



# ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING AND TRANSIT OPTIONS FOR NEEDHAM SENIORS



COUNCIL  
ON AGING  
Needham



Needham Council  
on Aging  
Needham Public  
Health Department  
August 2016

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# Acknowledgements

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# **ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING AND TRANSIT OPTIONS FOR NEEDHAM SENIORS**

**Needham Council on Aging  
Needham Public Health Department  
August 2016**

# Executive Summary

## Background

An age-friendly community is one that is conducive to healthy, active participation of all residents regardless of their age or ability.

In January 2016, the Needham Public Health Division received a grant from the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards for Healthy Aging through Healthy Community Design. The funds were designated for an assessment of community conditions and barriers to senior-friendly housing and transit in Needham.

## Methods

- Interviews of 21 key leaders, local government officials and providers who have experience working with this age group;
- Four focus groups with older Needham residents;
- A survey completed by 650 Needham residents aged 55 and above, in both electronic and in print formats;
- A review of current municipal regulations and policies that impact housing and transit for an aging population.

## Assets

Needham is clearly perceived by residents as a desirable place to live. In focus groups and surveys, respondents overwhelmingly stated that they wish to continue living in this town. Focus group participants identified many community assets including civic organizations, volunteerism, strong faith communities, and the long-established relationships developed over the course of a lifetime.

Some aspects of transportation were also identified by focus group participants as strengths. With four commuter rail stations and the #59 bus, Needham is well-connected to Boston. Other assets identified by participants include the volunteer-based transportation services of Council on Aging and the Needham Community Council, MBTA senior discounts, and Uber.

In the housing realm, participants discussed the wide array of senior living communities in Needham such as North Hill, Wingate, Chestnut Hollow, Avery Crossing, Nehoiden Glen, and properties owned by the Needham Housing Authority.

Participants and key informants discussed the condominium market in Needham which provides opportunities for people looking to downsize and reduce maintenance responsibilities.

Participants also remarked on the walkability of Needham, particularly the center area with its well-maintained sidewalks and the compact nature of downtown.

Needham's adoption of "Complete Streets" puts it well ahead of many other communities. The Downtown Redesign project will accommodate multi-modal users with streets and sidewalks altered to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety. Recent and ongoing improvements to Needham's walking trails are also very beneficial to the older residents of the town.

## **Challenges to aging in Needham**

The challenges identified by focus group and survey participants fall into a few notable categories: housing; transportation; and pedestrian safety. Affordability, while mostly addressed in discussions about housing, was also an issue in groceries and retail.

### **Housing**

The Senior Survey on Housing and Transit consisted largely of questions about housing, including questions about respondents' desire to stay in Needham as well as their assessment of their likelihood to remain in town. Of the 621 respondents who answered both the *importance* and *likelihood* questions, 135 (22%) indicated that it is more important for them to remain in Needham than it is likely that they will remain. Put another way, 22% of respondents want to remain in Needham as they age, but feel that one or more factors will prevent them from staying in their community.

Residents identified specific barriers to aging in place: the scarcity of appropriate housing; the high cost of housing (purchase price or rent, and upkeep); costliness of modifying existing homes to increase accessibility; and zoning regulations that prohibit accessory dwelling units.

### **Affordability**

The most prominent theme in all of the focus groups was the lack of affordable and senior-appropriate housing in Needham. Rising taxes were cited as a serious barrier, especially for those living on fixed incomes. As taxes rise, the housing cost burden increases as well, even if all other costs remain constant.

According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, a household is considered cost burdened if it spends more than 30% of its income on rent or mortgage costs and utility costs. In 2012 using state and federal data, the Needham Planning and Community Development Department found that almost half of the town's 515 elderly renters who earned within 80% of the median family income (MFI) were overspending on their housing, almost all with severe cost

burdens. Those remaining 261 seniors who earned below 80% of the MFI and did not overspend, were likely living in subsidized housing or affordable units.

The high level of cost burdens among elderly renters and owners indicate that seniors who live on fixed incomes experience challenges with housing costs in Needham. Housing costs include energy bills, insurance costs, and property taxes. Many of the owners are likely empty nesters living in single-family homes that cost too much for them to maintain and with more space than they require at this stage of their lives.

### Housing stock

The severe shortage of suitable and affordable housing stock in Needham is a significant issue for seniors who wish to remain in the community. Many participants and survey respondents would like to relocate within Needham. However, as smaller homes are demolished and replacement homes or condos generally cost more than people can expect to receive when they sell their current houses, residents are compelled to either stay in their current home, regardless of whether it is accessible and sized to meet their current needs, or else move to another town.

A number of residents would like to move to condominiums rather than to smaller houses as another alternative to one-floor living and the added benefit of limited upkeep required on their part. But again, the stock is expensive and the supply is limited.

### Needham addresses the shortage

It is important to note that several key informants talked about efforts underway to address, at least in part, this housing crunch. Zoning Overlay Districts, which comprise a set of rules applied to property within the overlay district in addition to the requirements of the underlying or base zoning district, can encourage certain desired land uses. They may allow for mixed use development, which could include specific senior and low-income housing options.

Needham has adopted Overlay District zoning for a number of its business districts to encourage this mixed-use multi-family housing alternative by relaxing its density and height requirements in circumstances where the above noted uses are provided. Smart growth, using underused commercial space for multi-use building, including housing, is a strategy used in many communities but it often requires zoning amendments and by-law revisions to implement. Needham has acted proactively, by incorporating the Zoning Overlay Districts into the context of its zoning program.

### Adapting existing homes

Many Needham residents have some options to adapt their current homes to allow them to age in place. However, in some circumstances, modifications are not practical due to cost of renovation or the architecture of the home. One-hundred and two (102) survey respondents indicated that they

were not able to make the modifications that they wanted to make, most of whom cited cost as the barrier to modifying their current homes.

### The middle class squeeze

While there are some options for people who qualify for low-income housing, and many options for those who can afford the higher cost senior living communities, those in the middle do not have many alternatives. Thus, the affordable housing problem is greatest for moderate income people who do not qualify for subsidized housing but can't afford market rate housing. There is a real sense among survey respondents and focus group participants that the middle class is being squeezed out of Needham.

### Unrealistic assessments or expectations for the future

Many of the participants appeared to have unrealistic assessments of the accessibility of their homes or of their own abilities as they age. Several participants did not appreciate the potential challenges posed by a split level house or a house with several steps leading to the front door. As currently able-bodied people, they are unaware of the challenges that "just a few" steps (and bathtubs, high-placed cupboards, etc.) Others were keenly aware of the limitations that may be just around the corner.

### Accessory Apartments

One of the recurring topics at focus groups, in interviews, and in comments on the survey, is accessory apartments. Also known as "accessory dwelling units," the Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit<sup>1</sup> defines them as a self-contained apartment in an owner occupied single family home that is either attached to the principal dwelling or in a separate structure on the same property. Accessory dwelling units have been proposed throughout Massachusetts and the rest of the country as a viable solution to some of the housing and support problems faced by seniors.

Accessory dwelling units appears to be a potentially contentious issue in Town. While Needham zoning does not currently allow accessory dwelling units, focus group participants, survey respondents, and some key informants believe they would be an affordable means for seniors to downsize. One interviewee also talked about accessory units providing the benefits of multi-generational living.

The majority of focus group participants were in favor of allowing accessory apartments. Some wished for more flexibility in zoning regulations, particularly as they apply to family-occupied units.

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<sup>1</sup> An initiative of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit is a resource for cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. It is available at: [http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart\\_growth\\_toolkit/pages/mod-adu.html](http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-adu.html)

However, a number of key informants and some survey respondents voiced concern about the possible ramifications of allowing such units.

There may be some tendency toward conflating the issues of accessory dwelling units for the benefit of elders wishing to downsize or live contiguously with family members, and the issue of affordable housing stock. It is important to separate these discussions as much as possible.

#### A public health perspective: isolation and depression

As people age, they are at increasing risk for depression associated with loss and isolation. One key informant talked about the isolation experienced by suburban seniors when they lose the ability to drive or are homebound for other reasons.

Focus group participants and survey respondents spoke about the losses and challenges they would face if they were to leave Needham. Integrating into a new community, particularly as an elder, is always challenging. A couple of participants spoke explicitly about the isolation and depression they have seen among their friends who have relocated to other communities.

#### **Transit**

Needham is unquestionably an automobile-dependent community. This was not problematic for many years; however, the auto-centric design becomes a barrier as the population ages.

Many older adults continue to drive into their 70s and 80s. According to the Needham Senior Survey Report, 94% of respondents plan to continue driving as they age. Yet, as seniors' abilities diminish, many are compelled to modify their driving habits or to give up driving entirely. For family members (or for an individual considering giving up driving) "taking away the keys" is an enormous stressor.

As the Town of Needham anticipates a significant increase in its elderly population, it must also prepare for more people who do not drive and who will benefit from increasing transportation options in the community.

Local modes of transportation typically fall into the following categories:

- **Non-emergency medical visits** – must be scheduled several days in advance of trip.
- **Demand-based transportation** – includes taxis and ride hailing services which do not require advance planning.
- **Neighborhood-based transportation** – offered by private communities or housing or developments as a connection to key community service or retail locations.
- **Service-specific transportation** – community based organizations or employers providing transportation to their sites.

- **Community circulators** – vans or buses that run on designated routes, providing curb-to-curb transportation throughout a town.

### Public transit in Needham

Needham residents are generally pleased with the existing MBTA services, but also identified many needs unmet by current systems. Although the commuter rail and the bus are assets for transportation to Boston or Newton, getting *to* them is difficult, particularly from the more distant parts of Town. The hours of operation for the bus and commuter rail services are also seen as problematic. As designed, the commuter rail runs at times suitable for people traveling to and from Boston on a typical work schedule. There are limited trips on weekdays and none on Sundays.

### Non-emergency medical transit

There was near unanimous dissatisfaction with the RIDE. Participants in all focus groups and several key informants described the service as unreliable. Passengers often wait for hours for pick-up at home and again when ready to leave their health care providers.

One challenge for services run by community-based organizations is that many rely on volunteer drivers. The ranks of these volunteers have diminished in recent years as they, too, are aging out. Needham Community Council volunteers, for example, are mostly over 60 years old. The challenge of having enough volunteers to meet demand has prompted the Community Council to augment its volunteer driver program with a pilot program that uses Uber for resident transportation.

### Demand-based transportation

According to several focus group participants and survey respondents, Newton-based Veteran's Taxi service is not consistently responsive to the needs of Needham travelers. Participants speculated that this is due to the low volume of customers in Needham.

While a few focus group participants were enthusiastic about Uber, others were unlikely to use the service. For most, online ride hailing services are unavailable because they are either intimidated by or unable to access the technology or else find the service too costly. Cooperative initiatives launched in summer 2016 by the Council on Aging and the Needham Community Council have begun to explore using Uber and other ride-hailing services to assist with senior transportation challenges.

### Service specific transportation

The Council on Aging provides door-to-door transportation for seniors to the Center at the Heights. This service is essential for many older adults to continue to engage in social activity. The COA also runs weekly trips to grocery stores.

### Community circulators

One of the top recurring discussions in focus groups, interviews, and comments on the survey, was the mini bus shuttle that once circulated around Needham. The service was discontinued in the early nineties, but many residents have long and fond memories of riding the bus when they or their children were young. Now, most survey and focus group participants think of such a service as an opportunity for mobility and independence.

### Coordinating information about transportation

Several participants in focus groups, interviews, and the survey, suggested the need for a coordinated service for information and requests for transportation. Such services, called “one call–one click transportation services”, are recommended by the Bipartisan Policy Center’s Senior Health and Housing Task Force, a Washington D.C.-based think tank. The one call–one click program allows an individual to call one phone number (or click on one link) to access “real-time information, support, and referrals to help seniors navigate the complexities of securing rides.”<sup>2</sup>

The Wellesley Council on Aging recently revamped their program to integrate all transportation services for seniors. The program has one FTE to answer a central phone number and to schedule van or volunteer drivers. If a request cannot be accommodated by the COA, the employee helps the caller find the most appropriate transportation option.

### Regional Transportation

The MetroWest Regional Transportation Authority was established ten years ago to serve several communities in the western suburbs. Bus routes run through Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Marlborough, Milford, Natick, Newton, Southborough, Wayland, and Wellesley. The buses go through town centers, to shopping districts and malls, to MBTA stations, and provide connectivity among and within these communities

According to one key informant, a collaborative of contiguous communities that includes Needham is in discussions about establishing more regional transportation.

### Maximizing local assets

Participants in all aspects of the study wondered about the prospect of maximizing use of existing vehicles. In focus groups and interviews there were suggestions to consider using school vans during the day and evening hours when not being used for students.

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<sup>2</sup> Healthy Aging Begins at Home. Bipartisan Policy Center, May, 2016. <http://cdn.bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BPC-Healthy-Aging.pdf>, Chapter 3.

At the initial planning meeting and in interviews, Needham community leaders expressed an interest in exploring the possibility of partnering with local businesses which have their own shuttles: BID-Needham, TripAdvisor, the 128 Business Council, and Olin College.

## **Pedestrian Safety and Walkable Neighborhoods**

Current research indicates that senior citizens are more vulnerable to pedestrian injuries and fatalities than all other age groups except for young children. According to the Centers for Disease Control, pedestrians aged 65 and older accounted for 19% of all pedestrian deaths and an estimated 10% of pedestrian injuries in 2013.<sup>3</sup>

The Town of Needham is making infrastructure improvements that will benefit all users in the town. The Downtown Streetscape Plan and the Trails Master Plan are examples of this approach. Participants are generally pleased with the walkability in Needham.

### Street Crossing

Many survey respondents cited problems they experience while crossing the street in Needham. Limited crossing time is a problem for most older adults and is being addressed in many jurisdictions and on a national level.

Some respondents were pleased with the addition of audio signals at select crossings, while others wished for additional features including those that would enhance the visibility of crosswalks. Participants in one focus group suggested embedding lights within crosswalks.

### Sidewalk conditions

While many lauded the condition of sidewalks in the center of town, others talked about problems with sidewalks (or lack of sidewalks) in the residential areas. Some survey respondents identified specific locations of sidewalks in need of repair.

### Benches

One third of the respondents (37%) indicated that they would be more likely to walk for exercise or to get to their destinations if there were more benches on their walking routes.

In New York City, as part of its senior pedestrian safety program, benches were installed in areas where there is a high senior population. The program allows residents to suggest places where additional benches would be helpful.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/pedestrian\\_safety/](https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/pedestrian_safety/)

<sup>4</sup> Safe Streets for Seniors <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/safeseniors.shtml> and New York City Department of Aging <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/senior/pedestrian.shtml>

## Next Steps

As the Town of Needham moves on to address the housing, transit, and pedestrian issues identified in this report, Town leaders may consider looking at national recommendations as well as compelling programs from comparable communities.

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities<sup>5</sup> is an excellent resource for information about how other communities in the U.S. are becoming “livable communities.”

## Housing

The Needham Planning and Community Development Department is a rich resource of information on current housing stock, with an Affordable Housing Specialist on staff.

- There is great interest in increasing the amount of market-affordable housing in Needham and housing appropriate for an older population. Even though the economics of real estate is a daunting challenge, the data from this Healthy Aging project will be useful in addressing the issues. The evident effect of tear downs on older residents in Needham can be incorporated into ongoing discussions of this phenomenon.
- Programs that can assist senior citizens with burdensome housing costs (modification, maintenance, tax assistance) could be promoted more effectively to reach the target population.
- Many seniors currently live in homes that may present hazards or may be difficult for them to navigate as their abilities wane. Promoting services that can help them assess the age-friendliness of their homes would be very beneficial. AARP has developed a tip sheet to help with such assessments.<sup>6</sup> The social workers at the Council on Aging are a wealth of resources for this and many other available services as well.
- Challenging as it is, the question of accessory apartments deserves the time and attention of Town leaders. There are many examples, both locally and across the nation, of communities modifying local zoning restrictions to allow some form of accessory dwelling. It would be useful to look at the real impact such zoning changes have made in comparable or neighboring communities like Lexington, Scituate, Dedham, and Newton.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly Communities: An institutional affiliate of the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

<http://www.aarpinternational.org/File%20Library/Resources/AARPNetworkofAgeFriendlyCommunitiesBooklet.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> *Is My Home ‘HomeFit’?*, <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/documents-2015/HomeFit2015/01%20Is%20My%20Home%20HomeFit.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Massachusetts Housing Regulations <http://www.masshousingregulations.com/pdf/accessory.pdf>

- Other models to address the needs of seniors who wish to remain in Needham should also be explored. The “Village-to-Village” movement provides a model for meeting the needs of elders who wish to remain in their homes as they age. While many of the needs served by this model are currently addressed by the Council on Aging, it provides another model that is appealing to some Needhamites. Some respondents expressed interest in other forms of congregate housing such as co-housing or group homes.

## **Transportation**

- “Bring back the mini-bus,” or another effective circulator transit service, was the clear and consistent message from the survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews. Whether this need can be delivered by a Needham-specific service or by a regional or public-private partnership is best addressed at a transportation summit, conference, or task force. This issue does not fall under the domain of existing Town transportation committees, although their work is relevant and should be included in the problem-solving effort.
- A “one click–one call” service for seniors would enhance local transportation as it currently exists. Other Massachusetts municipalities that have recently adopted such programs (Wellesley and Acton) should be tapped as resources to explore options.

## **Pedestrian safety**

Pedestrian safety has been prioritized in the Town of Needham as evidenced by the Downtown Streetscape Plan and the Trails Master Plan.

- However, respondents to the Senior Survey on Housing and Transit identified walking challenges beyond the downtown area. Missing or poorly maintained sidewalks, short crossing cycles, poorly marked crosswalks, and traffic violations can be addressed by appropriate Town departments.
- Needham might also consider adding benches in locations beyond downtown to provide older or disabled residents with resting stops and to increase the walkability of the community.

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## **Main Report**

# **ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING AND TRANSIT OPTIONS FOR NEEDHAM SENIORS**

**Needham Council on Aging  
Needham Public Health Department  
August 2016**

## Background

### What does it mean to be an “age-friendly community?”

Also called a “community for a lifetime,” an age-friendly community is one conducive to healthy, active participation of all residents regardless of their age or ability.

The Town of Needham, like other suburban communities, was designed for the needs of families nurturing children (and for automobiles) during the exponential growth in the post-WWII boom. The Town, enormously successful at this mission for decades, may also in some ways be a victim of that success. In recent years it has become clear that suburban communities are generally not well-suited for the active and healthy engagement of their older residents. Ironically, the aging boomers and their parents for whom the suburbs were created are now facing unanticipated challenges in these low-density, car-dependent, use-separated municipalities.

Needham has one of the highest populations of adults age 60 and over in the MetroWest region. According to demographic information maintained by the Needham Town Clerk, in 2015, 24% of the town’s population (a total of 7,357 residents) were age 60 and above, and this age group represents a great and growing proportion of all Needhamites.

After two decades of growth that aligned with the Town’s overall population trend, by 2010 Needham’s senior population began growing both absolutely and as an ever larger share of the Town’s overall population. The number of 60-plus Needham residents has increased by more than 700 over the past two years alone, and that age cohort is projected to grow by 15% in Needham over the next five years according to the McCormack School at UMass Boston<sup>8</sup>. By 2020, residents age 60 and older will represent 27% of the Town’s residents, and a decade later this population will hit 31%.

The growing number of seniors, many of whom are looking to downsize their homes and reduce their dependence on cars as they age, has resulted in a housing crunch in the community. As is the case in most American suburbs, Needham’s policies, regulations, and by-laws have not kept pace with the needs of this demographic wave.

Lot-size minimums and restrictions on rentals and multifamily housing preserve a consistent character and income level between homes, but make it difficult to downsize within the same

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<sup>8</sup> McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston and its Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging. Demographic fact sheet available at: [https://www.umb.edu/editory\\_uploads/images/centers\\_institutes/center\\_social\\_demo\\_research\\_aging/Dem\\_Brief\\_2.pdf](https://www.umb.edu/editory_uploads/images/centers_institutes/center_social_demo_research_aging/Dem_Brief_2.pdf). Dataset available at: [https://www.umb.edu/editor\\_uploads/images/centers\\_institutes/center\\_social\\_demo\\_research\\_aging/Projections\\_by\\_MA\\_town\\_2010\\_2030\\_1xlsx](https://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes/center_social_demo_research_aging/Projections_by_MA_town_2010_2030_1xlsx)

neighborhood, afford high property taxes on a fixed income, build senior housing, or justify transit service where densities are too low.<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

In 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched its Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program<sup>10,11</sup> to help communities adapt to the needs of their rapidly aging populations. This movement has been represented in the United States by the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities since 2012.<sup>12</sup>

In the WHO paradigm, there are eight “domains of livability.” These are:

1. **Open spaces and public buildings** – availability of safe and accessible recreational facilities.
2. **Transportation** – safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation.
3. **Housing** – wide range of housing options for older residents; aging in place; and other home modification programs.
4. **Social participation** – access to leisure and cultural activities; opportunities for older residents to socialize and engage with their peers and with younger people.
5. **Respect and social inclusion** – programs that promote ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as programs to encourage multi-generational interaction and dialogue.
6. **Work and civic engagement** – paid work and volunteer activities for older residents and opportunities to engage in formulation of policies relevant to their lives.
7. **Communication and information** – access to communications technology to keep older residents connected to their community and friends and family.
8. **Community and health services** – access to homecare services, clinics, and programs to promote wellness and active aging.

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<sup>9</sup> “Retrofitting Suburbs,” Denham-Jones, E. and Williamson, J. *Independent for Life: Homes and Neighborhoods for an Aging America*, Cisneros, Henry, Dyer-Chamberlain, Margaret, and Hickie, Jane (ed.) Stanford Center on Longevity, University of Texas Press 2012.

<sup>10</sup> World Health Organization Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.  
[http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_network/en/](http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age_friendly_cities_network/en/)

<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide  
[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly Communities: An institutional affiliate of the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. Available at:  
<http://www.aarpinternational.org/File%20Library/Resources/AARPNetworkofAgeFriendlyCommunitiesBooklet.pdf>

## The Needham Response

In January 2016, the Needham Public Health Division received a grant from the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards for Healthy Aging through Healthy Community Design. The funds were to be used for an assessment of two domains of livability: community conditions and barriers to senior-friendly housing and transit in Needham.

Why just two of the livability domains? The Town of Needham, as indicated by participants in all aspects of this study as well as the feedback from the National Citizens Survey, achieves a high level of resident satisfaction in the other six domains. Housing and transportation present barriers to older adults as well as other residents. However, until now there has been only anecdotal evidence of seniors facing challenges in housing and transit.

The first planning meeting for Healthy Aging through Health Community Design, held on March 13, 2016, included Needham community leaders from the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board, Town administration, and community-based organizations. Among the questions raised at that meeting were:

- What are the existing assets and barriers for seniors living in Needham?
- What are the opportunities to address those barriers?
- What can be done to keep people in their homes longer?
- What is the potential for collaborating with other towns or organizations to enhance transportation options?
- What are the data gaps?

In April 2016, the Public Health Division and the Council on Aging began a comprehensive assessment process which included quantitative and qualitative data collection:

- **Interviews** of key leaders, local government officials and providers who have experience working with this age group;
- **Focus groups** with older Needham residents;
- **Survey** completed in both electronic and in print formats; and
- **Review** of current municipal regulations and policies that impact housing and transit for an aging population.

## Methods

### Key Informant Interviews

Twenty-one (21) people were interviewed as key informants. These included: the Town Manager; Assistant Town Manager for Operations; several members of the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board; a State Representative; directors of the Public Health Division, Council on Aging, Planning and Community Development Department, Department of Public Works, YMCA, Community Council, the Library, Economic Development; and social workers from the Council on Aging and the Needham Housing Authority (see Appendix C for complete list.) The interviewees shared their perspectives on the housing and transit issues in Needham. In addition to their professional experience, each had personal stories related to challenges for seniors attempting to age in place. Some spoke about their own challenges, but most had stories of family members, aging parents, grandparents, or friends.

### Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted with a total of 37 participants (30 women and 7 men). The groups included volunteers at the Needham Community Council, Council on Aging board members, and members of the League of Women Voters and the Exchange Club. Discussions focused on the age-friendly attributes of Needham, existing assets, barriers, and ideas for improving housing and transportation options for elders (see Appendix D for Focus Group Guide.)

Focus groups were facilitated by the Project Manager of the Healthy Aging through Healthy Community Design Project and transcribed by staff members of the Division of Public Health. Transcription included a combination of direct quotes and paraphrasing of discussion.

Qualitative thematic analysis was performed by multiple members of the team. Focus group data were analyzed by reading transcripts and identifying common themes and by using *Dedoose*, a cloud-based qualitative data analysis software. The findings in *Dedoose* mirrored the common themes of the transcript reviews, further validating the analysis.

### Survey

The Senior Survey on Housing and Transit (see Appendix A) consisted of 61 questions largely focused on community assets and challenges in housing, transit, and pedestrian concerns. Over 650 responses were received between May 4 and June 6, 2016. There were six collection points, each with paper surveys and a collection box. These included: Needham Community Council; Center at the Heights; the Library; Linden-Chambers housing development; the Treasurer and the Town Clerk offices at Town Hall; and outside of Town Meeting. Paper surveys were also

distributed at the YMCA and to clients of the Public Health Division's Traveling Meals Program. The online survey was promoted through the Needham Community Council, the Exchange Club, Needham Clergy Association, and the Council on Aging and through local media. The survey was developed by the Public Health Division and by research scientist Scott Formica from Social Science Research and Evaluation (SSRE). Data analysis provided by SSRE (see Appendix B for Survey Report.)

## Needham residents speak:

### Needham is largely an age-friendly community

- *"I love living in Needham. I've been here since 1990..... I am a member of the Y and use it often. Feel very fortunate to live in such a great town!"* (Survey respondent)
- *"Needham is a wonderful friendly town. I had a local police car pull up one day. I was out walking with my cane (after my hip was broken). I was coming from the library with books. He lived 2 streets over and said "Hop in I know where you live and will drop you off! His daughter had collected canned goods from my house for her club. He said "you were generous" to her."* (Survey respondent)

Needham is clearly perceived by residents as a desirable place to live. In focus groups and surveys, respondents overwhelmingly stated that they wish to continue living in the town. Focus group participants identified many community assets including civic organizations, volunteerism, strong faith communities, and the long-established relationships developed over the course of a lifetime.

Most frequently (and enthusiastically) mentioned were the Council on Aging and Needham Community Council, as well as other services for seniors provided by the Town. Needham's range of services to seniors includes vibrant programming at the Center at the Heights and the Needham Free Public Library, meal delivery for home-bound residents, safety checks by the Police Department, food and clothing for low-income individuals, and rides to grocery stores and medical appointments. One interviewee spoke about particular efforts to engage older adults in multi-generational activities such as Needham Lights.

- *"I think Needham is doing a good job. Love the work done at Senior Center!"* (Survey)
- *"Needham has a great deal to offer seniors through the Community Council...senior programs...and good medical care in town."* (Survey)
- *"We all like Needham because we all moved here when we were younger. We got to know each other through Scouts, on the soccer field, through Church."* (Focus group)

Some aspects of transportation were also identified by focus group participants as strengths. With four commuter rail stations and the #59 bus, Needham is well-connected to Boston. Other assets identified by participants include the volunteer-based transportation services of the Council on Aging and the Needham Community Council, MBTA senior discounts, and Uber.

In the housing realm, participants discussed the wide array of senior living communities in Needham such as North Hill, Wingate, Chestnut Hollow, Avery Crossing, Nehoiden Glen, and properties owned by the Needham Housing Authority.

Participants and key informants discussed the condominium market which provides opportunities for people looking to downsize and reduce maintenance responsibilities.

Participants also remarked on the walkability of Needham, particularly the center area, which is enhanced by well-maintained sidewalks and the compact nature of downtown.

- *“Would love to maintain that access [walkability] as we age, so, if we can remain in town, we hope that this survey serves to support seniors being able to live and thrive here. Up to this point, Needham has been a wonderful community in which to live. Thank you for asking these questions!” (Survey )*
- *“[The] Town has excellent crossing signage at major intersections.” (Survey)*

Needham’s adoption of a number of “Complete Streets” principles puts it well ahead of many other communities. The Downtown Redesign project will accommodate multi-modal users, with streets and sidewalks altered to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety. Recent and ongoing improvements in accessibility as evidenced in the Trails Master Plan are very beneficial to the older residents of the town.

## Challenges to aging in Needham

The challenges identified by focus group and survey participants fall into a few notable categories: housing; transportation; and pedestrian safety. Affordability, while mostly addressed in discussions about housing, was also an issue in groceries and retail.

### Housing

Residents had a lot to say about housing. First, as stated earlier, almost all respondents in focus groups and surveys expressed the strong desire to remain in Needham as they age. This desire to stay is representative of seniors in all parts of the country. According to an AARP survey conducted in 2014,<sup>13</sup> 88% of respondents 65 and older wish to stay in their current residences as long as possible.

The Senior Survey on Housing and Transit (Appendix A) consisted largely of questions about housing, including about respondents' desire to stay in Needham as well as their assessment of their likelihood to remain in town. Of the 621 respondents who answered both the *importance* and *likelihood* questions, 135 (22%) indicated that it is more *important* for them to remain in Needham than it is *likely* that they will remain. Twenty-two percent may not seem like a particularly high number, but it is worth remembering that there are multiple Needham seniors behind each percentage point. If we assume that survey responders are representative of all Needham seniors (data from the Needham Town Clerk show that in 2015 there were 7,357 residents age 60 or older), then 22% represents more than 1,600 older Needhamites. (See Appendix B for Needham Senior Survey Report). Participants in focus groups and key informant interviews corroborated this finding, with the majority expressing concerns that, although hoping to remain in Needham as they age, they are not sure they will be able to do so.

Specific barriers to aging in place include: the scarcity of appropriate housing; the high cost of housing (purchase price or rent, and upkeep); costliness of modifying existing homes to increase accessibility; and zoning regulations that prohibit accessory dwelling units, also known as, in-law apartments. It is important to clarify what is necessary to allow aging in place. An age-friendly home has universal design elements that make living comfortable, safe, and accessible for all people regardless of ability. Key elements include: at least one no-step entry; single-floor living; wide hallways and doors; lever-style door and faucet handles; storage within easy reach; and bathrooms with walk-in showers and higher toilets. Although minor modifications can be made to make a home safer for older adults (installing banisters on both sides of stairways, grab bars in bathrooms, slip-proof floors, etc.), many changes are significant and costly (such as adding full bathrooms, laundry facilities, and master bedrooms to the first floor of a house, etc.)

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<sup>13</sup> "Home and Community Preferences of the 45+ Population." September 2014. AARP. Available at: [http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys\\_statistics/il/2015/2014-Home-Community-45plus-res-il.pdf](http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/il/2015/2014-Home-Community-45plus-res-il.pdf)

Those who anticipated that they might have to leave Needham cited numerous reasons:

Respondents indicated that if they were to consider moving out of Needham at some point in the future that the most common reasons for doing so would be: looking for a smaller home size (58%), looking for a home with services to help them live independently as they age (56%), and concerns that it will be too expensive to maintain their current home (51%). Approximately one of every ten respondents (9%) provided an additional write-in response – these responses tended to all be sub-themes of the factors that appeared in the survey. The most common write-in comments were more affordable housing options (2.3%), single-floor living options (1.8%), and lower property taxes (1.2%). (Appendix B)

## Affordability

- *“The question is about staying in the community: Our children can’t afford to move in; Older adults can’t afford to stay.”* (Key informant interview)

“Affordable housing” is a term used differently by many participants in this study. For some it refers to the Affordable Housing program, properties owned and run by the Needham Housing Authority or properties which are required to provide below-market rents for people with low-income or with disabilities. For some, “affordable housing” is the standard by which cost burden is defined.<sup>14</sup> However, for most focus group and survey participants, “affordable housing” simply means *housing that they can afford*.

- *“I grew up in Needham..... It is becoming harder to afford living here and I would love to stay in Town the rest of my life. .”* (Survey)
- *“Wish we could find a smaller place to live in Needham for the same or less money than we currently pay..... Even renting in Needham today would be costlier per month than our current mortgage, taxes, and insurance combined currently costs us.”* (Survey)
- *“...There is nothing that we can sell our house and downsize [and stay in Needham]. These are our friends, our doctors are here.”* (Focus group)
- *“Lower cost shared housing is probably the biggest deficit in Needham. Despite being quite well off, I can’t afford North Hill. I’ll therefore almost certainly move within 10 years.”* (Survey)

This theme of the lack of affordable and appropriate housing was prominent in all the focus groups. While everyone spoke about their desire to age in place in Needham, the primary concern was that they and their neighbors could not afford to remain in this community.

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<sup>14</sup> According to the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, a household is considered cost burdened if it spends more than 30% of its income on rent or mortgage and utilities.

Rising taxes were cited also as a serious barrier, especially for those on a fixed income. As taxes rise, the housing cost burden increases as well even if all other costs remain constant. While the Council on Aging has comprehensive information about available assistance programs including property tax “work-off” programs and the Board of Selectmen’s Water/Sewer Abatement Policy for Low Income Households, it is not clear whether the people who participated in the study are aware of such programs.

- *“Real estate taxes are disproportionately high for small houses in Needham.” (Survey)*
- *“Property taxes and the size of new homes being built to replace homes seniors might downsize to are inevitably going to change demographics. That is sad because many of us who are responsible for the excellence of the Needham community may not be able to stay here.” (Survey)*
- *“I decided to sell my house when I retired because of the increasing taxes and upkeep on a 90+ year old house.” (Survey)*

### Cost burden

Families who pay more than 30% of their income for housing costs (including rent or mortgage, taxes, and utilities) are considered cost burdened. If housing costs are 30% - 50% of income, a family has a moderate cost burden; above 50% is considered a severe cost burden. For those living below the median income, this can mean that they may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.

According to state and federal data sources analyzed by the Needham Planning and Community Development Department, in 2012 almost half (49.3%) of the 515 elderly renters who earned within 80% of the median family income (MFI) overspent on their housing, almost all with severe cost burdens. Those remaining 261 seniors who earned below 80% of the MFI and did not overspend on housing were likely living in subsidized housing or affordable units.

Also from the Planning and Community Development Department, in 2012 there were 585 elderly owners who earned at or below 80% MFI. In that year, 365 households (62%) overspent on housing, including 270 households (46%) that shouldered severe cost burdens. The housing cost burdens among elderly renters and owners are particularly challenging for people who are living on fixed incomes.

### Financial assistance

There are several existing programs to help elders with housing cost burden. Seniors 65 years and older may apply for property tax deferral or tax relief programs such as “tax work-off”. Needham’s

Board of Selectmen also has a Water/Sewer Abatement Policy for Low Income Household. The public health nurses, located at the Center at the Heights, assist financially-challenged residents in applying for heating assistance. Additionally, the social workers at the Council on Aging are a wealth of information on available resources and resident support programs.

In May, 2016, the Senior Health and Housing Task Force of the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington D.C.-based think tank, recommended that local governments should establish or expand programs to assist seniors with home modifications. According to the Task Force:

Currently, 80 percent of home modifications and retrofits for aging are paid out of pocket by residents. States and municipalities can help relieve some of this burden by making funding available to both individuals (homeowners and landlords) and contractors for expenses incurred acquiring or modifying a property for accessible use.<sup>15</sup>

Henry Cisneros, the former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, recommends “lifelong” improvement packages for elders’ homes. He likens such programs to home weatherization or energy efficiency projects.

“The need for an affordable and effective package of modifications and regular maintenance to make existing homes more suitable for older people should be organized as a renovation package to create homes that could be used for a lifetime.”<sup>16</sup>

### The middle class squeeze

While there are some options for people who qualify for low-income housing, and many options for those who can afford the pricier senior living communities, those in the middle do not have many alternatives. Thus, the affordable housing problem is greatest for moderate income people who do not qualify for subsidized housing but can’t afford market-rate housing.

- *“What is defined as ‘affordable’ is not really affordable.”* (Focus group)
- *“There is very little affordable housing in Needham - places that are like Charles Court or Hamlin but with an elevator. Other “independent” living condos are way too expensive or low income.”* (Survey)
- *“There is a lack of affordable housing for middle class.”* (Survey)

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<sup>15</sup> Healthy Aging Begins at Home. Bipartisan Policy Center, May, 2016. Page 9. <http://cdn.bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BPC-Healthy-Aging.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Cisneros, H., Dyer-Chamberlain, M., Hickie, J. *Independent for Life: Homes and Neighborhoods for an Aging America*. Stanford Center on Longevity. 2012

There is a real sense among survey respondents and focus group participants that the middle class is being squeezed out of Needham. As one key informant described the dilemma for middle class seniors, *“People are not qualifying for existing senior housing due to assets.”* Another key informant talked about how middle class residents are being left to fend for themselves while low-income residents qualify for subsidized housing and affluent folks can afford their desired living conditions.

## **Housing stock**

The severe shortage of suitable and affordable housing stock in Needham is a significant issue for seniors who wish to remain in the community. Many participants and survey respondents would like to relocate within Needham because their current homes are too large, not accessible, or too burdensome to maintain. However, as smaller homes in Needham are being demolished and replacement homes or condos generally cost more than people can expect to receive when they sell their current houses, residents report feeling compelled to either stay in their current home, regardless of whether it is accessible and sized to meet their current needs, or else move to another town.

- *“Needham is a great town but the lack of lower priced housing will probably force me to sell my house and move somewhere else.”* (Survey)
- *“Given the shortage of smaller homes, most of our friends who have already downsized have moved out of town. While we would prefer to remain in Needham, we are, sad to say, probably going to be forced to follow that option. Needham has yet to consider the needs of all of its citizens.”* (Survey)

There is a pervasive sense that older residents cannot stay in Needham. Some focus group participants and survey respondents even went so far as to say that Needham doesn't value or want them anymore.

- *“We are getting priced out of Webster Green and don't know where else in Needham has elevators, as we can't do stairs.”* (Survey)
- *“There is a huge number of people leaving to live elsewhere. You cannot downsize. There are no smaller places with one-floor...I can name 15 families my age who have left town because they went to towns with more reasonable prices homes like Medway and Medfield.”* (Focus group)
- *“Sadly, with all of the building in our community, none is reasonably priced so seniors can sell their home and downsize to a condo, nor can working class families live in Needham. Builders are catering to the million-plus market and ending economic diversity in our town.”* (Survey)

A number of residents would like to move to condominiums rather than to smaller houses as another alternative to one-floor living, with the added benefit of limited upkeep required on their part. But again, the stock is expensive and the supply is quite limited.

- *"As I age, I want less responsibility [for maintenance and upkeep]"* (Focus group)
- *"It's not just the mobility [regarding staying in the home]. It's the maintaining"* (Focus group)
- *"Needham needs more large condominiums with elevators. Only 2 in Needham now (Rosemary Ridge & Avery). Homeowners prefer to buy condo units rather than rent & need walk-to-everything locations."* (Survey)
- *"Some of our homes will sell for less than we'd have to pay for a condo."* (Focus group)

### Tear downs

The issue of tear downs came up frequently in focus groups and among survey respondents.

- *"It is most distressing that housing in Needham has come to knocking down the smaller homes for seniors to live in rather than providing or allowing (through codes) homes to be rehabbed with first floor bedroom and full bath with laundry! But it seems Needham is wishing the senior population to out of town along with the middle-income home owner. Very distressing!!!!!"* (Survey)
- *"...there are few, if any, affordable condos with one-floor living, and small houses are taken by developers to tear down and build huge homes. Sadly, I think that I will have to leave Needham as I age."* (Survey)
- *"Senior citizens are moving out of Needham due to high taxes. The large new homes are drawing in the younger crowd with children - and causing for Needham to add to the schools!!."* (Survey)

### Needham addresses the shortage

It is important to note here that several key informants talked about efforts underway to address, at least in part, this housing crunch. Zoning Overlay Districts, which comprise a set of rules applied to property within the overlay district in addition to the requirements of the underlying or base zoning district, can encourage certain desired land uses. They may allow mixed-use development which could include senior and affordable housing. Needham has adopted Overlay District zoning for a number of its business districts to encourage this mixed-use multi-family housing alternative by relaxing its density and height requirements in circumstances where the above noted uses are

provided. The Town of Needham was recently honored by the Massachusetts Housing Partnership for the residential zoning overlay district recently adopted in Needham Crossing.

According to a key informant, the Town is also concerned about preserving some affordability in market rate rental developments as these units add important diversity to Needham's housing stock and are typically more affordable alternatives in the private housing market. One such development was recently sold to an entity that has been making considerable capital investments and raising rents. These rent increases may displace a number of longer-term residents, seniors in particular.

### Adapting existing homes

Many Needham residents have some options to adapt their current homes to allow them to age in place. One key informant remarked on the growing awareness among his peers of the issues they face in aging and debilitation. Some of these folks are making accommodations in their own homes. One focus group participant even talked about adding an elevator to his house. Although it would be a considerable cost, he saw it as less expensive than moving.

#### Existing Home Modifications – Summary (from the Needham Senior Survey Report)

Almost half of all respondents (46%) reported that they have made one or more modifications to their home to enable them to stay there as they age. The largest proportion of respondents reported that they have made modifications to their bathroom (36%) and/or installed improved lighting (26%). Four percent of respondents (4%) provided an additional write-in response – these responses tended to all be sub-themes of the list of modifications that appeared in the survey. The most common write-in comments were: having made physical alterations to their home such as changes to doors, adding ramps, or making bathroom improvements (1.5%); having recently downsized or moved to more senior-friendly housing (0.6%); and having installed or signed-up for a monitoring or security system (0.6%). (See Appendix B )

However, in some circumstances, modifications are not practical due to cost of renovation or the architecture of the home. One-hundred and two (102) survey respondents (17%) indicated that they were not able to make the modifications that they wanted to make, most of whom cited cost as the barrier to modifying their current homes. Again, although 17% is not a high percentage, there are multiple seniors behind each percentage point. In this instance, there are about 1,250 Needham residents who wanted to modify their homes to increase accessibility but cited cost as a barrier to those changes.

- *“Re-doing a bathroom to make it handicap accessible is a major thing. Tens of thousands of dollars.”* (Focus group)
- *“My house has only 1 step up...2 floors...I could make it 1 floor living but it would be \$000 expensive...gut the whole house.”* (Focus group)

Barriers to Making Home Modifications – Summary (from the Survey Report)

Across the respondent sample, seventeen (17%) of respondents indicated that they were not able to make modifications to their home that they wanted to make. Among this group, 4% reported that the reason they have not been able to make modifications is that they don't own the property and are not allowed to make modifications. Thirteen percent of respondents (13%) identified another barrier to being able to make their desired modifications. Within this subset, the largest proportion of respondents cited cost (10%) and architecture of the home (7%) as barriers. Few respondents cited a barrier that was not already listed in the survey. (See Appendix B)

In some focus groups, there were wishful discussions about the possibility of subsidies, tax breaks, or other supports to make remodeling more affordable. Participants were not aware of existing programs, such as the Home Modification Loan Program, tax work-off, or Senior Tax Deferral.

Unrealistic assessments or expectations for the future

Many of the participants appeared to have unrealistic assessments of the accessibility of their homes or of their own abilities as they age. One elder key informant remarked that her peers are young enough that they can still cope (although they don't know what will happen as they age).

Several focus group participants did not appreciate the potential challenges posed by a split level house or a house with several steps leading to the front door. As currently able-bodied people, they are unaware of the challenges that "just a few" steps (and bathtubs, high-placed cupboards, etc.) Others were keenly aware of the limitations that may be just around the corner.

- *"As you age you often cannot predict your mobility until that a.m." (Survey)*
- *"Not really knowing what future health needs may arise - if I don't need help - I will remain in my home & go out feet first." (Survey)*
- *"I am lucky to be able to still climb to the bedroom level - but if needed - I have a room that easily could be a first floor bedroom." (Survey)*

One key informant talked about how home maintenance can be a serious problem for many older residents. The Town responds on a complaint-basis to homes in disrepair, but there is very limited, if any, assistance for people before their homes get to such a serious and obvious state of neglect.

Another key informant talked about elders whose capacity and mobility have diminished to the point that they are limited to very few spaces within their homes. One person could no longer access most of her house and was confined to living in her kitchen.

## Accessory Apartments

One of the recurring topics at focus groups, in interviews, and in comments on the survey, is accessory apartments. Also known as “accessory dwelling units,” the Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit<sup>17</sup> defines them as a self-contained apartment in an owner occupied single family home that is either attached to the principal dwelling or in a separate structure on the same property. Accessory dwelling units have been proposed throughout Massachusetts and the rest of the country as a viable solution to some of the housing and support problems faced by seniors.

Among the recommendations from *Healthy Aging Begins at Home*, a publication of the Bipartisan Policy Center,<sup>18</sup> is:

States and local communities should consider adopting permissive land-use policies that allow for and encourage alternative housing structures for seniors, such as ADUs [accessory dwelling units], micro-units, and congregate/group homes, and they should undertake a comprehensive examination of their existing policies to ensure they promote a range of affordable housing options for their seniors.<sup>19</sup>

And,

[Accessory dwelling units], in particular, can help seniors of all income levels realize their aspiration to age in their communities when these structures are located on the property of a grown child or close relative. When an ADU is located on a senior’s own property and then rented, it can provide a new stream of income that can help finance the senior’s retirement or serve as an offset to property taxes. ADUs also represent a potential source of housing for a caregiver to a senior. Despite these benefits, concerns are sometimes raised that the proliferation of ADUs and other alternate housing structures will change the character of a neighborhood, increase traffic flow, make parking more difficult, and impose even greater burdens on public services. In response, some communities impose zoning code overlays, ordinances that create extra requirements beyond simple land-use specifications, before an ADU can be approved. Complying with these overlays, which range from minimum lot sizes for homes that seek to add an ADU, limits on how much of the lot can be covered with structures, and regulations governing the ADU’s relationship to the primary unit on the lot, can be time-consuming and costly. Rigid parking requirements, as well as high permit and impact fees, can also act as barriers to building a new ADU or legalizing an existing one.<sup>20</sup>

In previous years, the merits of accessory dwelling units have been debated in Town. While Needham zoning does not currently allow accessory dwelling units, focus group participants,

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<sup>17</sup> An initiative of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit is a resource for cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. It is available at:

[http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart\\_growth\\_toolkit/pages/mod-adu.html](http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-adu.html)

<sup>18</sup> Healthy Aging Begins at Home. Bipartisan Policy Center, May, 2016. <http://cdn.bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BPC-Healthy-Aging.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Healthy Aging Begins at Home. Bipartisan Policy Center, May, 2016. Page 9. <http://cdn.bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BPC-Healthy-Aging.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Healthy Aging Begins at Home. Chapter 2, Health Begins at Home: The Overriding Need for More Affordable Supply, p. 35. Bipartisan Policy Center, May, 2016. <http://cdn.bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BPC-Healthy-Aging.pdf>

survey respondents, and some key informants believe they would be an affordable means for seniors to downsize. One interviewee also talked about accessory units providing the benefits of multi-generational living.

The majority of focus group participants were in favor of allowing accessory apartments. Some wished for more flexibility in zoning regulations, particularly as they apply to family occupied units. Survey respondents also wrote in some thoughts.

- *"I have redesigned the first floor of my home to accommodate my aging parents. It would have been great to be able to build an apartment within my home." (Survey)*
- *"My biggest complaint is that I can't put a separate apartment in my huge house so I could rent it out, and eventually have a caretaker live there. Although there are five two-family houses on my block that were grandfathered in, apparently at some point a single family ... restriction was put in. Make a zoning exception for elderly or disabled people who want to create a separate apartment with kitchen in their houses!" (Survey)*

However, a number of key informants and some survey respondents voiced concern about the possible ramifications of allowing such units. One interviewee, although stating that she thought the Town needs to allow in-law apartments, expressed concerns:

- *"How can we preserve the culture of this town while meeting the growing needs? How to honor the people who are here? (Key informant interview)*

Another key informant, although he thought the idea of accessory apartments has merits, discussed the possibility of unintended consequences of allowing them. Even if the units are designated for family members, the concerns were about scofflaws ignoring such limitations, the difficulty of enforcement, and risks associated with high density housing.

Another interviewee worried that allowing accessory apartments would inevitably change the nature of the community by increasing congestion and traffic. There was also concern about lowering property value, as indicated by this survey respondent:

- *"It is important to us that if we ever have to sell our house, we are able to get as much as possible for it. Local regulations and ordinances should not diminish the value of residential real estate." (Survey respondent)*

There may be some tendency toward conflating the issues of accessory dwelling units for the benefit of elders wishing to downsize or live contiguously with family members, as well as the issue of affordable housing stock. It is important to separate these discussions as much as possible.<sup>21</sup>

### **A public health perspective: isolation and depression**

As people age, they are at increasing risk for depression associated with loss and isolation. One key informant talked about the isolation experienced by suburban seniors when they lose the ability to drive or are homebound for other reasons. Another key informant spoke about working with the Needham Police Department, calling them to provide safety checks for some isolated elders.

In several instances, focus group participants spoke about the losses and challenges they would face if they were to leave Needham. Integrating into a new community, particularly as an elder, is always challenging. A couple of participants spoke explicitly about the isolation and depression they have seen among their friends who have relocated to other communities. Survey respondents also commented on the losses they would anticipate.

- *"Don't want to leave people we know, doctors, volunteer programs, etc. Hard to start over!!!!."* (Survey)
- *"If you moved to another town, you don't have those connections. You're lost."* (Focus group)
- *"Sometimes older people want to get out of the house. I could pick up my neighbor's medicine at the pharmacy, but she wants to go out to do it. To get out of the house."* (Focus group)

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<sup>21</sup> For more thoughts from Needham residents on accessory apartments, see the discussion on the Needham MA Facebook page on Saturday, June 11, 2016.

## Transit

### Background and importance

“Transportation is the vital link that connects older adults to social activity, economic opportunity, and community services. The ability to age in one’s home and community is compromised without it. Older adults need transportation to the places and services that support their independence.....Safe, affordable, accessible, dependable, and user-friendly options are needed to overcome the physical limitations associated with aging.”<sup>22</sup>

Needham is unquestionably an automobile-dependent community. According to one key informant, most of the town was built after the construction of Route 128, and therefore its streets, homes, and neighborhoods are meant for cars. This was not problematic for many years; however, the auto-centric design becomes a barrier as the population ages.

- *“I think in general Needham is hard to get around if you don’t have a car.”* (Focus group)

Many older adults continue to drive into their 70s and 80s. According to the Needham Senior Survey Report (see Appendix B), 94% of respondents plan to continue driving as they age. Yet, as seniors’ abilities diminish, many are compelled to modify their driving habits or to give up driving entirely.

- *“Some of us don’t like to drive at night.”* (Focus group)
- *“[older people giving up driving] ...is a tremendous loss of independence.”* (Focus group)

For family members (or for an individual considering giving up driving) “taking away the keys” is an enormous stressor. One key informant found it so difficult to dissuade an older relative from driving that she considered leaving her job.

- *“I know I would die if I had to give up my driver’s license.”* (Focus group)
- *“That’s a scary moment for me. I’m afraid of that day.”* (Focus group)

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<sup>22</sup> The Policy Book: AARP Public Policies 2015-2016. Chapter 9, Livable Communities. Transportation section. <http://policybook.aarp.org/the-policy-book/chapter-9/p152-1.3091804>

Some turn to family and friends to transport them to medical appointments or to run errands. Others have access to services provided by human service organizations. But without sufficient options, older adults are at risk of becoming isolated from people or activities that are important to them. Adequate transportation is essential to support continued independence. As one key informant said, “*Transportation is critical to aging in place.*”

As the Town of Needham anticipates a significant increase in its elderly population, it must also prepare for more people who do not drive and who will benefit from increasing transportation options in the community.

“Access to transportation is key to support the health and well-being of older adults and ensure their ability to age in place in the community. Yet access to adequate, accessible transportation is a major challenge.”<sup>23</sup>

One key informant remarked that although some existing senior communities (Wingate and North Hill) are expanding, they are in remote locations and are not walkable to downtown.

Local modes of transportation typically fall into the following categories:

- **Non-emergency medical visits** – must be scheduled several days in advance of trip.
- **Demand-based transportation** – includes taxis and ride hailing services which do not require advance planning.
- **Neighborhood-based transportation** – offered by private communities or housing or developments as a connection to key community service or retail locations.
- **Service-specific transportation** – community based organizations or employers providing transportation to their sites.
- **Community circulators** – vans or buses that run on designated routes, providing curb-to-curb transportation throughout a town.

## **Transportation services in Needham**

### Public transit

Needham is served by the MBTA commuter rail and one bus. Four commuter rail stations provide direct access to Boston while the MBTA bus runs through Newton (connecting to the Riverside branch of the Green Line) and terminates in Watertown. Neither the bus nor the commuter rail operates on Sundays.

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<sup>23</sup> National Association of Area Agencies on Aging <http://www.n4a.org/transportation>

Needham residents are generally pleased with the existing MBTA services, but also identified many needs unmet by current systems.

Although the commuter rail and the bus are assets for transportation to Boston or Newton, getting to them is challenging, particularly from the more distant parts of Town. The common terms for travel between home and public transit are the “first mile” and the “last mile.” These terms generally refer to challenges faced by suburban commuters, but they are also applicable to other residents who wish to use public transportation and are therefore significant in Needham.

The hours of operation for both MBTA bus and commuter rail services are also seen as problematic. As designed, the commuter rail runs only at times suitable for people traveling to and from Boston on a typical work schedule. There are limited trips on weekdays and none on Sundays.

- *“There is no Sunday commuter rail service, so friends visiting, or trips to Boston are limited. Public transportation is a big issue with living in Needham, there is some but mostly developed around working people needing to get into the city.”* Survey respondent
- *“Public bus is too rare. Hope to have more buses! And shuttle.”* Survey respondent

### Non-emergency medical transit

Non-emergency medical transportation is available through the Needham Community Council and its volunteer drivers. Non-emergency medical trips are also provided by the paratransit service run by the MBTA (the RIDE), Veterans’ Transportation (RSVP – Retired Volunteer Service Program), the Neighborhood Brigade (volunteer drivers), the American Cancer Society (also volunteer drivers), Springwell (Busy Bee and Senior Medical Escort Program), and Bayada Home Health Care, which can be very costly.

There was near unanimous dissatisfaction with the RIDE. Participants in all focus groups and several key informants described the service as unreliable. Passengers often wait for hours for pick-up at home and again when they are ready to leave their health care providers.

Participants spoke favorably about the Needham Community Council and the RSVP services, but were nonetheless unhappy about having to give three days’ notice to reserve a ride. They bemoaned the lack of service for same-day medical appointments which leaves them either walking or using a cab.

Reliance on volunteer drivers can be a challenge for services run by community-based organizations. The ranks of these volunteers have diminished in recent years as they, too, are aging out. Needham Community Council volunteers, for example, are mostly over 60 years old. The challenge of having enough volunteers to meet demand has prompted the Community Council to augment its volunteer driver program with a pilot program that uses Uber for resident

transportation. One key informant speculated that younger people are less likely to be volunteer drivers because of concerns about liability.

### Demand-based transportation

Independent Transportation Network of Greater Boston is a member-based service for seniors or adults with visual impairment. Veteran's Taxi service, based in Newton, is the only commercial on-demand service. Uber, and other ride-hailing companies, also serve Needham.

According to several focus group participants and survey respondents, Newton-based Veteran's Taxi service is not consistently responsive to the needs of Needham travelers. Participants speculated that this is due to the low volume of customers in Needham.

- *"Cab service is terrible - have tried to get home from Newton Highlands by cab - impossible!"* (Survey )

As one key informant noted, *"Needham is not a cab culture."* Another interviewee spoke about some residents with ongoing health issues and appointments in Boston who use much of their income on transportation.

While a few focus group participants were enthusiastic about Uber, others were unlikely to use the service. For most, online ride-hailing services are unavailable because people are intimidated by or unable to access the technology. Some participants expressed reluctance to use a service with which they are unfamiliar and which they perceive as being unsafe.

### Service-specific transportation

The Council on Aging operates a van which ferries residents to the Center at the Heights. The Needham Community Council also provides courtesy van transportation within Needham two days a week. These services are essential for many older adults to continue to engage in social activity. The COA also runs weekly trips to grocery stores.

- *"I think the senior bus service is extremely important. I recently had to give up driving and I couldn't survive so well without this service. Only family lives out of state."* (Survey respondent)

There are several employers in Needham that run shuttles from off-site parking to the worksite. These include Beth Israel-Deaconess Hospital Needham, TripAdvisor, and the 128 Business Council. Olin College also has a shuttle for students.

## Community circulators

One of the top recurring discussions in focus groups, interviews, and comments on the survey, was the mini bus shuttle that once circulated around Needham. The service, called the Needham-Mite, was discontinued in the early nineties, but many residents have long and fond memories of riding the bus when they or their children were young. Some remember the van as a cross-generational experience with both young and old benefiting. Now, most survey and focus group participants think of such a service as an opportunity for mobility and independence.

- *"I loved the minibus we had in Needham when our children were little. When I do have to give up my license a shuttle bus would help me to feel independent." (Survey)*
- *"It is extremely important that a shuttle bus be part of the Needham landscape for elderly and for people without licenses. The town has many wonderful facilities and should not be dependent upon cars and the occasional van rides that are available only for specific purposes. (Survey)*
- *"We live in an area that is about two miles from the center. As we age and drive less, it would be important to have a shuttle or bus service that goes to the different neighborhoods around town." (Survey)*

From the book, *Independent for Life*, comes this explanation of different ways of thinking about the purpose of public transportation:

*"The primary focus of transit in most metropolitan regions is regional congestion mitigation rather than enhanced individual mobility. Such a system works well for commuters. It is less effective for those who are retired or work out of a home office and need transit for daily errands. Reorienting the focus of transit planning from congestion mitigation to individual mobility is particularly important for older adults who must rely on public transportation as they age. For these riders, an efficient alternative is the local circulator buses."<sup>24</sup>*

Circulator buses travel a regular route throughout a community, providing curb-to-curb transportation through residential and commercial districts. They allow residents to run errands in town, visit neighbors, and go shopping at will. As much as such a service benefits older citizens, it allows all people, regardless of age or purpose, a significant degree of independence.

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<sup>24</sup> "Longevity and Urbanism," Plater-Zyberk, E. and Ball, S. *Independent for Life: Homes and Neighborhoods for an Aging America*. Cisneros, H., Dyer-Chamberlain, M., Hickie, J. (ed). Stanford Center on Longevity. University of Texas Press 2012.

- *“There is some transportation available for grocery shopping and medical appointments but not for other errands like the cleaners or the bank or CVS or the hairdresser.”* (Focus group)

The Senior Survey on Housing and Transit included questions about current and anticipated transportation needs. Following is a summary of some of the findings regarding respondents’ expectations. Note that the use of a public bus or shuttle is the option chosen just behind the top priorities of driving oneself or having others drive them.

#### Importance of Different Transportation Methods in Future – Summary

The largest proportion of respondents reported that it is *moderately important* or *very important* for them to be able to drive themselves as they age (94%), have others drive them (83%), use a public bus or shuttle (62%), walk (62%), use a special transportation service (57%), take a taxi or cab (39%), and ride a bike (24%). Write-in comments tended to be identical to the items that already appeared in the survey. (Appendix B)

#### Coordinating information about transportation

Several participants in focus groups, interviews, and the survey, suggested the need for a coordinated service for transportation information and requests. Such services, called “one call–one click transportation services,” are recommended by the Bipartisan Policy Center’s Senior Health and Housing Task Force, a Washington-based think tank. The one call – one click program allows an individual to call one phone number (or click on one link) to access “real-time information, support, and referrals to help seniors navigate the complexities of securing rides.”<sup>25</sup>

There is a wide variety of one-call and one-click services available to residents. With all of these programs, a single call or a single visit to a web page provides information about specific services, and often immediate connection to those services. The complexities of the various programs, their standards for eligibility, and numerous service providers remain behind the scenes, out of the eye of the customer.<sup>26</sup>

This kind of one-stop shopping can increase senior engagement and access to social, cultural, and service opportunities. This format is used by programs serving veterans and has also been adopted by a number of communities as a way to serve local seniors.

The Wellesley Council on Aging, for example, recently revamped its transportation program to integrate all transportation services for seniors. The program has one full-time equivalent position

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<sup>25</sup> Healthy Aging Begins at Home. Bipartisan Policy Center, May, 2016. <http://cdn.bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BPC-Healthy-Aging.pdf>, Chapter 3.

<sup>26</sup> Community Transportation Association of America. [http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/Guidebook\\_Chap2.pdf](http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/Guidebook_Chap2.pdf)

to answer a central phone number and to schedule van or volunteer drivers. If a request cannot be accommodated by COA, the employee helps the caller find the most appropriate transportation option.

Another local model is CrossTown Connect, a transportation management association public-private partnership. It was established to regionalize transportation services in Acton, Boxborough, Concord, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, and Westford and includes a dispatch call center for community-based services for seniors and people with disabilities.

### Regional Transportation

The MetroWest Regional Transportation Authority was established ten years ago to serve several communities in the western suburbs. Bus routes run through Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Marlborough, Milford, Natick, Newton, Southborough, Wayland, and Wellesley. The buses go through town centers, to shopping districts and malls, to MBTA stations, and provide connectivity among and within these communities

According to one key informant, a collaborative of contiguous communities that includes Needham is in discussion about establishing more regional transportation. Representatives from Needham, Newton, Waltham, Watertown, and Wellesley are working with a consultant to consider a public-private partnership to increase transportation options.

### Maximizing local assets

Participants in all aspects of this study wondered about the prospect of maximizing the use of existing vehicles. In focus groups and interviews there were suggestions to consider using Needham Public School vans during the day and evening hours when not being used for students.

In focus groups and survey responses, there were suggestions to expand the services provided by the Council on Aging van. The Wellesley COA recently leased an accessible van from MetroWest Regional Transportation Authority. In addition to the COA organized trips and weekly runs to the grocery store, the van is available to Wellesley seniors for door-to-door service – at a nominal fee – for personal errands, medical visits, and trips to the gym or hair salon.

At the initial planning meeting in March, and in interviews, Needham community leaders expressed an interest in exploring the possibility of partnering with local businesses which have their own shuttles: BID-Needham, TripAdvisor, the 128 Business Council, and Olin College.

A resource for more strategies is the National Center for Mobility Management whose mission is “to facilitate communities to adopt transportation strategies and mobility options that empower people to live independently, and advance health, economic vitality, self-sufficiency, and community.”<sup>27</sup>

## **Pedestrian Safety and Walkable Neighborhoods**

### **Background and Importance**

Current research indicates that senior citizens are more vulnerable to pedestrian injuries and fatalities than all other age groups except for young children. According to the Centers for Disease Control, pedestrians aged 65 and older accounted for 19% of all pedestrian deaths and an estimated 10% of pedestrian injuries in 2013.<sup>28</sup>

Seniors are at risk of pedestrian accidents due to many of the disabilities associated with aging: limited physical mobility and reaction time; vision and hearing problems; cognitive impairment; and diminished stability leading to falls. Elderly people walk more slowly than other pedestrians and require more time to cross a street. Older pedestrians also may not see cars or may have trouble reacting quickly to dodge cars that are too close to them.

The Town of Needham, in applying Complete Streets, is making infrastructure improvements that will benefit all users in the town. The Downtown Streetscape Plan and the Trails Master Plan are wonderful examples of this approach. Focus group participants and survey respondents are generally pleased with the walkability in Needham.

### **Street Crossing**

Many survey respondents cited problems they experience while crossing the street in Needham:

Half of the respondents (49.9%) indicated that they have trouble crossing the street when walking for at least one reason. Respondents were most likely to identify not having enough time on the traffic light (22%), followed by not having crosswalks where they need them (21%), fear that turning cars won't see them crossing the street (18%), and not having traffic lights where they need them (11%). (Appendix B)

Limited crossing time is a problem for most older adults and is being addressed in many jurisdictions and on a national level.

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<sup>27</sup> National Center for Mobility Management <http://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/about-us/>

<sup>28</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/pedestrian\\_safety/](https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/pedestrian_safety/)

The walking speed set for signal operations is one of the most important design and operational parameters affecting pedestrian safety. In December 2009 the FHWA approved an update to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) that acknowledges the slower pace of older pedestrians. The National Committee on MUTCD now recommends that signals give pedestrians seven seconds to leave the curb.<sup>29</sup>

The National Committee on MUTCD recommends that signal timing should allow seven seconds for “pedestrian clearance time,” to register the signal change and to step off the curb. It proposes an assumed “walking speed of 3.5 feet per second” from curb to curb. It also states:

Where pedestrians who walk slower than 3.5 feet per second, or pedestrians who use wheelchairs, routinely use the crosswalk, a walking speed of less than 3.5 feet per second should be considered in determining the pedestrian clearance time.<sup>30</sup>

Some respondents were pleased with the addition of audio signals at select crossings, while others wished for additional features including those that would enhance the visibility of crosswalks. Participants in one focus group suggested embedding lights within crosswalks.

- *“Crosswalks need lighting or painted differently. At lights, get halfway across street, cars do not stop.”* (Survey)
- *“Need good audio crossing signals and good sidewalks & more benches & more raised markings at intersections for the blind/impaired. Atrocious sidewalks need repair here - so unsafe, esp. at intersections & CBD in general.”* (Survey)

## Sidewalk conditions

While many lauded the condition of sidewalks in the center of town, others talked about problems with sidewalks (or lack of sidewalks) in the residential areas. Some survey respondents identified specific locations of sidewalks in need of repair.

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<sup>29</sup> AARP Policy Book: AARP Public Policies 2015-2016. <http://policybook.aarp.org/> chapter 9.

<sup>30</sup> US Dept of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 2009 Edition. Chapter 4E, Pedestrian Control Features. <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/htm/2009/part4/part4e.htm>

- “[There are] places with no sidewalks.” (Survey)
- “Sidewalks in sorry state of repair, likely to trip elderly and disabled...” (Survey)
- “I do a lot of walking, but am aware of many hazards on sidewalks that are crumbling or have different elevations or holes.” (Survey)
- “As someone who walks and does not drive, I would like to see improvement in the safety of sidewalks, especially in winter weather, and improved enforcement of traffic safety rules for drivers...it can be scary to walk in this town given the driving habits of some.” (Survey)
- “.....we do walk for exercise, but the sidewalk conditions are often poor and I can see that it could be a problem in the future to get around town.” (Survey)

## Benches

One third of the respondents (37%) indicated that they would be more likely to walk for exercise or to get to their destination if there were more benches on their walking route (Appendix B)

- “Perhaps additional benches in neighborhoods - private homes. There are 2 along Chestnut St. Very nice!” (Survey)
- “More benches: This is an excellent idea! Start with all of Highland Ave, then Great Plain Ave.” (Survey res)

In New York City, as part of its senior pedestrian safety program, benches were installed in areas where there is a high senior population. The program allows residents to suggest places where additional benches would be helpful.<sup>31</sup>

For additional information, see the AARP Community Walk Audit.<sup>32</sup>

## Next Steps

As the Town of Needham moves on to address the housing, transit, and pedestrian issues identified in this report, Town leaders should consider looking at national recommendations as well as best practices and successful programs from comparable communities.

<sup>31</sup> Safe Streets for Seniors <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/safeseniors.shtml> and New York City Department of Aging <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/senior/pedestrian.shtml>

<sup>32</sup> AARP Community Walk Audit <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/documents-2016/AARP-Livable-Communities-Walk-Audit-Tool-Kit-41216.pdf>

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is an excellent resource for information about how other communities in the U.S. are becoming “livable communities.”

## Housing

The Needham Planning and Community Development Department is a rich resource of information on current housing stock with an Affordable Housing Specialist on staff.

- There is great interest in increasing the stock of market-affordable housing in Needham, and in particular, housing appropriate for an older population. Even though the economics of real estate is a daunting challenge, the data from this Healthy Aging project will be useful in addressing the issues. The evident effect of tear downs on older residents in Needham can be incorporated into ongoing discussions of this phenomenon.
- Programs designed to assist senior citizens with burdensome housing costs (modification, maintenance, tax assistance) can be promoted more effectively to reach the target population.
- Many seniors currently live in homes that may present hazards or may be difficult to navigate as their abilities wane. Promoting services that can help them assess the age-friendliness of their homes would be very beneficial. AARP has developed a tip sheet to help with such assessments.<sup>33</sup> The social workers at the Council on Aging are a wealth of resources for this and many other available services as well.
- The question of accessory apartments deserves the time and attention of Town leaders. There are many examples, both locally and across the nation, of communities that have modified local zoning restrictions to allow some form of accessory dwelling. It would be useful to look at the real impact such zoning changes have made in comparable or neighboring communities like Lexington, Scituate, Dedham, and Newton.<sup>34</sup>
- Other models to address the needs of seniors who wish to remain in Needham should be explored. The “Village-to-Village” movement provides a model for meeting the needs of elders who wish to remain in their homes as they age. While many of the needs served by this model are currently addressed by the Council on Aging, it provides another model that

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<sup>33</sup> *Is My Home 'HomeFit'?*, <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/documents-2015/HomeFit2015/01%20Is%20My%20Home%20HomeFit.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Massachusetts Housing Regulations <http://www.masshousingregulations.com/pdf/accessory.pdf>

is appealing to some Needhamites. Some respondents expressed interest in other forms of congregate housing such as co-housing or group homes.

- As the proportion of elderly residents grows, Needham can promote the use of universal design in renovation and new housing. A long-standing local resource is the Institute for Human Centered Design, located in Boston.

## **Transportation**

- “Bring back the mini-bus,” or another effective circulator transit service, was the clear and consistent message from the survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews. Whether this need can be delivered by a Needham-specific service or by a regional or public-private partnership is a question best addressed at a transportation summit, conference, or task force. This issue does not fall under the domain of existing Town transportation committees, although their work is relevant and should be included in the problem-solving effort.
- A “one click–one call” service for seniors would enhance local transportation as it currently exists. Other Massachusetts municipalities that have recently adopted such programs (Wellesley, Action) should be tapped as resources to explore options.

## **Pedestrian safety**

Pedestrian safety has been prioritized in the Town of Needham as evidenced by the Downtown Streetscape Plan and the Trails Master Plan. However, participants identified walking challenges, some of which may be easy to address.

- Missing or poorly maintained sidewalks, short crossing cycles, poorly marked crosswalks, and traffic violations can be addressed by appropriate Town departments.
- Needham should also consider adding benches in locations beyond downtown to provide older or disabled residents with resting stops and to increase the walkability of the community.

# **APPENDIX A**

## **NEEDHAM SENIOR SURVEY ON HOUSING AND TRANSIT**



## SENIOR SURVEY ON HOUSING AND TRANSIT

### Directions

The Town of Needham is conducting a survey of Needham residents who are 55 years of age and older to assess their attitudes, opinions, and needs related to housing, transportation, and senior-friendly community infrastructure.

We are asking all Needham residents 55 years of age and older to take part in this brief survey. The results will be used to help inform community planning across a variety of Town departments.

Completed surveys can be dropped off at the Library, Needham Community Council, Center at the Heights, or at the Town Hall with the Clerk or Treasurer.

If you would prefer to mail back the survey, simply place it in an envelope and mail it to:

Lynn Schoeff  
Needham Department of Public Health  
1471 Highland Avenue  
Needham, MA 02492

This survey is also available online. To take part in the survey online, just type the following website address into an internet browser such as Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, or Safari. The survey can be accessed both on a computer and on an iPad or other tablet device.

**Website Address:** <http://surveys.ssre.org/s3/needhamseniors>

**Thank you very much for your time.**

**These first questions are about you.**

- 1. What is your gender?**  
1  Female 2  Male
- 2. How old are you? (age in years):** \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. How long have you lived in Needham?**  
1  Less than 5 years 4  25-34 years  
2  5-14 years 5  35-44 years  
3  15-24 years 6  45 years or more
- 4. What is your current marital status?**  
1  Married  
2  Not married, living with a partner  
3  Separated or divorced  
4  Widowed  
5  Never married
- 5. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?**  
1  Employed or self-employed, part-time  
2  Employed or self-employed, full-time  
3  Unemployed, but looking for work  
4  Retired, not working at all  
5  Not in labor force for other reasons
- 6. Please estimate your annual household income before taxes in 2015.**  
1  Less than \$25,000 5  \$100,000 to \$149,999  
2  \$25,000 to \$49,999 6  \$150,000 to \$199,999  
3  \$50,000 to \$74,999 7  \$200,000 to \$249,999  
4  \$75,000 to \$99,999 8  \$250,000 or more
- 7. In general, when compared to most people your age, how would you rate your health?**  
1  Excellent  
2  Very Good  
3  Good  
4  Fair  
5  Poor
- 8. How often do you typically use the Internet for things like email, getting information, paying bills, or purchasing? This includes access from home, work, a mobile device, or someplace else.**  
1  Several times a day  
2  About once a day  
3  3-6 days a week  
4  1-2 days a week  
5  Once every few weeks  
6  Once a month or less  
7  Never go online

**The next questions are about housing.**

- 9. In what type of home do you currently live?**  
1  Single family home  
2  Town home or duplex  
3  Apartment  
4  Condominium  
5  Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. Which of the following best describes the setting in which you currently live?**  
1  Private residence  
2  Needham Housing Authority property  
3  Senior housing  
4  Long-term care facility  
5  Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- 11. Have you ever provided care for another adult living in your household who needed assistance with everyday tasks?**  
1  No  
2  In the past, but not currently  
3  Yes, I am currently providing care
- 12. How would you rate Needham as a place for people to live as they age?**  
1  Excellent  
2  Very Good  
3  Good  
4  Fair  
5  Poor
- 13. How important is it for you to remain in Needham as you age?**  
1  Extremely Important  
2  Very Important  
3  Somewhat Important  
4  Not Very Important  
5  Not At All Important
- 14. How important is it for you to be able to live independently in your own home as you age?**  
1  Extremely Important  
2  Very Important  
3  Somewhat Important  
4  Not Very Important  
5  Not At All Important
- 15. How likely is it that you will remain in Needham as you age?**  
1  Extremely Likely  
2  Very Likely  
3  Somewhat Likely  
4  Not Very Likely  
5  Not At All Likely

**16. If you were to consider moving out of Needham, would the following factors impact your decision to move?**

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
a) Looking for a smaller home size .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
b) It will be too expensive to maintain your current home.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
c) Fearing for your personal safety or security concerns .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
d) Looking for a home with services to help you live independently as you age .	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
e) Wanting to be closer to better health care facilities.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
f) Wanting to be closer to family.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
g) Needing more access to public transportation .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
h) Wanting to live in a different climate.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
i) Looking for an area with lower cost of living .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
j) Other, please specify: .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>

**17. Have you made any of the following modifications to your home to enable you to stay there as you age?**

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
a) A ramp, wider doorways, chairlift, or elevator to allow easier access into or within your home.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
b) Bathroom modifications such as grab bars, handrails, a higher toilet, or non-slip tiles.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
c) Added a bedroom, bathroom, and/or kitchen on the first floor .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
d) Improved lighting .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
e) Installed a medical emergency response system that notifies others in case of an emergency .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
f) Other, please specify: .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>

**18. Have you wanted to make modifications to your home, but were not able to?**

1  Yes    2  No

**19. If you were not able to make modifications to your home, what has prevented you from making these changes?**

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
a) I don't own the property and am not allowed to make modifications .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cost of the modification .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
c) Architecture of the home .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
d) Building codes .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
e) Zoning codes.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
f) Finding a contractor .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
g) Other, please specify: .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>

**The next questions are about community infrastructure and transportation.**

**20. When walking, do you have any trouble crossing the street for the following reasons? (check ALL that apply)**

1  No crosswalks where you need them                      4  Turning cars do not see you  
 2  No traffic lights where you need them                    5  Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
 3  Not enough time on the traffic light

**21. Would you be more likely to walk for exercise or to get to your destinations if there were more benches on your walking route?**

1  Yes    2  No    3  Not Sure

**22. How important do you think it is to have the following in your community?**

	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Moderately Important</i>	<i>Slightly Important</i>	<i>Not Important</i>
a) Well-maintained and safe parks that are within walking distance of your home .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
b) Public parks with enough benches .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
c) Benches in other public places such as shopping and business districts.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
d) Sidewalks that are in good condition, free from obstruction, and are accessible for wheelchairs or walkers .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
e) Well-maintained public buildings and facilities that are accessible to people of different physical abilities.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
f) Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
g) Bus or shuttle service for older residents .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
h) Well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
i) Other, please specify:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

**23. How often do you currently use the following ways to get yourself around Needham for trips like shopping, visiting the doctor, visiting friends, and running errands?**

	<i>Very Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
a) Drive yourself.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have others drive you .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
c) Walk .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
d) Ride a bike.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
e) Use public bus or shuttle .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
f) Take a taxi or cab .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
g) Use a special transportation service, such as one for seniors or persons with disabilities.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
h) Other, please specify:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

**24. As you age, how important is it for you to be able to get yourself around Needham in the following ways?**

	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Moderately Important</i>	<i>Slightly Important</i>	<i>Not Important</i>
a) Drive yourself.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have others drive you .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
c) Walk .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
d) Ride a bike.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
e) Use public bus or shuttle .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
f) Take a taxi or cab .....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
g) Use a special transportation service, such as one for seniors or persons with disabilities.....	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
h) Other, please specify:	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

**25. Please use the space below to share any additional comments.**

# **APPENDIX B**

## **SENIOR SURVEY REPORT**

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## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Needham Public Health Department and Needham Council on Aging conducted a survey of Needham residents ages 55 and older to learn about their attitudes, opinions, and needs related to housing, transportation, and senior-friendly community infrastructure. This report presents findings from 650 Needham seniors who took part in the survey during spring 2016.

### **Respondent Characteristics (Page 7)**

Survey respondents were predominantly female (67%). On average, respondents were 69 years of age – half were between 55 and 67 and half were 68 years of age or older. The majority of respondents (70%) were married or living with a partner. Almost all respondents (92%) felt that their health was good or better in comparison to their peers. Roughly half of the respondents (46%) reported that their 2015 pre-tax household income was less than \$100,000 and half (54%) indicated that it was \$100,000 or greater. Over half of the respondents (56%) were retired or outside of the workforce for other reasons. Forty-three percent (43%) are currently employed either part-time (20%) or full-time (23%). Less than 1% of respondents reported that they are currently unemployed and looking for work (0.6%). Almost all respondents (92%) indicated that they use the Internet at least once every few weeks or more.

Generalizing across the sample, the *average* respondent was a 69-year-old married female in better than average health across a wide variety of income levels with an equal chance of being inside or outside of the workforce who typically uses the Internet several times a day.

### **Residence in Needham (Page 12)**

Approximately three-quarters of respondents (72%) reported that they have lived in Needham for 25 years or longer. One of every three respondents has lived in Needham for 45 years or more. Almost all of the respondents (93%) are currently living in a private residence with almost eight of every ten respondents reporting that they live in a single family home.

Generalizing across the sample, the *average* respondent is currently living in a private, single family home in Needham and has lived in Needham for 25 years or more.

### **Attitudes About Residence in Needham (Page 14)**

Almost all of the respondents (91%) reported that it is *very* or *extremely important* for them to be able to live independently in their home as they age. Eighty-two percent (82%) perceive Needham to be a *good, very good, or excellent* place for people to live as they age. Over 90% of respondents feel it is *somewhat, very, or extremely important* for them to remain in Needham as they age, and an equal proportion believe it is *somewhat, very, or extremely likely* that they will do so. Twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents indicated that it was more important for them to remain in Needham as they age compared to the likelihood that they will do so (n=135).

### **Potential Factors Influencing Decisions to Move (Page 17)**

Respondents indicated that *if* they were to consider moving out of Needham at some point in the future that the most common reasons for doing so would be: looking for a smaller home size (58%), looking for a home with services to help them live independently as they age (56%), and concerns that it will be too expensive to maintain their current home (51%). Approximately one of every ten respondents (9%) provided an additional write-in response – these responses tended to all be sub-themes of the factors that appeared in the survey. The most common write-in comments were: more affordable housing options (2.3%), single-floor living options (1.8%), and lower property taxes (1.2%).

### **Existing Home Modifications (Page 19)**

Almost half of all respondents (46%) reported that they have made one or more modifications to their home to enable them to stay there as they age. The largest proportion of respondents reported that they have made modifications to their bathroom (36%) and/or installed improved lighting (26%). Four percent of respondents (4%) provided an additional write-in response – these responses tended to all be sub-themes of the list of modifications that appeared in the survey. The most common write-in comments were: having made physical alterations to their home such as changes to doors, adding ramps, or making bathroom improvements (1.5%); having recently downsized or moved to more senior-friendly housing (0.6%); and having installed or signed-up for a monitoring or security system (0.6%).

### **Barriers to Making Home Modifications (Page 20)**

Across the respondent sample, 17% of respondents indicated that they were *not* able to make modifications to their home that they wanted to make. Among this group, 4% reported that the reason they have not been able to make modifications is that they don't own the property and are not allowed to make modifications. Thirteen percent of respondents (13%) identified another barrier to being able to make their desired modifications. Within this subset, the largest proportion of respondents cited cost (10%) and architecture of the home (7%) as barriers. Few respondents cited a barrier that was not already listed in the survey.

### **Potential Barriers to Walking for Exercise or Errands (Page 23)**

One-third of respondents (37%) indicated that they would be more likely to walk for exercise or to get to their destination if there were more benches on their walking route. Half of the respondents (49.9%) indicated that they have trouble crossing the street when walking for at least one reason. Respondents were most likely to identify not having enough time on the traffic light (22%), followed by not having crosswalks where they need them (21%), fear that turning cars won't see them crossing the street (18%), and not having traffic lights where they need them (11%). The most common write-in responses for this question were: drivers don't stop at crosswalks (2.8%); drivers are hurried, distracted, or on cell phones (2.0%); not enough sidewalks the further you get from the center of town (1.8%); and the poor condition of many sidewalks (1.7%).

### **Perceived Importance of Community Infrastructure Elements (Page 25)**

Over three-quarters of respondents indicated that it was either *moderately important* or *very important* to have the following community infrastructure elements: sidewalks that are in good condition, free from obstruction, and accessible for wheelchairs or walkers (96%); well-maintained public buildings and facilities that are accessible to people of different physical abilities (92%); bus or shuttle service for older residents (89%); well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities (88%); well-maintained and safe parks that are within walking distance of their home (85%); public parks with enough benches (82%); separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians (81%); and benches in other public places such as shopping and business districts (79%). Write-in comments tended to be sub-themes of the items that already appeared in the survey.

### **Current Transportation Methods (Page 28)**

Respondents were most likely to report that they *sometimes* or *often* drive themselves (93%), walk (74%), have others drive them (28%), or ride a bike (20%). Comparatively fewer respondents report that they *sometimes* or *often* use a public bus or shuttle (9%), take a taxi or cab (8%), or use a special transportation service (6%). Write-in comments tended to be identical to the items that already appeared in the survey.

### **Importance of Different Transportation Methods in the Future (Page 30)**

The largest proportion of respondents reported that it is *moderately important* or *very important* for them to be able to drive themselves as they age (94%), have others drive them (83%), use a public bus or shuttle (62%), walk (62%), use a special transportation service (57%), take a taxi or cab (39%), and ride a bike (24%). Write-in comments tended to be identical to the items that already appeared in the survey.

### **Comparison – Current Methods Versus Importance of Future Methods (Page 32)**

Respondents placed higher importance on being able to take a taxi or cab, use a public bus/shuttle, have others drive them, and using a special transportation service in the future compared to their current use of these different methods of transportation. This was particularly the case for using a special transportation service in the future.

### **Additional Comments (Page 33)**

Respondents were invited to provide additional comments – 150 respondents (23%) provided at least one comment. Qualitative thematic analysis extracted 247 discrete themes. Respondents were most likely to comment on the need for additional transportation options for seniors (6%), and the need for more affordable housing options for seniors (6%).

## BACKGROUND AND METHODS

The Needham Public Health Department and Needham Council on Aging conducted a survey of Needham residents ages 55 and older to learn about their attitudes, opinions, and needs related to housing, transportation, and senior-friendly community infrastructure. The survey asked questions in four broad domains: (1) respondent characteristics, (2) housing, (3) community infrastructure, and (4) transportation.

The anonymous survey, which consisted of 61 discrete questions, was administered as both a paper-based and online questionnaire during the six-week period between May 4, 2016 and June 14, 2016. Potential respondents were given the option to complete the survey online or to complete and return the paper-based version to the Public Library, Needham Community Council, Center at the Heights (senior center), or at the Needham Town Hall with the Town Clerk or Town Treasurer. This was the first time this survey was implemented in the community.

### Validity and Reliability

One of the challenges associated with survey research is the potential for error in the data. This can stem from multiple sources such as the same respondent submitting multiple surveys, poor question wording, lack of appropriate response options that accurately reflect the experiences of all potential respondents, frivolity, and misinterpretation of the underlying meaning of a question. The likelihood of encountering these potential sources of error can vary depending on the method used to collect the data. This was a multi-modal survey, but the majority of responses were received online. The single largest source of potential error associated with online data collection is lack of knowledge about *who* actually responds to the survey (e.g., did one respondent complete multiple surveys, was the respondent really 55 or older, was the respondent really a Needham resident). While we cannot ever know with absolute certainty, short of having respondents complete the survey under controlled conditions (e.g., having respondents complete the survey in-person), there are several steps that can be taken to increase our confidence in the results. For example:

1. Using clear and unambiguous language in the instructions – prominently indicating who the intended target audience is (i.e., Needham residents 55 years of age and older) and indicating what the questions are about (i.e., housing, community infrastructure, and transportation).
2. Data screening – using visual and statistical screening to identify and remove cases in which the respondent provided obviously frivolous responses (i.e., always choosing the same or extreme response options for every item).
3. Identical case analysis – statistically identifying all duplicate records to minimize the chances that the same person submitted multiple surveys and/or the chances that the survey was accidentally submitted multiple times.

While these are not foolproof methods, they do help to ensure a clean dataset that minimizes the chances that there are gross errors present in the final set of data. Each of these steps was taken during the administration and analysis of the Needham Senior Survey on Housing and Transit.

Ideally, the development of survey items, such as those used in the Needham Senior Survey on Housing and Transit, should be an iterative process. Items should be field-tested with a subset of representatives from the intended target population and psychometric analyses should be conducted to help build the case that the survey items are both valid and reliable. Under real world, non-laboratory conditions, this is often difficult to accomplish. To help guard against this potential for error, survey items should be based either in whole, or in part, on items that have been used successfully in other research projects and in other settings. The Needham survey met this condition for the majority of items. Many of the questions in the survey were taken from AARP Community Survey Questionnaire<sup>1</sup>.

During the analysis phase, issues with specific items can be identified based on the pattern of missing responses. If, for example, 25% of respondents did not answer one of the items, this should be noted as part of the results and this item should be modified in any future surveys. By striking a balance of design, logical, and statistical controls, as was the case with the Needham Senior Survey on Housing and Transit, we can minimize the odds of large-scale error creeping into the survey and maximize our confidence in the results.

#### **Analysis Plan**

Descriptive statistics are presented for each item in the survey (i.e., the number and percentage of all respondents that answered each response option for each item in the questionnaire). Some of the questions in the survey allowed respondents to write-in (or type-in) a response. These items were thematically coded to extract the major theme(s) present in the data.

#### **Analytical Sample**

A total of 526 individuals visited the survey webpage during the six-week period that it was open. Seventy-one (71) of these individuals (13% of those who visited) were removed from the final analytical sample. The reason for removal in each instance was that the respondent either did not answer any of the questions or only answered the first series of demographic questions without going any further. An additional 195 individuals completed the paper-based version of the survey. These data were hand-entered into an Excel database by a project staff member and the data were merged with the online survey dataset.

The final analytical sample consisted of 650 completed surveys – 455 online surveys (70%) and 195 paper-based surveys (30%).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/aarp-community-survey-questionnaire.html>

### Generalizability

Results are generalizable only to those Needham residents ages 55 and older who took part in the survey and may not reflect the attitudes, opinions, and needs of other seniors in the community. The 2014 American Community Survey estimates that there are 9,284 residents ages 55 and older living in Needham. Based on these estimates, the Needham Senior Survey on Housing and Transit reached approximately 7.0% of this population.

<b>Estimated Sample Size and Response Rate</b>			
	<b>ACS 2014 Population Est.</b>	<b>Senior Survey</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
55-60 years	2,335	118	5.1%
61-65 years	1,839	117	6.4%
66-75 years	2,408	226	9.4%
76-85 years	1,340	109	8.1%
86 years and over	1,362	41	3.0%
Missing	-	39	
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,284</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>7.0%</b>

### Missing Values Analysis

A missing values analysis was conducted to identify any items that were skipped by a large number of respondents. All of the items in the survey were answered by at least 80% of the respondents (n=520 respondents). Most items were answered by 95% or more of the respondents. Each analysis presents the number of missing responses and special note is made for any items that had below an 85% response rate.

For the purposes of the current assessment, the effects of missing data appear to be minimal.

## FINDINGS – RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Eight of the questions in the survey asked about different respondent characteristics. These questions included the respondent's gender, age, current marital status, perceived health status, household pre-tax income in calendar year 2015, current employment status, whether they are a care provider for another adult, and typical Internet use. The purpose of these questions is to describe the responding sample as a way to assess the extent to which the finding may be generalizable to the broader community.

### Gender

Approximately two-thirds of respondents (67%) indicated that they were female and 33% reported that they were male.

**Table 1: Respondent Gender**

What is your gender?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Female	434	67.4%
Male	209	32.5%
Missing	7	-
Total Valid	643	98.9%

### Age

Respondents were asked to identify their exact age. During the analysis phase, these responses were collapsed into five-year intervals. Respondents ranged in age from 55 years of age to 100 years of age. The average age of respondents was 69 years. Half of the respondents were under 68 years of age and half were over 68 years of age. The largest number of respondents (34) were 70 years of age. Separated into five year increments, the largest proportion of respondents (22%) were between 66 and 70 years of age.

**Table 2: Respondent Age**

How old are you?		
	Frequency	Percentage
55-60 years	118	19.3%
61-65 years	117	19.1%
66-70 years	135	22.1%
71-75 years	91	14.9%
76-80 years	70	11.5%
81-85 years	39	6.4%
86-90 years	28	4.6%
91-95 years	8	1.3%
96-100 years	5	0.8%
Missing	39	-
Total Valid	611	94.0%

### Marital Status

Approximately two-thirds of respondents (68%) indicated that they are currently married, 15% are widowed, 10% are separated or divorced, 6% never married, and 2% are not married but living with a partner.

Table 3: Marital Status

What is your current marital status?	Frequency	Percentage
Married	429	67.6%
Not married, living with a partner	13	2.0%
Separated or divorced	61	9.6%
Widowed	93	14.6%
Never married	39	6.1%
Missing	15	-
Total Valid	635	97.7%

### Perceived Health Status

The vast majority of respondents (92%) felt that their health was good or better in comparison to their peers. Eight percent (8%) of respondents reported that their health was *fair* (7%) or *poor* (1%) when compared to other individuals in their age cohort.

Table 4: Perceived Health Status

In general, when compared to most people your age, how would you rate your health?	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	9	1.4%
Fair	43	6.8%
Good	134	21.1%
Very Good	271	42.7%
Excellent	178	28.0%
Missing	15	-
Total Valid	635	97.7%

### Household Pre-Tax Income in Calendar Year 2015

Respondents were asked to estimate their household's pre-tax income level during the prior federal tax year (calendar year 2015). Respondents were fairly evenly distributed across household income levels. Roughly half of the respondents (46%) reported that their 2015 pre-tax household income was less than \$100,000 and half (54%) indicated that it was \$100,000 or greater. The largest group of respondents (21%) reported that their 2015 pre-tax household income was between \$100,000 and \$149,000.

It is important to note that roughly one-fifth of respondents (17%) opted not to answer this question. While it is still informative to know the answer to this question among 83% of the

sample, the summary statistics may over-estimate or under-estimate the income level of respondents to the survey based on the presence of missing data.

**Table 5: Household Pre-Tax Income in Calendar Year 2015**

<b>Please estimate your annual household income before taxes in 2015</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than \$25,000	49	9.1%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	64	11.8%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	72	13.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	66	12.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	113	20.9%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	67	12.4%
\$200,000 to \$249,999	41	7.6%
\$250,000 or more	69	12.8%
Missing	109	-
Total Valid	541	83.2%

#### **Employment Status**

Half of the respondents indicated that they are currently retired (52%) and 4% are not in the labor force for other reasons (56% combined). Forty-three percent (43%) are currently employed either part-time (20%) or full-time (23%). Less than 1% of respondents reported that they are currently unemployed and looking for work (0.6%).

**Table 6: Employment Status**

<b>Which of the following best describes your current employment status?</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Employed or self-employed, part-time	128	20.2%
Employed or self-employed, full-time	148	23.3%
Unemployed, but looking for work	4	0.6%
Retired, not working at all	329	51.9%
Not in labor force for other reasons	25	3.9%
Missing	16	-
Total Valid	634	97.5%

#### **Care Provider for Another Adult**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they have ever provided care for another adult living in their household who needed assistance with everyday tasks. Approximately one-third of respondents (32%) reported that they have provided care for another adult living in their household – 27% did so in the past and 5% are currently providing care for another adult living in their household.

**Table 7: Care Provider for Another Adult**

<b>Have you ever provided care for another adult living in your household who needed assistance with everyday tasks?</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No	427	67.7%
In the past, but not currently	172	27.3%
Yes, I am currently providing care	32	5.1%
Missing	19	-
Total Valid	631	97.1%

**Internet Use**

Almost all respondents (92%) indicated that they use the Internet at least once every few weeks or more. Eighty-seven percent (87%) typically use the Internet daily, with 78% reporting that they typically use the Internet several times a day.

As noted earlier, 70% of the responses to this survey were received online. This may bias the result of this question and raise questions about the extent to which it may be generalizable to the broader group of individuals 55 years of age and older across the entire community. It is worth noting, for example, that 21% of the 195 respondents who completed the paper-based version of the survey report that they never go online and that the 455 respondents who completed the online version of the survey were significantly more likely than their peers ( $p < .001$ ) to report that they typically use the Internet several times a day (87% of online respondents versus 56% of paper-based respondents). This suggests that the summary statistics for this question may greatly over-estimate typical Internet use among Needham residents 55 years of age and older.

**Table 8: Typical Internet Use**

<b>How often do you typically use the Internet for things like email, getting information, paying bills, or purchasing? This includes access from home, work, a mobile device, or someplace else</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Never go online	41	6.5%
Once a month or less	7	1.1%
Once every few weeks	5	0.8%
1-2 days a week	12	1.9%
3-6 days a week	16	2.5%
About once a day	61	9.6%
Several times a day	492	77.6%
Missing	16	-
Total Valid	634	97.5%

### **Respondent Characteristics – Summary**

Survey respondents were predominantly female (67%). On average, respondents were 69 years of age – half were between 55 and 67 and half were 68 years of age or older. The majority of respondents (70%) were married or living with a partner. Almost all respondents (92%) felt that their health was good or better in comparison to their peers. Roughly half of the respondents (46%) reported that their 2015 pre-tax household income was less than \$100,000 and half (54%) indicated that it was \$100,000 or greater. Over half of the respondents (56%) were retired or outside of the workforce for other reasons. Forty-three percent (43%) are currently employed either part-time (20%) or full-time (23%). Less than 1% of respondents reported that they are currently unemployed and looking for work (0.6%). Almost all respondents (92%) indicated that they use the Internet at least once every few weeks or more.

Generalizing across the sample, the *average* respondent was a 69-year-old married female in better than average health across a wide variety of income levels with an equal chance of being inside or outside of the workforce who typically uses the Internet several times a day.

## FINDINGS – RESIDENCE IN NEEDHAM

Three questions in the survey assessed the length of time that respondents have lived in Needham, the setting in which they currently live, and the type of residence in which they currently live.

### Length of Residence in Needham

Approximately three-quarters of respondents (72%) reported that they have lived in Needham for 25 years or longer. Twelve (12%) of the responding sample has lived in Needham for less than 15 years. The largest proportion of respondents (30%) – almost one-third of the sample – indicated that they have lived in Needham for 45 years or more.

**Table 9: Length of Residence in Needham**

<b>How long have you lived in Needham?</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 5 years	35	5.5%
5-14 years	43	6.7%
15-24 years	99	15.5%
25-34 years	127	19.9%
35-44 years	141	22.1%
45 years or more	193	30.3%
Missing	12	-
<b>Total Valid</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>98.2%</b>

### Residence Setting

The vast majority of respondents (93%) reported that they are currently living in a private residence. Four percent (4%) are currently living in a Needham Housing Authority property, 2% in senior housing, and 0.6% in a long-term care facility.

**Table 10: Residence Setting**

<b>Which of the following describes the setting in which you currently live?</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Private residence	584	92.8%
Needham Housing Authority property	27	4.3%
Senior housing	14	2.2%
Long-term care facility	4	0.6%
Missing	21	-
<b>Total Valid</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>96.8%</b>

### Type of Residence

Close to eight of every ten respondents (79%) reported that they are currently living in a single family home. Eleven percent (11%) of respondents are currently living in an apartment, 7% in a condominium, and 4% in a town home or duplex.

**Table 11: Type of Residence**

In what type of home do you currently live?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Single family home	501	78.9%
Town home or duplex	23	3.6%
Apartment	70	11.0%
Condominium	41	6.5%
Missing	15	-
Total Valid	635	97.7%

As shown in the table below, 92.8% of individuals (n=581) who answered both the type of residence and residential setting question reported that they live in a private residence and 7.2% report living in public housing or some form of assisted housing (n=45).

**Type of Residence by Residential Setting**

	Private Residence	Needham Housing Authority Property	Senior Housing	Long-Term Care Facility	Total
Single family home	498	0	0	0	498
Town home or duplex	23	0	0	0	23
Apartment	23	27	13	4	67
Condominium	37	0	1	0	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>626</b>

### Residence in Needham – Summary

Approximately three-quarters of respondents (72%) reported that they have lived in Needham for 25 years or longer. One of every three respondents has lived in Needham for 45 years or more. Almost all of the respondents (93%) are currently living in a private residence with almost eight of every ten respondents reporting that they live in a single family home.

Generalizing across the sample, the *average* respondent is currently living in a private, single family home in Needham and has lived in Needham for 25 years or more.

## FINDINGS – ATTITUDES ABOUT RESIDENCE IN NEEDHAM

Four questions in the survey assessed respondents' attitudes about their residence in Needham. Respondents were asked how important it is for them to be able to live independently as they age, how they would rate Needham as a place for people to live as they age, how important it is for them to remain in Needham as they age, and how likely it is that they will remain in Needham as they age.

### Importance of Living Independently

Respondents were asked, "How important is it for you to be able to live independently in your own home as you age?" Nine out of every ten respondents (91%) reported that it is either *very important* (32%) or *extremely important* (59%) for them to be able to live independently in their home as they age. Two percent (2%) of respondents indicated that it is *not very important* or *not at all important* to them to be able to live independently in their own home as they age.

**Figure 1: Importance of Living Independently (n=626, mean = 4.47 out of 5.00)**

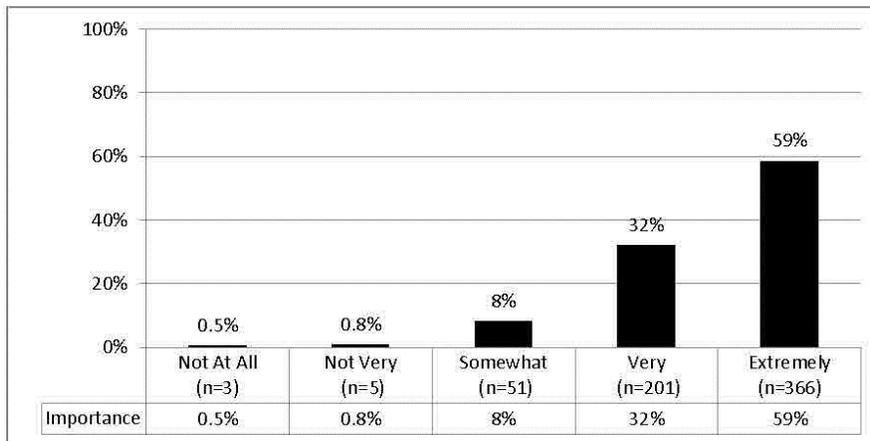


Figure Notes: A total of 626 individuals (96.3%) answered this question.

### Ratings of Needham as a Place to Live as People Age

Respondents were asked, "How would you rate Needham as a place for people to live as they age?" Eight of every ten respondents (82%) perceived Needham to be a *good* (32%), *very good* (34%), or *excellent* (17%) place for people to live as they age. Four (4%) of respondents felt that Needham was a *poor* place for people to live as they age.

**Figure 2: Needham as Senior Friendly Place to Live (n=627, mean = 3.46 out of 5.00)**

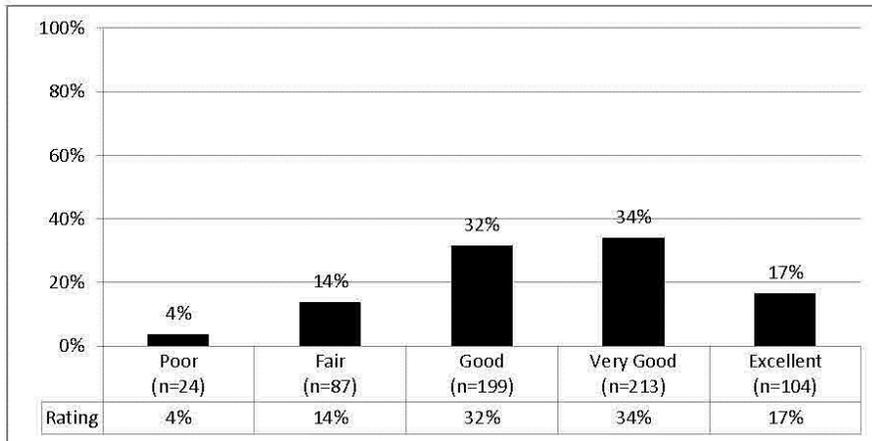


Figure Notes: A total of 627 individuals (96.5%) answered this question.

**Importance of Remaining in Needham**

Respondents were asked, “How *important* is it for you to remain in Needham as you age?” Nine of every ten respondents (93%) indicated that it is *somewhat important* (25%), *very important* (35%), or *extremely important* (33%) for them to remain in Needham as they age. Seven (7%) reported that it is *not very important* or *not at all important* for them to remain in Needham as they age.

**Figure 3: Importance of Remaining in Needham (n=626, mean = 3.92 out of 5.00)**

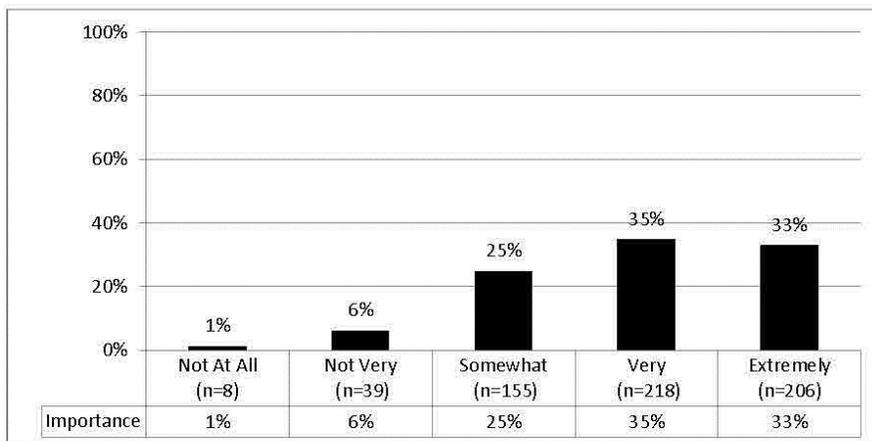


Figure Notes: A total of 626 individuals (96.3%) answered this question.

### Likelihood of Remaining in Needham

Respondents were asked, “How *likely* is it that you will remain in Needham as you age?” Nine of every ten respondents (91%) indicated that it is *somewhat likely* (24%), *very likely* (36%), or *extremely likely* (31%) that they will remain in Needham as they age. Nine (9%) reported that it is *not very likely* or *not at all likely* for them to remain in Needham as they age.

Figure 4: Likelihood of Remaining in Needham (n=623, mean = 3.86 out of 5.00)

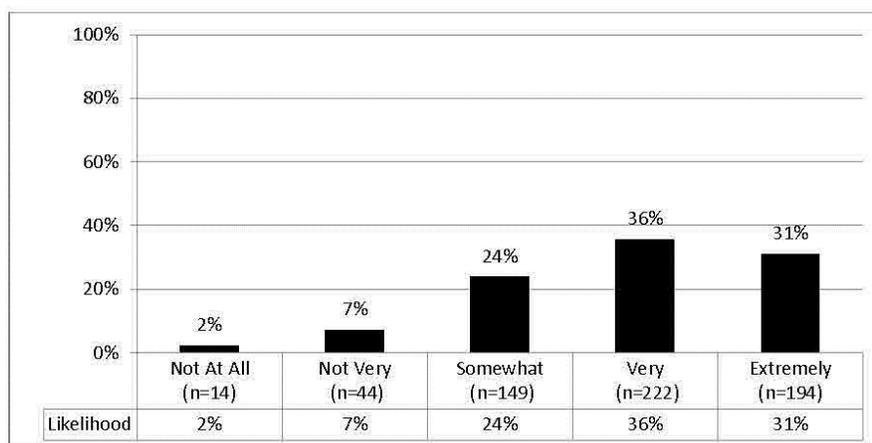


Figure Notes: A total of 623 individuals (95.8%) answered this question.

### Comparison Between Importance and Likelihood Ratings

Over half of the 621 respondents that answered both the importance and likelihood questions provided the same rating for *importance* and *likelihood* of remaining in Needham as they age (49%). Twenty-two percent (22%) provided a lower *importance* rating than *likelihood* rating – indicating that it is more *likely* that they will remain in Needham than it is *important* for them to do so (n=134). Twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents provided a higher *importance* rating than *likelihood* rating – indicating that it is more *important* for them to remain in Needham than it is *likely* that they will remain in Needham (n=135).

### Attitudes About Residence in Needham – Summary

Almost all of the respondents (91%) reported that it is *very* or *extremely important* for them to be able to live independently in their home as they age. Eighty-two percent (82%) perceive Needham to be a *good*, *very good*, or *excellent* place for people to live as they age. Over 90% of respondents feel it is *somewhat*, *very*, or *extremely important* for them to remain in Needham as they age, and an equal proportion believe it is *somewhat*, *very*, or *extremely likely* that they will do so. Twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents indicated that it was more important for them to remain in Needham as they age compared to the likelihood that they will do so (n=135).

## FINDINGS – POTENTIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISIONS TO MOVE

A series of 9 items in the survey asked respondents to identify potential factors that might influence their decision about whether or not to move out of Needham in the future.

### Potential Factors Influencing Decisions to Move

Over half of respondents indicated that *if* they were to consider moving out of Needham, the most common reasons for doing so would be: looking for a smaller home size (58%), looking for a home with services to help them live independently as they age (56%), concerns that it will be too expensive to maintain their current home (51%), and wanting to be closer to their family (50%). Approximately four of every ten respondents indicated that they would look for an area with lower costs of living (44%) or an area with more access to public transportation (42%). Comparatively fewer respondents indicated that wanting to live in a different climate (24%) or wanting to be closer to better health care facilities (23%) would impact their decision. Fourteen percent (14%) indicated fearing for their personal safety or having safety concerns.

**Table 12: Potential Factors Influencing Decisions to Move**

If you were to consider moving out of Needham, would the following factors impact your decision to move?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Looking for a smaller home size (n=557)	324	58.2%
Looking for a home with services to help you live independently as you age (n=557)	309	55.5%
It will be too expensive to maintain your current home (n=551)	283	51.4%
Wanting to be closer to family (n=555)	279	50.3%
Looking for an area with lower cost of living (n=549)	242	44.1%
Needing more access to public transportation (n=548)	232	42.3%
Wanting to live in a different climate (n=543)	128	23.6%
Wanting to be closer to better health care facilities (n=542)	127	23.4%
Fearing for your personal safety or safety concerns (n=545)	77	14.1%

Table Notes: Between 542 (83.4%) and 557 (85.7%) individuals answered these questions – average 85%.

In addition to the nine potential factors influencing decisions to move that were included in the survey, respondents had the option to write-in other factors. A total of 56 individuals (9% of all respondents) wrote-in another factor. Seventy-seven (77) discrete themes were extracted from these comments using qualitative thematic analysis. The complete list of comments and themes appears in **Appendix A**.

Respondents who chose to write-in a factor were most likely to indicate that a desire for more affordable housing options would potentially influence their decision to move out of Needham at some point in the future (2.3%). Other comments provided by five or more respondents included: wanting to find a single-floor household (1.8%); a community with lower property taxes or special property tax relief for seniors (1.2%); presence of a long-term care facility

(1.1%); availability of affordable condominiums or apartments (1.1%); the ability to downsize their current living space (0.9%); the ability to be within walking distance of services and the downtown area (0.9%); and wanting a change of scenery, lifestyle change, or to be closer to family (0.8%). See Appendix A for the complete list of comments and themes.

**Table 13: Potential Factors Influencing Decisions to Move – Write-In Responses**

<b>If you were to consider moving out of Needham, would the following factors impact your decision to move? – Other (write-ins) – See Appendix A.</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
More Affordable Housing Options	15	2.3%
Single Floor Living	12	1.8%
Lower Property Taxes	8	1.2%
Presence of a Care Facility	7	1.1%
Condo/Apartment	7	1.1%
Downsizing	6	0.9%
Walking Distance to Services	6	0.9%
Change of Scenery/Lifestyle/Closer to Family	5	0.8%
Home Maintenance/Home Services	4	0.6%
Close Services	3	0.5%
More Senior Activities	2	0.3%
Future Health Status/Death of Spouse	2	0.3%

Table Notes: The percentage column is based on the 650 survey respondents as the denominator.

**Potential Factors Influencing Decisions to Move – Summary**

Respondents indicated that *if* they were to consider moving out of Needham at some point in the future that the most common reasons for doing so would be: looking for a smaller home size (58%), looking for a home with services to help them live independently as they age (56%), and concerns that it will be too expensive to maintain their current home (51%). Approximately one of every ten respondents (9%) provided an additional write-in response – these responses tended to all be sub-themes of the factors that appeared in the survey. The most common write-in comments were: more affordable housing options (2.3%), single-floor living options (1.8%), and lower property taxes (1.2%).

## FINDINGS – HOME MODIFICATIONS

A series of items in the survey asked respondents whether or not they have made modifications to their home to enable them to stay there as they age, whether they wanted to make modifications but were not able to, and barriers to making desired home improvements.

### Existing Home Modifications

Almost half of all respondents (46%) report that they have made one or more modifications to their home to enable them to stay there as they age.

Approximately one-third of respondents (36%) reported that they have made modifications to their bathroom and one-quarter (26%) have installed improved lighting. Fewer respondents report that they have added a bedroom, bathroom, or kitchen on the first floor (12%), added a ramp or made other modifications to allow easier access into or within their home (6%), or installed a medical emergency response system (6%).

**Table 14: Existing Home Modifications**

Have you made any of the following modifications to your home to enable you to stay there as you age?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Bathroom modifications such as grab bars, handrails, a higher toilet, or non-slip tiles (n=595)	211	35.5%
Improved lighting (n=568)	146	25.7%
Added a bedroom, bathroom, and/or kitchen on the first floor (n=579)	71	12.3%
A ramp, wider doorways, chairlift, or elevator to allow easier access into or within your home (n=591)	38	6.4%
Installed a medical emergency response system that notifies others in case of an emergency (n=578)	36	6.2%

Table Notes: Between 542 (83.4%) and 557 (85.7%) individuals answered these questions – average 85%.

In addition to the five types of modifications that were included in the survey, respondents had the option to write-in other types of modifications. A total of 23 individuals (4% of all respondents) wrote-in another factor. Twenty-three (23) discrete themes were extracted from these comments using qualitative thematic analysis. The complete list of comments and themes appears in **Appendix B**.

Respondents who chose to write-in a modification were most likely to indicate that they made physical alterations to their home such as changes to doors, adding ramps, or making bathroom improvements (1.5%). Other comments provided by four or more respondents included: having recently downsized or moved to more senior-friendly housing (0.6%) and having installed or signed-up for a monitoring or security system (0.6%). See Appendix B for the complete list of comments and themes.

**Table 15: Existing Home Modifications – Write-In Responses**

Have you made any of the following modifications to your home to enable you to stay there as you age? – Other (write-ins) – See Appendix B.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Physical Alterations (doors, ramps, bathroom improvements)	10	1.5%
Downsized	4	0.6%
Monitoring/Security System	4	0.6%
Cell Phone	2	0.3%
Contract Maintenance Services	2	0.3%
Caregiver Support	1	0.2%

Table Notes: The percentage column is based on the 650 survey respondents as the denominator.

**Existing Home Modifications – Summary**

Almost half of all respondents (46%) reported that they have made one or more modifications to their home to enable them to stay there as they age. The largest proportion of respondents reported that they have made modifications to their bathroom (36%) and/or installed improved lighting (26%). Four percent of respondents (4%) provided an additional write-in response – these responses tended to all be sub-themes of the list of modifications that appeared in the survey. The most common write-in comments were: having made physical alterations to their home such as changes to doors, adding ramps, or making bathroom improvements (1.5%); having recently downsized or moved to more senior-friendly housing (0.6%); and having installed or signed-up for a monitoring or security system (0.6%).

**Barriers to Making Home Modifications**

Respondents were asked whether they wanted to make modifications to their home that they have not been able to make.

Across the respondent sample, 83% indicated that they did *not* want to make any modifications to their home that they were not able to make. One-hundred and two (102) respondents (17%) indicated that they were not able to make the modifications that they *wanted* to make.

Four percent of respondents (4%) of respondents reported that the reason they have not been able to make desired modifications is that they don't own the property and are not allowed to make modifications. Thirteen percent of respondents (13%) identified another barrier to being able to make their desired modifications. See Figure 5.

There were several instances in which it appears that respondents were confused by the manner in which these questions were presented. In these instances, respondents indicated that they did not want to make any modifications to their home but then went on to note that they don't own the residence or that there were other barriers to making modifications. This was handled by prioritizing their initial answer to Question #18, "Have you *wanted* to make modifications to your home, but weren't able to?" If respondents answered "No" to this question, any of the barriers they cited in subsequent items were assigned to missing. The

rationale for this change is that the analysis is intended to represent those that *want* to make modifications independent of their ability to do so. If they don't have an interest in making changes, the presence or absence of potential barriers is not applicable at this point in time. If this survey is repeated in Needham or replicated in another community, attention should be paid to examining how to modify Question #18 and #19 to reduce the potential for error.

**Figure 5: Barriers to Making Home Modifications**

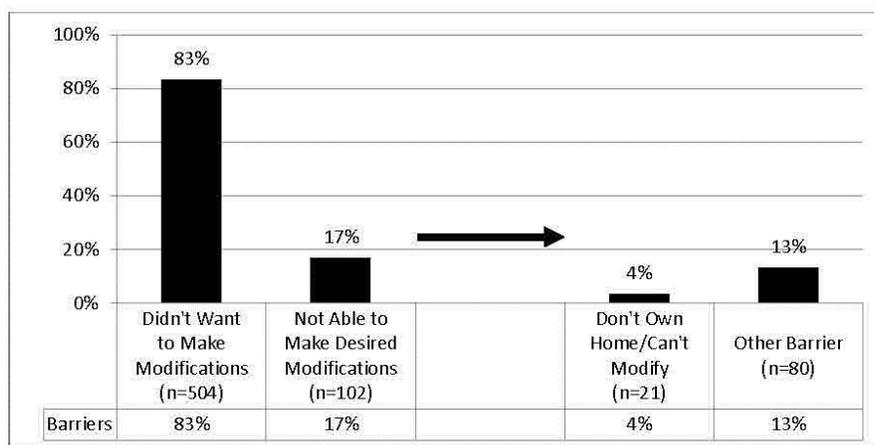


Figure Notes: A total of 606 individuals (93.2%) answered this question.

Among the individuals who wanted to make home improvements yet cited barriers other than not owning the residence (n=80), the largest proportion identified the cost of the modification as being a barrier (10% of all respondents). Other barriers to making desired improvements were: architecture of the home (7%), building codes (3%), finding a contractor (2%), and zoning codes (2%).

**Table 16: Barriers to Making Home Modifications**

If you were not able to make modifications to your home, what has prevented you from making these changes?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Cost of the modification	61	10.1%
Architecture of the home	40	6.6%
Building codes	17	2.8%
Finding a contractor	14	2.3%
Zoning codes	13	2.1%

Table Notes: A total of 606 individuals (93.2%) answered these questions.

In addition to the five types potential barriers that were included in the survey, respondents had the option to write-in other barriers. A total of 5 individuals (0.8% of all respondents)

wrote-in another barrier. Five (5) discrete themes were extracted from these comments using qualitative thematic analysis. The complete list of comments/themes appears in **Appendix C**.

Respondents who chose to write-in a barrier were most likely to identify expense as the barrier (0.5%). The two additional respondents cited time (0.2%) and property lines (0.2%) as barriers to making desired home improvements. See Appendix C for the complete list of comments and themes.

**Table 17: Barriers to Making Home Modifications – Write-In Responses**

<b>If you were not able to make modifications to your home, what has prevented you from making these changes? – Other (write-ins) – See Appendix C.</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Expense	3	0.5%
Time	1	0.2%
Property lines (setback requirements)	1	0.2%

Table Notes: The percentage column is based on the 650 survey respondents as the denominator.

**Barriers to Making Home Modifications – Summary**

Across the respondent sample, seventeen (17%) of respondents indicated that they were not able to make modifications to their home that they wanted to make. Among this group, 4% reported that the reason they have not been able to make modifications is that they don't own the property and are not allowed to make modifications. Thirteen percent of respondents (13%) identified another barrier to being able to make their desired modifications. Within this subset, the largest proportion of respondents cited cost (10%) and architecture of the home (7%) as barriers. Few respondents cited a barrier that was not already listed in the survey.

## FINDINGS – EXERCISE AND WALKING

Two sets of items in the survey asked about potential barriers to walking for exercise or errands.

### Potential Barriers to Walking for Exercise or Errands – Places to Rest

Respondents were asked, “Would you be more likely to walk for exercise or to get to your destinations if there were more benches on your walking route?” Five-hundred and ninety (590) individuals answered this question (90.8% of all survey respondents).

One-third of respondents (37%) indicated that they *would* be more likely to walk for exercise or to get to their destination if there were more benches on their walking route.

### Potential Barriers to Walking for Exercise or Errands – Crossing the Street

Half of the respondents (49.9%) indicated that they have trouble crossing the street when walking for at least one reason (n=308). Respondents were most likely to identify not having enough time on the traffic light (22%), followed by not having crosswalks where they need them (21%), fear that turning cars won’t see them crossing the street (18%), and not having traffic lights where they need them (11%).

**Table 18: Potential Barriers to Walking for Exercise or Errands**

<b>When walking, do you have any trouble crossing the street for the following reasons?</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not enough time on the traffic light	137	22.2%
No crosswalks where you need them	128	20.7%
Turning cars do not see you	109	17.7%
No traffic lights where you need them	69	11.2%
Missing	33	-
Total Valid	617	94.9%

In addition to the four potential barriers that were included in the survey, respondents had the option to write-in other barriers. A total of 65 individuals (10% of all respondents) wrote-in another barrier. Ninety-eight (98) discrete themes were extracted from these comments using qualitative thematic analysis. The complete list of comments/themes appears in **Appendix D**.

Respondents who chose to write-in a barrier were most likely to indicate that drivers do not stop at crosswalks (2.8% of all respondents). Five or more respondents also identified: drivers who are hurried, distracted, or on cell phones (2.0%); not enough sidewalks the further you get from the center of town (1.8%); the poor condition of many sidewalks (1.7%); speeding drivers (0.9%); poor visibility and inadequate lighting near several crosswalks (0.9%); and the feeling that there is too much traffic in town (0.8%). See Appendix D for the complete list of comments and themes.

**Table 19: Potential Barriers to Walking for Exercise or Errands – Write-In Responses**

<b>When walking, do you have any trouble crossing the street for the following reasons? – Other (write-ins) – See Appendix D.</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Drivers don't stop at crosswalks	18	2.8%
Hurried drivers/Distracted Drivers/Cell Phone Use	13	2.0%
Not enough sidewalks	12	1.8%
Sidewalk condition	11	1.7%
Speeding	6	0.9%
Poor visibility/Inadequate Lighting	6	0.9%
Too much traffic in town	5	0.8%
Traffic lights too short	3	0.5%
More signage/painted crosswalks	3	0.5%
Sidewalk obstructions (bushes, construction equipment, snow)	3	0.5%
Great Plain Avenue	2	0.3%
Highland Avenue	2	0.3%
Hillside Avenue	2	0.3%
More audible crosswalk signals	1	0.2%
Bicyclists not yielding right of way	1	0.2%
Handicap ramp condition	1	0.2%
Right turn on red through crosswalk	1	0.2%
Long wait times for traffic light	1	0.2%
Center of town	1	0.2%
Central Avenue	1	0.2%
Grant Street	1	0.2%
Green Street	1	0.2%
Route 135	1	0.2%
The Farm House	1	0.2%
More crosswalks needed	1	0.2%

Table Notes: The percentage column is based on the 650 survey respondents as the denominator.

**Potential Barriers to Walking for Exercise or Errands – Summary**

One-third of respondents (37%) indicated that they *would* be more likely to walk for exercise or to get to their destination if there were more benches on their walking route. Half of the respondents (49.9%) indicated that they have trouble crossing the street when walking for at least one reason. Respondents were most likely to identify not having enough time on the traffic light (22%), followed by not having crosswalks where they need them (21%), fear that turning cars won't see them crossing the street (18%), and not having traffic lights where they need them (11%). The most common write-in responses for this question were: drivers don't stop at crosswalks (2.8%); drivers are hurried, distracted, or on cell phones (2.0%); not enough sidewalks the further you get from the center of town (1.8%); and the poor condition of many sidewalks (1.7%).

## FINDINGS – COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of having eight different infrastructure elements in their community.

### Perceived Importance of Community Infrastructure Elements

Over three-quarters of respondents indicated that it was either *moderately important* or *very important* to have each of these infrastructure elements in their community: sidewalks that are in good condition, free from obstruction, and accessible for wheelchairs or walkers (96%); well-maintained public buildings and facilities that are accessible to people of different physical abilities (92%); bus or shuttle service for older residents (89%); well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities (88%); well-maintained and safe parks that are within walking distance of their home (85%); public parks with enough benches (82%); separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians (81%); and benches in other public places such as shopping and business districts (79%).

**Table 20: Perceived Importance of Community Infrastructure Elements**

How important do you think it is to have the following in your community?	Not	Slightly	Moderately	Very
Sidewalks that are in good condition, free from obstruction, and are accessible for wheelchairs or walkers	1.5% (9)	2.9% (17)	17.8% (106)	77.9% (464)
Well-maintained public buildings and facilities that are accessible to people of different physical abilities	2.2% (13)	5.9% (35)	22.3% (132)	69.6% (413)
Bus or shuttle service for older residents	2.5% (15)	8.3% (49)	27.7% (163)	61.5% (362)
Well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities	2.6% (15)	9.2% (54)	25.4% (149)	62.8% (368)
Well-maintained and safe parks that are within walking distance of your home	4.2% (25)	11.0% (65)	34.9% (206)	49.9% (295)
Public parks with enough benches	4.1% (24)	13.7% (80)	38.5% (224)	43.6% (254)
Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians	6.8% (40)	12.6% (74)	30.6% (179)	49.9% (292)
Benches in other public places such as shopping and business districts	5.6% (33)	15.6% (91)	35.6% (208)	43.2% (253)

Table Notes: Between 582 (89.5%) and 593 (91.2%) individuals answered these questions – average 91%.

Figure 6 presents these data visually by charting the mean score (average) for each item. Mean scores range from a low of 1.00 (Not Important) to a high of 4.00 (Very Important). As shown in the figure, the mean score for all eight items fell between the *moderately important* and *very important* points on the scale. The most important element was having sidewalks that are in

good condition, free from obstruction, and are accessible for wheelchairs or walkers (mean = 3.72 out of 4.00). The least important element (comparatively) was having benches in other public places such as shopping and business districts (mean = 3.16 out of 4.00). It is important to note that even among this least important item that 79% of respondents indicated that having benches in other public places such as shopping and business districts was *moderately important* or *very important* to them.

**Figure 6: Perceived Importance of Community Infrastructure Elements (Mean Scores)**

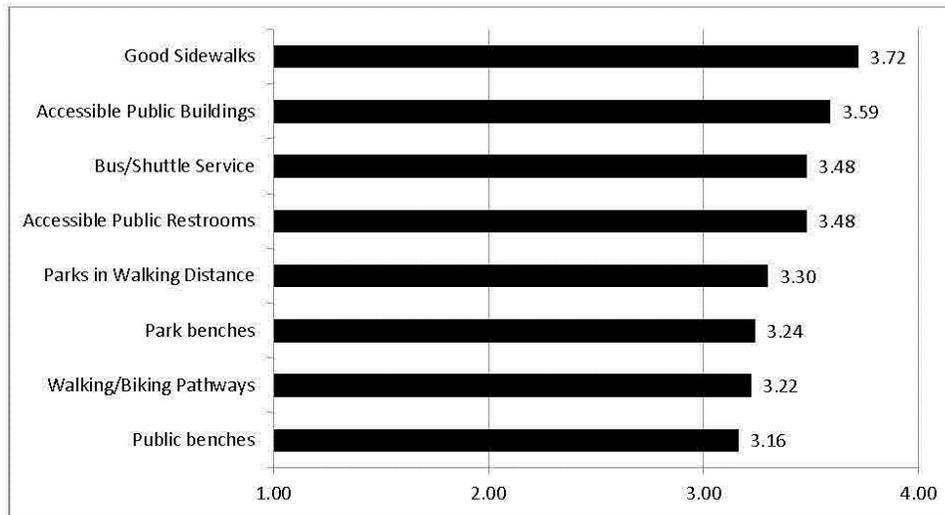


Figure Notes: Mean scores range from a low of 1.00 (Not Important) to a high of 4.00 (Very Important).

In addition to the eight community infrastructure elements that were included in the survey, respondents had the option to write-in other important community infrastructure elements. A total of 25 individuals (4% of all respondents) wrote-in another community infrastructure element. Thirty (30) discrete themes were extracted from these comments using qualitative thematic analysis. The complete list of comments/themes appears in **Appendix E**.

Respondents who chose to write-in a different community infrastructure element were most likely to identify sidewalks in good condition and unobstructed (1.1%). Two or more respondents also identified: better street lighting (0.5%); more enforcement of traffic laws (0.5%); pedestrian-friendly improvements (0.3%); more access to restrooms (0.3%); and more audio crosswalks (0.3%). See Appendix E for the complete list of comments and themes.

**Table 21: Perceived Importance of Community Infrastructure Elements – Write-Ins**

How important do you think it is to have the following in your community? – Other (write-ins) – See Appendix E.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Sidewalks (good condition; unobstructed)	7	1.1%
Street lighting	3	0.5%
Traffic enforcement	3	0.5%
Pedestrian-friendly (bike-free sidewalks; right of way)	2	0.3%
Business restrooms/Handicap restrooms (higher toilets)	2	0.3%
Audio crosswalks	2	0.3%
Caring community	1	0.2%
Community activities	1	0.2%
Convenient mailboxes	1	0.2%
Great senior center	1	0.2%
Heating at Center at the Heights	1	0.2%
Less traffic in town	1	0.2%
MBTA parking (snow removal)	1	0.2%
More bus routes/Accessible public transportation	1	0.2%
Service with vetted contractors	1	0.2%
Taxi vouchers	1	0.2%
Store-front benches	1	0.2%

Table Notes: The percentage column is based on the 650 survey respondents as the denominator.

**Perceived Importance of Community Infrastructure Elements – Summary**

Over three-quarters of respondents indicated that it was either *moderately important* or *very important* to have the following community infrastructure elements: sidewalks that are in good condition, free from obstruction, and accessible for wheelchairs or walkers (96%); well-maintained public buildings and facilities that are accessible to people of different physical abilities (92%); bus or shuttle service for older residents (89%); well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities (88%); well-maintained and safe parks that are within walking distance of their home (85%); public parks with enough benches (82%); separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians (81%); and benches in other public places such as shopping and business districts (79%). Write-in comments tended to be sub-themes of the items that already appeared in the survey.

## FINDINGS – CURRENT TRANSPORTATION METHODS

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they currently use seven different modes of transportation to get around Needham.

### Current Transportation Methods

Respondents were most likely to report that they *sometimes* or *often* drive themselves (93%), walk (74%), have others drive them (28%), or ride a bike (20%). Comparatively fewer respondents report that they *sometimes* or *often* use a public bus or shuttle (9%), take a taxi or cab (8%), or use a special transportation service (6%).

The response rate for these items varied from 83% to 91%. Several respondents answered the question about driving themselves and did not answer any of the other items in the list. Given this, it is possible that the summary statistics for other methods of transportation on the list may be over-estimates under the assumption that these individuals only drive themselves and saw no need to respond to the other questions in the list.

**Table 22: Current Transportation Methods**

How often do you currently use the following ways to get yourself around Needham for trips like shopping, visiting the doctor, visiting friends, and running errands?				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Drive yourself	5.2% (31)	1.3% (8)	2.7% (16)	90.7% (539)
Walk	10.1% (56)	16.4% (91)	45.8% (254)	27.7% (154)
Have others drive you	42.2% (227)	29.4% (158)	20.4% (110)	8.0% (43)
Ride a bike	59.3% (318)	20.7% (111)	15.5% (83)	4.5% (24)
Use public bus or shuttle	71.8% (389)	18.8% (102)	7.4% (40)	2.0% (11)
Take a taxi or cab	71.9% (386)	19.7% (106)	7.4% (40)	0.9% (5)
Special transportation service, such as one for seniors or persons with disabilities	89.0% (477)	5.0% (27)	3.4% (18)	2.6% (14)

Table Notes: Between 536 (82.5%) and 594 (91.4%) individuals answered these questions – average 84%.

Figure 7 presents these data visually by charting the mean score (average) for each item. Mean scores range from a low of 1.00 (Never) to a high of 4.00 (Very Often). The most frequent method of transportation was driving (mean = 3.79 out of 4.00). The least frequent method of transportation was a special transportation service (mean = 1.20 out of 4.00).

Figure 7: Current Transportation Methods (Mean Scores)

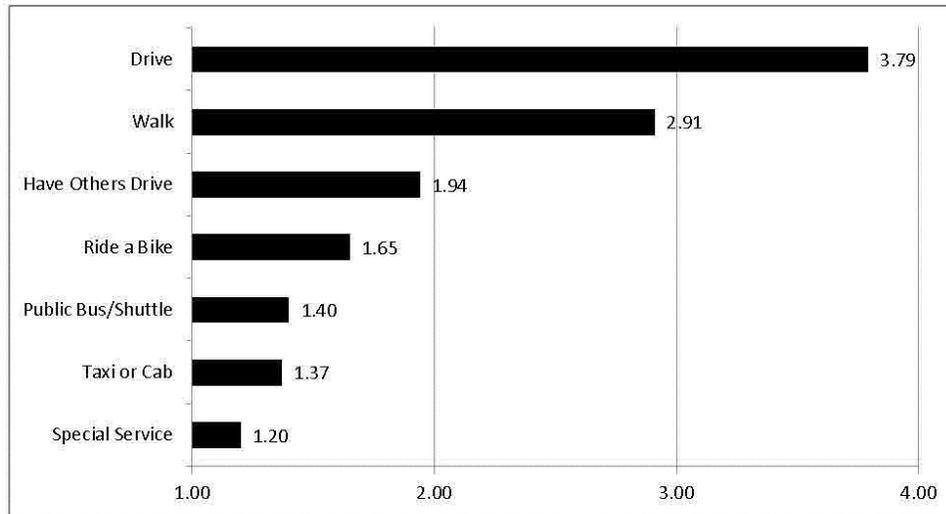


Figure Notes: Mean scores range from a low of 1.00 (Never) to a high of 4.00 (Very Often).

In addition to the seven transportation methods that were included in the survey, respondents had the option to write-in other methods. A total of 10 individuals (2% of all respondents) wrote-in another transportation method. Twelve (12) discrete themes were extracted from these comments using qualitative thematic analysis. The complete list of comments/themes appears in Appendix F. All of the write-in comments were variations of existing survey items.

Table 23: Current Transportation Methods – Write-In Responses

How often do you currently use the following ways to get yourself around Needham for trips like shopping, visiting the doctor, visiting friends, and running errands? – Other (write-ins) – See Appendix F.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Public transportation (train, public bus)	5	0.8%
Special Services (e.g., Council on Aging van)	4	0.6%
Taxi or cab	2	0.3%
Drive	1	0.2%

Table Notes: The percentage column is based on the 650 survey respondents as the denominator.

**Current Transportation Methods – Summary**

Respondents were most likely to report that they *sometimes* or *often* drive themselves (93%), walk (74%), have others drive them (28%), or ride a bike (20%). Comparatively fewer respondents report that they *sometimes* or *often* use a public bus or shuttle (9%), take a taxi or cab (8%), or use a special transportation service (6%). Write-in comments tended to be identical to the items that already appeared in the survey.

## FINDINGS – TRANSPORTATION METHODS AS RESPONDENTS AGE

Respondents were asked to indicate how important it is for them to be able to get around Needham using seven different modes of transportation as they age.

### Importance of Different Transportation Methods in Future

The largest proportion of respondents reported that it is *moderately important* or *very important* for them to be able to drive themselves as they age (94%), have others drive them (83%), use a public bus or shuttle (62%), walk (62%), use a special transportation service (57%), take a taxi or cab (39%), and ride a bike (24%).

The response rate for these items varied from 80% to 90%. As with the previous set of items, several respondents answered the question about driving themselves and did not answer any of the other items in the list. Given this, it is possible that the summary statistics for other methods of transportation on the list may be over-estimates under the assumption that these individuals only intend drive themselves as they age and saw no need to respond to the other questions in the list.

**Table 24: Importance of Different Transportation Methods in Future**

<b>As you age, how important is it for you to be able to get yourself around Needham in the following ways?</b>				
	<b>Not</b>	<b>Slightly</b>	<b>Moderately</b>	<b>Very</b>
Drive yourself	4.3% (25)	1.4% (8)	15.5% (91)	78.9% (463)
Have others drive you	6.9% (38)	9.8% (54)	28.1% (155)	55.3% (305)
Use public bus or shuttle	17.3% (95)	21.2% (116)	31.2% (171)	30.3% (166)
Walk	11.3% (60)	26.8% (142)	38.6% (204)	23.3% (123)
Special transportation service, such as one for seniors or persons with disabilities	20.7% (109)	22.0% (116)	24.7% (130)	32.6% (172)
Take a taxi or cab	30.6% (159)	30.6% (159)	26.3% (137)	12.5% (65)
Ride a bike	60.9% (318)	15.1% (79)	14.8% (77)	9.2% (48)

Table Notes: Between 520 (80.0%) and 587 (90.3%) individuals answered these questions – average 83%.

Figure 8 presents these data visually by charting the mean score (average) for each item. Mean scores range from a low of 1.00 (Not Important) to a high of 4.00 (Very Important). The most important method of transportation in the future was driving (mean = 3.69 out of 4.00). The least important method of transportation in the future was biking (mean = 1.72 out of 4.00).

**Figure 8: Importance of Different Transportation Methods (Mean Scores)**

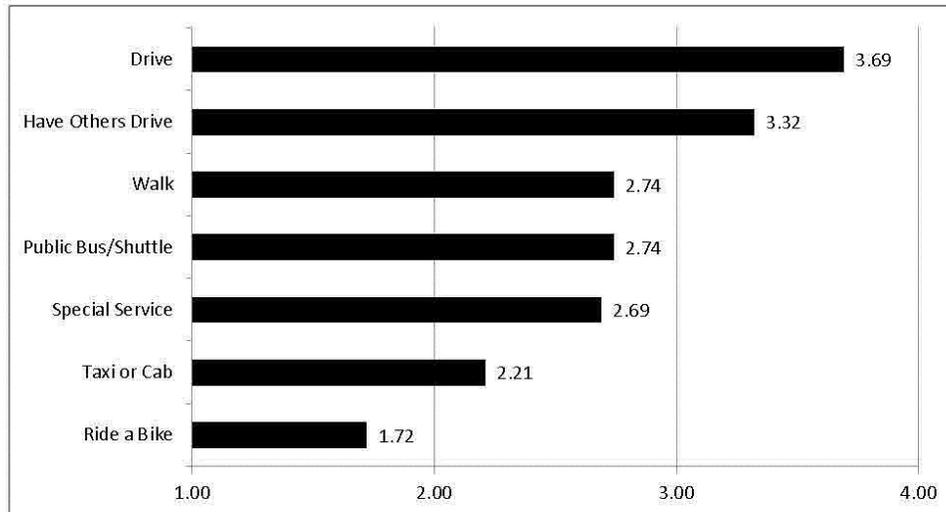


Figure Notes: Mean scores range from a low of 1.00 (Not Important) to a high of 4.00 (Very Important).

In addition to the seven transportation methods that were included in the survey, respondents had the option to write-in other methods. A total of 9 individuals (1% of all respondents) wrote-in another transportation method. Nine (9) discrete themes were extracted from these comments using qualitative thematic analysis. The complete list of comments/themes appears in **Appendix G**. All of the write-in comments were variations of existing survey items.

**Table 25: Importance of Different Transportation Methods – Write-In Responses**

As you age, how important is it for you to be able to get yourself around Needham in the following ways? – Other (write-ins) – See Appendix G.		
	Frequency	Percentage
Transportation options for seniors	5	0.8%
More accessible van access	2	0.3%
Mini bus	1	0.2%
Ride share	1	0.2%

Table Notes: The percentage column is based on the 650 survey respondents as the denominator.

**Importance of Different Transportation Methods in Future – Summary**

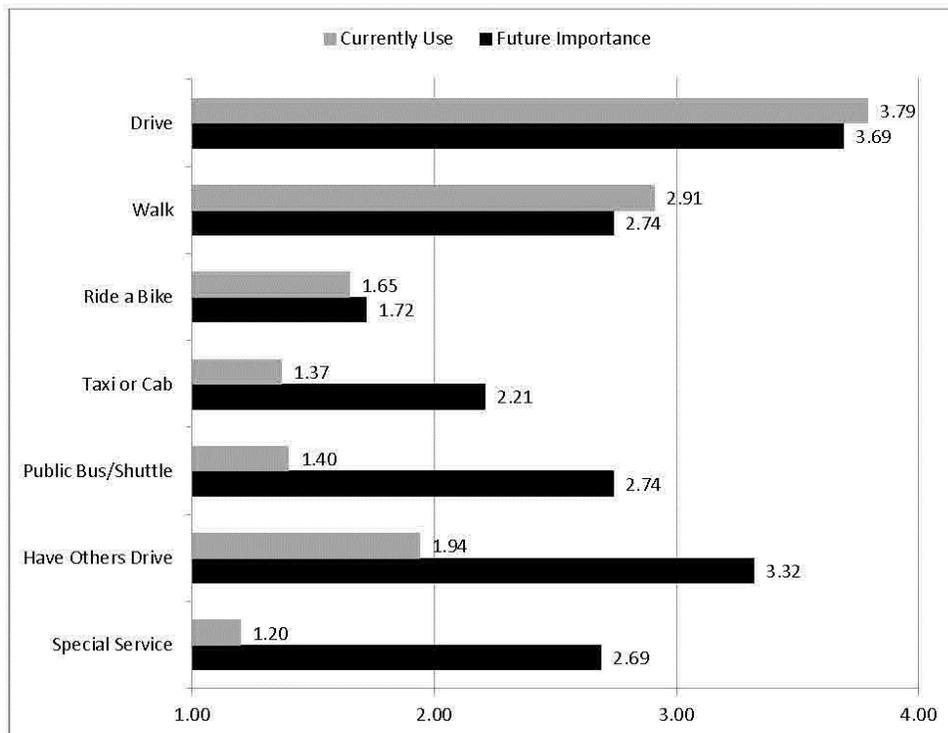
The largest proportion of respondents reported that it is *moderately important* or *very important* for them to be able to drive themselves as they age (94%), have others drive them (83%), use a public bus or shuttle (62%), walk (62%), use a special transportation service (57%), take a taxi or cab (39%), and ride a bike (24%). Write-in comments tended to be identical to the items that already appeared in the survey.

**Comparison – Current Methods Versus Importance of Future Methods**

Figure 9 compares the frequency with which people currently use different methods of transportation for getting around Needham compared to the degree of importance they place on each of these different methods of transportation in the future as they age.

Ratings for driving, walking, and riding a bike were similar with respect to how often people report that they currently use these methods and the importance that they place on each in the future as they age. Respondents placed higher importance on being able to take a taxi or cab, use a public bus/shuttle, have others drive them, and using a special transportation service in the future compared to their current use of these different methods of transportation. This was particularly the case for using a special transportation service in the future.

**Figure 9: Current Versus Future Methods (Mean Scores)**



## FINDINGS – ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Respondents were invited to provide additional comments – 150 respondents (23%) provided at least one comment. Qualitative thematic analysis extracted 247 discrete themes.

Respondents were most likely to comment on the need for additional transportation options for seniors (6%), and the need for more affordable housing options for seniors (6%). The complete list of themes/comments appears in Appendix H.

<b>Additional Comments (write-ins) – See Appendix H.</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Additional transportation options for seniors	41	6.3%
Affordable housing	39	6.0%
More condos/apartments	21	3.2%
Undesirable construction priorities (too many tear-downs)	17	2.6%
Positive comments about Needham elderly services	15	2.3%
Sidewalk condition	15	2.3%
More downsizing options	11	1.7%
Lower/reduce property taxes for seniors	11	1.7%
Stricter traffic enforcement	6	0.9%
More single-floor housing stock	6	0.9%
More senior activities	5	0.8%
Group housing	4	0.6%
More street lighting	4	0.6%
Restrictive building codes and zoning bylaws	4	0.6%
Upgrades/modification to Needham Housing units	4	0.6%
High cost of living	3	0.5%
Crosswalks – better signage/painting	3	0.5%
More benches	3	0.5%
More downtown housing	3	0.5%
Don't prohibit tear-downs and lower real estate values	3	0.5%
Issues with the Senior Center	3	0.5%
Bike path	2	0.3%
In-home services	2	0.3%
Meals on Wheels	2	0.3%
Ride/car sharing	2	0.3%
Audio crosswalks	1	0.2%
More traffic lights	1	0.2%
Helper Program	1	0.2%
More public restrooms	1	0.2%
Invest in youth	1	0.2%
Outdoor walking track	1	0.2%
List of vetted contractors	1	0.2%
Pet-friendly housing	1	0.2%

**APPENDIX A: POTENTIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISIONS TO MOVE – OTHER RESPONSES**

**Question #16j:** If you were to consider moving out of Needham, would the following factors impact your decision to move?

**Response:** 56 Individuals Commented (9% of all respondents): 77 discrete themes were extracted.

Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Affordable	Maintenance	Condo	Affordable condo so outdoor and building maintenance not my responsibility.
Affordable	Condo		Affordable Condo.
Affordable	Condo		Affordable condo in Needham.
Affordable	Downsizing		Looking for a small, affordable house.
Affordable	Downsizing		Smaller single family affordable home in Needham.
Affordable	Care Facility		Would want elder apartment, affordable rent.
Affordable	Care Facility		Looking more suitable/lower cost/long term option.
Affordable	Single Floor		Affordable one floor living.
Affordable	Single Floor		Finding a single story affordable home.
Affordable			Affordable housing.
Affordable			Affordable rent.
Affordable			High cost of Needham housing.
Affordable			Price relative to size we would like is not available in Needham due to builders taking all the inventory.
Affordable			Looking for a town in the Metro West area with lower real estate cost.
Affordable			Remaining where I am now unless rent keeps going up.
Bigger Kitchen			Bigger kitchen footage to perform healthy diet. Very little work area now.
Care Facility			Care facility.
Care Facility			Care facility.
Care Facility			Availability of long-term care facility.
Care Facility			Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) nearby.
Change of Scenery			Change it up after 35-40 years.
Close Services	Condo		Condo close to town, food store, library.
Home Services			Community with more services to come into my home.
Condo	Walking Distance	Single Floor	Will want a condo. Home without stairs; walking distance to stores, restaurants, etc.
Condo	Apartment		Condo or apartment.
Death of Spouse			Death of spouse.
Downsizing	Close Services	Single Floor	Moving to another home within the town that is smaller, one level and closer to the center - stores, restaurants, T, medical facilities, etc.
Downsizing			Unable to downsize.
Downsizing			Community that values keeping smaller homes to accommodate youngest and oldest citizens.
Downtown Shopping			A downtown shopping area that provides more options.
Family			What remains of family is on the west coast.

<continued below>...

APPENDIX A: Potential Factors Influencing Decisions to Move – Other Responses <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Lifestyle			Lifestyle choices when I retire.
Property Taxes			Escalating real-estate taxes due to new homes next door.
Property Taxes			Location with lower real-estate taxes.
Property Taxes			Lower assessments and taxes.
Property Taxes			Lower property taxes.
Property Taxes			Property taxes.
Property Taxes			Real estate taxes are disproportionately high for small houses in Needham.
Property Taxes			Each town must provide property tax relief to its senior citizens - they deserve nothing less! Town of Needham (as are all towns) is too greedy - cut back on other programs if necessary!!!
Property Taxes			Lower property taxes for seniors.
Maintenance			Home maintenance issues.
Maintenance			Less home maintenance.
Senior Activities			Swim activities and activities specific for seniors.
Senior Complex	Senior Activities		Looking for an over 55 complex with lots of activities.
Sense of Community			Looking for a better sense of community.
Single Floor Living	Walking Distance	Sidewalks	One floor; sidewalks, and destinations to walk to.
Single Floor Living	Downsizing		Looking for a small house on a single level.
Single Floor Living	Parking		One floor living without stairs and adjacent parking.
Single Floor Living			House or Condo on one level. No stairs.
Single Floor Living			One floor living.
Single Floor Living			One floor living.
Single Floor Living			One floor living in case of knee injuries.
Single Floor Living			Option for one floor living.
Walking Distance			Want to be able to walk more places.
Walking Distance			Wanting more walkable location for shopping, etc.

**APPENDIX B: EXISTING HOME MODIFICATIONS – OTHER RESPONSES**

**Question #17f:** Have you made any of the following modifications to your home to enable you to stay there as you age?

**Response:** 23 Individuals Commented (4% of all respondents): 23 discrete themes were extracted.

Theme	Comment
Caregiver Support	24x7 caregivers.
Cell Phone	Cell phone with quick dial.
Cell Phone	Cell phone / Jitterbug.
Contract Maintenance Services	Added support for winter-related chores.
Contract Maintenance Services	Have started to contract out some maintenance tasks, like grounds keeping during growing season.
Downsized	I moved to a small ranch house.
Downsized	Recently moved to a smaller home in Needham.
Downsized	Sold home and moved to an apartment.
Downsized	We moved from single family home to condominium with elevators (Rosemary Ridge) in past 2 years.
Monitoring/Security System	Are You Okay Program Sheriff's office.
Monitoring/Security System	Alarm system.
Monitoring/Security System	Did install a security system.
Monitoring/Security System	Wear an alert button.
Physical Alterations	Altered door handles.
Physical Alterations	Heating and Air Conditioner.
Physical Alterations	Moved laundry room to first floor.
Physical Alterations	Porch.
Physical Alterations	Railing outdoors for steps to house.
Physical Alterations	Made a ramp with wood logs, for carrying in groceries.
Physical Alterations	Removed doors for wheelchair access.
Physical Alterations	Removed tub and installed shower considering a tub may be more difficult as we age.
Physical Alterations	Shower bars.
Physical Alterations	Upstairs laundry.

**APPENDIX C: BARRIERS TO MAKING HOME IMPROVEMENTS – OTHER RESPONSES**

**Question #19g:** If you were not able to make modifications to your home, what has prevented you from making these changes?

**Response:** 5 Individuals Commented (0.8% of all respondents): 5 discrete themes were extracted.

Theme	Comment
Time	Have not applied myself yet to doing so.
Expense	Need to sell bigger house first.
Expense	Labor expenses.
Expense	In process of looking to add bed/bath/ laundry on 1st floor. May be unaffordable.
Property lines	A carport (there is no garage). Setback from neighbor's drive prevents that. There is no protection from the sun and the car gets very, very hot in the summer, and is a challenge to keep clear in the winter.

**APPENDIX D: POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO WALKING FOR EXERCISE OR ERRANDS – OTHER RESPONSES**

**Question #20e:** When walking, do you have any trouble crossing the street for the following reasons?

**Response:** 65 Individuals Commented (10% of all respondents): 98 discrete themes were extracted.

Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Audible Signals			Not enough Audible Signals - I am blind.
Bicyclists			People on bicycles who do not obey rules of road - run lights.
Distracted Drivers	Cell Phones		Drivers are distracted using their cell phones.
Distracted Drivers			Drivers do not seem to pay attention to people walking in cross walks. A vehicle making a turn has nearly hit me while in a cross walk multiple times.
Drivers Don't Stop	Cell Phones	Speeding	Drivers texting, phoning, speeding through town, failing to stop for pedestrians.
Drivers Don't Stop	Distracted Drivers		Drivers do not reliably stop at stop signs on side streets intersecting more major streets. They are on autopilot or otherwise distracted, I think.
Drivers Don't Stop	Hurried Drivers	Cell Phones	Needham drivers are impatient, drive too quickly, and ignore crosswalks. Texting is still a problem.
Drivers Don't Stop	Hurried Drivers		Drivers run the walk lights - crazy drivers in a hurry.
Drivers Don't Stop	Signage/Painting	More Lighting	Crosswalks need lighting or painted differently. At lights, get halfway across street, cars do not stop.
Drivers Don't Stop	Traffic		Steady flow of traffic, cars frequently do not stop for pedestrians.
Drivers Don't Stop			Careless drivers ignore crosswalks.
Drivers Don't Stop			Cars do not always stop at crosswalks.
Drivers Don't Stop			Cars do not stop at marked cross walks in Needham.
Drivers Don't Stop			Cars not stopping at crosswalk.
Drivers Don't Stop			Crosswalks at dangerous locations and drivers who do not slow or stop for pedestrians.
Drivers Don't Stop			Dangers of crossing at a crosswalk where drivers don't stop.
Drivers Don't Stop			Drivers in too much of a hurry to let people cross the street.
Drivers Don't Stop			Drivers NOT stopping at crosswalk.
Drivers Don't Stop			Rude stupid drivers ignoring crosswalks.
Drivers Don't Stop			There is a crosswalk that cars do not pay attention to. You risk your life crossing half the time.
Drivers Don't Stop			Too many drivers ignore pedestrian signal.
Drivers Don't Stop			Vehicles not stopping for pedestrians in crosswalk.
Ramp Condition	The Farm House		Handicap ramps need repair (e.g., in front of The Farm House).
Hurried Drivers	Cell Phones		Drivers in a hurry and self-absorbed, talking on cell phone etc.
Hurried Drivers			Crazy drivers.
Hurried Drivers			Rushing motorist who comes across when lights changing amber into red, etc.
Light too Short	Center of Town		I have noticed the walk light is too short for my 94-year-old mother in law in the center of town.
Light too Short			Lights are too short.
Light too Short			Sometimes walk signs signals at traffic lights are too short in length.
More Lighting			Only intermittent street lights on my street. It is often dark.

<continued below>...

APPENDIX D: Potential Barrier to Walking for Exercise or Errands – Other Responses <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
More lighting			Some areas do not have enough street lighting
No Sidewalks	Green Street		No sidewalk linking Green Street to South Street.
No Sidewalks			No sidewalks.
No Sidewalks			No sidewalks.
No Sidewalks			No sidewalks.
No Sidewalks			No sidewalks - the automobile rules Needham.
No Sidewalks			No sidewalks in places.
No Sidewalks			Places with no sidewalks.
No Sidewalks			There are no sidewalks on our street.
Right Turn on Red			Green light or right-on red to turn across a crosswalk while a pedestrian is crossing with cross light lit.
Sidewalk Condition	Construction Equipment		So much construction equipment in neighborhoods to knock down and rebuild homes. Sidewalks and roads not good in so many places! The equipment (trucks, backhoes) cause unsafe crossings.
Sidewalk Condition	Grant Street	More Lighting	Very uneven and broken sidewalk on northwest side of Grant Street near Dedham Avenue. Dim overhead lighting at the junction of Grant and Dedham makes it hard to see pedestrians.
Sidewalk Condition	Highland Avenue		Sidewalks on Highland Avenue need repair.
Sidewalk Condition	Hillside Avenue	No Sidewalks	Sidewalk on Hillside Ave between West and Dale is poor. No sidewalk on Dale Street.
Sidewalk Condition	No Sidewalks	Obstructions	Missing, broken, and obstructed sidewalks (especially in winter).
Sidewalk Condition	No Sidewalks		Cracked, uneven sidewalks or no sidewalks.
Sidewalk Condition	No Sidewalks		Live too far from town center...side walks out this way are not maintained or are nonexistent.
Sidewalk Condition	Obstructions		Sidewalks themselves are often in terrible condition and obstructed by bushes, etc.
Sidewalk Condition			Broken pavement.
Sidewalk Condition			Need better sidewalks!!
Sidewalk Condition			Very poor sidewalks - broken and easy to stumble or fall.
Signage/Painting	Highland Avenue		Corner of Highland and Hunnewell is treacherous. No cone to indicate pedestrian right of way.
Signage/Painting			Maintain painted crosswalks.
Speeding	Cell Phones		People in this town drive too fast and are on cell phones.
Speeding	Great Plain Ave.	No Crosswalks	Great Plain Ave. Cars travel fast and street is wide. Occasional painted crosswalk would be helpful.
Speeding	Great Plain Ave.		Speeding cars on Great Plain Ave. toward Wellesley make it difficult to cross.
Speeding			Speeding vehicles.
Speeding			The cars go too fast!
Traffic	Central Avenue		Central Ave traffic...anywhere on Central Ave!!!!
Traffic	Route 135		Intimidation by traffic when using crosswalks on rt. 135.
Traffic			Too many cars.
Traffic			Traffic.
Visibility	Hillside Avenue		Concern about visibility at Hillside Ave intersection with Rosemary & West Streets.
Visibility			Tree and homes to block sight lines.
Waiting Times			Sometimes long wait for the walk light.

**APPENDIX E: IMPORTANT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENTS – OTHER RESPONSES**

**Question #22i:** How important do you think it is to have the following in your community?

**Response:** 25 Individuals Commented (4% of all respondents): 30 discrete themes were extracted.

Theme	Theme	Comment
Bike-Free Sidewalks		Bike-free sidewalks.
Business Restrooms	Store-Front Benches	Bathrooms in front of stores. Benches up front.
Caring Community	Pedestrian Right of Way	Community ethic that cares about others and pedestrian right of way.
Community Activities		More community group walking groups to experience town's hiking trails.
Convenient Mailboxes		Mailbox near Roche Bros.
Great Senior Center		Great senior center.
Handicap Restrooms		Toilets in handicapped restrooms must be higher!!
Heating at Center at the Heights		Center at the Heights - More heat.
Less Traffic		Less traffic.
MBTA Parking (snow removal)		MBTA parking that's cleared of snow and ice in the winter.
More Bus Routes		Easier access to public transportation and more bus routes.
Service with Vetted Contractors		Newton, Wellesley, a Beacon Hill have a central service (w/annual fee) for obtaining vetted services.
Sidewalks	Audio Crosswalks	Good sidewalks and cross lights with audio.
Sidewalks	Traffic Enforcement	I think the police department fails badly and should be ashamed for not making sure the sidewalks are clear. There are many places where cars in driveways block sidewalks because the families have too little space and/or the cars are too large.
Sidewalks		Condition of sidewalk and roadway pavement is often un-walkable - should be kept up.
Sidewalks		Responsiveness by town to citizen calls about dangerously cracked sidewalks and walkways!
Sidewalks		Sidewalks on the side streets need updating in the town center.
Sidewalks		Sidewalks period.
Sidewalks		Sidewalks where there are none.
Street Lighting		Better lighting along sidewalks on Harris Avenue.
Street Lighting		Lighting.
Street Lighting		Well-lit streets.
Taxi Vouchers		Cab vouchers for people who need affordable transportation.
Traffic Enforcement	Audio Crosswalks	Traffic light bells - more police oversight - speeding, running red lights, etc.
Traffic Enforcement		Police presence to catch and fine drivers who fail to stop for red lights, turn on red when not allowed, fail to stop for pedestrians, go too fast through town, etc.

**APPENDIX F: CURRENT TRANSPORTATION METHODS – OTHER RESPONSES**

**Question #23h:** How often do you currently use the following ways to get yourself around Needham for trips like shopping, visiting the doctor, visiting friends, and running errands?

**Response:** 10 Individuals Commented (2% of all respondents): 12 discrete themes were extracted.

Theme	Theme	Comment
Drive		Drive to full-time job.
Public transportation		I sometimes take the train between Senior Center and my house.
Public transportation	Taxi or Cab	I use public bus or shuttle and UBER traveling outside of Needham.
Public transportation		The bus – I use the #59 to get to T.
Public transportation	Taxi or Cab	Take cab or bus.
Public transportation		Train to Boston regularly.
Special service		Council on Aging van.
Special service		I use the Senior Van and also use Needham Community Council services.
Special service		Town bus (senior) for doctor appointments and food shopping.
Special service		Use transportation service for my mom who lives with me.

**APPENDIX G: IMPORTANCE OF FUTURE TRANSPORTATION METHODS – OTHER RESPONSES**

**Question #24h:** As you age, how important is it for you to be able to get around Needham in the following ways?

**Response:** 9 Individuals Commented (1% of all respondents); 9 discrete themes were extracted.

Theme	Comment
Mini Bus	Bring back the mini bus.
Ride Share	Ride share service.
Senior Transport	I think the senior center should provide transportation to doctor appointments.
Senior Transport	Much more use of shuttles, etc. Depends on routes and cost.
Senior Transport	Regular rides and pick-ups from the train and subway stations.
Senior Transport	Town bus for seniors.
Senior Transport	Transportation that is free or very low cost.
Van Access	Can't use the steps (on van).
Van Access	Each town should provide wheelchair van for its handicapped residents for purposes of medical appointments, etc.

**APPENDIX H: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

**Question #25:** Please use the space below to share any additional comments.

**Response:** 150 Individuals Commented (23% of all respondents): 247 discrete themes were extracted.

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Affordable	Downsize	Condo/Apts	Construction Priorities	Seniors looking to downsize cannot find condos with 2-bedrooms and bathrooms that are new and affordable. Developers should consider building two smaller units instead of 4-bedroom, 4-bath with large common areas for \$995,000. I would like to see 2 units instead for \$500,000 each. Thank you for advocating for seniors.
Affordable	Downsize	Construction Priorities	Condo/Apts	We will eventually need to sell and leave our large home and property but will probably have to leave Needham as there are no smaller affordable homes and especially no affordable condos or town houses in the town. Needham appears to be becoming a town for two-income professionals; not necessarily a bad thing, but the needs of seniors and lower-income residents are being overshadowed. The tear-down craze shows no evidence of slowing down and the town is showing no diversity of architecture anymore but cookie-cutter homes on lots that are way too small. Having the commuter rail come to Needham is great and we use it a great deal to go into Boston for concerts, museums, and shopping. The senior rate fee is very affordable.
Affordable	Downsize	Construction Priorities		My main concern currently is how we might downsize in this community, given the prevailing trend of small homes being razed to accommodate new construction of 4000- 6000 sq. ft. houses. Given the shortage of smaller homes, most of our friends who have already downsized have moved out of town. While we would prefer to remain in Needham, we are, sad to say, probably going to be forced to follow that option. Needham has yet to consider the needs of all of its citizens. But it sure seems to be doing well with contractors and new young citizens with trust funds. I feel badly for our adult children's friends who would love to move back to Needham, but can't begin to afford to buy here. We are basically still able-bodied and value our current location since we can walk to most places we need to access in town. Would love to maintain that access as we age, so, if we can remain in town, we hope that this survey serves to support seniors being able to live and thrive here. Up to this point, Needham has been a wonderful community in which to live. Thank you for asking these questions!
Affordable	Downsize	Construction Priorities		We are looking to downsize but in Needham the cost of condominiums is prohibitive on our income and the smaller houses seemed to be gobbled up by developers to tear down and build high priced big homes. We have been looking in other communities but would rather stay in Needham where most our supports are as well as close friends and neighbors.
Affordable	Downsize	Construction Priorities		We have raised 3 great kids to adulthood and are now grandparents. We live close to town, which we LOVE, but have thoughts of downsizing. Due to the extremely high cost of even the smallest home (due to the fact that builders will pay a huge sum for these homes in order to replace them with 1 million dollar homes) ...our thoughts of downsizing close to town in the town of Needham are unattainable.

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APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Affordable	Downsize			Wish we could find a smaller place to live in Needham for the same or less money than we currently pay to live in our current home. Even renting in Needham today would be costlier per month than our current mortgage, taxes, and insurance combined currently costs us.
Affordable	Group Housing	Construction Priorities		Affordable congregate housing is totally missing from Needham. Soaring house prices and the building of overly large and expensive houses has made Needham a most undesirable place for those who are aging.
Affordable	Group Housing			Lower cost shared housing is probably the biggest deficit in Needham. Despite being quite well off, I can't afford North Hill. I'll therefore almost certainly move within 10 years.
Affordable	Property Taxes			Cost of housing is an issue. We recently sold our home and bought a single-level home w/garage. Had to add a great deal of money to the price we got for our former house in order to purchase the new one. Also property taxes are a real issue. Needham needs to find a way to stabilize taxes for seniors so that they are not always having to increase amount they withdraw from savings or cut in other areas in order to keep up with increasing tax bills.
Affordable	Condo/Apts	Property Taxes	Sidewalk Condition	More moderately priced condos, say \$300,000 to \$400,000. Real estate tax breaks for seniors. Maintain sidewalks in good condition to avoid falls. Needham is a great town but the lack of lower priced housing will probably force me to sell my house and move somewhere else.
Affordable	Condo/Apts	Single-Floor	Construction Priorities	I would love to stay in Needham, close to family, friends and good medical care. However, to downsize from a single family home to a condo is beyond my means with the high prices in Needham. Also, there are few, if any, affordable condos with one floor living, and small houses are taken by developers to tear down and build huge homes. Sadly, I think that I will have to leave Needham as I age.
Affordable	Condo/Apts			As I age, I am not sure I will be able to find an affordable apartment-style condo in Needham. I am very happy that Needham is for the most part a walkable community and would like us to do even better in that regard.
Affordable	Condo/Apts			It would be wonderful to have moderately priced condos for the senior citizens. I want to sell my home and go to a condo but they are too expensive.
Affordable	Condo/Apts			It would be great to see more affordable housing options for seniors, apartments or small family homes for rent. I currently rent a small house and the advantage of not having to maintain a property as I age is huge. I hope that Needham will consider more senior housing.
Affordable	Condo/Apts			There is very little affordable housing in Needham – places like Charles Court or Hamlin but with an elevator. Other independent living condos are way too expensive or low income.
Affordable	Condo/Apts			Need more low-income 55+ apartments near center of town. Thank you.
Affordable	Condo/Apts			We need affordable condominium type senior housing.
Affordable	Condo/Apts			Would really love to have more options in Needham for housing. We will definitely have to leave our home (too expensive to maintain) and will probably need to leave Needham to find an affordable condo that is very nice, but not over the top. This is sad.

APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Affordable	Single-Floor			I would love to stay in Needham. I would love to buy a relatively new (built after 1990) small house (under 2000 sq ft) on a single level/ranch, but there are none available and cost of housing and sizing is going up in unprecedented ways .... It's disheartening to say the least.
Affordable	Transportation	Group Housing	Senior Activities	A moderately priced senior living community with independent living and good transportation; 2 bd. Units and lots of social and educational activities.
Affordable	Transportation			As always, the housing situation is a major issue - affordable housing is an oxymoron in this town. It does not exist. The public transportation is a joke.
Affordable	Transportation			Housing that meets senior needs is fast disappearing in Needham. Large homes with stairs and 2nd and 3rd floors are not convenient, nor affordable. Also, a bus shuttle that once ran in town should be re-instated.
Affordable	Transportation			I live with my husband who is 66 and has Parkinson's. We recently downsized from our home on Tower Ave and bought a smaller condo at Greendale Village. This addresses many of our needs because it has a first floor master suite. However, I'm very concerned about the lack of senior services especially transportation and more affordable housing going forward. As I age it will become more difficult and expensive to care for my husband at home.
Affordable	Transportation			Many seniors in Needham are on fixed incomes. Over the years, Needham's housing has become way too expensive for elders. Please preserve the very small affordable houses in town so that seniors can buy them to live in as they grow older. Also, please provide transportation that runs frequently, taking seniors to stores, to medical appointments, to social programs, etc. This will get seniors off the roads who should not be driving.
Affordable	Transportation			Needham has many seniors but needs better transportation option. Housing needs to be more affordable. Will probably move to a lower cost area within 5 years.
Affordable	Construction Priorities	Downtown Housing	Transportation	I am a senior and I have also worked with seniors for all of my professional career. The theme that consistently is voiced is that there is inadequate public transportation and inadequate options for single floor living (at an affordable price) throughout the western suburbs. Needham is not an exception. The current trend in building in this town in no way addresses these concerns and likely will contribute to less diversity in Needham (especially age). Affordable housing closer to downtown and/or public transportation (that once existed for a period of time in Needham) would maintain many seniors' ability to remain in Needham.
Affordable	Construction Priorities	Transportation		My 76-year-old father currently lives with us. Not being able to drive, when it happens, will be very difficult for him. There are many places he cannot get to using the senior shuttle, which will mean that he has to rely on me, and his world will be much more limited. Improved transportation will be the key for seniors. When our youngest child leaves college, I expect that my husband and I will leave Needham. Housing is too expensive, and smaller houses in my neighborhood (which would otherwise be ideal) are vanishing quickly. Needham has become too upscale too quickly. Once our older children are settled, we will probably choose to move to be near them - they are unlikely to return here because of the cost of housing and other factors.

APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Affordable	Construction Priorities			Sadly, with all of the building in our community, none is reasonably priced so seniors can sell their home and downsize to a condo, nor can working class families live in Needham. Builders are catering to the million-plus market and ending economic diversity in our town.
Affordable				Affordable housing is the biggest concern. Lots of seniors are on fixed incomes with no place to go. There is a shortage of senior housing here in town. Waitlists are years long.
Affordable				I am an active 61-year-old and still work full-time. My husband and I like living in Needham where we raised our college-aged son. I may retire in a few years and we are not sure if we will be able to afford to stay in Needham. Ideally we'd like to stay for a while.
Affordable				I feel that Needham should have more affordable independent housing and assisted living places that are affordable.
Affordable				I grew up in Needham but it should make more affordable housing available for retirees. It is becoming harder to afford living here and I would love to stay in town the rest of my life.
Affordable				I hope Needham gets more affordable housing. I really want to stay in Needham.
Affordable				Most seniors, middle income earners, and young families can no longer afford to live here.
Affordable				My home is close to the center of Needham so getting to where I need to go is fairly easy. What is to bad is North Hill has priced itself out of reach for people like me and it is people like me that Dr. Willgoose wanted it built for. So far I am very lucky.
Affordable				Needham needs elder housing that is affordable.
Affordable				There is a lack of affordable housing for the middle class.
Affordable				We are getting priced out at Webster Green and don't know where else in Needham has elevators as we can't do stairs. We know Chestnut Hollow has an elevator but their apartments are too small for a couple.
Affordable				One of my greatest concerns is the cost of finding a suitable place to live should I decide that I no longer wish to maintain my own single family home.
Audio Crosswalks	Sidewalk Condition	More Benches		Need good audio crossing signals, good sidewalks, more benches, and more raised markings at intersections for the blind/impaired. Atrocious sidewalks need repair here - so unsafe, especially at intersections and in the community business district in general.
Bike path	Positive Feedback			Needham does a good job with elderly services. Off street bike paths would be helpful.
Bike path				Thanks for looking into these issues. I wish there was a bike path in central Needham or a place that one could safely ride.
Crosswalk Signs/Paint	Traffic enforcement			We live at The Highlands. I frequently walk to Sudbury Farms and most of the stores in Needham Center and the Heights. There is a crosswalk at the corner of Oakland and Highland (at the corner of the High School). Very infrequently do cars stop when you are trying to cross the street. I would like to see better signage in these type of areas to allow elderly, handicapped, and the general public to cross safely.
Crosswalk Signs/Paint				Crosswalks need to be repainted in bright yellow or black and white zebra pattern. Green or red sidewalks do not stand out to drivers.

APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Downsize	Condo/Apts	Transportation	In-Home Services	Would like to see more condo options to downsize to in Needham and transportation options as I age. How about groups like on Beacon Hill to assist make aging at home feasible?
Downsize	Single-Floor			I needed to downsize from my home in Needham of 49 years due to my husband's health. I needed one-floor living, no stairs and adjacent parking. I looked in Needham for a number of years; town houses seem to prevail. In the end, I had to leave Needham to accommodate my needs. I do think stairs can be a problem for an aging population.
Downsize	Construction Priorities	Pet-friendly housing		Needham has to think about more living accommodations for its seniors. As tear-downs happen - Needham is losing their senior population. Many of my friends are leaving town to downsize. They want to stay in Needham but there aren't many options. Most of my senior friends have pets and this seems to be a challenge to find living accommodations that accommodate animals.
Downsize				Being able to downsize and stay in Needham if we choose to remain in this area. Right now we plan to stay where we are realizing that circumstances (health/physical) can change.
Downsize				Lack of smaller accessible housing for those of us who want to downsize.
Group Housing				Consider establishing private homes for the elderly (maybe 8 to 10 people) where each resident has their own room, a community kitchen etc. Group home model not a nursing home or assisted living. This way elderly can stay in Needham, have companionship etc.
Cost of Living	Property Taxes			I think cost of living in need ham - constant raising of taxes - makes it harder for seniors to stay in town. Some modification of tax burden should be allowed - not sure how, but necessary.
Cost of Living				Older Needhamites are unable to bear the increasing costs of living in this town.
Cost of Living				High expense to maintain housing.
In-Home Services	Construction Priorities			Other towns have good systems and networks of in-home care visiting and helping out so that seniors can stay at home with adequate help and be incorporated into the larger community as valued members who have something to contribute. Other towns have a healthy mix of all ages and income levels and a sense of community that respects the value that well-incorporated different ages and income levels bring to everyone's living experience. Needham is focused on attracting very rich young people who will live in McMansions and pump up the tax revenue while turning the town into a place with less green space and fewer trees than Boston (indeed less than much of Manhattan). This policy results in elderly either forced to leave or to live in houses that are falling apart because they can't afford to pay the taxes and make repairs and eat.
Property Taxes	Street lighting	Contractor List		Need better street lighting. Brighter bulbs would be such an improvement! More assistance with property taxes and discounts in downtown stores. Help with finding tradespeople available to modify the property to allow people to remain in their home.
Property Taxes	Transportation			Reduced taxes for seniors after so many years. Town shuttle bus, etc.
Property Taxes	Construction Priorities			Property taxes and the size of new homes being built to replace homes seniors might downsize to are inevitably going to change demographics. That is sad because many of us who are responsible for the excellence of the Needham community may not be able to stay here.
Property Taxes	Construction Priorities			Senior citizens are moving out of Needham due to high taxes. The large new homes are drawing in the younger crowd with children - and causing for Needham to add to the schools!!

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APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Property Taxes				I decided to sell my house when I retired because the increasing taxes and upkeep on a 90+ year old house. Just moved out of Needham to a slightly larger space with less than half the taxes.
Property Taxes				Elimination of property taxes for elderly so they can remain in their homes! Stop finding ways to spend - find ways to absolve seniors of onerous tax burdens! Southern states adopted tax relief for seniors YEARS AGO!
Property Taxes				Real estate taxes much too high.
Property Taxes				Taxes are getting very high for retirees.
Meals on Wheels				Enjoy the Meals on Wheels program.
Meals on Wheels				We need better (BETTER) meals on wheels!
More benches				Perhaps additional benches in neighborhoods. There are two along Chestnut St. Very nice!
More benches				More benches: This is an excellent idea! Start with all of Highland Ave, then Great Plain Ave.
Condo/Apts	Single-Floor			In the past year I have looked to down-size to a 2-bedroom condo (all on 1 floor) in Needham. It's been disappointing at the availability of same.
Condo/Apts	Single-Floor			Needham has been a wonderful community in which to raise our kids. The lack of senior friendly townhomes, such as those with 1st floor bedrooms where maintenance can be taken care of, means that we will likely have to leave this community that we love.
Condo/Apts	Single-Floor			Please allow building of more condos with bedroom on first floor.
Condo/Apts	Transportation			Needham needs more condos with elevators. Only two in Needham (Rosemary Ridge & Avery). Homeowners prefer to buy condo units rather than rent and need walk-to-everything locations. Cab service is terrible - have tried to get home from Newton Highlands by cab - impossible!
Condo/Apts	Construction Priorities	Transportation	Sidewalk Condition	I would be ready to sell my house and downsize except that there is no place to go. All the single level houses are being torn down, the condos/town houses are too expensive, and many don't provide snow removal. If I become unable to drive, Needham is an extremely difficult place to live. Lack of transportation is a problem. Sidewalks are uneven and often not shoveled.
Condo/Apts	Zoning Bylaws	Construction Priorities		It is very important to increase the supply of rental units and condo or townhouses so that aging residents will not have to be responsible for outdoor maintenance and maintenance of the structural elements of the unit (e.g., roof repairs). Zoning By-law needs to be amended to allow these types of developments in more areas of town, with incentives to developers for affordable units. Many other towns have made provisions for this type of housing and Needham lags behind - too much of Needham is restricted to single family residences. Multi-family housing, including 5-10 unit townhouses with an association of unit owners, will enable many aging residents to stay in Needham. This is presently discouraged by town government, either deliberately or because they do not spend enough time thinking about this type of planning.
Condo/Apts				Would like to move to a one level condo in Needham, however, there is a very small supply. There is a need for more over 55 residences, some with outdoor pools.
Condo/Apts				I spend a significant amount of time in Florida. The housing there (private condos) is easily accessible and livable. I would like to see that type of housing in Needham.

APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
More Downtown Housing	Sidewalk Condition			More housing near center. Needham is an example of much of what is wrong with single family homes in an automobile centric environment. Lively sidewalks a rarity. Read Jane Jacobs.
More Downtown Housing				Senior housing and assisted living residences should be located in the center of town, not on the outskirts as most currently are.
More Traffic Lights	Positive Feedback			Needham Heights is very good for providing frequent benches. Need a traffic light at the corner of Highland Avenue and Hunnewell Street.
Helper Program	Positive Feedback			Needham has a great deal to offer seniors through the Community Council (provided medical equipment for my mother and father-in-law), senior programs (the center has many things to offer), and good medical care in town. Having grown up here and returned, I don't see any reason to leave as we age. I don't know if there is a way to match seniors up with those interested in helping them with daily tasks such as food shopping, mowing lawns, or even just visiting, etc. but if not, this would be ideal for residents to help other residents.
Positive Feedback				The services from the town are very impressive. Rides to doctor appointments, rides to shopping, and so many other good services and programs from the Council on Aging. Mystery Bus ride from the Exchange club of Needham and the Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners are an added plus...Enjoy them all.
Positive Feedback				The situation for older citizens seems to be improving. Good work! Keep on keeping on. Thanks.
Positive Feedback				Needham and being near the center is perfect for active retired people.
Positive Feedback				Needham is a wonderful, friendly town. I had a local police car pull up one day. I was out walking with my cane. I was coming from the library with books. He lived 2 streets over and said "Hop in, I know where you live and will drop you off!" His daughter had collected canned goods from my house for her club. He said "you were generous to her."
Positive Feedback				We have not reached the stage of needing help but hope that it is available when that happens. We are glad that Needham is concerned about its seniors as that makes it a good community.
Positive Feedback				I live at North Hill - a great community!
Positive Feedback				I enjoy the senior center.
Positive Feedback				I think Needham is doing a good job. Love the work done at Senior Center!
Positive Feedback				Senior center offers quite a lot, which I don't need to take advantage of yet, but can see that I will someday. When I fully retire, expect to take advantage of their interesting programming.
Positive Feedback				Center at the Heights offers good shuttle service.
Positive Feedback				Enjoy programming at the Center on the Heights -- films, music, talks & discussions.
Public restrooms				Often our seniors want to have an adventure, but need to know where the nearest bathroom facilities are. Such should be offered and noted.
Real Estate Value	Traffic enforcement			Traffic light timing creates severe congestion and unsafe aggressive driving in the center. Be careful about building/zoning restrictions that harm property values of older, smaller homes.
Real Estate Value				It is important to us that if we ever have to sell our house, we are able to get as much as possible for it. Local regulations and ordinances should not diminish the value of residential real estate.

APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Real Estate Value				There seems to be a small but vocal minority of people in Needham who want to restrict our ability to sell our old houses, by limiting the ability of developers to tear down and rebuild. As someone living in a 60-year-old modest ranch that will likely be a teardown when we choose to sell, if we see that there will be onerous rules regarding selling our homes, we may choose to move out of Needham early so we don't get caught and possibly lose thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars from unnecessary restrictions.
Invest in youth				I believe money should be spent on our young people, for their education, not on us seniors. Too much is already being spent on us via Medicare and Medicaid.
Restrictive Building Codes	Condo/Apts			Allowing for multigenerational homes with adaptive living conditions without penalty. Currently, the building codes do not allow for such an item. I have redesigned the first floor of my home to accommodate my aging parents. It would have been great to be able to build an apartment within my home. In contrast, it would be great to have more housing similar to North Hill. As the population in Needham ages, they should be able to age in the town, not age out.
Restrictive Building Codes	Transportation			Luckily I am financially independent, will be able to take Uber when I can't drive and pay caretakers to come in. My biggest complaint is that I can't put a separate apartment in my huge house so I could rent it out, and eventually have a caretaker live there. Although there are five two-family houses on my block that were grandfathered in, apparently at some point a single family (snob) restriction was put in. Make a zoning exception for elderly or disabled people who want to create a separate apartment with kitchen in their houses! When I moved here we had a senior shuttle, which was great. Today, it should be run Uber-style. All seniors should have smart phones. The town can donate them to poor, and students can teach them how to use them. That way the shuttle can take a flexible, on demand route.
Restrictive Building Codes	Construction Priorities			It is most distressing that housing in Needham has come to knocking down the smaller homes for seniors to live in rather than providing or allowing (through codes) homes to be rehabbed with first floor bedroom and full bath with laundry! But it seems Needham is wishing the senior population go out of town along with the middle-income home owner. Very distressing!!!!
Ride/Car Sharing	Senior Activities			Have group hiking/walking groups within town. Share automobile for needy elderly without family or income for a taxi.
Ride/Car Sharing				It would be fantastic to be able to share a car with a cooperative group of co-owners, but my insurance company will not cover this arrangement. I may not be able to afford buying/maintaining another car when my current vehicle gets too old.
Senior Center (issues)				I visited the Senior Center at the new location and I found two reasons that I'm not coming back. The stench from the bathrooms was terrible. It could be smelled from the bathrooms to other rooms. Why is there not a good cleaning service to keep bathrooms and other rooms stench free? Also, parking for seniors visiting the Center is all at the back of the building and the entrance is at the front--this is especially difficult during the winter.
Senior Center (issues)				Senior Center - Most have to keep coats on. Much too cold environment for seniors.

APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Senior Center (issues)				I think it's horrible that the senior center has no bulletin board and that it is not open on weekends. The senior center is one of the least friendly places in Needham and needs to be changed. There are no group activities for seniors near the town center; only in the Heights.
Sidewalk Condition	Outside walking track			I do a lot of walking, but am aware of many hazards on sidewalks that are crumbling or have different elevations or holes. It would be great to have an outside walking track or path that has a good surface (soft, not concrete). I use the high school track at times, but it is mostly asphalt.
Sidewalk Condition	Street lighting			Sidewalks in better condition and with better lighting.
Sidewalk condition	Traffic enforcement			I love Needham and plan to live here as long as possible. I believe the support services for the aged are very good. As someone who walks and does not drive, I would like to see improvement in the safety of sidewalks, especially in winter weather, and improved enforcement of traffic safety rules for drivers...it can be scary to walk in this town given the driving habits of some.
Sidewalk Condition	Traffic enforcement			Sidewalks in sorry state of repair, likely to trip elderly and disabled. Autos turning corners at too great a speed, too silently. Put more money into capital budget.
Sidewalk Condition				Have spoken with a senator at a community meeting months ago regarding the broken condition of sidewalks on Highland Ave between 757 Highland Ave and Rosemary street, on which I walk daily, fell once due to a break in the sidewalk. No response to my report.
Sidewalk Condition				Mount an effort to improve passage on our sidewalks.
Sidewalk Condition				Too much ice on sidewalks. Sidewalks don't get plowed properly or sanded at all.
Sidewalk Condition				I find sidewalks in the center of Needham very difficult due to the many and varied obstacles. These include signs, poles, sandwich boards, trash containers, trees, plants, parking meters which have the meters intruding into the sidewalk pathway, and merchant items for sale. I am blind, and use a cane for mobility. All of these obstacles make it very difficult for me to travel.
Sidewalk Condition				Lack of sidewalks and poorly maintained sidewalks are main concern.
Sidewalk Condition				Would like to see better cleared sidewalks in winter and to be able to use pedestrian crossing buttons without having to climb over mounds of snow.
Senior Activities				Educational programs available in housing.
Senior Activities				I think every effort should be undertaken to offer a variety of activities outside the house to encourage and allow senior citizens to socially participate, both physically and mentally.
Senior Activities				Year round pool rather than a pool for 6 weeks. A lot of money for 6 weeks.
Street lighting				No complaints. Town could perhaps improve street lighting a bit.
Street lighting				Read about the town wanting to get rid of some street lights. There isn't enough light now, so that would be a dangerous hazard.
Traffic Enforcement	Crosswalk Signs/Paint			Drivers on Highland Ave, especially at Hunnewell, often do not stop for pedestrians, and there is no marking as there is on other intersections on Highland and Great Plain Ave. This addition would help greatly – not just seniors!
Traffic Enforcement				Please use this information to help slow down cars in thickly settled areas.

APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Transportation	Positive Feedback			Overall this is a great place to live with most services that accommodate all ages. We have not experienced issues with security or ability to get around the town. One can walk or drive as needed although some people might need public transportation which used to exist, but no longer does. We are lucky to have a good hospital and many caring public services in this town.
Transportation	Sidewalk Condition			We live in an area that is about two miles from the center. As we age and drive less, it would be important to have a shuttle or bus service that goes to the different neighborhoods around town. Also, we do walk for exercise, but the sidewalk conditions are often poor and I can see that it could be a problem in the future to get around town.
Transportation	Upgrades			Shopping is very limited. Distance from Roche Brothers to Needham Heights is too far to walk especially if you are carrying items. Not possible to live in Needham and have all your needs satisfied in town. Senior housing is an embarrassment! More attention given to playing fields.
Transportation				The Center at the Heights is a blessing. Shuttle service to the Center would be important for individuals who cannot drive.
Transportation				I am always grateful that the COA provided a limo and very kind drivers who picked my mother up to take her to the Center for lunch. They came to the door and helped her as she was nearly blind. Because The Ride could not help her down the stairs we could never use that option. Available transportation with door to door help is my biggest concern as I age.
Transportation				I miss the mini bus!
Transportation				I think the senior bus service is extremely important. I recently had to give up driving and I couldn't survive so well without this service. Only family lives out of state.
Transportation				I visit the senior center for activities, movies and trips. There may come a time when I can no longer drive, so the senior center van may be a service I would use.
Transportation				I loved the minibus we had in Needham when our children were little. When I do have to give up my license a shuttle bus would help me to feel independent.
Transportation				I remember the shuttle bus in Needham long ago. That seemed like a really wonderful service, even though I did not need it myself at that time.
Transportation				It is extremely important that a shuttle bus be part of the Needham landscape for elderly and for people without licenses. The town has many wonderful facilities and should not be dependent upon cars and the occasional van rides that are available only for specific purposes.
Transportation				Why does Needham not have Veterans Taxi vouchers. All other towns have them for seniors!
Transportation				I love the train and it happens to be fairly convenient for me. However, the walk from the station entrances and the train platforms is a significant drawback.
Transportation				The issue I see my older friends struggle most with is transportation. If they cannot (or SHOULD NOT!) drive, they have very few options - The Ride is slow and expensive and you can't constantly call friends to drive you around (some of them should not be driving either!), and there is no public transportation other than the #59 bus, which has a limited route. The Senior Center and the residence facilities can cover some of this for their clients, but people who are trying to live at home have real problems.

Appendix - Needham Senior Survey on Housing and Transit (Spring 2016): B52

APPENDIX H: Additional Comments <continued>...

Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Comment
Transportation				Having a reasonable, inexpensive, and convenient transportation option. If bus service were frequent to every place I wanted to go, I would not need someone to drive me.
Transportation				I would prefer a community w/bus and T, not just commuter rail which I use every day for work.
Transportation				Need dependable local transportation for medical appointments!
Transportation				Public bus is too rare. Hope to have more buses and a shuttle.
Transportation				No transportation for seniors on Seabeds Way and the T is unreliable on the Senior Bus. The step is too high!!
Transportation				The Senior Center van is a very important asset that I may need at some future time.
Transportation				There is an enormous difference in my experiences at 55 and my mom's at 85. Needham does not address the needs of people who cannot drive yet don't want to be isolated at home.
Transportation				There is no Sunday commuter rail service, so friends visiting, or trips to Boston are limited. Public transportation is a big issue with living in Needham, there is some, but mostly developed around working people needing to get into the city.
Transportation				Thus far, I have been blessed with excellent health, and I can drive my car, but I do believe elderly transportation is VERY important to seniors in Needham.
Transportation				When I first moved to Needham there was some type of senior shuttle bus in my neighborhood that went around town to bring seniors shopping. That would be a welcome service to bring back and help to alleviate parking issues as well. Teens that don't drive could also use it.
Transportation				When I first moved to Needham, there was a shuttle service and I enjoyed using it when needed even as a young person to get to downtown.
Transportation				To successfully age-in-place, Needham residents will certainly need transportation options to cross town boundaries. An important consideration is the level of assistance people may need to utilize transportation options – from door-to-door, door-through-door, and stay at the destination. Moreover, it would be helpful to ask about volunteer driver programs and supportive transportation needs of people with cognitive impairment.
Transportation				It's very important to have frequent train service particularly on weekends.
Transportation				I cannot walk beyond 20 steps and there are times when the car is out of commission and no one else is available who isn't worse off than I am.
Upgrades				Needham Housing does not do much to upgrade apartments.
Upgrades				Needham should consider modifying public housing units for handicap individuals. Builders should be more mindful of the need of more handicap units and study new technology.
Upgrades				Needham Housing Authority (needs to maintain/upgrade units).

# **APPENDIX C**

## **KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

KATE FITZPATRICK	NEEDHAM TOWN MANAGER
CHRIS COLEMAN	NEEDHAM ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER
DENISE GARLICK	STATE REPRESENTATIVE
TIMOTHY MCDONALD	DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
JAMIE BRENNER GUTNER	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COUNCIL ON AGING
LATANYA STEELE	ASST DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL WORK, COA
RICK MERSON	DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS
LEE NEWMAN	DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEVRA BAILIN	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
KAREN SUNNARBORG	HOUSING SPECIALIST, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
ANN MACFATE	DIRECTOR, NEEDHAM FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
SANDRA ROBINSON	DIRECTOR, NEEDHAM COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MOE HANDEL	CHAIR, BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MATT BORRELLI	VICE CHAIR, BOARD OF SELECTMEN
DAN MATTHEWS	BOARD OF SELECTMEN
EDWARD COSGROVE	CHAIR, BOARD OF HEALTH (ALSO ON COA BOARD)
KAREN PRICE	PRESIDENT, NEEDHAM LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
PAULA JACOBSON	DIRECTOR, YMCA
RAMIN ABRISHAMIAN	NEEDHAM CLERGY ASSOCIATION
PENNY KIRK	SOCIAL WORKER, NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY
SAM BASS-WARNER	FORMER MEMBER OF PLANNING BOARD

# **APPENDIX D**

## **FOCUS GROUP GUIDE**

## **FOCUS GROUP GUIDE**

### **Healthy Aging through Healthy Community Planning**

**Spring 2016**

#### **1. Healthy Aging through Healthy Community Planning**

- Project background
- Confidentiality statement

#### **2. Project purpose**

- Gather information to inform further discussion on the town level
- Quantitative data – survey
- Qualitative data – key informant interviews and focus groups
- Review of zoning and bylaws related to housing and transportation

“An age-friendly world enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age. It is a place that makes it easy for older people to stay connected to people that are important to them. And it helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages and provides appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves.” (WHO and AARP)

#### **What do we want to know?**

- What are the age-friendly features of Needham?
- What problems do you encounter in Needham as an older person?
- What is missing from Needham that would enhance your health, participation, and security?

## **Housing**

- Please describe the house or the apartment where you live.
- Do you plan to continue to live there as you get older?
- Is your home age-friendly?
- If you move, what sort of housing will you be looking for?
- What are your choices for housing in the community?
- What are the barriers older people face in housing in Needham?

## **Transportation**

- What are your transportation options like in Needham?
- How do you find out about transportation options in Needham?
- What is it like to drive in Needham?
- What are the barriers older people face in transportation in Needham?

Lastly, if you had 10 minutes to speak with community, state or federal decision makers, what would be two things you would tell them that senior citizens and their caregivers need the most to have a good quality of life?

# **APPENDIX E**

## **REGULATIONS AND POLICIES**

# Healthy Aging Review: Municipal Regulations and Policies

The Town of Needham’s regulatory framework was reviewed to determine the age-friendliness of housing policies. The review included publicly-available reports and documents from Town departments, including the Planning and Community Development Department, the Building Division, the Council on Aging, and the Commission on Disabilities. Included among the review were the Zoning Map and Bylaws (2014), Chapter 40B Guidelines (2012), Affordable Housing Plan (2007), and the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (2013)

The regulatory framework was explored to identify the elements that promote or accommodate activities that make housing supportive of healthy aging. The review was guided by a number of resources from the World Health Organization<sup>35</sup>, AARP<sup>36</sup>, MetLife Foundation<sup>37</sup>, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>38</sup>, and others<sup>39</sup>. Based on these resources, four areas were identified for the review:

- a) Guidelines and policies encouraging development of accessible housing
- b) Zoning code allowing assisted living and senior housing
- c) Zoning code allowing flexible housing arrangements
- d) Ease of home modifications

## Guidelines and policies encouraging development of accessible housing

### Background

Accessible environments can reduce the risk of injury or death, improve public safety, and help older residents remain independent. Universal design—products and environments that promote access to the home for all persons regardless of age or ability—includes modifications that can help older individuals, especially those with physical disabilities,

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<sup>35</sup> World Health Organization, *Ageing and Life Course: Towards an Age-Friendly World*, <http://www.who.int/ageing/age-friendly-world/en/>

<sup>36</sup> AARP, *Livable Communities: Great Places for All Ages*, <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/>

<sup>37</sup> MetLife Foundation, *Healthy Aging*, <https://www.metlife.com/metlife-foundation/about/healthy-aging.html>

<sup>38</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Healthy Aging*, <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/index.html>

<sup>39</sup> Age Friendly Portland, *Building an Age Friendly Community*, <http://agefriendlyportland.org/>; Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, *Aging Stats*, [http://www.agingstats.gov/agingstatsdotnet/main\\_site/default.aspx](http://www.agingstats.gov/agingstatsdotnet/main_site/default.aspx); Age-Friendly NYC, *NYC’s 59 Initiatives*, <http://www.agefriendlynyc.org/city-government.html>

maintain independence and reduce the risk of injury or death<sup>40</sup>. The focus of this section is the encouragement of the construction of accessible housing units that can accommodate aging residents.

The Massachusetts Building Code governs standards for building construction in cities and towns in the state. The Architectural Access Board (AAB) Rules and Regulations, which are part of the state building code, provide the construction and repair standards for buildings open to the public to ensure that buildings and facilities are accessible for person with disabilities<sup>41</sup>. These rules and regulations support the development of publicly funded accessible housing units and apply to common spaces in private multi-family housing.

## **Assessment**

This review found some consideration and guidance on accessibility within Needham's current regulations and policies. Accessibility was addressed in the Downtown Streetscape Plan and the Trails Master Plan, however no local policies regarding accessibility in new housing construction were identified. The 2013 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice addressed accessibility and indicates that Needham does not require accessibility in new construction or rehabilitation, outside of meeting building code requirements consistent with the AAB rules and regulations. The document also identifies the need for accessible housing in relation to:

- The existing older resident population who has disabilities.
- The negative effects disabilities can have on household incomes.
- The opportunities accessible environments provide for those with disabilities to participate in the community.

This review did not find that a policy or regulation has been adopted since this report.

## **Zoning code allowing assisted living and senior housing**

### **Background**

Zoning and land use regulations determine the housing opportunities available to older residents.

Senior-only housing, also called age-restricted housing, is built expressly for residents who are age 55 years or older. This type of housing is made possible through an exemption to

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<sup>40</sup> Center for Universal Design, "The Principles of Universal Design."

<sup>41</sup> For specific elements and applications of the Architectural Access Board rules and regulations, see: <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/consumer-prot-and-bus-lic/license-type/aab/aab-rules-and-regulations-pdf.html>

the Federal Fair Housing Act which protects senior housing facilities from liability for familial status discrimination and allows them to refuse to sell or rent dwellings to families with children<sup>42</sup>.

Massachusetts has its own legislation related to age-restricted housing. For those housing developments not under a state or federal program, the law requires projects to be sited on properties of at least five acres<sup>43</sup>. Similar to the federal exemption, the Massachusetts legislation requires units to have a householder who is 55 years or older. Many local bylaws are more restrictive, prohibiting permanent residents who are 18 years old or younger<sup>44</sup>.

In an assisted living development, older residents own or rent independent units and are supported with daily living activities by an on-site staff<sup>45</sup>. These developments require a license from the state in order to operate. Assisted living may be connected to skilled nursing facilities which offer more services for those residents who need a higher level of care. When these two uses are co-located, they are often referred to as Continuing Care Developments.

## **Assessment**

Needham's zoning bylaw allows assisted living and age-restricted housing. The Elder Services Zoning District was approved in 2010 as an overlay district to encourage the coordinated development of housing and services primarily serving residents 55 years or older.<sup>46</sup> In addition to by-right and special permit uses allowable through the underlying zoning, the Elder Services Zoning District allows Independent Living Apartments and Assisted Living and Alzheimer's-Memory Loss Facilities with a special permit. In the district, these special permit uses have lot area, frontage, setback, height, and floor area ratio requirements, and must provide 0.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit. Inclusionary zoning is part of the Elder Services Zoning District when independent living apartments are constructed. Through the inclusionary zoning, at least 10% of the units in a development must be affordable housing units and the marketing plan for the units must be approved by the Planning Board.

The Elder Services Zoning District occupies several parcels that are in close proximity to exit 19 off Interstate 95. This location offers good access for family members and

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<sup>42</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Senior Housing: What you should know..." [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/seniors](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/seniors).

<sup>43</sup> General Laws: Chapter 151B, Section 4, Subsection 6.

<sup>44</sup> Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, "Age Restricted Active Adult Housing in Massachusetts A Review of the Factors Fueling Its Explosive Growth and the Public Policy Issues It Raises", June 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Sustainability Toolkit, "Understanding Housing For Older Adults", 2014, <http://www.pvpc.org/plans/pioneer-valley-sustainability-toolkit>

<sup>46</sup> Use Regulations, Section 3.12, Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Needham, as amended to October 2014.

caregivers who may live outside the area and may serve residents who still currently drive. However the location may not accommodate walking trips (the area around the district receives a WalkScore of 48, which characterizes the area as car dependent, meaning a car is required to access daily needs and services<sup>47</sup>.)

## Zoning code allows flexible housing arrangements

### Background

While some older residents may seek 55+ housing, others prefer multi-generational housing. Housing models that may offer more flexibility for seniors include:

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), sometimes called accessory or “in-law” apartments, are independent housing units that are typically co-located with a primary residence on a single-family lot. They can part of a principal dwelling or in separate structure<sup>48</sup>. Accessory dwelling units must be a locally permitted, either by-right or by special permit. Many municipalities in Massachusetts have accessory units that pre-date zoning and have been grandfathered in rather than permitted.
- Co-housing, an arrangement where older adults can share housing with other unrelated adults, may occur in a single home or through groups of older residents living in individual units with shared spaces (e.g., kitchen, living, laundry, etc.) in a mini-community.<sup>49</sup> Co-housing may allow older residents to stay in their homes and share facilities while reducing the individual costs of housing. Opportunities for co-housing can be affected by local regulations that restrict the number of unrelated individuals who may live together.
- Cooperative Housing usually involves the formation of a non-profit cooperative organization that covers the purchase and costs of housing (home, property taxes, insurance, etc.). Residents purchase shares in the cooperative and pay monthly fees to cover operating costs.<sup>50</sup> As with co-housing, cooperative housing can be affected by local regulations regarding unrelated individuals living together and zoning that limits multi-family developments.

While not a formal model, another growing housing arrangement is Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities. These are neighborhoods or buildings that were not originally built specifically for seniors, but which now have a significant proportion occupied by older

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<sup>47</sup><https://www.walkscore.com/score/235-gould-st-needham-ma-02494>

<sup>48</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit, [http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart\\_growth\\_toolkit/](http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/).

<sup>49</sup> Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Sustainability Toolkit, “Understanding Housing For Older Adults”, 2014, <http://www.pvpc.org/plans/pioneer-valley-sustainability-toolkit>

<sup>50</sup> National Association of Housing Cooperatives, “Buying into a Housing Cooperative”, <http://coophousing.org/resources/owning-a-cooperative/buying-into-a-housing-cooperative/>.

residents.<sup>51</sup> These communities, while not planned or age-restricted, can include public and private housing and provide the opportunity for coordinating services for the older population. Examples of such communities can be found in Massachusetts (Beacon Hill Village<sup>52</sup>) and throughout the country<sup>53</sup>.

## Assessment

The Town of Needham does not currently permit accessory dwelling units. According to the Planning Department, the possibility of accessory unit zoning has been considered several times. The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (2013) noted that not permitting accessory units presents a regulatory barrier for affordable housing development in the town.

It should also be noted that zoning reform legislation passed by the Massachusetts Senate in April 2016, includes a provision for accessory units. Under this reform legislation, accessory units would be allowed by right in any single-family residential district but would require a lot of 5,000 square feet or greater and would have to conform to Title 5 of the state environmental code. Municipalities could require that the units be owner-occupied and could cap the total number of allowable units. Municipalities could also regulate dimensional elements such as, setbacks, bulk, and height.<sup>54</sup>

There is the possibility for co-housing opportunities in the Town of Needham. The town's Zoning Bylaw defines a family as:

*(1) one or more persons related by blood or marriage and including not more than eight additional persons of which not more than six may be foster children and not more than four may be persons other than foster children, or (2) not more than five unrelated individuals per dwelling unit<sup>55</sup> where one individual is the resident owner of the property, all living as a single housekeeping unit. The Board of Appeals may issue a special permit for up to two additional individuals per dwelling unit<sup>56</sup>.*

Under part two of this definition, an older resident who is a homeowner could share housing with at least four other individuals.

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<sup>51</sup>NORC Blueprint, "About NORC Programs", <http://www.norcblueprint.org/about/>

<sup>52</sup>Beacon Hill Village <http://www.beaconhillvillage.org/>

<sup>53</sup> NORC Community Directory: <http://norcs.org/community-directory>

<sup>54</sup> MA Smart Growth Alliance, "Section by section description of S. 2311", <http://ma-smartgrowth.org/wp-content/uploads/S2311-section-by-section-matrix.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> Dwelling Unit – a room or group of rooms designed and equipped exclusively for use as living quarters for only one family including provisions for living, sleeping, cooking and eating (per the definition of the Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Needham)

<sup>56</sup> Definitions, Section 1.3, Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Needham, as amended to October, 2014.

While a co-housing or cooperative arrangement may be possible, other considerations affect how these models could work. There are statutes regulating lodging houses or buildings where rooms are made available for rent and the co-housing arrangement may trigger the need for a license from the state

Similarly, a boarding house is subject to other requirements in Needham. Boarding houses are permitted in several districts, including select residential districts, business districts, and industrial districts. Special permits are required for boarding houses in the General Residential zoning district and the entire Apartment zoning districts. Boarding houses also, require one off-street parking space per rental or sleeping unit, which could exceed the number of off-street parking space allowed for a single-family home.

The Town of Needham’s multi-family zoning districts provide opportunities for co-housing and cooperative housing. Multi-family developments are permitted by right or by special permit in the following districts:

Use District <sup>57</sup>	Class of District	Right
Residential District	Apartment - A- 1 Apartment - A-2 Apartment - A-3	By-right
Overlay District	Lower Chestnut Street Overlay District	By-right, not exceeding five dwelling units per mixed-use building Special Permit, containing six or more dwelling units in a mixed-use building
	Garden Street Overlay District	By-right, not exceeding five dwelling units per mixed-use building Special Permit, containing six or more dwelling units in a mixed-use building Special Permit, free-standing multi-family dwelling

Under these conditions, new co-housing or cooperative housing developments could be constructed in the town. Existing co-housing or cooperative housing developments, if any, would be subject to dimensional regulations if there was a goal to alter or relocate the uses.

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<sup>57</sup> Information provided is general in nature. For specific requirements of identified, please see the Town of Needham Zoning Bylaw

## Ease of home modification permitting

### Background

Home modifications are preventative measures that can be made indoors and outdoors to reduce health risks and negative outcomes for older residents.<sup>58</sup> Modifications can range from minor changes such as changing door handles and adding grab bars, to major (and expensive) renovations to bathrooms and kitchens and to allow for one-floor living. Modifications that include electrical, plumbing, or structural changes require building permits.

### Assessment

A review of Town documents and materials did not discover a formal policy or program that actively supports home modifications for older residents.

While there is no formal policy, there are several resources to provide support for increased accessibility and going through the home modification process. The Building Division has an informative website that provides detailed guidance on the building and home remodeling process.<sup>59</sup> This information, although not specifically aimed at older residents, does make the home modification process more transparent and understandable.

The Town of Needham is served by a Commission on Disabilities that provides resources for community changes that are inclusive of people with disabilities. The commission provides grants to organizations and institutions for physical items that enable people with disabilities to live independently, but does not assist homeowners with changes to their homes.<sup>60</sup> The Council on Aging, as well as the Disabilities Commission, provides a link to Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission program which offers zero and low interest

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<sup>58</sup> According the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year, one of three adults aged 65 years or older falls. Falls can cause moderate to severe injuries, such as hip fractures and head traumas, and increase the risk of early death. <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Town of Needham Building Inspector, Home Remodeling Guided Process, <http://www.needhamma.gov/index.aspx?nid=1252>.

<sup>60</sup> Town of Needham Commission on Disabilities, Grants, <http://www.needhamma.gov/index.aspx?nid=1104>.

loans that support independent living.<sup>61</sup> Older homeowners are eligible for this funding if they are frail or have a disability and if their income falls within the program range.

The town's Council on Aging (COA) offers a social work staff that assists older residents so that they can age in place. Included in these services are assistance with home modifications and home maintenance referrals.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Home Modification Loan Program, <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/housing-disability/home-mod-loan/hmlp-program.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Town of Needham, Council on Aging Social Service Department, <http://www.needhamma.gov/index.aspx?NID=578>

# **APPENDIX F**

## **RESOURCES FOR AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES**

## Resources for Age-Friendly Communities

- Age-Friendly Communities: The Movement to Create Great Places to Grow Up and Grow Old in America. An Introduction for Private and Public Funders. Created for Community AGEnda, A program of Grantmakers In Aging, Supported by the Pfizer Foundation. April 2013. Available at:  
[http://www.giaging.org/documents/130402\\_GIA\\_AFC\\_Primer.pdf](http://www.giaging.org/documents/130402_GIA_AFC_Primer.pdf)
- AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Available at: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>
- WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities  
[http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_network/en/](http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age_friendly_cities_network/en/)
- Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide. Available at:  
[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)
- Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities. World Health Organization.  
[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age_friendly_cities_checklist.pdf)
- Building Age-Friendly Communities: The Summit. Tufts Health Plan Foundation, March 18, 2015. Available at: <http://www.tuftshealthplanfoundation.org/community-impact.php?page=community-impact/summit>
- Strategies to Meet the Housing Needs of Older Adults. Insight on the Issues 38, March 2010. Keith Wardrip, for AARP Public Policy Institute.  
<http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/ppi/liv-com/i38-strategies.pdf>
- The Metlife Report on Aging in Place, 2.0. Rethinking Solutions to the Home Care Challenge. September 2010.  
<https://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/mmi/publications/studies/2010/mmi-aging-place-study.pdf>
- From the ICMA Newsletter, July 7, 2016. Highlight of Pew Charitable Trust Series on Suburban Aging.  
[http://icma.org/en/icma/newsroom/highlights/Article/107273/Pew\\_Series\\_Highlights\\_Suburban\\_Aging\\_and\\_Its\\_Impact\\_on\\_Local\\_Government](http://icma.org/en/icma/newsroom/highlights/Article/107273/Pew_Series_Highlights_Suburban_Aging_and_Its_Impact_on_Local_Government)



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