

CHAT

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY AGING TRANSITIONS

Community ASSESSMENT

————— FOR THE —————

TOWN of WAKEFIELD

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.....	12
Opportunities.....	13
Livability Principle #5 – Respect and Inclusion	13
Data	13
Strengths.....	14
Opportunities.....	14

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

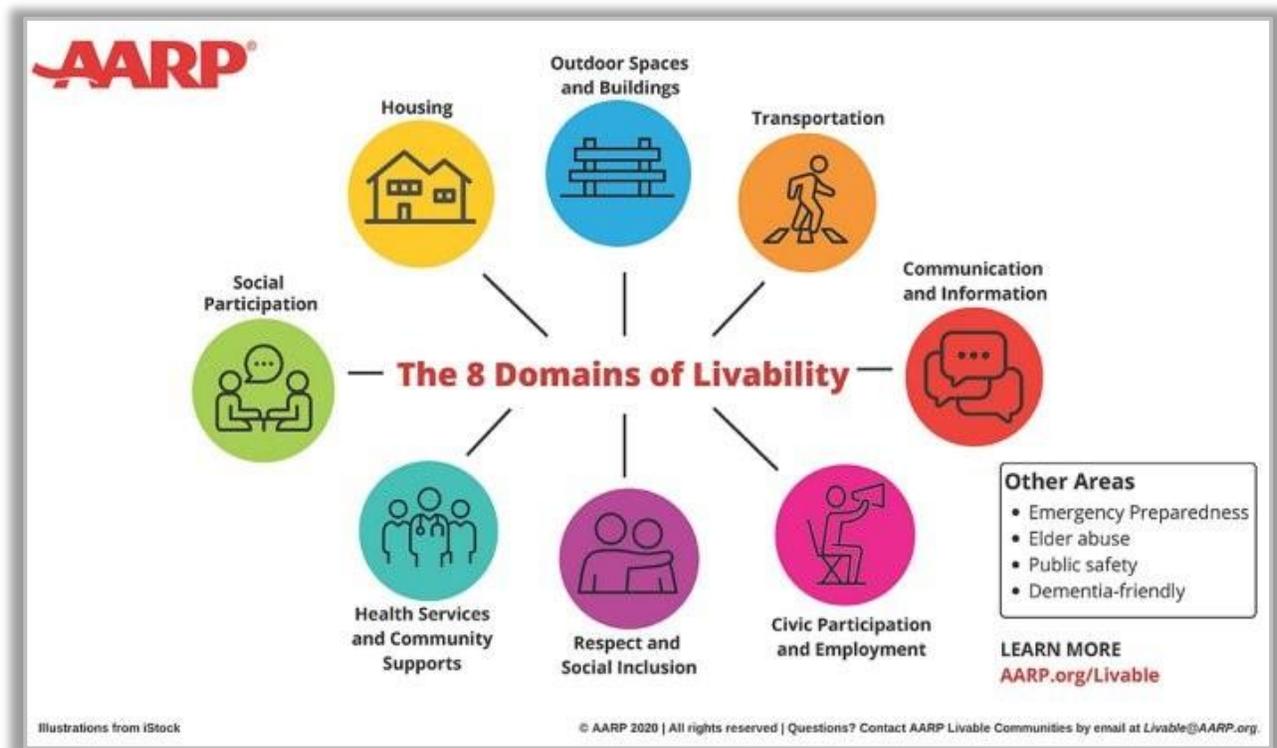
INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK

[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 community Zoom Forum for the Town in addition to the surrounding communities of Brookfield, Farmington, Middleton, Milton, and New Durham 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. One Wakefield resident 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 Evan McDougal, SRPC Commissioner.

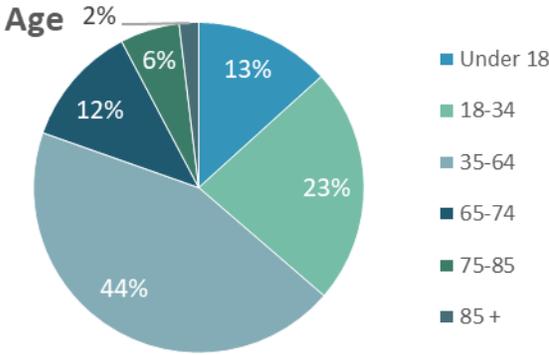
COMMUNITY PROFILE

Wakefield is Route 16's gateway to the Lakes Region and White Mountains and is characterized by its rural and residential charm. Today it is home to many year-round lake front residents and a second-home market for southern New Hampshire and metropolitan Boston.

Wakefield's population is 5,141, and the town's services not only provide for those residents, but also residents of the neighboring Brookfield. Residents feel like the community is accepting of those of different backgrounds.

The outreach process, combined with supplementary data analysis, was used to outline the many ways in which Wakefield 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	5141
Median Age	51.8
Total Housing Units	2117
Number of Jobs in Town	973
Life expectancy	83



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

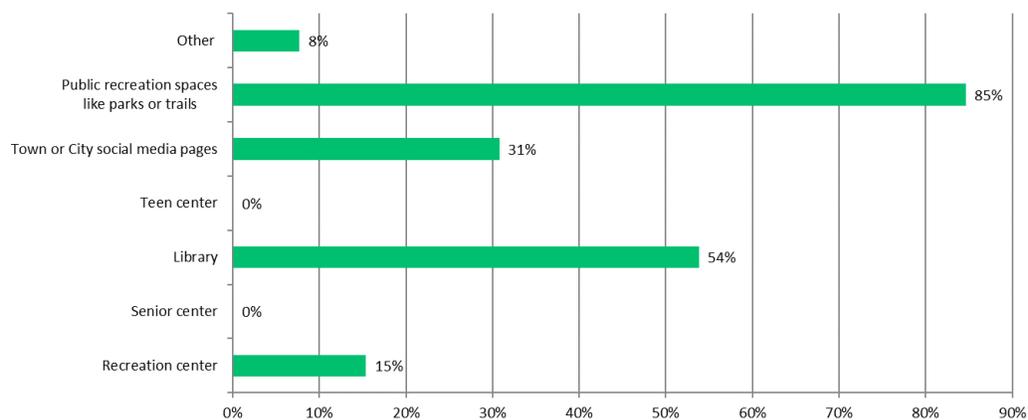
Recreation Site Type	Number of Sites
Beach	3
Boating Access	1
Community Garden	0
Disc Golf Course	1
Dog Park	0
Fishing Access	0
Golf Course	0
Gym	0
Open Space and Trails	0
Park	2
Playground	4
Pool	0
Rail Trail	2
Skatepark	1
Skating Rink	0
Sledding Hill	0
Sports Fields and Courts	4
Total	18

Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	0
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	9
Libraries	3
Medical and Health Care Facilities	2
Governmental Services	2
Non-Governmental Services	1
Fire and Police Stations	2
Schools	1
Total	20

5% of land in Wakefield is conserved.



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





STRENGTHS

- **Community character** – Residents appreciate the rural community character of Wakefield, which is created by its abundant natural resources (see bullet below) and smaller population.
- **Natural beauty draws tourism** - Residents appreciate the Town’s natural resources, like Lake Ivanhoe and Great East Lake, and outdoor recreation spaces like Ames Park and the Town Beach.
- **All-season trail use** - Most trails are open to snowmobiles in winter, like the Cotton Valley Rail Trail.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Lack of public restrooms** – The Town could use centrally located public restrooms (perhaps at Turntable Park in Downtown Sanbornville) for visitors and residents who spend time in downtown. Other bike and walking paths (Cotton Valley Rail Trail), and recreation fields (Thompson Field, Paul Elementary School Ball Field) could be served by seasonal portoilets.
- **Better multi-use policies for the outdoor recreation options** – The town could review existing uses on public lands and assess feasibility for use by mountain bikers, snowmobilers, dirt bikes, in addition to normal allowances for hikers. The trails could get more use this way.
- **Better advertise trail networks** – Local trail resources, like the Cotton Valley Rail Trail, could be better promoted to draw tourists, many of whom spend freely, particularly those in the motor sport industry. The Town could more greatly leverage grassroots tourism initiative, Explore Moose Mountains, and the work they are doing to promote local resources in Wakefield and six other surrounding communities.
- **Fostering an e-bike, e-dirt bike mecca** – Wakefield could be a highly attractive location for mountain biking trails, and it could benefit the town in drawing visitors. This could also be marketed to the e-bike and dirt bike crowd.
- **Protect the town’s lake resources** – The town could consider hiring a staff member to actively “patrol” the shorelands of its seven lakes to look for violations, in comparison with the current process where that is the responsibility of a current town staffer who has more prioritized roles.

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

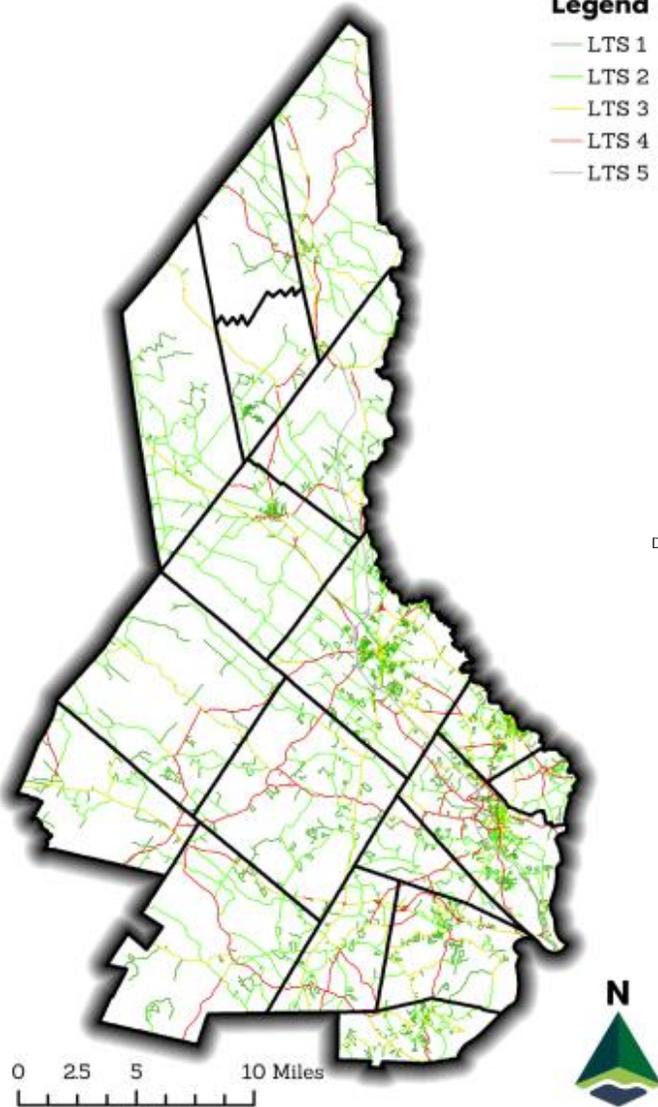
Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress

Legend

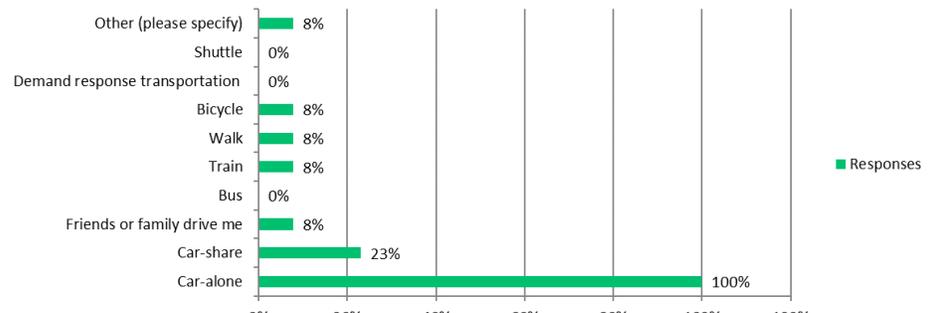
- LTS 1
- LTS 2
- LTS 3
- LTS 4
- LTS 5

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)	0
Wildcat Routes	0
Demand Response Transit	Yes



STRENGTHS

- **Access to Route 16** – Wakefield has exits on Route 16, which provides access to the Seacoast and White Mountains. This also increases access for resident commuting, and more visitors coming to Town.
- **Alternative route access** – Wakefield is also accessible by Routes 153 and 125, which link up with Routes 28 and 16 respectively, linking to the Seacoast and to the Lakes Region.
- **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 Wakefield. 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.”ⁱⁱⁱⁱ



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Increased public transportation or rideshare** - With the aging population, residents vocalized the need for increased public transportation options that are affordable. COAST Bus, which supplies the southern portions of the Strafford planning region, does not serve Wakefield. Alternate options to having bus service could be visualized in creative ways like a 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.
- **Widening Route 16** – This could help with traffic backups at signals at the intersection of Routes 16/153 and 16/10. These are very common on Friday evenings heading north and Sundays headed south.
- **Opportunities/support for green transportation** – The Town could research the benefits of using and providing infrastructure for motorized assisted bicycles and electric cars. This could benefit the Town in saving money on municipal transportation costs and attract visitors who drive electric vehicles (EV) and need EV charging stations.

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



2,117 total housing units in Wakefield.



STRENGTHS

- **Homes in the area are being updated** – This provides attractive options to those looking to buy a home in Wakefield.
- **Provision for workforce housing** - Wakefield also has a provision in its zoning ordinance for workforce housing. The ordinance is intended to promote the creation of workforce housing within environmentally sound developments and to enable the town to better accommodate its fair share for the region’s workforce housing needs.^v



OPPORTUNITIES

- **More affordable workforce and family housing** - There is very little workforce/affordable housing in Wakefield. The improvements and rising housing costs start on the Seacoast and move north. New options could include townhouses and condominium developments on larger plots of land with common greenspace, septic, and community water systems. In its master plan the Town has a goal of providing, “realistic and reasonable opportunities for workforce housing.”^{vi}

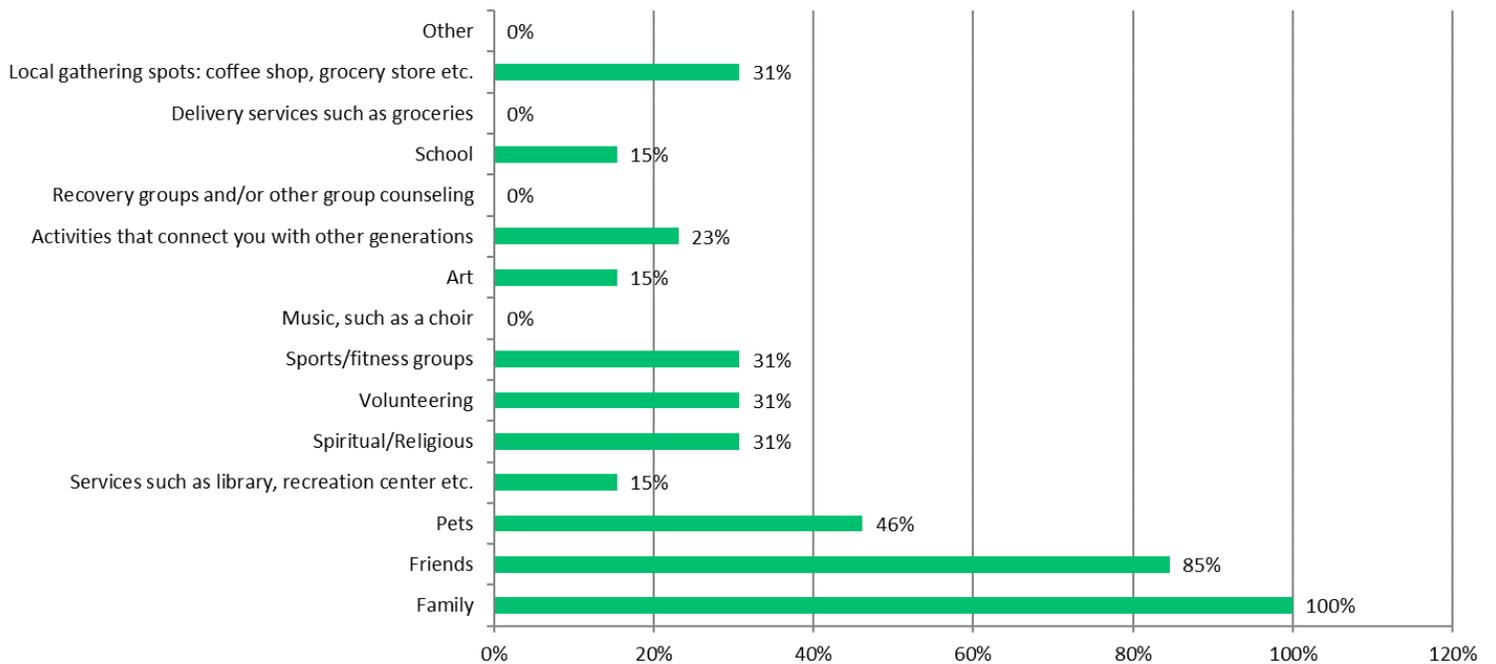
- **More lodging for visitors to the Town** - There is limited lodging for those visiting Town aside from the Wakefield Inn and several short-term rentals. More lodging could lead to more visitors to support local business.
- **Tiny homes as an accepted/common housing type** – The town could look into tiny homes as a standard of building that could be allowed under updates to the zoning ordinance.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #4 – SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

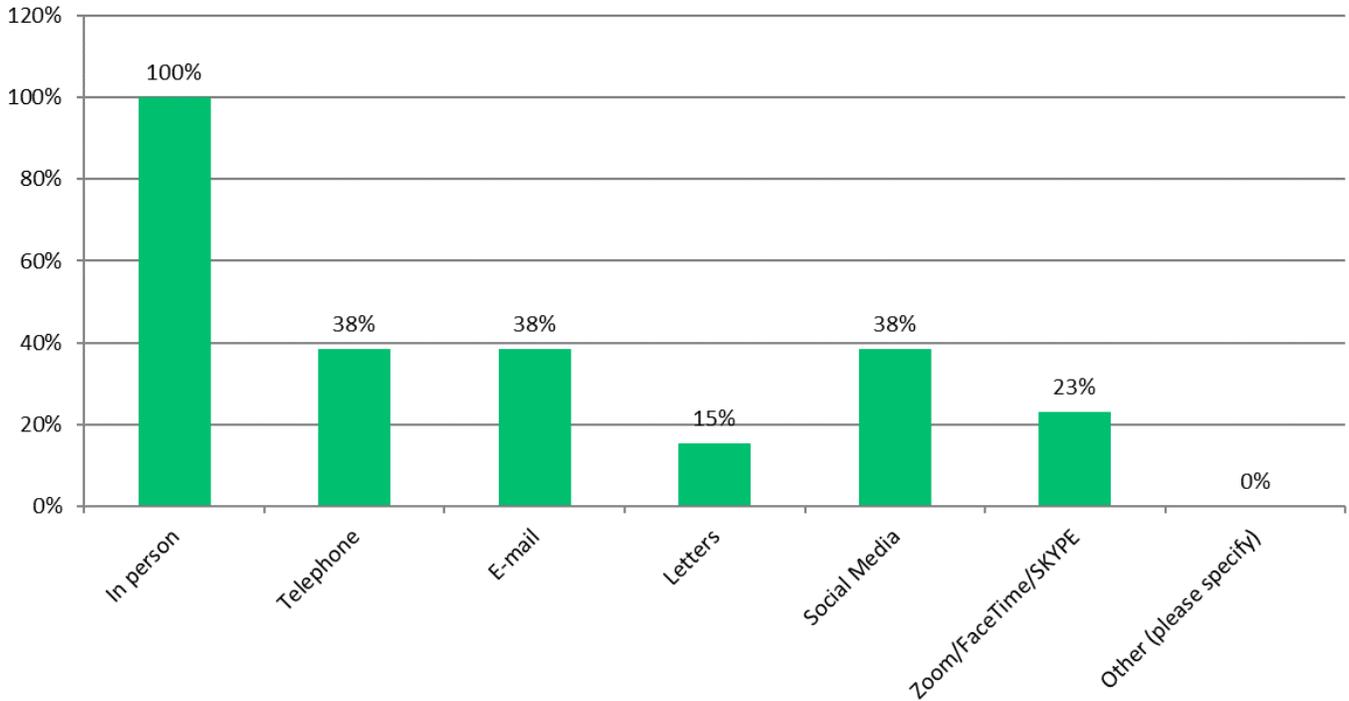
“Regardless of a person’s age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combated by having opportunities to socialize and the availability of accessible, affordable and fun social activities.”^{vii}

DATA

What are your main social interactions? Check all that apply



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



STRENGTHS

- **The town has dedicated volunteers** - The same elected and volunteering few are common faces on the various commissions and committees. They are committed to making Wakefield a great place and have historical knowledge and experience that make their input and advising beneficial to the Town.
- **Community Events** – The town’s recreation department holds events like the Christmas Tree Lighting, Breakfast with Santa, the Ice Fishing Derby and trips for seniors and others interested like Holiday Shopping trips to Portland.
- **Greater Wakefield Resource Center** – This center provides meals for seniors on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursday, and hosts bingo.
- **Gafney Library** – This public institution is an important community service. It holds various events like an annual gingerbread contest, Lego club, and outdoor story time.



OPPORTUNITIES

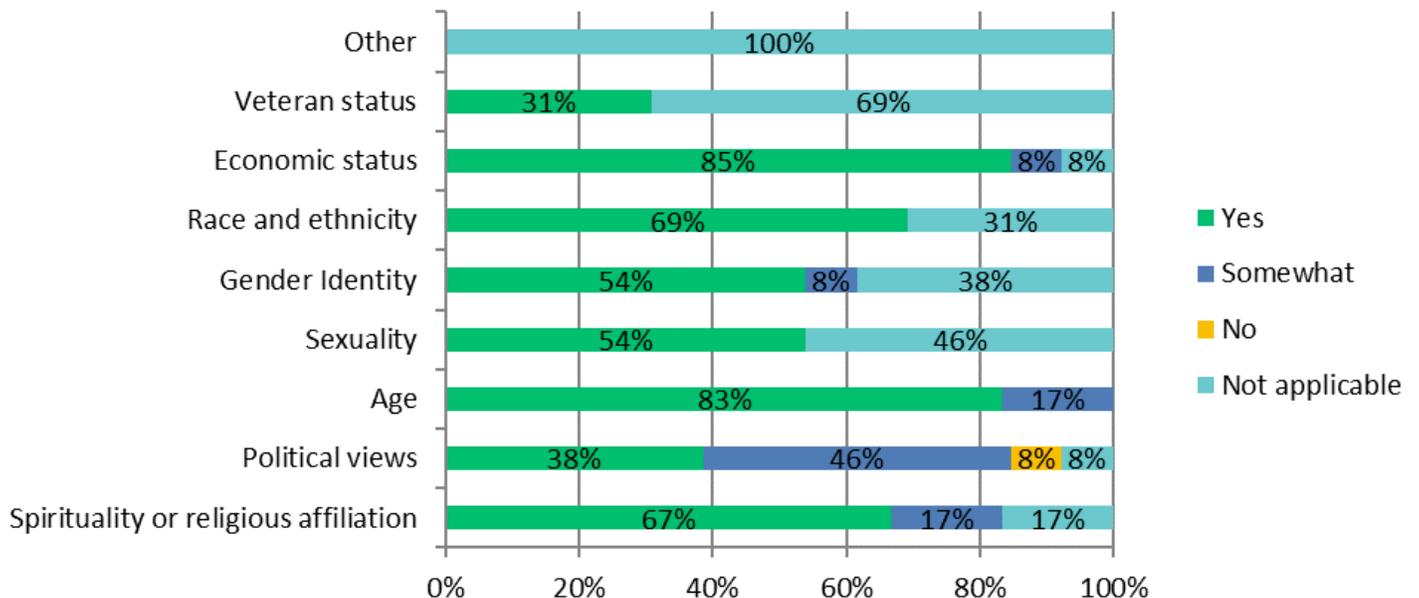
- **Event to bring together seasonal and year-round residents** – The town could host a summer kick-off event to encourage a stronger sense of community between seasonal and year-round residents.
- **More community events** – The town could hold more community events, in addition to ones mentioned above, that get media attention and encourage visitors.
- **Greater variety of dining options/restaurants** – Having more dining options in Town could draw more visitors and benefit residents who would have more options.
- **Permanent indoor and outdoor activities** – Year-round events could be held in spaces like the Wakefield Opera House. Currently the Recreation Department uses this space for yoga and could expand programming there.

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.”^{viii}

DATA

Do you feel accepted in your community with regards to:





STRENGTHS

- **Accepting of the aging community** - A lot of retirees live in Wakefield part time. Residents 65+ make up 20% of the population.
- **Strong sense of place** – Residents have local, accessible establishments like a hardware store, market, restaurants, and boat facilities all in or near downtown.
- **The Gafney Knit Wits** - “The Gafney Knit Wits meet on Mondays from 10:00 to noon to knit, crochet and socialize. While much of the time the members work on their own projects, the group extended itself into the community by working on many charity projects - baby blankets, sweaters, and hats for local organizations that care for young mothers, chemo caps, helmet liners, shawls, and even Afghans to send to Afghanistan.”^{ix}



OPPORTUNITIES

- **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 to encourage friendships and connections. The Town’s recreation department could potentially assist with an effort like this.
- **Better community between year-round and seasonal resident** – Encourage harmony and community between all residents of Wakefield. This could happen through holding a festival at the beginning of each summer (see bullet under Livability Principle #4 – Social Participation).

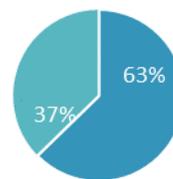
LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #6 – WORK AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

“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.”^x

DATA

Income	Median Household Income	\$69,185
	Income Inequality (Gini Index)	0.38
	Low income households	21.75%
	High income households	6.10%

Ballots Cast



■ In-Person ■ Absentee

* This data is from the 2020 general election



973 total jobs in Wakefield.



STRENGTHS

- **Easy commute to jobs** – Residents are near higher paying jobs to the south of Wakefield via Route 16.
- **Jobs in town** – There are 973 jobs in town. The town’s largest employers are the Town of Wakefield and the School District.
- **The town has dedicated staff and volunteers** - The same municipal staff and elected and volunteering few are familiar faces on the various commissions and committees. They are committed to making Wakefield a wonderful place and have historical knowledge and experience that make their input and advising beneficial to the Town.
- **Gafney Adult Learning Center** – The adult learning center is open for HISET study and job search/career counseling at the Greater Wakefield Resource Center.



OPPORTUNITIES

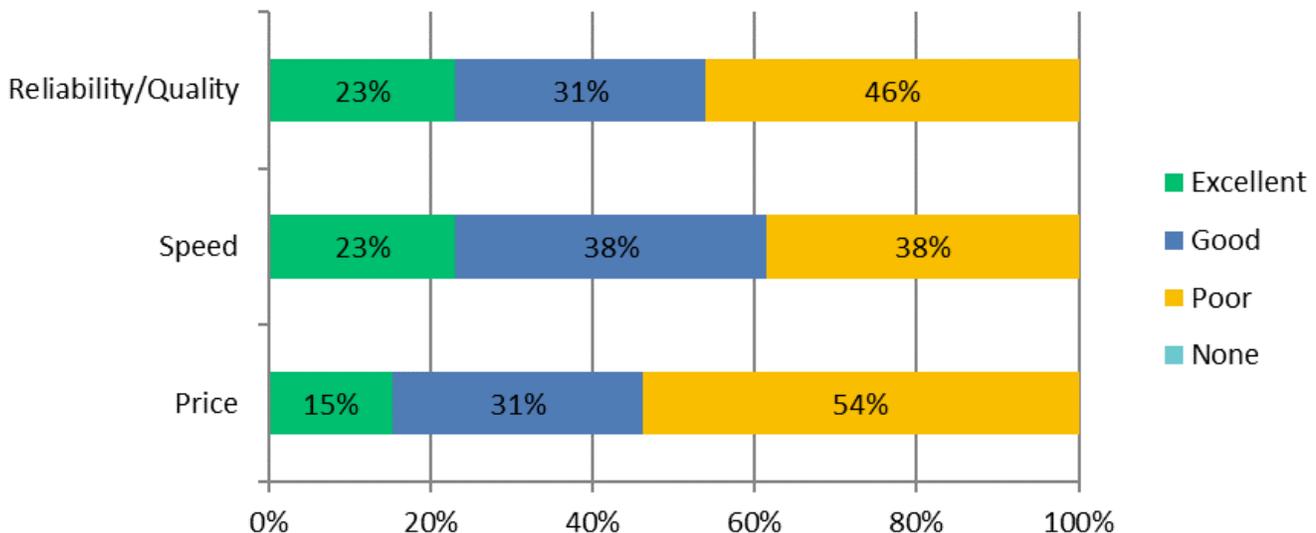
- **Need for a greater workforce population** – The town could benefit from a greater workforce in and around Wakefield. In Wakefield’s master plan the town encourages, “the advancement of technology, economic opportunities and communication throughout the Town to benefit residents, businesses, and education.”^{xi}
- **Local work opportunities appear to be limited and low wage** – Primarily there are only relatively low wage retail and restaurant work in town. There is a potential to Improve pay and benefits for these low wage jobs.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE #7 – COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

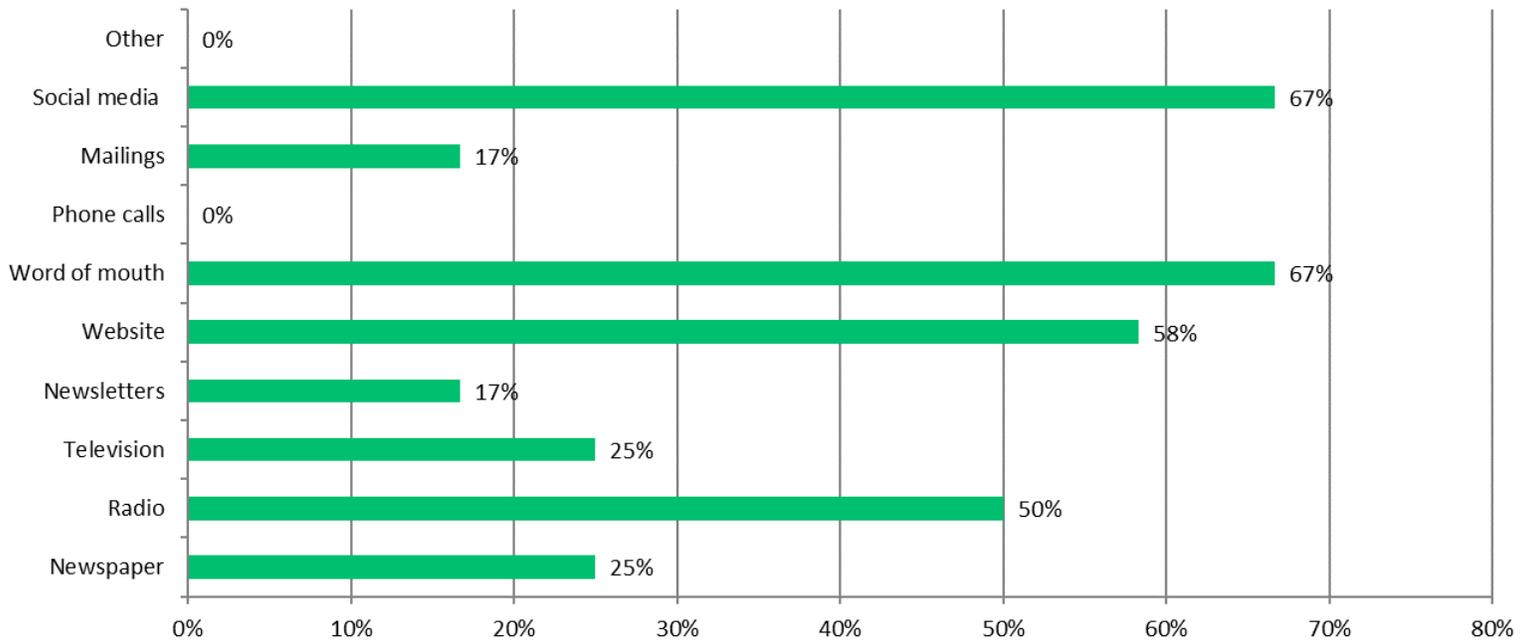
“We now communicate in ways few could have imagined a decade ago. Age-friendly communities recognize that information needs to be shared through a variety of methods since not everyone is tech-savvy, and not everyone has a smartphone or home-based access to the internet.”^{xii}

DATA

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

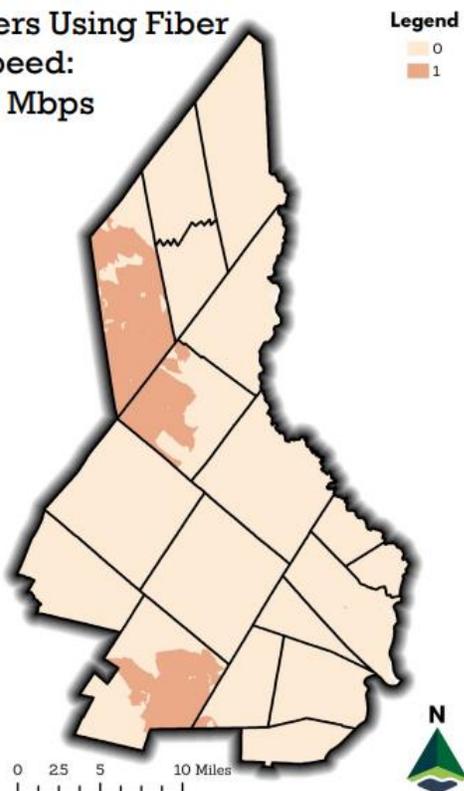


How do you learn about community news and activities? Check all that apply.

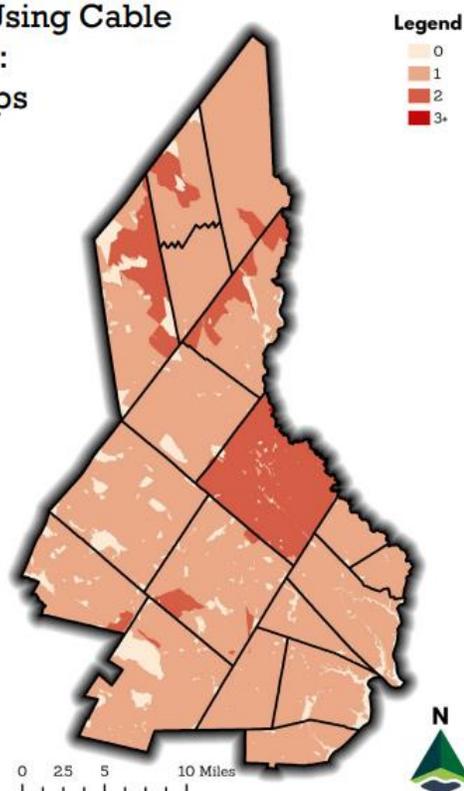


Broadband Access

Providers Using Fiber
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps



Providers Using Cable
Min. Speed:
100/20 Mbps





STRENGTHS

- **Wi-Fi outside the Gafney Library** – There is wi-fi from the Gafney Library that can be utilized outside the library for those on their phones, iPads, and laptops.
- **Local public affairs cable is primary local news source** - Clearview Community TV is Wakefield’s media resources for video recordings of local government meetings and more.
- **Facebook town groups** – While not maintained or interacted with by the Town, town Facebook groups like “WAKEFIELD NH – A COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER” proves to be a popular source of what is going on in Wakefield. The Town’s Recreation Department has a dedicated Facebook page where it posts regularly to an audience of 2,000+.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Affordable internet** – Residents want more affordable internet options. DSL is cheaper but limited in bandwidth. Cable has limited competition and is expensive.
- **Regional news source** – Wakefield and surrounding towns (Farmington, Middleton, Milton, 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.
- **Widen dissemination of information** – The town could partner with the Gafney Library to utilize its calendar to advertise important events; this way information could be shared with senior centers, and other entities. The Greater Wakefield Resource Center could also be a beneficial resource in getting information to seniors.
- **Internet upgrades** – While residents see the internet as reliable, there are opportunities for increased speed.
- **Increased news coverage** – There is little coverage for Wakefield in Rochester or Carroll County papers. This could be supplemented by a new regional news source (see bullet above).

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.”^{xiii}

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	5
Memory Cafes	0
Dementia Support Group	0
Total	5

Community Resources	Number of Sites
Places of Worship	0
Historic Places, Buildings, or Structures	9
Libraries	3
Medical and Health Care Facilities	2
Governmental Services	2
Non-Governmental Services	1
Fire and Police Stations	2
Schools	1
TOTAL	20



STRENGTHS

- **Gafney Library** – The local library provides free books and computer access, in addition to other programming.
- **Access to some healthcare options** – There is one Doctor’s office in Town, which provides medical care for residents.



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.

- **Medical center in the area closing** - The current medical center in the area will be closing, and there is a need for a local medical center.
- **Community and Health Services** - Wakefield has limited health services. This could be an opportunity for regional partnerships with surrounding towns (Milton, Middleton, Farmington, etc.).

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.wakefieldnh.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif1366/f/uploads/master_plan_-_may_2014.pdf#page=20

^{vi} https://www.wakefieldnh.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif1366/f/uploads/master_plan.pdf#page=29

^{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>

^{ix} <http://www.gafneylibrary.org/programs.asp>

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

^{xi} https://www.wakefieldnh.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif1366/f/uploads/master_plan.pdf#page=6

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

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