

CHAT

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY AGING TRANSITIONS

Community ASSESSMENT

————— FOR THE —————

TOWN of NORTHWOOD

GREATER SEACOAST COMMUNITY HEALTH



PUBLISHED: OCT 2022

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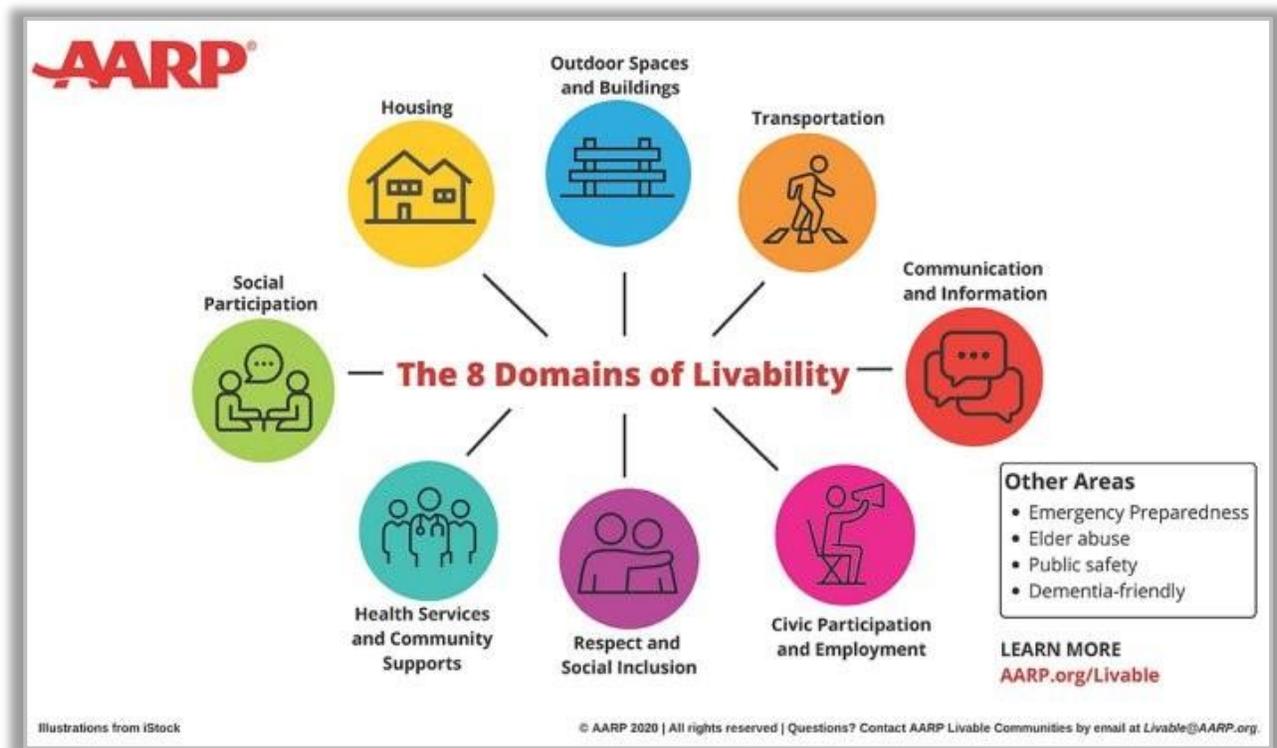
INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK

[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 reached out to each community, but for some an event was not able to be scheduled. A forum was scheduled for Barrington, Northwood, Strafford, and Nottingham on April 19th, however, due to the challenges of scheduling such events in the midst of the pandemic and a lack of registered participants, the forum did not take place.

SURVEY

Launched in early 2021, the CHAT online survey was distributed through multiple regional outlets, and through social media. Eleven Northwood 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 and a variety of other locations.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

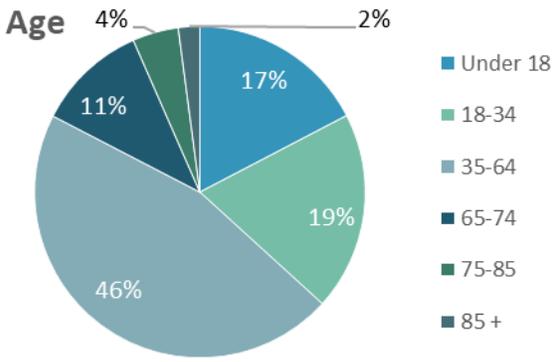
The Town of Northwood was founded in 1773 and is home to 4,241 year-round residents. Situated on Route 4, the Town is on the main thoroughfare between Concord and Portsmouth and sees an average of 13,000 commuters daily.¹ Many refer to this corridor as Antique Alley, for the abundance of antique shops lining the highway.

Though Northwood is sometimes called a bedroom community, there are more than one hundred small businesses in town, employing from one to twenty-five workers each. It is also home to Coe-Brown Academy, an esteemed high school that caters to teenagers in both Northwood and other surrounding communities.

Northwood is proud of its nine lakes and ponds, its mountain views, miles of country roads, and its many old and historic homes and public buildings. The abundance of recreation and natural resources support many seasonal residents in town.

The outreach process, combined with supplementary data analysis, was used to outline the many ways in which Rollinsford 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	4300
Median Age	44.2
Total Housing Units	1611
Number of Jobs in Town	1,055
Life expectancy	78.6



Sex



LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #1 - OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

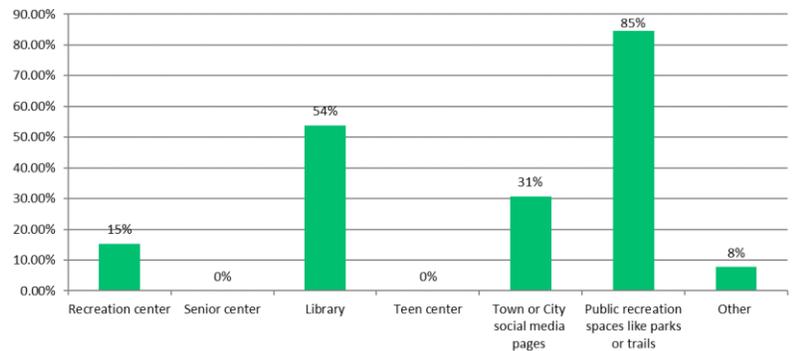
“People need public places to gather — indoors and out. Green spaces, seating and accessible buildings (elevators, zero-step entrances, staircases with railings) can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages.”ⁱ

DATA

Recreation Site Type	Number of Sites
Beach	4
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	2
Park	0
Playground	1
Pool	0
Rail Trail	0
Skatepark	0
Skating Rink	0
Sledding Hill	0
Sports Fields and Courts	3
Total	11

Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	2
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	1
Libraries	3
Medical and Health Care Facilities	0
Governmental Services	1
Non-Governmental Services	0
Fire and Police Stations	3
Schools	3
Total	13

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



16% of land in Northwood is conserved.





STRENGTHS

- **Chesley Memorial Library** – The town’s library serves as a community center for social activities. The library holds senior cafes, book discussions, craft programs, and more. It provides public access computers and is also building out what it calls a “library of things” for rentals on items like a bicycle pump, GoPro camera, popcorn machine and more.
- **Public Lakes and Beaches** - The town has nine lakes and ponds, three of which are accessible to Northwood residents: Mary Waldron Beach, Bennet’s Bridge Beach, and Northwood Lake.
- **Recreational Assets** – The town of Northwood is home to the popular Northwood Meadows State Park, among other sites like Woodman Marsh and the Northwoods school playground.
- **Coe Brown Academy** - Northwood is home to the esteemed Coe Brown Academy, “a small, rural, co-educational public academy secondary school accepting students in grades 9-12 from the towns of Northwood, Strafford, Nottingham, Barrington, and Deerfield. The Academy campus is located on the shores of Harvey Lake, and consists of Pinkham Hall, Smith Hall, Soper Hall, Wiggin Hall Fine Arts Center, Ruby Giles Music Center, Science Building, playing fields and woodlands.”ⁱⁱ



OPPORTUNITIES

- **More public gathering spaces** – The Chesley Memorial Library, while offering many resources, is smaller and doesn’t offer much space for community events and meetings.
- **More recreational resources** – In Northwoods’ 2004 master plan one of its guiding principles was to, “Protect and preserve Northwood’s natural resources and provide citizens with recreational opportunities to use these resources.”ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Continued preservation of historic buildings** – According to Northwood’s 2004 Master Plan, its historic homes and barns are “irreplaceable”, and the town should work with entities like the NH Land and Heritage Investment Program to preserve these.

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).”^{iv}

DATA

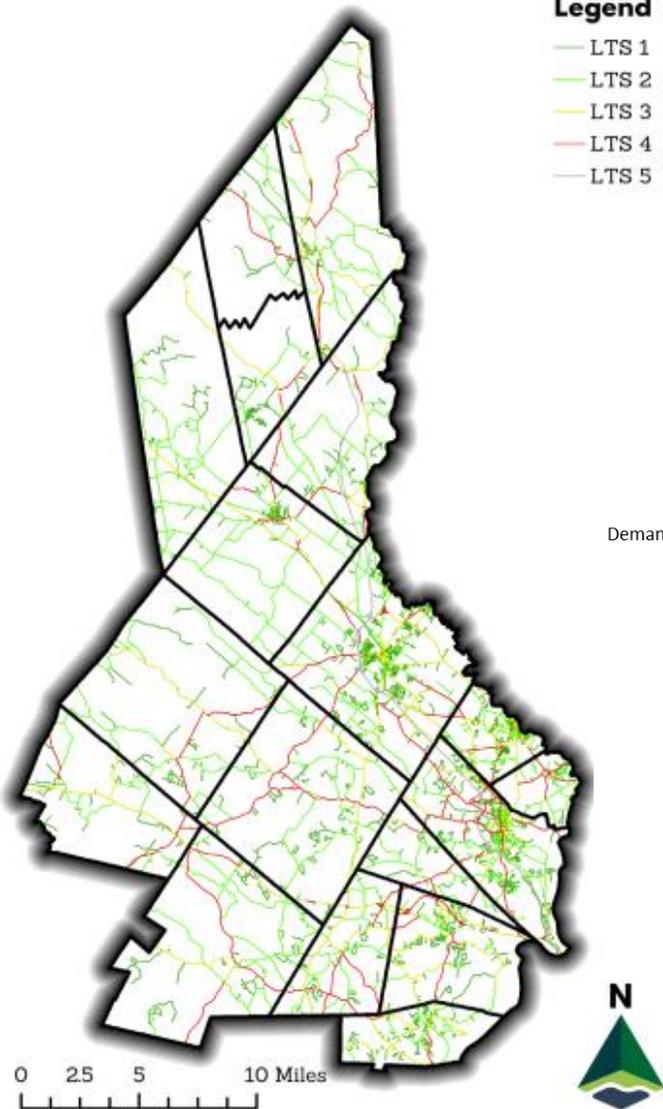
Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress

Legend

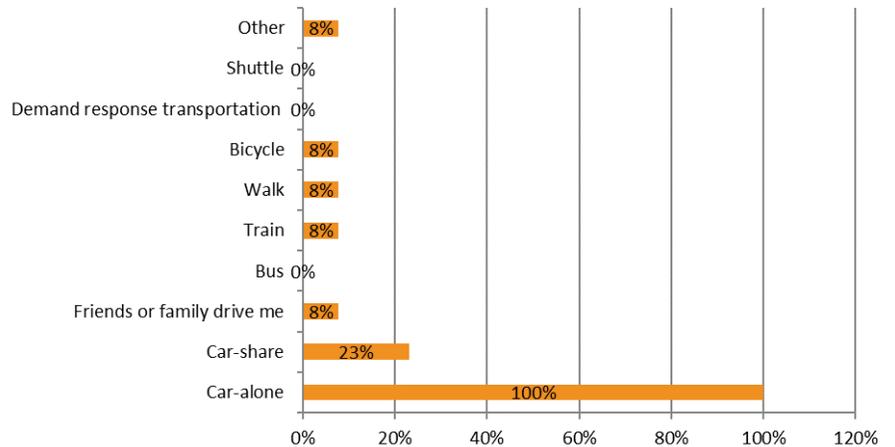
- LTS 1
- LTS 2
- LTS 3
- LTS 4
- LTS 5

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)	0
Wildcat Routes	0
Demand Response Transit	Yes



STRENGTHS

- **Access to Route 4** - Route 4 runs through the center of town, making it convenient to get to other places, like Concord or Portsmouth, for employment and social endeavors.
- **Local Park and Ride** – There is a ~40 spot park and ride location in town, encouraging ride sharing and carpooling.
- **Ready Rides** – This independent, nonprofit volunteer drive program serves older adults with disabilities who reside in Northwood, and surrounding communities.
- **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 Northwood. 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.”^v



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Elderly shuttle service** – Over 50% of respondents on the CHAT online survey noted transportation options as a concern when considering growing older in the town. A dedicated elderly shuttle service could provide important access to services when aging adults can no longer drive independently.
- **Public transit or rideshare** – 100% of respondents on the CHAT online survey noted that the Town has inadequate public transportation. In Northwood's 2004 Master Plan it notes the importance of providing “choices and safety in transportation to create livable, walkable communities that increase accessibility for people of all ages.”^{vi} This could be visualized in diverse ways, like a network of volunteer drivers or rideshare for seniors, and the community in general or by leveraging the CommuteSmart NH Mobile and Web App, which provides ride-matching services.

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.”vii

DATA

Housing Stock

■ Single family ■ Multi-family ■ Mobile Home



Own vs Rent



1,611 total housing units in Northwood.



STRENGTHS

- **The Meadow at Northwood** – This 31-bedroom unit housing complex was built using funds from HUD’s Section 2020 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program. It ensures that housing is affordable for seniors.
- **Open Space Design** – The town’s zoning ordinance requires open space design, which “allows the creation of high quality, traditional residential neighborhoods while also protecting important components of the natural landscape.”viii This is in line with the importance the Town places on its natural resources and conservation of such.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **More rental housing** – Only 9% of those living in Northwood rent. There is an opportunity to increase rental stock for those looking to downsize and age in Town.
- **Increased living options for seniors**- The town could benefit from increased and safe options for senior housing, including rentals with affordable rates.

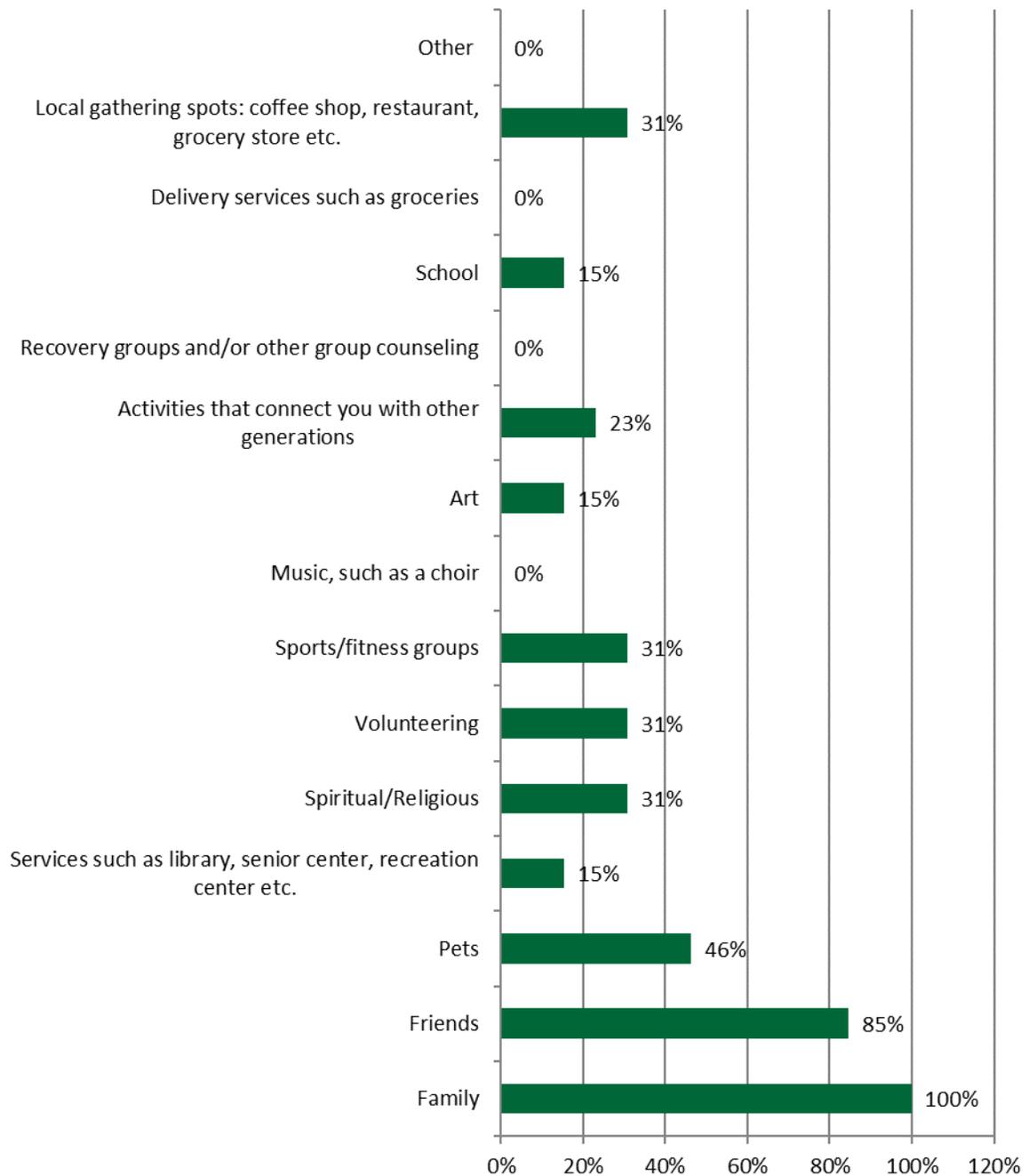
- **New housing via adapted zoning** - Enact zoning controls which encourage new housing units and community-oriented businesses to be located in or near the villages of East Northwood, the Ridge, and Northwood Narrows.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #4 – SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

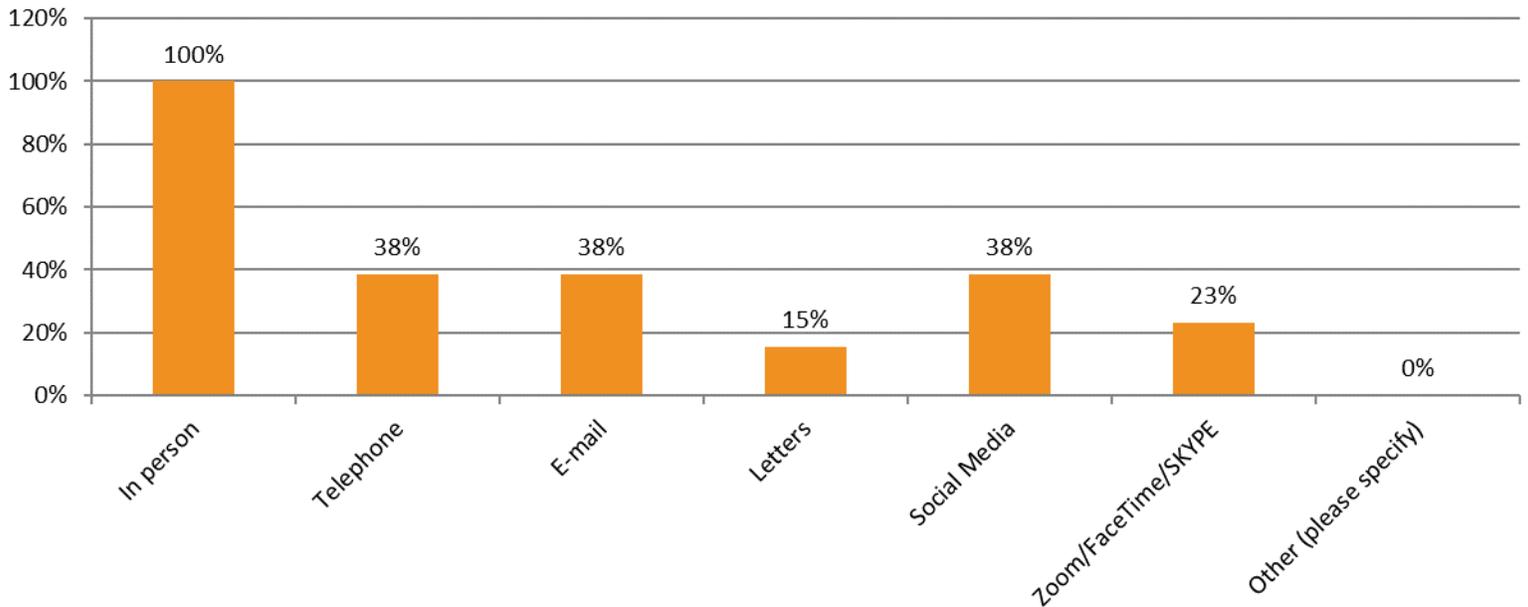
“Regardless of a person’s age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combated by having opportunities to socialize and the availability of accessible, affordable and fun social activities.”^{ix}

DATA

What are your main social interactions? Check all that apply



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



STRENGTHS

- **Northwood Recreation Department** – The town’s recreation department manages and runs different programming like community cookouts, craft fairs, and different camps, sporting events and clubs like youth soccer.
- **Library Programming** – As mentioned above, the Chesley Memorial Library offers opportunities for social participation through its senior cafes, book club programming, and story times.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **More senior activities** – In the CHAT online survey respondents expressed that there is a need for more organized social activities for senior citizens.
- **Community gathering space** – The town could benefit from a community center to support increased programming for seniors and others in town.
- **More community activities** – There could be more activities for the community to socially engage with each other. In its 2004 Master Plan the town noted a focal point of working to “create “town centers” or

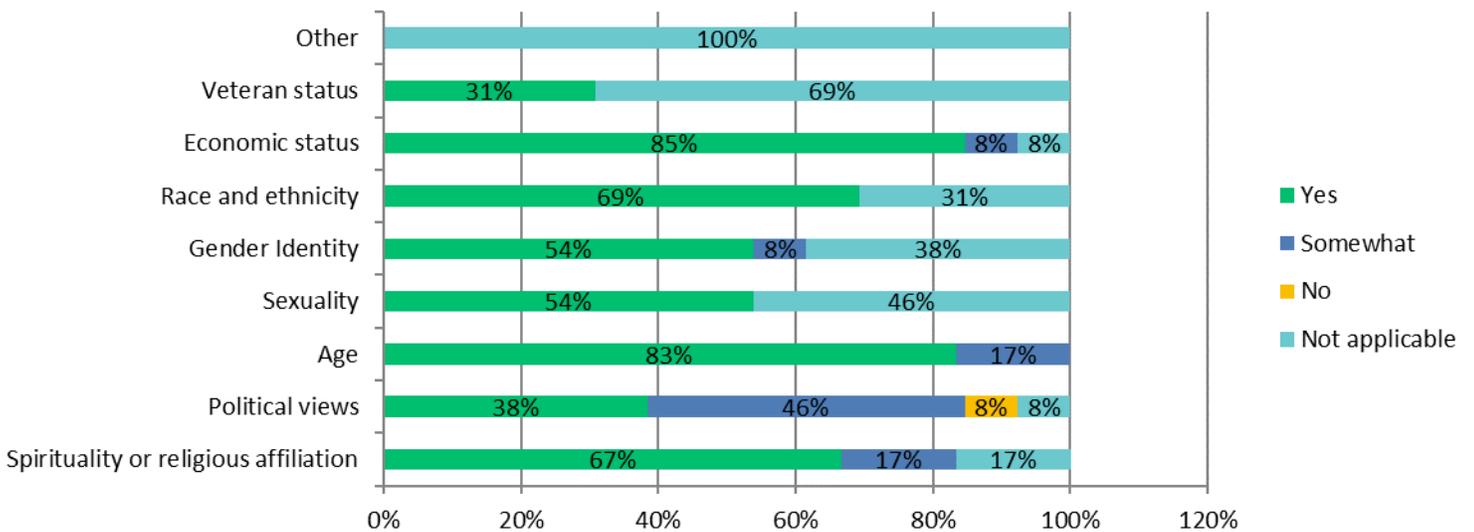
“town focal points” where residents can come together socially (suppers, fairs, holiday parties, old home days).”

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.”^x

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 Northwood, as expressed on the CHAT online survey.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increased public dialogue**-In the CHAT online survey it was noted that some personal feelings about sustainable development do not seem to be accepted in town. Encouraging more public dialogue around these issues could help people to feel heard and accepted.
- **Maintain and grow public spaces**- The town could consider building a community center or other public gathering space to hold activities that encourage a space for events that make residents feel a sense of community.

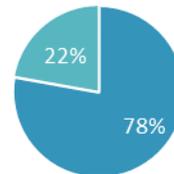
LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #6 – WORK AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

“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.”^{xi}

DATA

Income	Median Household Income	\$91,411
	Income Inequality (Gini Index)	0.34
	Low income households	11.75%
	High income households	9.20%

Ballots Cast



■ In-Person ■ Absentee



1,055 total jobs in Northwood.

* This data is from the 2020 general election



STRENGTHS

- **Proximity to jobs** – According to the CHAT survey, residents moved to Northwood for its centralized location. There is an abundance of good jobs in the region.
- **Antique Alley**- There are several small businesses located along the Route 4 corridor, dubbed Antique Alley for the variety of antique shops.

- **Town Recruitment to Boards** - The town posts openings for volunteer opportunities on its website to encourage participation at the municipal level.



OPPORTUNITIES

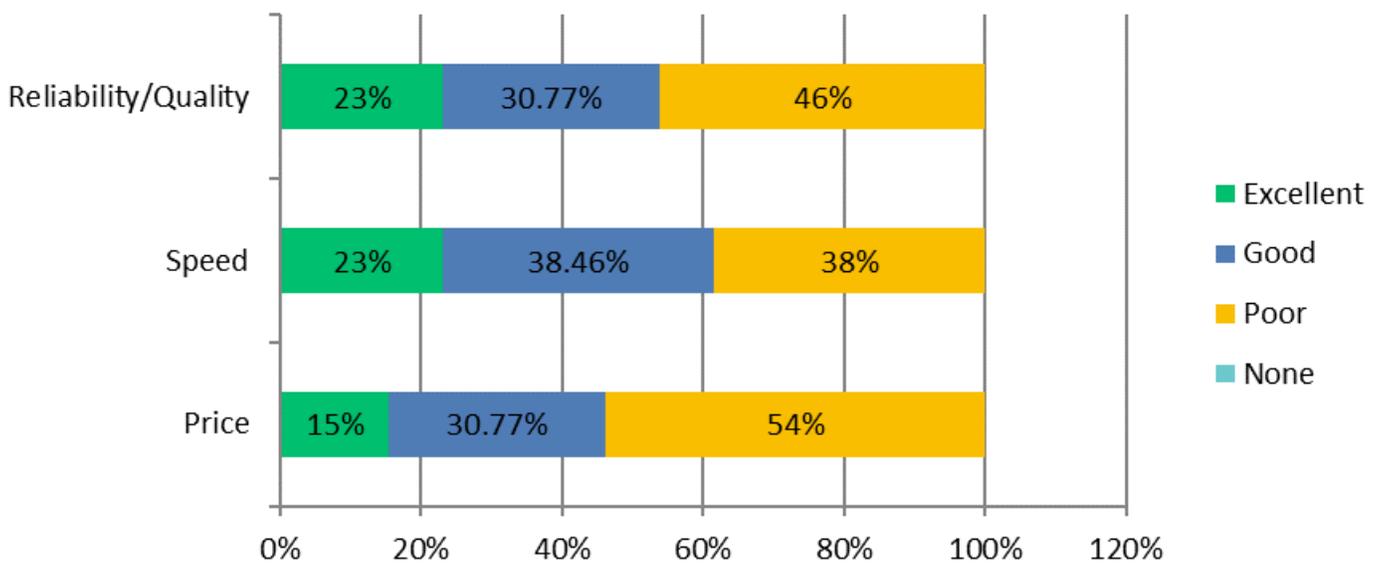
- **Develop opportunity for economic development in a balanced manner** - The town’s 2004 master plan notes, “In an effort to maintain the rural character of the town, development which relates to the historic amenities in the community, or which relates to the high-quality natural setting would be ideal.”^{xii}

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #7 – COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

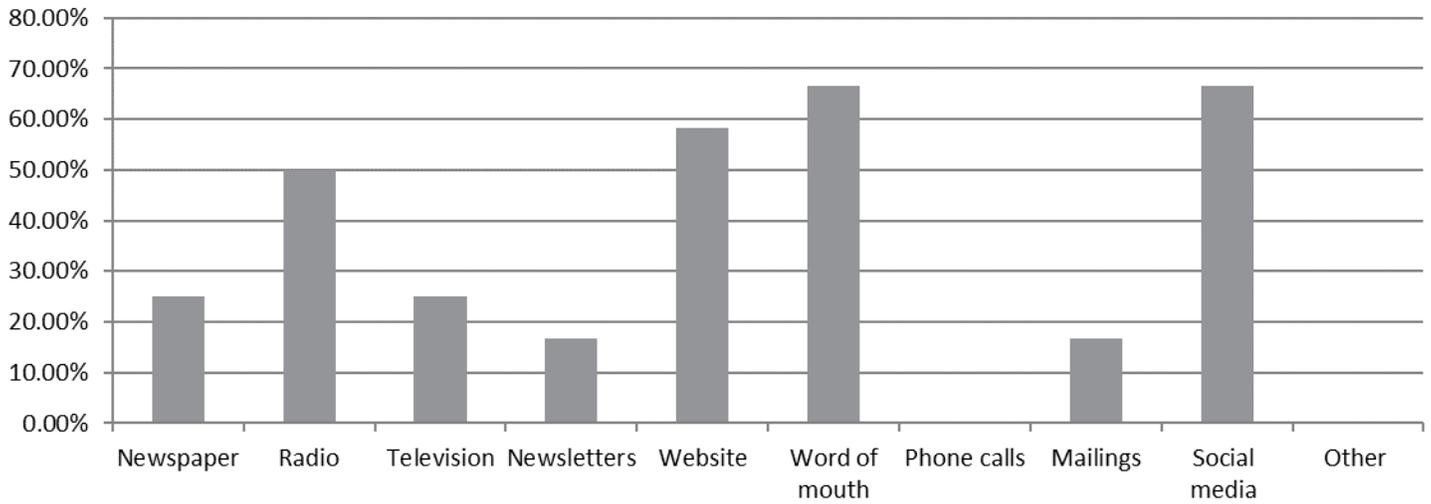
“We now communicate in ways few could have imagined a decade ago. Age-friendly communities recognize that information needs to be shared through a variety of methods since not everyone is tech-savvy, and not everyone has a smartphone or home-based access to the internet.”^{xiii}

DATA

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

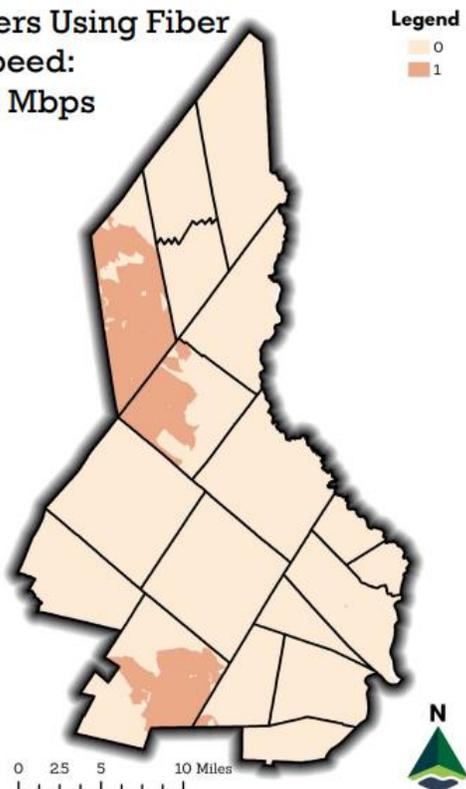


How do you learn about community news and activities? Check all that apply.

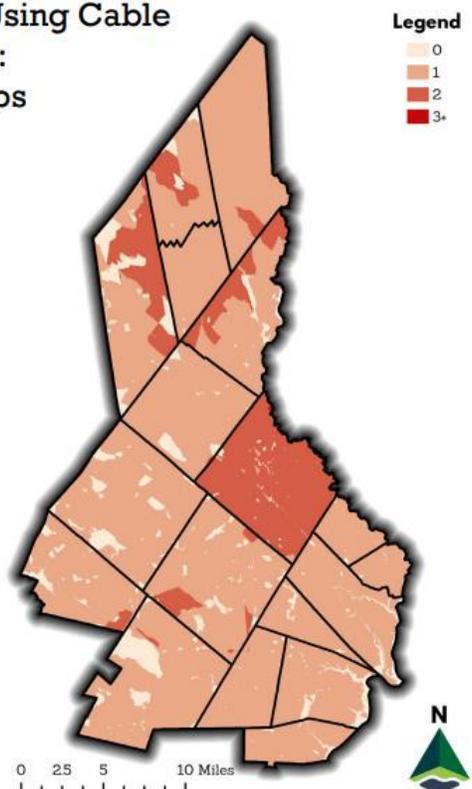


Broadband Access

Providers Using Fiber
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps



Providers Using Cable
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps





STRENGTHS

- **Internet access is sufficient** - Residents reported that the speed and reliability of their internet is good, however there is desire for increased speeds.
- **Town website** – The town maintains a robust website with information about staff, volunteers, and happenings and news in town. It has a useful notices and news section that is posted to regularly.
- **Facebook town groups**– While not maintained or interacted with by the Town, town Facebook groups like “Northwood NH Community Chat” and “Northwood NH Connect “prove to be a popular source of what is going on in Northwood.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Affordable internet** – Residents want more affordable internet options.
- **Increased communication with residents** – The town could find a platform for having stronger communications between the town and residents and utilize it for regular news updates, like a newsletter. This idea was also mentioned in the town’s 2004 Master Plan.

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.”^{xiv}

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	7
Memory Cafes	0
Dementia Support Group	0
Total	7

Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	2
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	1
Libraries	3
Medical and Health Care Facilities	0
Governmental Services	1
Non-Governmental Services	0
Fire and Police Stations	3
Schools	3
TOTAL	13



STRENGTHS

- **The Chesley Memorial Library** – This public institution is an important community service. It provides free services for downloading eBooks, provides discounted museum passes, alongside free books, and computer access.
- **Local healthcare offices** – The town has a local dental center, Northwood Physical Therapy, and the Inner Peace Holistic Center.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Emergency response** – On the CHAT online survey it was noted that long wait times for emergency services are problematic. This could be an opportunity to explore collaboration with surrounding communities’ emergency services as Northwood is very spread out.
- **Transportation to medical appointments** - Because travel is necessary to most medical appointments, the Town could explore creating a ride share or volunteer driving program to help with this.

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://coebrown.org/profile.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.northwoodnh.org/file/74/nwoodnh_2004_master_plan_1369921106.pdf

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

^v <https://communityrides.org/community-rides-0>

^{vi} https://www.northwoodnh.org/file/74/nwoodnh_2004_master_plan_1369921106.pdf

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

^{viii} https://www.northwoodnh.org/file/2212/Northwood_Development_Ordinance_2020_C.pdf

^{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>

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^{xii} https://www.northwoodnh.org/file/74/nwoodnh_2004_master_plan_1369921106.pdf

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