, sexuality, race, and economic status, as expressed on the CHAT online survey.
- **City’s new ad hoc Committee for Racial Equity and Inclusion** – In June 2020 the City of Dover started an ad hoc committee to “review data, hold listening sessions, and recommend to the City Council and City Manager, an action plan outlining existing and new steps to be taken to work to eliminate systemic racism in municipal operations, including boards and commissions, and foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.”^{vii}



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Infrastructure that is friendly for all** – Brick sidewalks, while they create a historic feel, can have uneven texture that may be an obstruction for those with certain disabilities.
- **Dementia Friendly Dover** – This initiative is housed within The Residence at Silver Square, is based off the model from Dementia Friendly America, and can be leveraged as an opportunity to create more support within the community for those with dementia
- **More LGBTQ+ events** – Increase access to resources and events that are specifically geared towards the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Intergenerational connections** – There is an opportunity for events to bring 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.”^{viii}

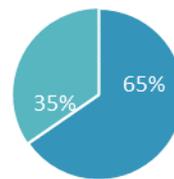
DATA

Income	Median Household Income	\$71,631
	Income Inequality (Gini Index)	0.44
	Low income households	20.13%
	High income households	7.20%



18,192 total jobs in Dover.

Ballots Cast



■ In-Person ■ Absentee

* This data is from the 2020 general election



STRENGTHS

- **Proximity to jobs** – According to the CHAT online survey, many residents moved to Dover for work. There is an abundance of good jobs in the region.
- **Continuing education and opportunities for training** – With UNH nearby there are opportunities for training and continued education.
- **Variety of employment opportunities** – School districts provide lots of jobs, while other big employers in the City include Wentworth Douglass Hospital and Liberty Mutual
- **Active slate of boards and commissions** – Dover is home to many community volunteers who are active on various community boards and committees.

There are many job opportunities that are currently or often do come available. There is vocational/professional training available through Adult Learning and nearby community college along with UNH.



OPPORTUNITIES

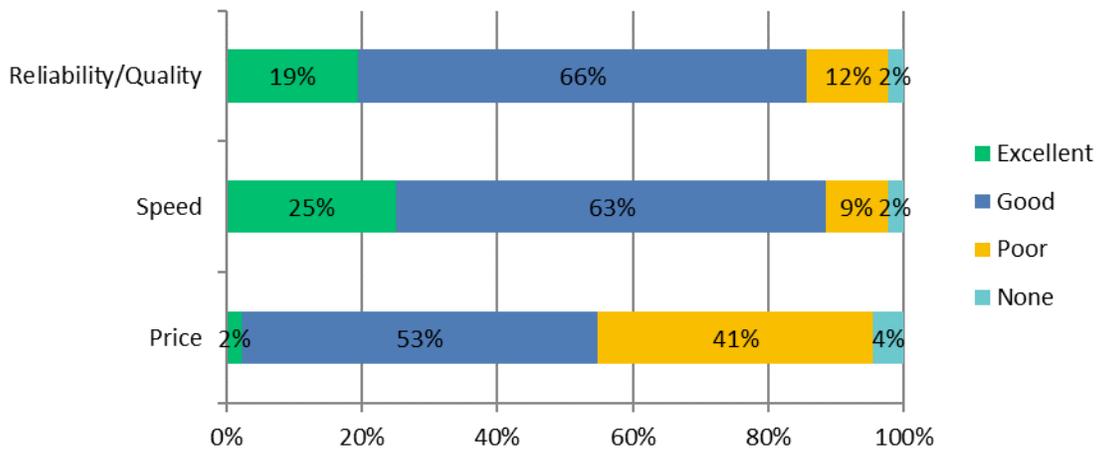
- **Centralized info about volunteering** – There could be a hub for volunteering opportunities, a key place where information from multiple entities was available and organized.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #7 – COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

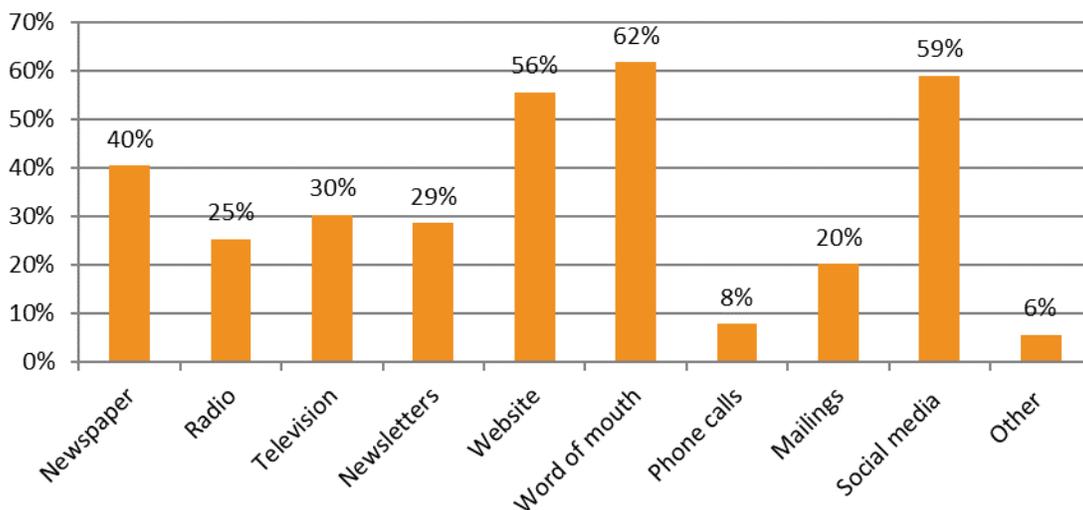
“We now communicate in ways few could have imagined a decade ago. Age-friendly communities recognize that information needs to be shared through a variety of methods since not everyone is tech-savvy, and not everyone has a smartphone or home-based access to the internet.”^{ix}

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.

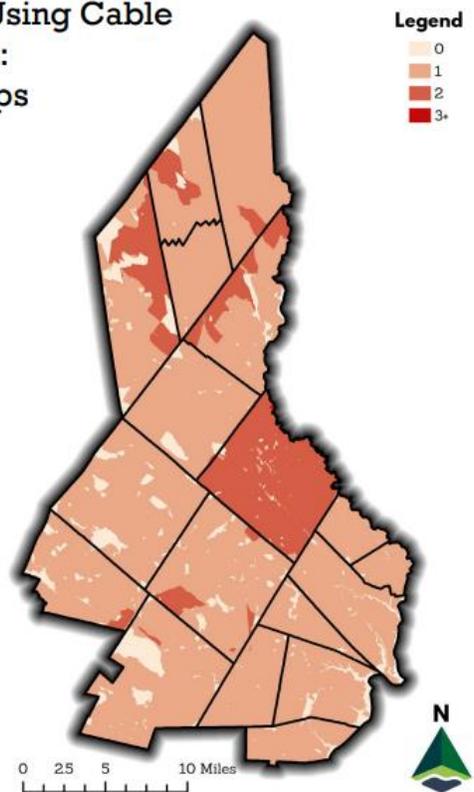


Broadband Access

Providers Using Fiber
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps



Providers Using Cable
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps



STRENGTHS

- **Reliable internet** – Most people throughout the City have access to reliable high-speed internet. As expressed on the CHAT online survey, 63% of residents think their current internet speeds are good (on the excellent, good, poor, none spectrum) and 66% think their internet is reliable.
- **Dover Download** – This weekly communication, sent out by the City, is a great source of information for residents, businesses, and organizations.
- **(Un)Official Dover** – While not maintained or interacted with by the City, the Facebook group (Un)Official Dover, proves to be a popular source of what is going on in Dover.

“Dover does a good job with info- [like with its] Dover Download, and [other] e-mails.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Better advertise Dover Download** – The Dover Download could be better advertised. Homeowners are notified when they move into town. There is potential for this to be advertised to new renters as well.
- **City website upgrades** – An updated website could be beneficial for citizens' access to information and increased transparency.
- **Increased information about volunteer opportunities** – There could be broader publicization of ways to get involved in the City.

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.”^x

DATA

Healthcare and Aging Services	Number of Sites
Assisted Living Sites	5
Nursing Homes	4
Senior Centers	1
Primary Care Providers	88
Hospitals	1
Community Health Centers	1
Home Health Agencies	11
Memory Cafes	2
Dementia Support Group	1
Total	114

Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	3
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	20
Libraries	7
Medical and Health Care Facilities	20
Governmental Services	4
Non-Governmental Services	9
Fire and Police Stations	4
Schools	9
TOTAL	76



STRENGTHS

- **Community Partners** – A designated Community Mental Health Center, Community Partners offers a wide variety of behavioral health and developmental services across the lifespan to individuals and families living in Strafford County.
- **Wentworth Douglass** – Wentworth-Douglass Hospital offers a wide range of healthcare services including acute care, disease management and wellness programs.
- **Service hub** – People from outside Dover come into the City for services and activities.

“[We should] think about physical and mental health together as whole health and build out supports.”



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increased mental health services** – There is a growing need for mental health services across the region and the state.
- **Assistance for elderly** – There is a need for small support services for elderly people; for example, someone to help clean or perform small house maintenance tasks.
- **Senior check-ins** – Check-in services for seniors are important, especially during events like the Covid-19 pandemic and other events that cause seniors to be shut-in.

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://communityrides.org/community-rides-0>

-
- ^{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.dover.nh.gov/government/boards-and-commissions/city-council/ad-hoc-committee-for-racial-equity-and-inclusion/#:~:text=The%20City%20Council's%20creation%20of,City%20of%20Dover%20to%20execute>
- ^{viii} <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>
- ^{ix} <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>
- ^x <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>