

Age-Friendly Survey Results Highlights

Overview

The Age-Friendly Task Force survey received 114 responses to the electronic survey and, as of Feb. 11, seven paper responses for a total of 121, which is more than 10% of the Town's residents. Not all respondents answered all of the questions.

The respondents ranged in age from 29 to 84, with most in their 60s (38 respondents) and 70s (41 respondents). Two-thirds were women, which is only slightly higher than what the most recent available U.S. Census data for Keene shows.

Thirteen of the respondents identified as seasonal residents.

Just over 70% thought Keene was a good or very good place to age though several suggested actions that would ensure/improve Keene's age friendliness. Less than a third indicated interest in moving out of Keene or out of their current home. The principal reasons cited for moving would be wanting to be closer to family or to move into an independent living retirement community/facility. At the same time, 32% said they need repairs/remodeling to stay in their homes long-term and 19% have no one to contact in an emergency.

According to respondents, the Town's three most important assets are:

- Our local markets and stores (93% said these were important).
- The transfer station (86%), although there were several suggestions in the comment box for enhancing ease of access and the ability to recycle.
- Town trails and parks, including Marcy Field (84%).

Also highly ranked were:

- Town streets (93% ranked as good or excellent).
- Free access to computers and the internet in public places, such as the libraries (91%, good/excellent).
- A range of volunteer opportunities (88%, good/excellent).

Weak points were:

- Unreliable cell service (53% said it was poor).
- Activities specifically geared to seniors (also 53%, poor)
- Unreliable internet (47%, poor).
- Access to community information in one central source (46%, poor). This was underscored by the number of respondents who said they wanted information on health and social services (68%) and information on support services for family caregivers (56%). Fifty-six percent also said they could use help with repairs and chores

like snow shoveling, with several commenting that they do not know who to contact for such help. These results also echo the Keene Strategic Plan's recommendation for an annually updated list of a wide range of resources.

Also of note:

- Most people said they get around Keene by car, although several also walk. Several commented that they felt the sidewalks in the hamlets need to be upgraded and regularly serviced. Some also wished for more benches along the sidewalks and some trails. There also was a request for public bathrooms.
- There also were a few comments that not only sidewalks, but also Keene's public buildings, parks and the transfer station need to be Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant, e.g., accessible to persons with mobility, vision and other limitations. This is something that the Keene Diversity Advisory Committee has also prioritized.
- Several respondents indicated interest in activities for elders and some sort of central gathering spot. Few seemed aware of Golden Peaks or used the Community Center. On a side note, the current president of Golden Peaks wants to step down but has not identified anyone willing to take over and seems at a loss for how to promote the group. Also on a side note, the Keene Valley Library has developed a "Memory Café" for individuals with dementia and their caregivers and has already scheduled five monthly programs that extend through June. This is being done in conjunction with the Caregiver Support Initiative at SUNY Plattsburgh.
- Some respondents also mentioned the need for affordable housing, primarily for workforce.

Surprises

The Age-Friendly Task Force members found several results somewhat surprising.

- A couple of respondents thought the Post Office was not age-friendly, perhaps because of the lack of home delivery.
- 36 respondents were interested in house-sharing as they age, which is more than was expected.
- Nextdoor Keene was not as highly rated as might be expected, indicating that there is no one form of communication that gets to all the members of the community. This also ties into recommendations that a resource guide be developed and disseminated widely, in both electronic and hard copy formats.
- Few respondents said they would move for a warmer climate, indicating that our year-round residents are a hardy lot!

- A few respondents mentioned the Neighborhood House not being much of an asset to the Town.

Potential Next Steps

As part of AARP's Age-Friendly initiative, our next step is to develop an action plan. Based on the survey responses, action items may include:

- Develop a resource guide and widely disseminate it such as at Town Hall, churches, the libraries, on the Town website, etc. As per the Keene Strategic Plan, for accountability and web page security purposes, we will seek to have a town employee charged with updating the guide at least annually.
- Develop an "Angie's List" type of resource for house repairs, odd jobs, snow removal, etc.
- Research private funding for benches in the hamlets and other public areas.
- Organize a Neighbor-to-Neighbor program, encouraging individuals to make contact and soliciting volunteers for emergency contacts.
- Encourage the Town to make the transfer station, sidewalks, Town Hall, the Community Center and other Town-owned facilities truly accessible to persons of all ages and mobility.
- Work with Keene Central School and/or volunteer fire departments on a program to replace smoke/carbon detector batteries in October for those who would like/need that service.
- Ensure the age-friendliness of Town trails by:
 - Working with Keene Central School to restore/improve the walking trail around Lake Winifred.
 - Supporting the development of the hamlet-to-hamlet walking/biking trail in Keene.
 - Supporting the Youth Commission's proposed multi-use trails on County-owned land in Keene and Upper Jay.
 - Supporting the Diversity Committee's concept for developing wheelchair-accessible trails and campsites on State-owned land in Keene.
- Develop a Town recreation map that lets current and new residents know where they can find opportunities like easy walks, bicycling, ice skating, etc. This would be oriented to locals and not promoted to outsiders.

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