



Swampscott for All Ages: A Community Needs Assessment

October 2019

**Commissioned by the Town of Swampscott
&
Swampscott for All Ages Committee**

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the support from:

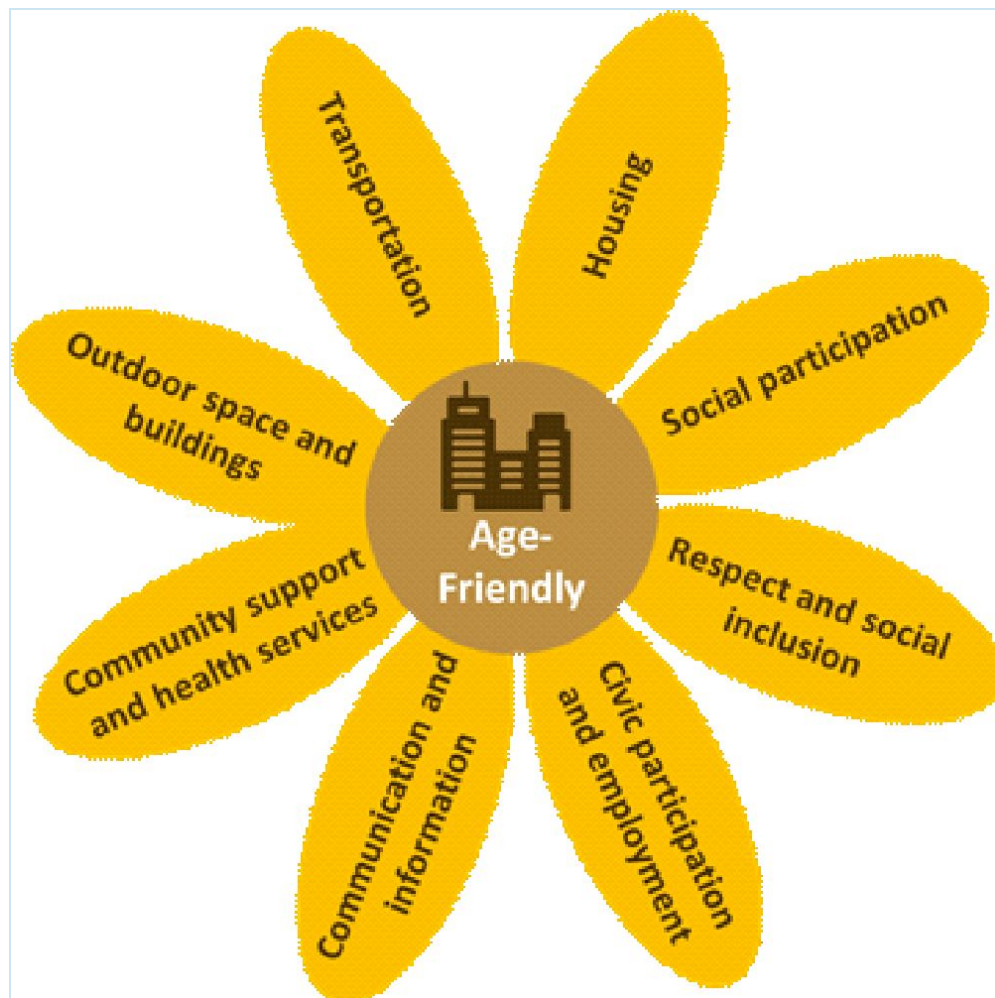
- ❖ Heidi Whear, Bob Powell
- ❖ Swampscott for All Ages Committee
- ❖ Sean Fitzgerald
- ❖ The residents of Swampscott who participated in the project

Outline of Today's Presentation

- ❑ The Age and Dementia Friendly framework
- ❑ Strategies used to hear from community of Swampscott
- ❑ Swampscott Characteristics and Recommendations by Age-Friendly Domain
- ❑ Discussion

Age-Friendly Framework

The Eight Domains of an Age-Friendly Community



- Enables people of **all ages** to **actively participate in community activities** and **treats everyone with respect**, regardless of their age
- Makes it easy for older people to **stay connected** to people who are important to them
- Helps people **stay healthy** and provides **support to those who can no longer live independently**

Dementia Friendly Community



- Meaningful access to and engagement in community life for people living with dementia and their family.
- Each sector of community works to create an informed, safe and respectful community.
- Prioritizing the promotion of quality of life for those living with dementia and their care partners.

Goals in Developing the *Swampscott for All Ages* Report

- Develop an understanding of Swampscott's *assets* and *concerns* of the community.
- Provide preliminary ideas for ways in which Swampscott's age friendly features may be improved.
- Draw on resident and stakeholder input.

Strategies for Learning about Swampscott

- Review of Existing Data
- Community Forum (~100 residents)
- Seven Key-Informant Interviews
 - Town Administrator
 - Senior Center Director
 - Planning Board Member
 - Police Chief
 - Fire Chief
 - GLSS Executive Director
 - YMCA Executive Director
- Four Focus Groups (29 participants)

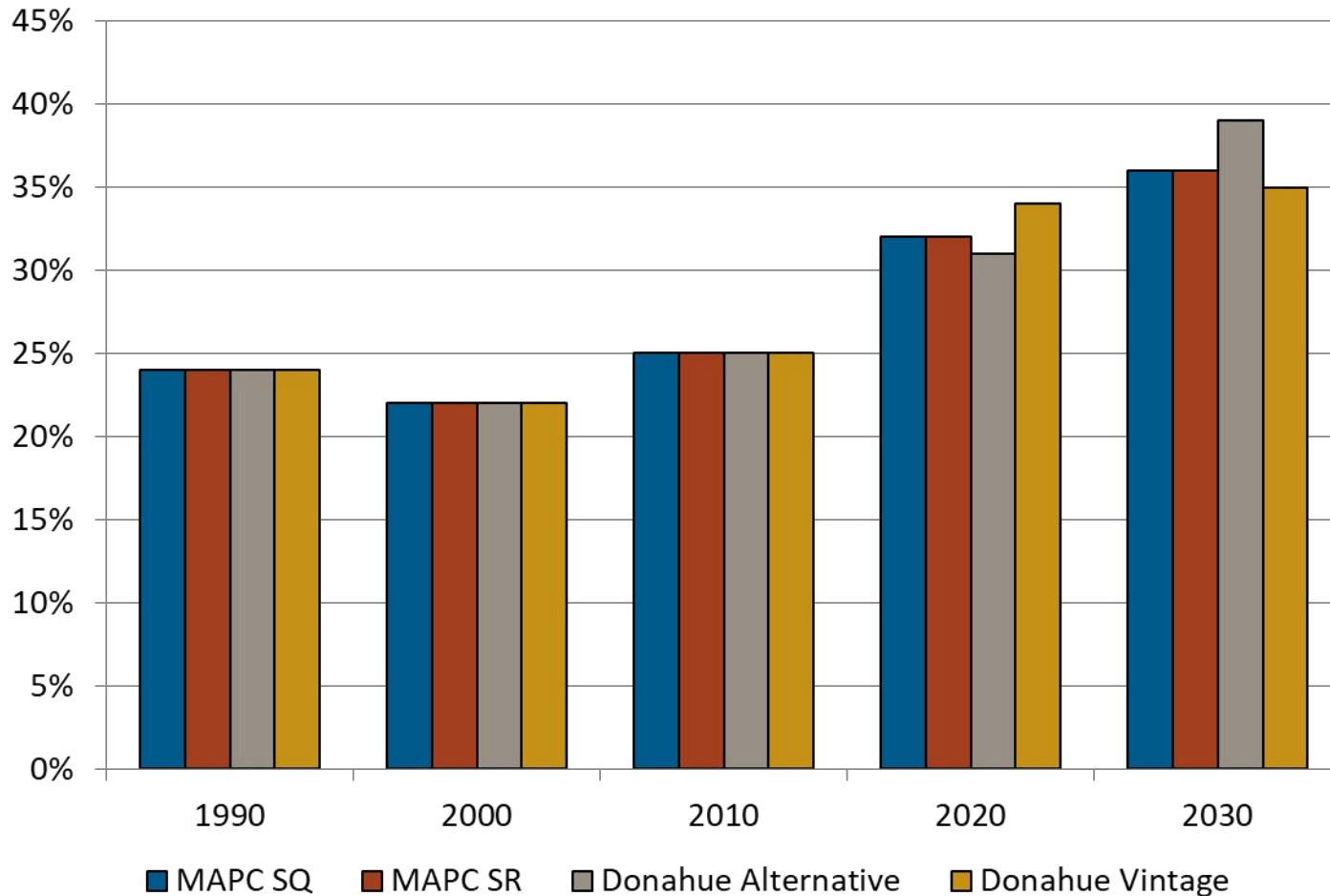
Strategies for Learning about Swampscott

- Resident Survey (55+)
- N=1,645 (33% Response rate)

	Survey Respondents	American Community Survey
55-59	14%	16%
60-69	38%	47%
70-79	32%	19%
80+	16%	18%
Total	100%	100%

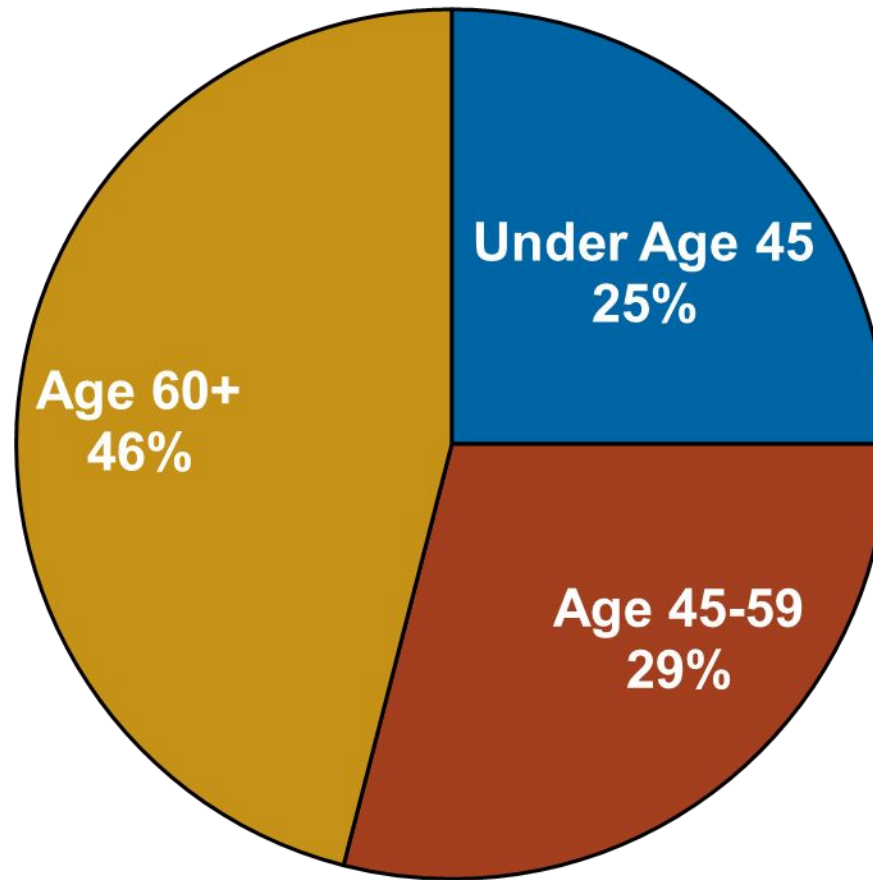
- Peer Community Comparison
 - Salem
 - Marblehead

By 2030 35% of Swampscott Residents Will Be 60+



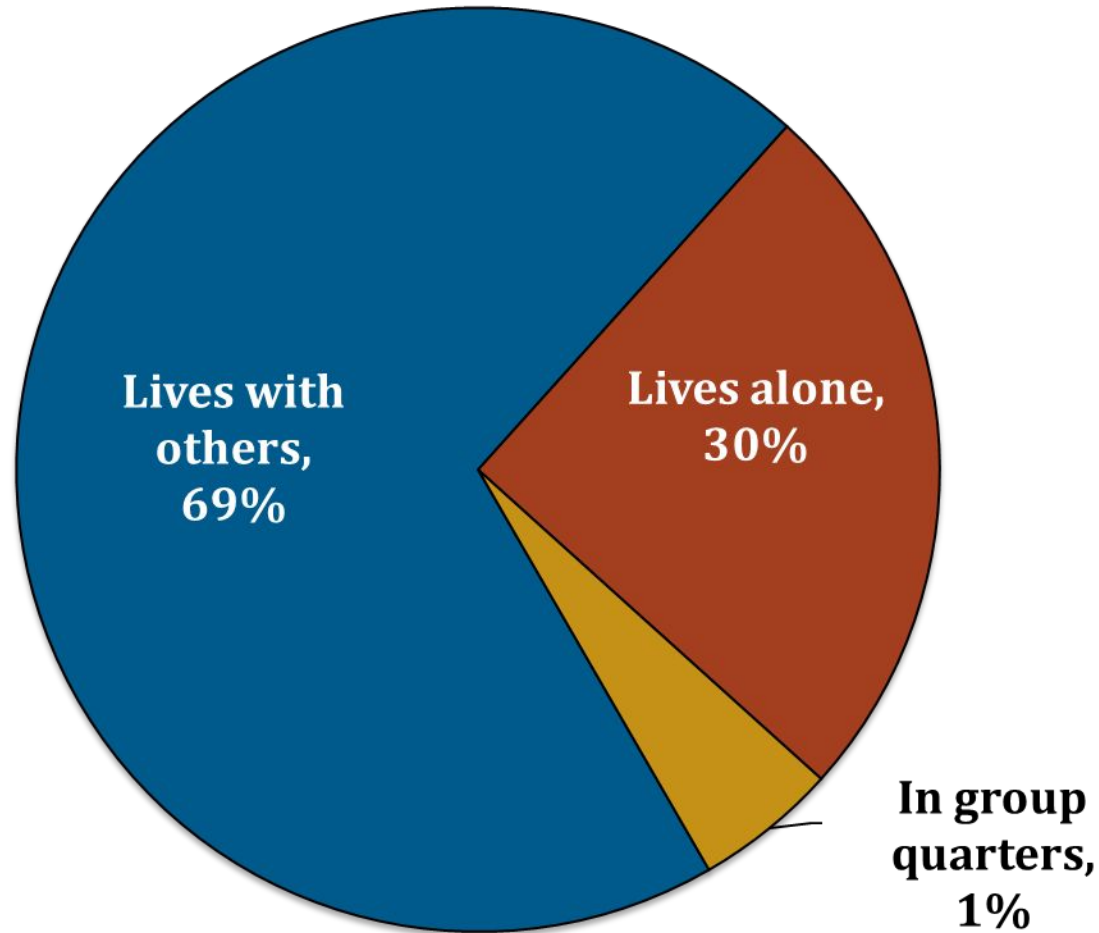
Sources: Population figures for 1990 through 2010 are from the U.S. Census.
Projection figures are from the Donahue Institute and MAPC.

46% of Swampscott Homeowners are Age 60+



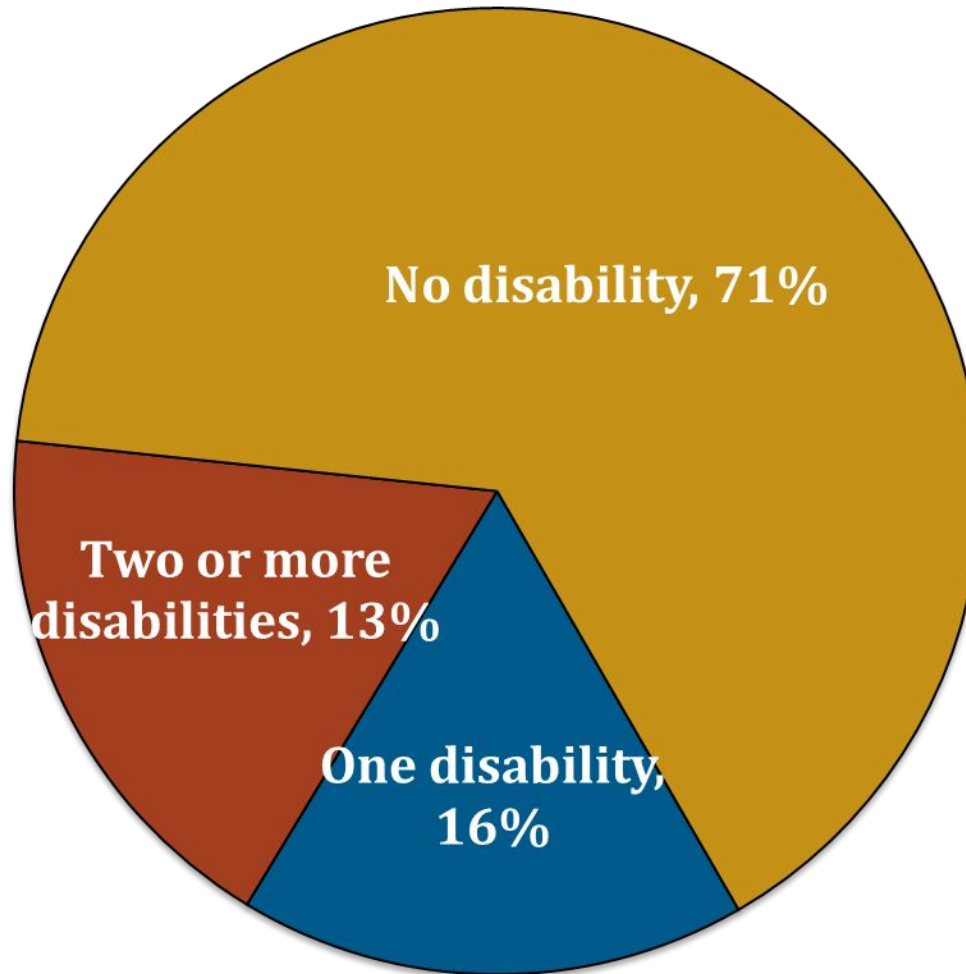
Source: American Community Survey, 2013-2017, Tables B25007 and B25011
Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

30% of Swampscott Seniors are Living Alone



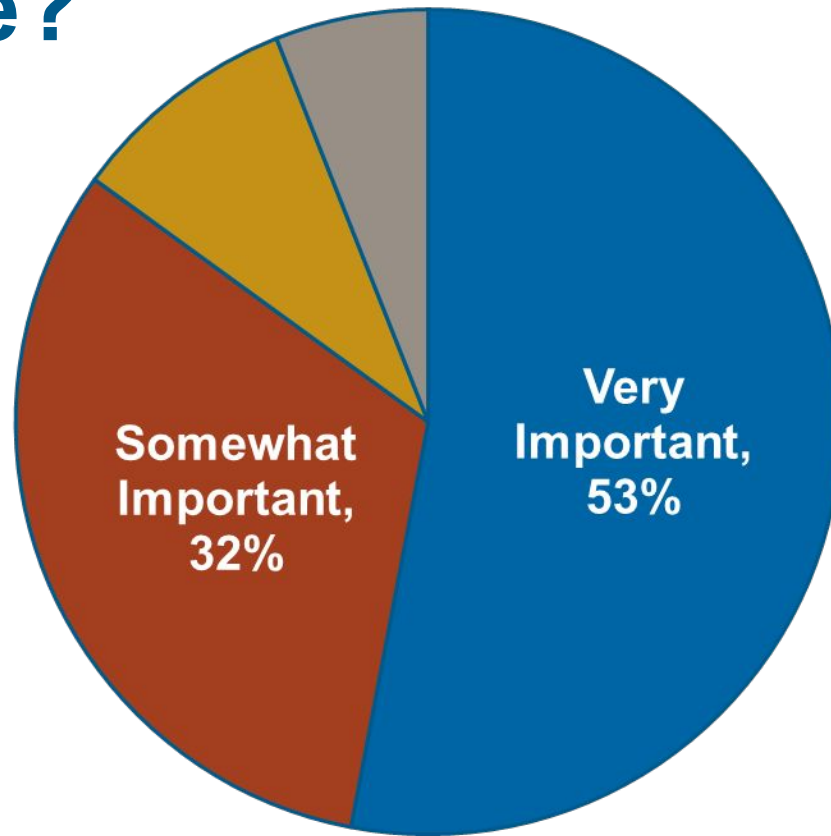
Source: American Community Survey, 2013-2017, Table B09020.
Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates

35% of Swampscott Residents Age 65+ have a Disability



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2013-2017, Table C18108

How important is it for you to remain living in Swampscott as you age?



■ Very Important
■ Slightly Important

■ Somewhat Important
■ Not at all Important

Cross-Cutting Theme:

Affordability and Economic Security

Community Input

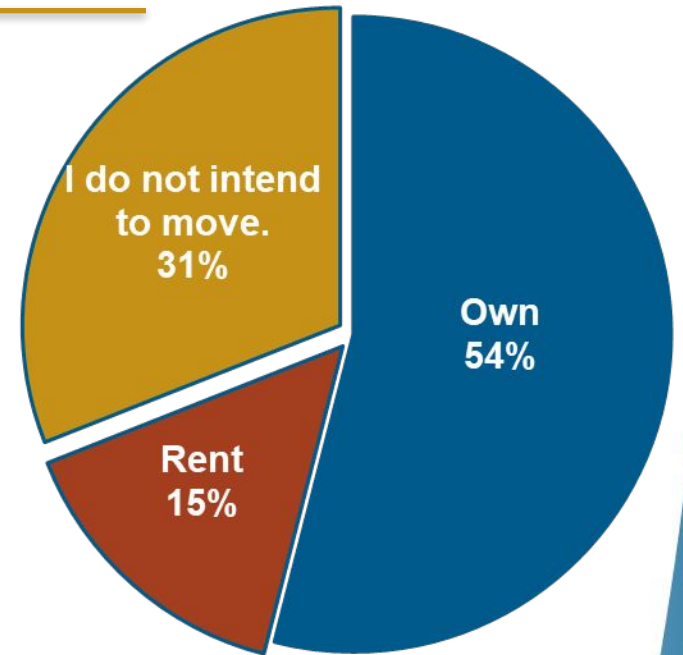
- **“Cost burdened”**: **32%-36%** of homeowners and **61%** of renters are spending more than 30% of their income on housing.
- **Cost of living**, namely property taxes, was the greatest concern about being able to stay in town for **more than half** of the survey respondents.
- **Economic insecurity** reported by **17%** of respondents; **22%** of residents age 65+ report a median income of less than \$25,000/year.

Ideas for Action

- Consider opportunities to **reduce property taxes** for those needing assistance. For example:
 - **Freeze property taxes** for those over a certain age.
 - **Expand access** to existing property tax relief programs by raising the income limit for the tax work-off program.
 - Ensure that those who are already eligible for existing programs are **aware** of how to apply.

Housing

- **56% of survey respondents reported that their current home does not have a bathroom and bedroom on the first floor.**
- **Apartment, condo, or townhome preferred by respondents age 60-79.**
- **Senior independent living preferred by the 80+ population.**
- **Of the 37% of survey respondents reporting home repair needs. 10% cannot afford them.**



“[my greatest concern is] living alone in a large house. Maintaining property is increasingly difficult....”

HOUSING: Ideas for Action

- Investigate **strategies** for developing a “**village**” in Swampscott.
- Promote **home repair and modification** so that current housing is **appropriate** as people age.
- Review zoning regulations to identify opportunities to create housing alternatives (e.g., accessory dwelling units, co-housing, creation of multifamily); and ensure that these opportunities are accessible.
- Increase the opportunity for **public discourse** around **affordable senior housing**.
- Increase **community connections to senior housing developments**—consider targeted outreach of information.

Transportation

- 20% of respondents age 70-79 **modify their driving** as do **34%** of those age 80+, and **24%** of respondents age 80+ **do not drive**.
- 41% of respondents **walk or bike** as methods of getting around.
- 31% of respondents are **dissatisfied with parking**.
- 4% - 7% of respondents **missed, cancelled, or rescheduled a medical appointment** in the last year due to of a lack of transportation.

“[I am] concerned about the town's ability to remain physically accessible for aging residents, whether it's the condition of roads and walkways to transportation options for residents to get around town”

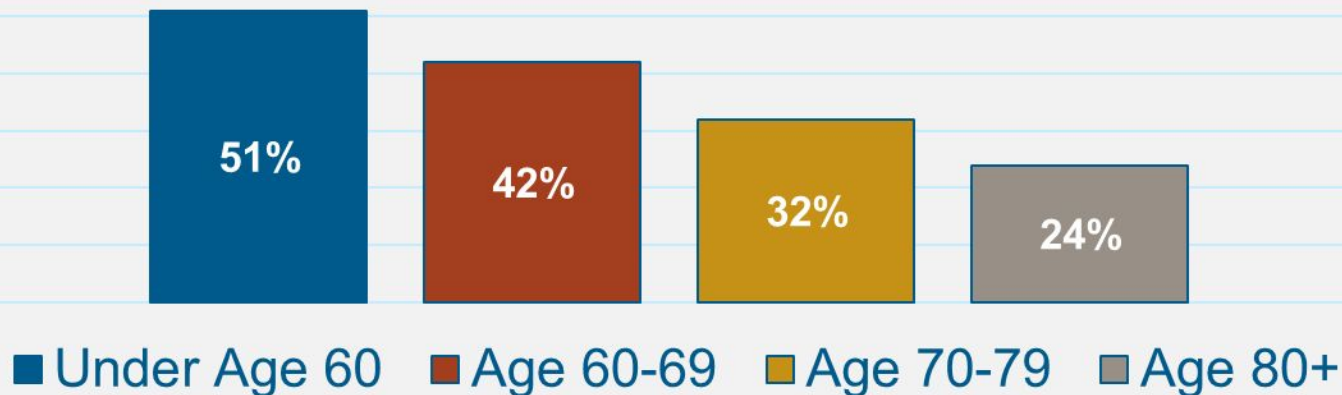
Ideas for Action in Swampscott: TRANSPORTATION

- **Expand options for medical transportation.** Consider the use of **volunteer drivers**.
- **Work with neighboring communities** to develop a multi-town transportation solutions.
- In support of recent plans for the downtown and waterfront areas—advocate for the completion of **sidewalk/intersection improvements**, added **handicap parking**, **shaded seating**, and **public restrooms** that will improve walkability.
- Make **ride share services in Swampscott** more “**age friendly**”, profile local drivers in the newspaper, host workshops etc.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

- 45% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with availability of **maintained sidewalks**.
- 56% of respondents are dissatisfied with the availability of **public restrooms**.
- 32% are dissatisfied with the availability of **shaded seating**; and 30% dissatisfied with **lighting** along walkways.

Are there sufficient places to go in Swampscott to socialize or for leisure? (% reporting No)



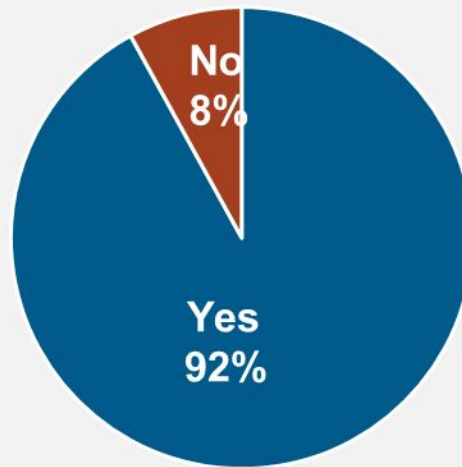
Ideas for Action in Swampscott: OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

- Improve **access to community amenities**.
 - Increase knowledge about **public restroom** locations, and potentially increase their availability.
 - Encourage **local businesses** to allow older adults to use their restrooms.
 - Create a **map of public restrooms**.
- Expand the number of locations for participation in **intergenerational social gatherings** and **recreation**.
 - Document and review **capacity of existing buildings** and advocate for a **feasibility study** to expand capacity.
- Create a mechanism for **residents to be informed of the progress of sidewalk and intersection improvements**.

Social Participation

- **18% did not talk with any neighbors** in the past month.
- **18%** ever participated at the senior center.
 - **“I’m not old enough”** and **“I am not interested”** were the most common reasons for those who do not participate.

Do you know someone living within 30 minutes or your home on whom you could rely for help?

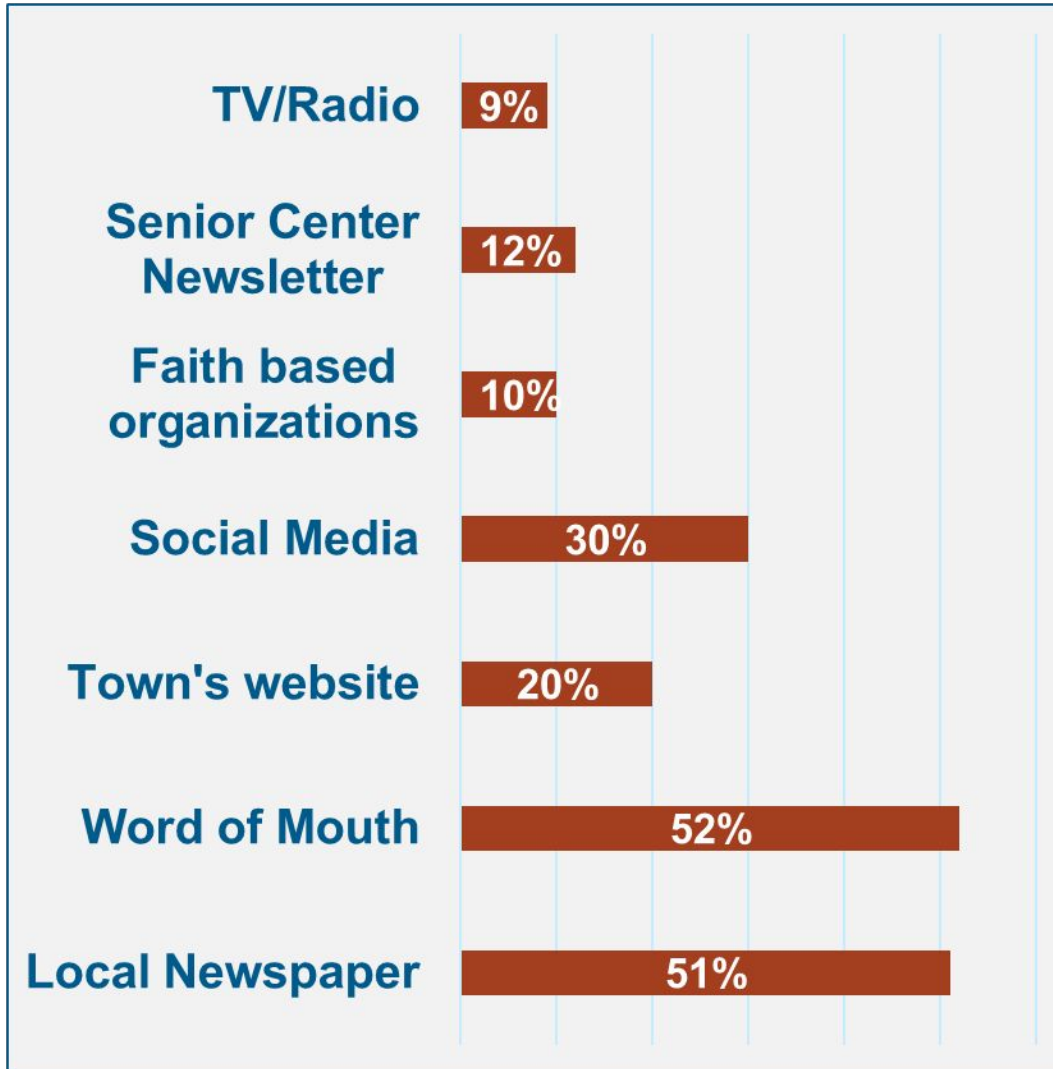


Ideas for Action in Swampscott:

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

- Initiate a **Facebook page** for older adults—foster peer to peer connections.
- Consider strengthening **intergenerational activities through creation of a senior-student liaison.**
- Develop a “**companion**” **program** that connects residents who have a shared interest.
- Identify **neighborhood-based programs or mechanisms** to strengthen informal networks in neighborhoods.
- Develop **an Age Friendly regional coalition** to strategize about ways that area senior centers can work together to ensure that all residents have access to the rich array of programs and services.
- Consider ways to **welcome first-time participants** to the Senior Center who are reluctant to participate on their own.

Communication & Information



- *49% of respondents do **not know who to contact** in if they or someone in their family needed help accessing social, municipal, or health services.*
- **21% of respondents age 80+ do not have Internet access at home.**

Ideas for Action in Swampscott:

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

- Consider **scheduling quarterly meetings** of key employees who work for organizations that provide services to older adults, providing an avenue to share information.
- Continue to **disseminate information** in multiple forms and provide print copies of important information in places other than the senior center.
- Explore the possibility of having a **centralized social calendar** for events happening around Swampscott as a way of making residents aware of programs (e.g., library, senior center, recreation, church groups).

Civic Engagement & Employment

- **64%** agree that there are **ample opportunities** to participate in **local government**, and **59%** believe there are **opportunities to volunteer**.
- **46%** of survey respondents are **retired**. **18%** plan to retire in the next 5 years.
- **8%** of respondents under age 60 are **looking for work**.

“I would appreciate the name of seniors I could help. Also I would appreciate the opportunity to help someone who needs occasional babysitting.”

Ideas for Action in Swampscott:

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & EMPLOYMENT

- Designate a group of **resident advocates** who will consistently attend board and committee meetings to **raise awareness of senior issues**.
- As more residents begin to retire, consider ways for them to get **connected with volunteer opportunities** and post-retirement work.
 - Consider hosting a “retirement fair” and invite residents who have recently turned 65 as well as business and local organizations seeking part time employees or volunteers.
- **Expand programming** around **retirement planning** or finding a post-retirement **job**.
- Develop a “**citizens leadership academy**” to educate residents of all ages about municipal processes and encourage their involvement.

Community Supports & Health Services

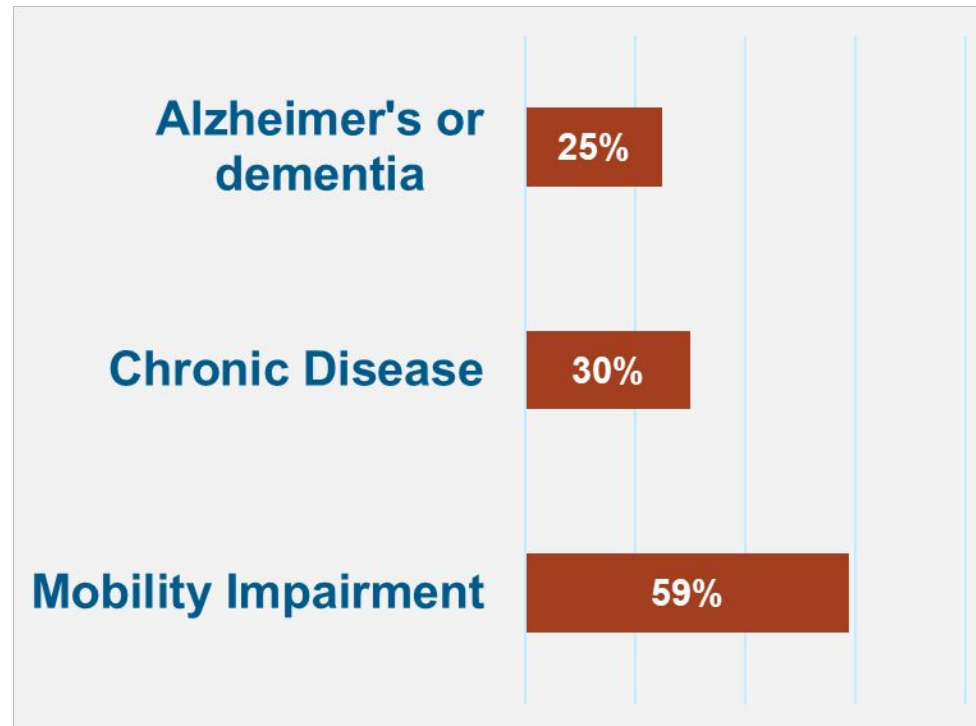
- ▶ *High rates of satisfaction reported for amenities like social services, health services, fitness opportunities and food access.*
- ▶ *High rates (<50%) of “I don’t know” response to questions about social services, mental health services, lifelong learning, and caregiver support and in-home services.*

“provide a central location to show all regional/town services for the older community. Including in-home assistance, yard work, activities (not just senior center)”

Caregivers are important consumers of community supports & health services

- 49% report being a **caregiver**, including 54% of respondents under age 70.
 - Among them, **59%** reported that this caregiving was very or somewhat **challenging** and **72%** of caregivers “don’t know” about **caregiver support**.

Condition of
care recipient:



Ideas for Action in Swampscott: COMMUNITY SUPPORTS & HEALTH SERVICES

- Host a **“crash course in caregiving”**
 - opportunity to connect the Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS) with family caregivers.
- Consider hosting a **“Caregiver’s Night Out”**
 - Explore partnerships with volunteer groups to provide respite care during the event.
- Consider a mechanism to **identify “at-risk” residents**
 - Encourage a **formal collaboration** between the police, fire, and senior center departments. If possible, formulate a **routine check-in** with these residents to stay ahead of crisis-situations.
- Consider **requiring a home-visit before a resident can obtain a lock box or life-alert** from the Swampscott Fire Department

Respect & Social Inclusion

- ▶ 6% of respondents feel discriminated against because of **income**
- ▶ 5% because of **age**
- ▶ 3% because of **religion/culture**

- ▶ **1 in 4 survey** respondents does not agree that local policymakers take into account the interests and concerns of older residents

“I think this effort is excellent and I hope a lot of insight comes from it. I support the idea of a permanent commission on multicultural and all ages living. There needs to be central leadership in this regard.”

Ideas for Action in Swampscott: RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Review existing accessibility of public events and meetings to ensure inclusion—include transportation, seating, closed captioning, restrooms and cost to ensure that all residents feel welcome and supported.
- Promote **greater awareness of dementia** in the community.
 - Expanding and developing dementia-friendly initiatives such as public education about dementia, access to adult day programs, and businesses that are trained to interact with people with dementia may be considered.
- Incorporate **elements of inclusion and respect in the Swampscott for All Ages mission** statement.

Priorities for Swampscott for All Ages

- ▶ **Outdoor Spaces & Buildings:** Coordinate and support existing plan to improve walkability and accessibility of Swampscott's outdoor spaces
- ▶ **Community Support & Health Services:** Increase outreach to caregivers and those at risk for social isolation
- ▶ **Communication & Information:** increase channels to residents about existing resources available to Swampscott residents and facilitate networking among stakeholders to sustain communication.
- ▶ **Advocacy:** Ensure that older residents are present in decision making processes and that there are sufficient opportunities for their voices to be heard in planning discussions.
- ▶ Explore and present creative alternatives—including regional approaches to:
 - ▶ Housing
 - ▶ Transportation
 - ▶ Programming

Next steps:

- ▶ Develop an action plan that includes:
 - ▶ Action steps, possible collaborators, estimated timeline and “outputs”
- ▶ Continue having a public presence and facilitating community conversations and events around livability and aging
- ▶ Implement the action steps laid out in the plan

Thank You!

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