



Building Livability  
In New Gloucester

# New Gloucester LIVABLE COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT DECEMBER 2022

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**In a Livable Community,**

**people of all ages can**

**GO FOR A WALK**

**GET AROUND EASILY AND SAFELY**

***ENJOY PUBLIC PLACES***

**WORK OR VOLUNTEER**

**FIND THE SERVICES THEY NEED**

**SHOP, SOCIALIZE, AND BE ENTERTAINED**

**LIVE *SAFELY* AND COMFORTABLY**

**and make their town or neighborhood**

**a lifelong home**

Adapted from the Maine Guide  
Building Livable, Age Friendly Communities

## BACKGROUND

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**Building Livability in New Gloucester** (BLING) is a volunteer group focused on making our community a more livable place to work, live and play for people of all ages.

Communities across Maine have found that people of all ages benefit from and want to live in towns that promote active, healthy and engaged living by all, especially older adults. Many towns have joined the Maine Network of Age-Friendly Communities to promote livable, age-friendly policies, practices and programs in their towns. Typically, an Age-Friendly Community has either a town-sponsored or a volunteer group that champions efforts to make a town a “more livable” community.

In 2021, the residents of New Gloucester voted to adopt an updated Comprehensive Plan and included as one of its goals: to promote an age-friendly and livable community that is a healthy, active, and safe place to work, play and age.” (p. 82; Comprehensive Plan for the Town of New Gloucester, 2021)

In early 2022, a group of interested community members decided to organize BLING as a volunteer effort. A core group of volunteers was eager to start immediately on the many aspirational goals of Age-Friendly communities. Goals in other Age-Friendly towns typically include:

- To promote inviting outdoor spaces, parks, recreational areas and programs
- To improve ways to safely and easily get around and through town
- To promote safe, affordable and accessible housing
- To expand volunteer opportunities to participate in the civic and social life of the town
- To support access to food, social and other health services
- To provide information and resources on services, activities and programs in the area
- To ensure people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives feel welcome and respected as part of the community.

## COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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One of the first priorities of the BLING group was to develop a survey to assess community needs, interests and gaps that could guide future planning and programming. A small work group was formed to review surveys from other Age-Friendly towns, from the Maine Council on Aging and from AARP’s Livable Community Resources. The final survey was modified to reflect New Gloucester specific interests and needs.

The survey includes questions that cover the core “domain” areas typical of Age-Friendly communities. They include: Respect and Social Inclusion; Housing; Getting Around/Transportation; Community Support; Recreation and Outdoor Space; Health and Wellness; Communication; and Social Participation.

## METHODS

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The survey was developed (using Google forms) in the spring of 2022. It was made available online and in hard copy at various places around town. In June of 2022, an email was sent with the survey link to all town officials and members of the town committees. Hard copies were available at the Town Hall and the Library. The survey and a handout with a link to the survey was also distributed at various sites around town including to the Friends of the Library, the Community Café (a monthly luncheon for older citizens), the Community Fair, the Village Store and the First Congregational Church of New Gloucester. The NGXchange (a community online news source) included an article and link to the survey on its website and Facebook page in early June with updates through August 2022.

We received 168 responses to the survey. All respondents were residents of New Gloucester. **Forty-two percent (42%)** of respondents were 65 and older and 57% were female. The results of the survey are reported using the number of people who responded to each individual question.

## ABOUT NEW GLOUCESTER<sup>1</sup>

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New Gloucester is a vibrant community with a healthy mix of young and older residents. In fact, based on 2020 estimates from the American Community Survey, New Gloucester has a higher percentage of residents under 18 years of age (25%) than Cumberland County (18.6%), Maine as a whole (18.6%) and the neighboring town of Gray (17.1%). And likewise, New Gloucester residents, on average, are younger than those in Cumberland County and statewide. The median age in New Gloucester is 39 years compared with 42 years in Cumberland County and 45 years, statewide.

New Gloucester is also fortunate that it has a high ratio of working age people to people over 65. In our town, there are 5.1 people who are in the 18-64 age group for every adult over 65. This is very high compared with other towns in Cumberland County and the State. In Cumberland County, this ratio is 3.41; and for the state as a whole it is 2.94.

But like other towns in Maine and across the country, people in New Gloucester are not only growing older but they are living longer. New Gloucester's population changed dramatically between 2000 and 2018. During that time, New Gloucester experienced a 6 percent decline in population under the age of 20 and a 94% increase in its population over 55. At the same time, the population between 65 and 74 increased 87% and the population over 75 grew by 66%. (New Gloucester Comprehensive Plan, 2021; p. 15).

Although the percentage of New Gloucester residents who are over 65 is relatively high (12%), it is below that of Cumberland County (18.5%) and the state of Maine (20.6%). People over the age of 80 are not remaining in New Gloucester. Only 1% of the New Gloucester population is 80 years or older compared with 4.5% in Cumberland County and 4.9% in Maine. And only 10% of those over 65 are living alone compared with about 28% in Gray and in Cumberland County.

Like many towns in Maine, New Gloucester has many old houses that require upkeep and maintenance and many are owned by people 65 years and older. In 2020, 89% of the houses lived in by a person over the age of 65, were 30 or more years old; and 65% were houses that were 50 or more years old.

The mean household income of New Gloucester (\$88,569) is lower than that of Cumberland County (\$98,132), but higher than that of Maine as a whole (\$78,301). Nevertheless, the mean retirement income in New Gloucester is \$21,292 compared with \$28,347 for Cumberland County and \$25,545 for Maine.

New Gloucester also has a high percentage of people over 65 living with at least one disability (hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, or independent living difficulty). It is estimated that 25% of those over 65 in New Gloucester have one of these disabilities compared with 14.6% in Cumberland County and 16.6% in Maine.

The story of New Gloucester and its residents is a common one. People want to remain in their homes and communities as they age. Young people want to live in communities that have open space, recreation and other opportunities for their families. But there are many challenges: lack of affordable, accessible housing; the cost of maintaining a home; the need for walkable paths and roadways; and lack of access to services and transportation.

Conducting a baseline survey of needs, gaps, and desires of the community is a first step in a long journey, but one that holds great promise and opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the data provided here was prepared for the New Gloucester M-DASH (Municipal Data Across Health Sectors) Task Force by consultants from the Maine Council on Aging. This data is based on five-year estimates from the American Community Survey in 2020.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Livability, Respect and Social Inclusion

Most people (79%) who responded to the survey highly rated New Gloucester as an **excellent or very good place** to live.

- More than 84% of respondents felt it was **extremely or very important** to remain in the New Gloucester as they grow older.
- Most residents felt included (90%); respected (92%); and that their voices were heard (76%) **most of the time or sometimes**.



### Housing

Almost all respondents live in a single-family home that they own.

The age of the homes that respondents live in varied:

- 66% lived in homes that were 11 to 50 years old
- 10% lived in homes that were 51 to 100 years old
- 18% lived in homes that are over 100 years old

When asked about moving, more than 47% said they were not considering moving; but those who would consider a move indicated that the main reasons for moving would be (in order of priority):

- a more walkable neighborhood
- to a home that requires less maintenance
- easier access to medical care and services
- to a smaller home
- access to public transportation
- a more diverse community
- where I could live more independently
- someone else to deal with shoveling

When asked if senior housing were to be developed, respondents indicated that would like to see:






- a community/cluster of homes (34%)
- continuous care community (17%)
- one story independent homes (10%)
- accessory dwelling units (2%)
- apartments (1%)



### Getting Around/Transportation

Respondents indicated that strategies for making it easier and safer to get around were high priorities. Respondents indicated that the following strategies were **very important/important**:

- Wider shoulders to keep cyclists/pedestrians out of traffic (81%)
- Signage for drivers (81%)
- Wheel chair access to building/facilities (81%)
- Strategies for slowing traffic (79%)
- Well-lit intersections (76%)
- Sidewalks/crosswalks in populated/busy areas (71%)
- Police presence to monitor speeding and safety, roads (57%)
- Public transportation or ride service (66%)
- Parking convenient to buildings (64%)

	<p><b>Community Support</b></p> <p>40% of respondents indicated that they did not anticipate the need for services in the next 5 years. However, those who anticipated a need for services identified the following as their top needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter sand buckets (26%)</li> <li>• Help with home chores (20%)</li> <li>• Child care/elder care (13%)</li> <li>• Housekeeping (11%)</li> <li>• Home modification (10%)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Recreation and Outdoor Space</b></p> <p>Respondents rated the following as very important/important</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More accessible trails/places to walk off the road (73%)</li> <li>• Trails connected to other towns (59%)</li> <li>• Off road bike trails around New Gloucester (48%)</li> <li>• Large indoor meeting, social gathering, recreational spaces (47%)</li> <li>• Conveniently located benches at recreational areas (45%)</li> <li>• Conveniently located benches along trails (38%)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Health and Wellness</b></p> <p>Twenty percent (20%) of respondents expressed a concern about falling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Among those 65 and over, 31% had concerns versus 11% of those under 65</li> </ul> <p>Most of the respondents had health care providers in Portland/South Portland/Scarborough (57%), Yarmouth/Freeport/Falmouth (36%) or Lewiston/Auburn (34%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17% of health care providers were located in Gray/New Gloucester</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>The most common places where people get information are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NGXchange (89%)</li> <li>• Word of mouth (59%)</li> <li>• Social media (46%)</li> <li>• Town website (43%)</li> <li>• Newspapers (20%)</li> <li>• Community TV (8%)</li> <li>• Backpack info (6%)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Social Participation</b></p> <p>Respondents were interested/engaged in the town. Of those who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 77% indicated that they vote</li> <li>• 40% attend meetings or watching on local TV</li> <li>• 30% watch meetings on local cable TV/live stream</li> <li>• 24% serve on committees</li> </ul> <p>Barriers to participation included no remote participation options (43%) and work schedule conflicts (29%).</p>

# **Building Livability in New Gloucester**

## **2022 Community Needs Assessment Survey**

### **Technical Notes**

#### **STRUCTURE**

One of the first priorities of the BLING group was to develop a survey to assess community needs, interests and gaps that could guide future planning and programming. A small work group was formed to review surveys from other Age-Friendly towns, from the Maine Council on Aging and from AARP's Livable Community Resources. The final survey was modified to reflect New Gloucester-specific interests and needs.

The survey, geared to residents of all ages, included 55 selected response and open response questions that cover the core "domains" of Age-Friendly communities. These include topics that relate to a person's health and wellbeing; their ability to easily get around in town; their housing needs; ways that people are and want to communicate and be socially engaged; and barriers and opportunities to make the town a desirable place to live and grow older.

The survey was developed and tested by a group of volunteers, promoted widely, and administered in the late summer/ early fall of 2022. Residents completed the survey digitally or on paper. Data was compiled and reported in late 2022.

#### **SAMPLE and SIGNIFICANCE**

169 New Gloucester residents responded to the survey.

While statistical significance is generally calculated for "high stakes" data, such as election polling and market research, it is not commonly calculated for a "low stakes" community survey. Nevertheless, the results of this survey were statistically significant.

According to the American Community Survey of the US Census, New Gloucester's population as of July 1, 2022 was 5,774, 21.9% (1,264) of whom were under 18. That leaves an adult population of 4,510.

This sample size (169) calculates to a confidence level of 95%, and a margin of error of 7.4% (anything under 10% is acceptable for this purpose).

How else did we check for validity and reliability (consistency)?

- respondents were of all ages;
- respondents lived in all areas of town; and
- respondents answered similarly no matter what their age group.

#### **RESOURCES**

American Community Survey

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/newgloucestertowncumberlandcountymaine/AGE295222>

Survey Monkey Sample Size Calculator

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/>

~ Deb Smith for BLING