

Wenham Connects: An Age and Dementia Friendly Needs Assessment

Caitlin Coyle, PhD

Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging
Gerontology Institute & Department
John W. McCormack School of Policy & Global Studies
University of Massachusetts Boston

October 2018

Commissioned by the Town of Wenham
Council on Aging

Acknowledgments

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

- ❖ Jim Reynolds, Director, Wenham Council on Aging
- ❖ Peggy Cahill, Age-Friendly Consultant
- ❖ The Wenham Museum for their space
- ❖ All of the Wenham residents, organizations, and municipal departments for their valuable input

Outline of Today's Presentation

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

Age-Friendly Framework

The Eight Domains of an Age-Friendly Community



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

Dementia Friendly Community



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

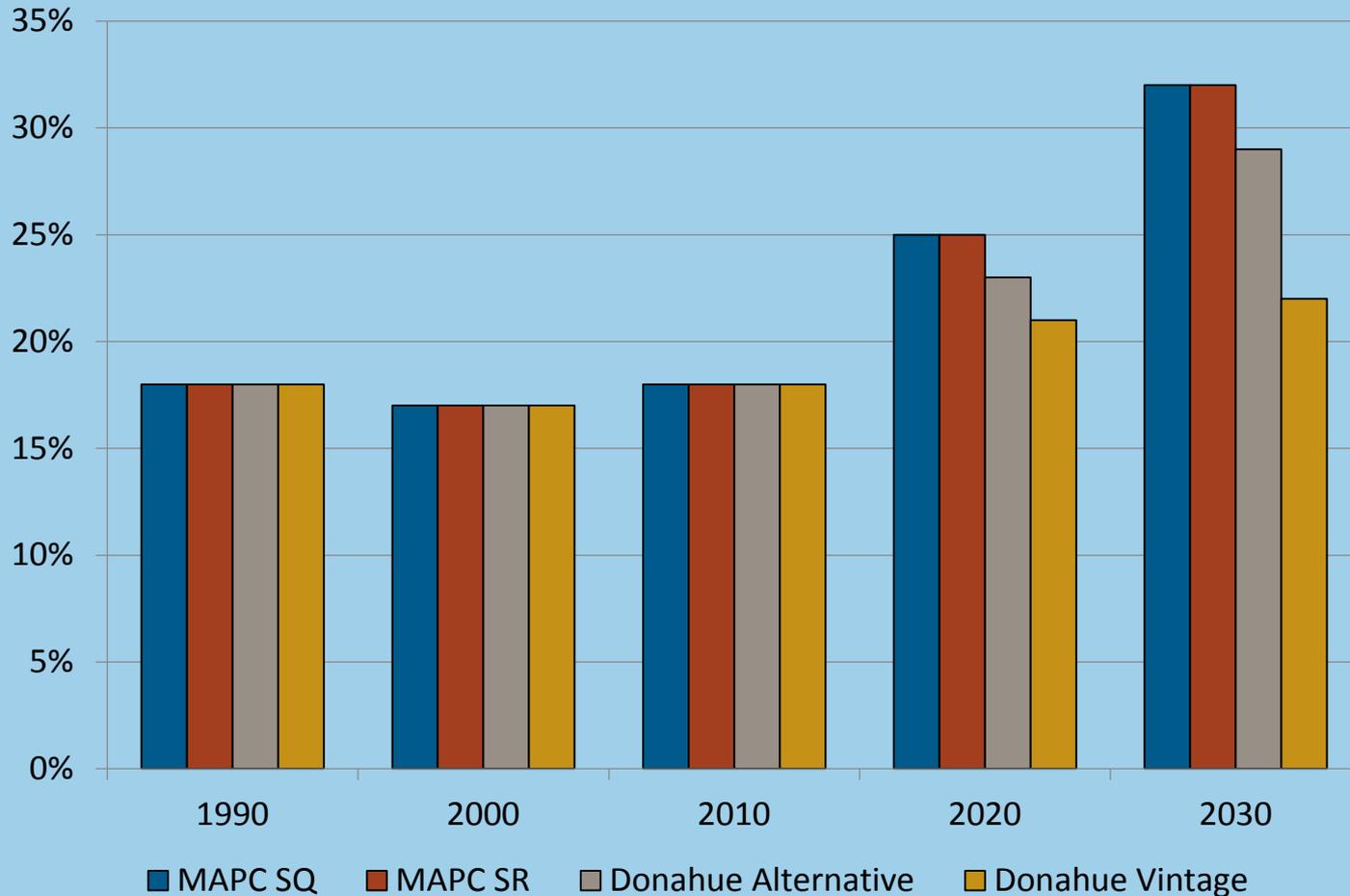
Goals in Developing the *Age and Dementia Friendly Wenham Report*

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

Strategies for Learning about Wenham

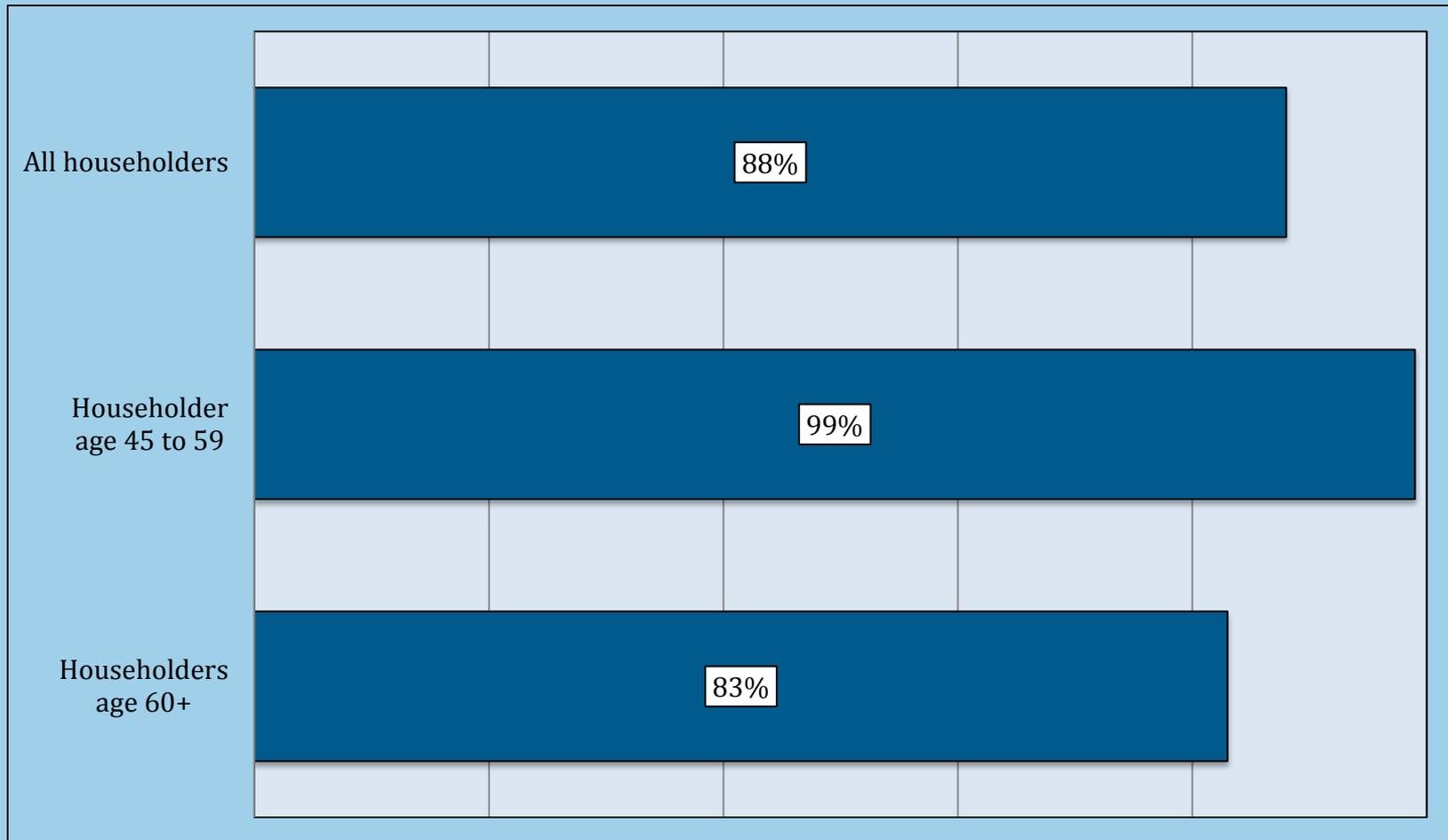
- Review of Existing Data
- Five Key-Informant Interviews
 - COA director
 - Town Administrator
 - Police Chief
 - Fire Chief
 - Permitting Coordinator & Special Projects Manager
- Four Focus Groups
 - Town Office Representatives
 - Representatives of nonprofits and other organizations serving Wenham
 - Wenham Residents (two Groups)

By 2030 Nearly 30% of Wenham Residents Will Be 60+



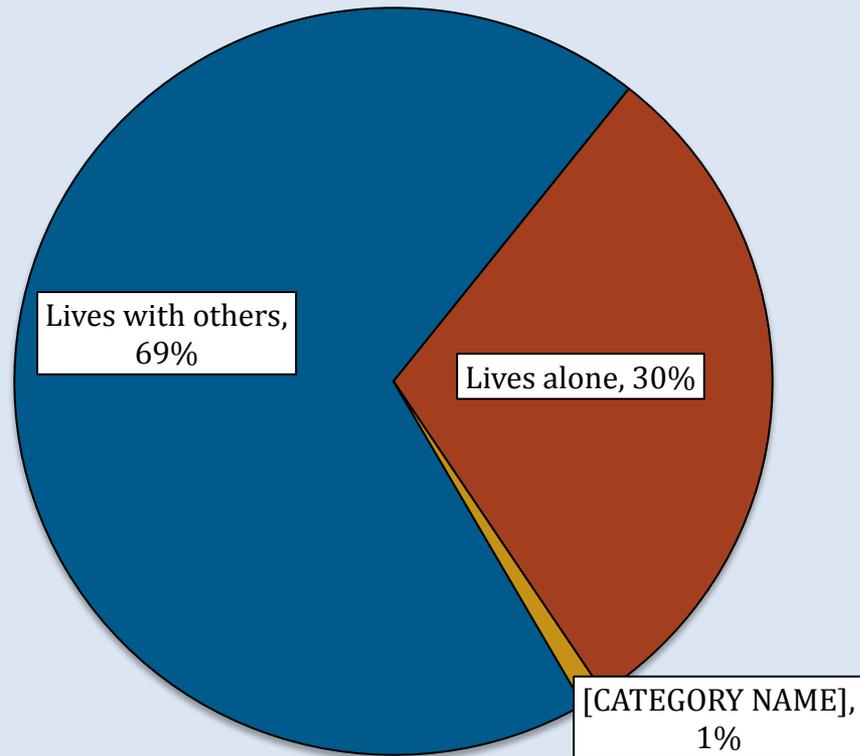
Sources: Population figures for 1990 through 2010 are from the U.S. Census. Projection figures are from the Donahue Institute and MAPC.

83% of Wenham Householders Age 60+ Own Their Home



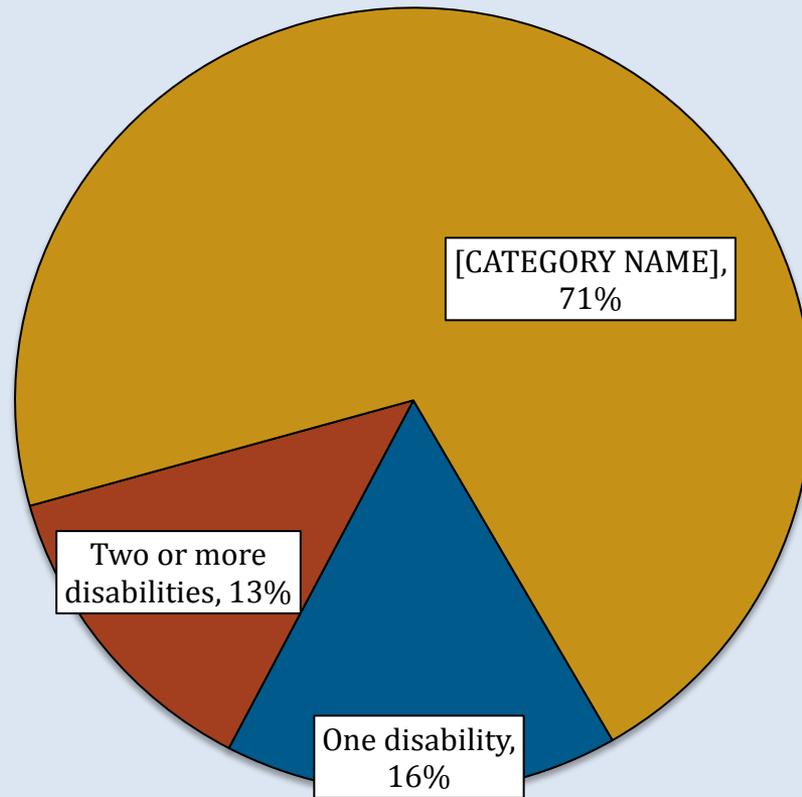
Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016, Tables B25007 and B25011
Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.

3 out of 10 Wenham Residents Age 65+ Live Alone



Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016, Table B09020.
Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates

Almost 3 in 10 Wenham Residents Age 65+ Report Having At Least 1 Disability



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2012-2016, Table C18108

Cross-Cutting Theme:

Affordability and Economic Security

Community Input:

- *Participants perceive that there is a segment of the senior resident population that “can’t afford to live here” and yet they remain living in a vulnerable economic state. It is an “invisible” need.*
- *Some participants observe a division between high- and low-income residents.*
- *Because Wenham lacks a commercial base, town finances rely on private homeowners.*

Suggestions from the Community:

- Improve communication and publicity about the Senior Tax Work Off Program and the Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit.
- Consider creating part-time flexible employment opportunities for seniors in Wenham.

Housing

- *Rural feel with access to urban areas*
- *Lack of housing options to age in community*
- *Prohibitive cost to live in Wenham, high property tax*
- *Need for access to trustworthy home maintenance information*

Suggestions from the Community

- Develop co-housing models
- Create a mechanism for older residents to access trustworthy resources
- Develop more affordable downsizing options, including closer to the “center” of town
- Better educate the community on current zoning laws

Transportation

- *COA Van and Public transportation to Boston are assets*
 - *Limited local transportation options*
 - *Lack of walkable options*

Suggestions from the Community

- Recruit local residents to drive for Uber or Lyft
- Pilot-test use of the COA van for evening events or weekend programming
- Learn more about how Hamilton's medical transportation system operates
- Generate a more creative slogan or name for the side of the COA van. For example, "Take a ride. You have earned it!"

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

- *Beautiful trails and parks*
- *Most municipal buildings are ADA compliant*
- *Outdoor Spaces & Recreation plan includes several “age-friendly” action*

Suggestions from the Community

- Ensure all parks and trails in Wenham are accessible, including parking, benches and signage.
- Better promote the availability of local greenspace.
- Create increased “connectivity” in Wenham via sidewalks, paths or bike routes.
- Develop more destinations to walk to.

Communication & Information

- *The Wenhamite (COA); Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle; several social media pages*

Suggestions from the Community

- Make *The Wenhamite* available as an e-news listserve.
- Expand the content of *The Wenhamite* to include services and other community resources.
- Create an online senior services directory.
- Use the Town Meeting Warrant Articles mailing to distribute information about Wenham resources available.
- Create a “Welcome Packet”.
- Publicize a “senior information hotline” at the COA.
- Place suggestion boxes in high-traffic areas to gather programming ideas for the COA.

Social Participation

- *The Library, COA, Wenham Tea Room, and Wenham Museum*
 - *Lack of intergenerational communal space*

Suggestions from the Community

- Consider ways to expand the capacity of the COA, including increased collaboration with the Hamilton COA.
- Engage Gordon College to partner on programs that will foster intergenerational experiences.
- Expand the “Senior to Senior” day program and develop relationships between various departments in Wenham.
- Develop a technology “help desk” at local schools.
- Start a breakfast club.
- Encourage neighborhood block parties or meetings.

Community Supports & Health Services

- *Trend toward families being geographically dispersed leading to “long-distance” caregiving*
- *Need for increased communication between residents, municipal departments, and organizations*

Suggestions from the Community

- Expand the social work capacity of the Town, COA.
- Explore opportunities to develop a “Village” program or “Neighbors Brigade” program.
- Target outreach and resource development for local and distant caregivers and include opportunities for respite.
- Continue to encourage residents to “check on their neighbors” during storms or extreme temperatures.

Civic Engagement & Employment

- *Wenham Citizen's Leadership Academy*
- *Fully-subscribed Senior tax work-off program benefits both residents and municipal departments*
 - *Many older residents are well-educated and experienced*

Suggestions from the Community

- Host the Citizen's Leadership Academy during the day.
- Continue to ensure that older residents or a representative from the COA are involved in community planning.
- Limit board and committee terms to ensure healthy turnover.
- Engage in a systematic review of boards, committees and commissions to ensure mission statements are adhered to and that duplication or gaps in services are not occurring.

Respect & Social Inclusion

- *Limited spaces for residents to gather.*
- *Divide between parents and older residents.*
- *Residents leave after children graduate from school system diminishing a sense of community.*

Suggestions from the Community

- Continue to develop mechanisms to outreach, education, and support to families dealing with dementia.
- Consider re-messaging efforts at the COA to avoid inferences of ageism.
- Target engagement efforts at persons without children, including empty-nesters and seniors. For example, send a birthday to residents when they turn 60.

Recommended Priority Areas

❖ Housing

❖ Community Supports &
Health Services

❖ Communication and
Information

❖ Social Participation

Thank You!

Caitlin Coyle, PhD

Research Fellow, Center for Social &
Demographic Research on Aging
Gerontology Institute, John W. McCormack
Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies
University of Massachusetts Boston

Caitlin.Coyle@umb.edu

voice: 617.287.7413