

How Age-Friendly Are We? Survey Results GEORGETOWN

Age-Friendly Communities of the Lower Kennebec is a regional grassroots volunteer coalition in the municipalities of Arrowsic, Bath, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich. Our mission is to help our communities become the best possible home for people of all ages, by ensuring that public spaces, homes, programs, civic events, and social gatherings are set up to meet people's changing wants and needs across the lifespan.

Method

- The committee for Age-Friendly Georgetown had started as part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan update. Many age-related issues were identified in the early discussions leading to the establishment of a dedicated Age-Friendly subcommittee, which has since evolved into an independent community team.
- The group conducted a survey to learn what is working to support healthy, active, engaged aging and to identify areas for improvement. The questions were very similar to the regional survey and the findings are summarized in this report.
- Surveys were mailed to all town property owners and included stamped return envelopes for completed questionnaires. With wide publicity and at meetings throughout the town the survey was explained and responses were encouraged.
- In Georgetown, once the results were analyzed, three public meetings were held to share the results and receive additional feedback.
- Several of the Georgetown survey questions were open-ended resulting in subjective responses as well as specific percentages.

Key Findings in Georgetown - Percentages Based on the Number of Survey Respondents

Social Connections. The lack of social connections and loneliness pose a great risk for physical illness, decline, depression, and death. Feeling "isolated" was a common theme in survey comments.

- A large majority says they get some level of support from family, neighbors, friends, or town organizations.
- There are very active and strong organizations in town that are open to everyone but have a large percentage of older residents involved. These include the Community Center, Working League, Historical Society, Richards Library, Robinhood Free Meetinghouse, and Volunteer Fire Department.
- Another large majority feels the town is friendly, neighborly, and supportive of one another. However, some note they feel left out of that connectedness.
- There are many community events such as potluck suppers, "get to know your neighbors" parties, bingo, jam sessions at the Meetinghouse, holiday events, Blessing of the Fleet, the Gleaning Program, and a local parade. These are very popular and well attended.
- Isolation, especially in the winter, is a concern of some.
- 48% say they would like to get involved with Age-Friendly activities.

Homes. One key finding is that the homes* people are living in may not fit their future. (*Homes refers to all types of places people live like condos, houses and apartments.) People want both, more choices and more information on resources that will help them stay in their homes.

- The ability to safely maintain their homes, as they get older is a major concern.
- Basic chores have become, or will soon become, a serious challenge. This includes snow shoveling, lawn mowing, and other yard work.
- The availability of workers to help in these areas is a concern. A volunteer-based "Handy Helper" program would be of great assistance.
- Many say they need, or would soon need, help in heating their homes. Much of the housing stock is quite old and not well prepared for cold winters.
- Many struggle to stay safe and warm during power outages and a good number are not aware that there are warming centers available in town for those occurrences.

Age-Friendly Communities of the Lower Kennebec



*Arrowsic
Bath
Georgetown
Phippsburg
West Bath
Woolwich*

- 95% have working smoke detectors.
- 71% have working carbon monoxide detectors.
- Affordable housing for young families and for those working in town is a big challenge due to the cost of housing/rentals and the limited amount, and cost, of buildable land.

Mobility. The inability to get around safely greatly limits people’s lives and opportunities. The fear of losing the ability to drive and therefore losing independence is a common concern in the survey comments and the three town forums. This is especially true in Georgetown as it is fairly removed from needed services, and there is little in the way of public transportation.

- 42% say they expect to need transportation assistance at some point.
- 84% indicate that getting to and from medical appointments is, or will be, their most important concern.
- 65% say grocery shopping, getting prescriptions, and other such errands are worries.
- Affordable and convenient transportation options, well-lit safe roads for walkers, bikers, and drivers, and sidewalks or wide shoulders that encourage walking are very important to participants.

Community Strengths. Most respondents agree that their community is a great place to live. Residents feel safe in their neighborhoods and get support and fulfillment from town organizations.

- 95% say they always feel safe in their home.
- The natural beauty and wide variety of recreation opportunities is a top response.
- Close-knit neighborhoods provide a safety net and communication network for many older residents.
- Town organizations like the Community Center, Working League, Historical Society, Richards Library, Volunteer Fire Department and the Robinhood Free Meetinghouse are widely valued and supported.

Communications.

- 78% say that email is the most effective way to receive information.
- 43% say *The Georgetown Tide*, the Historical Society’s newsletter, is another important communication tool.
- 30% get information from the two town public notice boards.
- However, there are many that are not tied in to communication networks and developing ways to get everyone in the loop by some means is a major goal.

Demographics. 17004 residents lived in the region in 2016, 1018 in Georgetown. Of 3403 over the age of 65 years 321 lived in Georgetown. (Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Censusdata <https://factfinder.census.gov>) 259 survey responses from Georgetown residents were evaluated.

- 79% were 60 years or older.
- 59% were female.
- 69% filled out the survey on their own. 31% completed it with a spouse, partner, or helper.

Personal Comments of Survey Respondents.

“My family members are continually grateful for Georgetown being the wonderful community it is.”

“I really like the idea of an age-friendly community. So many could use help. Thank you for doing the survey and the wonderful effort that is being put forth.”

“If climate change increases, storm damage makes road access and driving more difficult - particularly with the tidal situation.”

“Caregivers need affordable short-term respite care. Some can’t get away for even an overnight.”

“The Fire Department and Ambulance Service are of critical importance.”

Please join us. Our “Plan of Action” is based on the information we received and will provide many opportunities to become engaged to make our region more livable!

Contact agefriendlylowerkennebec@gmail.com 443-1573 and Like us on [Facebook](#). 