Aging in Bowdoinham: Seven Years Later (2012-2019)

An update to the 2012 needs assessment, *Aging in Bowdoinham*,
And 2014 Bowdoinham Age-Friendly Action Plan
using *Measuring the Age-friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators*
by the World Health Organization Centre for Health Development

Prepared by:
Bowdoinham’s Advisory Committee on Aging

For: Town of Bowdoinham
Executive Summary

This process evaluation of the 2016, Bowdoinham Age-Friendly Action Plan was undertaken between September 2019 and January 2020. The purpose of the process evaluation is to chart the course ahead for the next five years of age friendly community development in Bowdoinham.

Demographic Summary

Bowdoinham is home to 2,889 people, nearly half of whom are age 45 or older. The community has experienced substantial growth within its older population, with the number of persons age 60 and above increasing by 61.2% between 2000 and 2010, compared to a growth of 10.6% for the Town as a whole. The aging of Bowdoinham is being driven by a combination of people aging in the community, in-migration to Bowdoinham as a retirement destination, and out-migration of younger adults and their families. Projections suggest that growth in the number and share of older residents will continue; by 2030, it is expected that adults age 60 and older will account for half of Bowdoinham residents. One in three residents over age 60 in Bowdoinham live alone, and the majority live in homes that they own. Although many older households in Bowdoinham are economically secure, about 20% report incomes under $25,000 annually. Even for individuals who no longer are paying off a mortgage, expenses associated with property taxes, insurance, and routine upkeep may exceed their available resources. For individuals who develop functional impairments and disabilities, home modification, such as bathroom grab bars, railings on stairs, adequate lighting, and/or a first-floor bathroom, may be necessary for a resident to remain living safely in his or her home. Modifications represent an additional housing expense that may be difficult for residents living below economic security.

An Age-Friendly Community

In 2013, Bowdoinham was the first community in northern New England to be accepted into the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. In 2015, Lori Parham, State Director of AARP Maine met with the Advisory Committee on Aging to invite the community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. Later that year, the Select Board voted unanimously to join the AARP Network. To frame Bowdoinham’s age friendly process, the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and AARP Network identify eight aspects of communities that influence the health and quality-of-life of older residents: accessibility of outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation, communication and information, and community support and health services. An age friendly community has infrastructure to support the needs of residents who are living with limited mobility. The Town of Bowdoinham has invested in an extensive sidewalk system that covers about 90% of the village area where shops and businesses are located. About 70% of the buildings owned by the Town and 50% of privately owned buildings that are open to the public (e.g. the Three Robbers Pub, Cote’s Hardware, and the Bowdoinham Country Store) are accessible for a person who uses a wheelchair or walker for mobility. For residents who are no longer capable of driving or who no longer chose to drive, Rides in Neighbors Cars, an all-volunteer program is available to take residents to medical appointments, errands, recreational opportunities, or to socialize with friends or neighbors. Residents also depend on friends, neighbors and relatives to meet their need for transportation. While
there is room for improvement in accessibility and transportation, the Town and ACOA continues to work to increase accessibility by people of all ages and abilities.

An age friendly community has ample opportunities for civic engagement and volunteering and for older residents to participate in recreation and socio-cultural activities. About 70% of active volunteers in the Bowdoinham-based organizations (e.g. Bowdoinham Historical Society, Friends of the Library, Merrymeeting Arts Center) have reached the age of 60. Older residents serve on the many town committees and are actively engaged in planning for community-wide events, such as Celebrate Bowdoinham, the Library Plant Sale, and the Smelt Festival. Older citizens exercise their right to vote; 81.6% of eligible voters over the age of 60 participated in the most recent election. Older Bowdoinham residents are actively engaged in opportunities for physical activity; 17.8% have participated in one of the ACOA sponsored exercise programs (e.g. Exercise Plus, tai chi, kayaking, geo-caching, mushroom walks, cross-country skiing) or another organized exercise opportunity. More than 40% of people over the age of 60 participated in a socio-cultural opportunity sponsored by ACOA or offered by another organization in the community.

The Advisory Committee on Aging made an effort to approach the 2019 process evaluation and updated assessment without pre-conceived ideas about what Bowdoinham’s older residents currently identify as strengths and weaknesses of the community for aging. Data about the core indicators of the community’s age friendliness provided a broad overview of aging in Bowdoinham. Seven years into its age friendly journey, ACOA wanted to learn what residents see as the benefits of aging in Bowdoinham and what they think the town should do to increase its age friendliness. Two focus groups were convened—one on a weekday morning and one on a weekday evening. Members of the focus groups shared their desires to grow older in Bowdoinham. Participants were proud of Bowdoinham’s reputation as a good place to live and a place that welcomes people who move into town from other places.

Among the strengths of Bowdoinham identified by residents in the focus groups were:

1. A positive attitude toward older people and their contributions to Bowdoinham.
2. The community tradition of neighbor-helping-neighbor.
3. Opportunities to engage in meaningful volunteer work.
4. Activity and Resource list, produced by ACOA, that keeps residents aware of activities in town and nearby.
5. ACOA-sponsored social and recreational opportunities that give residents a chance to meet neighbors who share their interests.
6. Rides in Neighbors Cars, a volunteer driver transportation program
7. Handy Brigade, a volunteer home chore and repair program that is sponsored by the Masons

Items 4 and 5 above were instigated by ACOA in response to focus groups held in 2012 as part of the Comprehensive Planning Process for the town. ACOA has been distributing monthly activity and resource lists, offering recreational opportunities for different interests and fitness levels, providing a bi-monthly hot meal and educational program in space donated by the Bowdoinham Baptist Church, and
sponsoring the Shipmates Senior Club, open three hours each Thursday in space donated by Merrymeeting Hall, our community center. These efforts have been met with enthusiasm.

The primary barriers to aging in the community identified were:

1. Accessibility to town services, public spaces, and other buildings open to the public by residents with mobility limitations that require use of a walker or wheelchair.
2. Home-based care.
3. Care Partner support.
4. Availability of housing options for residents who wanted to age in the community, even when they were no longer able to maintain their current homes.
5. Finding paid help for outside chores, basic home maintenance, and home modification.

These are challenging barriers. Addressing them will require significant time and resources from ACOA, Bowdoinham town government, and residents of all ages. All across the United States, cities and towns are waking up to the need to create age friendly communities that will benefit residents of all ages. Bowdoinham’s culture of self-help will inspire us. Bowdoinham residents banded together to build a new elementary school with volunteer labor and materials paid for by chicken barbeques We did that for our children sixty years ago. In the years to come, we will find a way to keep older residents actively engaged in the community, participating in the recreational and social opportunities that they enjoy; and thriving in the home of their choice. The Advisory Committee on Aging looks forward to continuing to work with the Select board and with town residents to make Bowdoinham the age friendliest town in Maine!
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Acknowledgements

The Town of Bowdoinham’s Advisory Committee on Aging (ACOA) were primary contributing partners on all aspects of the project. Bob Curtis, Chair of ACOA’s Safety and Accessibility sub-committee, worked with Nancy Curtis, Dale Moser, and Diana Moser to complete an assessment of buildings and outdoor spaces open to town residents. George Christopher, Martha Cushing, Linda Jariz, Kathy Pszczolkowski, Maureen Booth, and Gracia Woodward reviewed the report to insure that it provided a picture of aging in Bowdoinham that reflected their experience working with older residents as well as the character of the community. Their input was invaluable for bringing the update of the needs assessment to a successful conclusion.

The Advisory Committee on Aging would like to thank the 18 Bowdoinham residents who shared their experiences and opinions about aging in Bowdoinham at the community focus group. ACOA appreciates the cooperation of Town officials who shared their insight and expertise throughout the data collection phase of the study. Tom Woodin, Town Manager; Nicole Briand, Director of Community Planning and Economic Development, Darren Carey, Code Enforcement Officer; Allen Aker, Recreation Department Director; and Pam Ross, Town Clerk, provided invaluable data and insight for the study. ACOA also thanks Rodney Chute, Deacon, Bowdoinham Second Baptist Church; Pastor Christina Couch, Church of the Nazarene; Kate Cutko, Library Director; Stephanie Dustin, Instructor, Cathance Fitness Center; Jim McGee, President, Bowdoinham Snowbirds Club; Lealeah Parker, Manager, Merrymeeting Arts Center; Joanne Savoie, Bowdoinham Food Pantry; Elizabeth Steen, Treasurer Bowdoinham Historical Society/Merrymeeting Hall; and Suzie Uhle, President of the Ladies Auxiliary; each of whom graciously agreed to provide valuable information for the study.

BOWDOINHAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AGING

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Bowdoinham

Bowdoinham, Maine, is home to approximately 2,889 residents (1) spread across a 39.2 square mile area with eight miles bordering on Merrymeeting Bay and the Cathance River. The median age is 43.7 (US Census, 2010); 574 (19.8%) residents have reached age 60 or more.

The majority of the population is white, non-Hispanic (94.4%) and well educated, with 42% of residents between the ages of 25-64 and 37.4% of residents aged 60 and over participating in some education beyond high school (2). Despite the lack of racial diversity, Bowdoinham prides itself on the occupational diversity of its residents—from blue collar workers to managers and professionals, from farmers to artists and craftspeople. Bowdoinham is home to many special interest groups that satisfy a diversity of interests—from the Bowdoinham Historical Society to the Snowbirds, a snowmobile club.

Bowdoinham includes residents who have lived a lifetime in Bowdoinham and residents who have moved from other places to enjoy the rural lifestyle. The 24 operating farms in the community are a source of pride. About 18.2% of Bowdoinham’s land area is used for farming and almost 56% of the land is forested (3). The Town’s location on Merrymeeting Bay, its rivers and forested land provide many recreational opportunities—including hiking, boating, kayaking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, hunting, fishing and bicycling.

Bowdoinham has a distinct town center, commonly known as “the village” (see Appendix 1), which includes single and multi-family housing, businesses, and municipal services. Bowdoinham’s village area includes a restaurant, grocery store, gas station, arts center, craft school and other small businesses located near the Mailly Waterfront Park. The fire station, Coombs Municipal Building (housing the Town office and library), Bowdoinham Community School, Town Hall (used for concerts and other gatherings), Second Baptist Church, Bowdoinham Church of the Nazarene, three voluntary associations (Merrymeeting Grange, Bowdoinham Masonic Hall, and Knights of Pythias) and a small airport are all within a one-mile radius of the Town center. Although Bowdoinham has no industrial base, local encouragement of small businesses and entrepreneurship is evidenced by the large number (91) of businesses and sole proprietorships listed on the Town website. About 8.5% of the working age population (aged 16+) work primarily from home; 4.5% are employed within the Town limits. The remaining 87% of workers commute to work in other municipalities (4).

The majority (49.1%) of Bowdoinham residents who have reached the age of 65 live with a spouse or partner in a single-family home. However, multi-generational households are also common. Of the 269 households that included at least one resident aged 65 or older, 19.3% included a grand-child (5). The community—with its many recreational and social opportunities—also provides an ideal setting for the 32% of older households occupied by a resident living alone.
Community residents are known for their civic engagement and volunteerism. For example, the eight volunteers of the Town’s Emergency Medical Services provide “first responder” services to assist residents until an ambulance arrives. The Bowdoinham library receives approximately 44% of its annual budget from the Town. Much of the remainder is earned through its annual plant sale, organized by the Friends of Library with over 1000 hours of volunteer time. The sale, the longest continuously running plant sale in Maine, attracts gardeners from miles around. It is more than a fund-raiser, it is a community building event. The residents of Bowdoinham pride themselves on their can-do attitude as well as a culture of neighbor-helping-neighbor. For residents who struggle financially, a food pantry is open twice a week and a “clothing closet” is open one day a month for residents to purchase clothing at a nominal fee (currently $1/bag). Donated clothing is also sorted and made available to anyone who wants it at the Recycling Barn, commonly referred to as the “Barn of Opportunity”.

Although Bowdoinham offers many of the services and consumer goods needed by residents, some are not available in the community. Bowdoinham is an easy commute by car to larger communities with a wealth of services, shopping, and cultural opportunities. The nearest hospital is 12 miles away, in Brunswick, Maine. Medical services (e.g. primary care physicians, physical therapists, long-term care facilities, supportive housing options, and counselors) are available in the neighboring town of Richmond as well as in nearby Topsham (distance: 7 miles). The Town is centrally located with Augusta, the state’s capitol 25 miles away, Portland, the state’s largest city, 33 miles away and Lewiston, the state’s second-largest city, 18 miles away.
The Advisory Committee on Aging

In 2012, as part of the comprehensive planning process, the Town of Bowdoinham completed an assessment of services and supports needed for older residents to age optimally in the community (http://www.bowdoinham.com/needs-assessment-aging-bowdoinham). The assessment identified five key areas for improvement:

1. information about community activities and how to access services;
2. coordinated leadership and advocacy for Bowdoinham’s older residents;
3. transportation alternatives for residents who are no longer comfortable driving;
4. supportive housing for older adults and availability of affordable home repair and home modification services; and,
5. central place where older adults and other community members can gather for activities.

In response to the needs assessment, the Town of Bowdoinham Select Board appointed the Advisory Committee on Aging (ACOA) to address issues and concerns of older residents. Bowdoinham became the first community in Maine to be accepted as part of the WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities in 2014 (http://agefriendlyworld.org/en/property/bowdoinham/).

The mission of the Advisory Committee on Aging (ACOA) is to:

• Increase the services and programs that are available to residents of all ages and abilities in Bowdoinham by working with volunteer groups and partnering with local and regional organizations.
• Provide activities geared to keeping the residents of Bowdoinham healthy, active, and engaged in our community.
• Advise the Town of Bowdoinham Select Board about infrastructure and policy that will make it easier and safer for residents of Bowdoinham to thrive at all stages of life, regardless of ability.

The vision of ACOA is to foster changes in the physical and social environment that will make Bowdoinham a better place to live for people of all ages, especially for older adults and for people living with disabilities.

Core Values

ACOA is committed to a set of principles that guide the Age-Friendly work in Bowdoinham:

• Infrastructure changes, programs, and services are coordinated by ACOA in response to what older residents tell us they want and need to thrive in the community. No new activities, services, or other changes will be planned without input from older residents.
• ACOA builds on Bowdoinham’s resources and assets to make the community a better place to live for people of all ages.
• ACOA partners with regional and local organizations to promote, support, and grow the services available to Bowdoinham residents.
• When gaps in services are identified, ACOA fosters volunteer groups interested in tackling the challenges. We provide needed technical support, no-cost marketing, and volunteer recruitment to those volunteer groups.
• Any activities sponsored by or offered through ACOA will be available to all residents of Bowdoinham regardless of ability to pay.

The role of ACOA in Municipal Government and in the Community

ACOA members are appointed by the Select Board to serve a term of three years that can be renewed, for an additional term if the ACOA member wants to continue working on the committee. Three officers—the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary—are voted on yearly. Terms are for one year, starting July 1 and ending on June 30. Bylaws can be viewed by going to: http://www.bowdoinham.com/advisory-committee-aging-bylaws-0

ACOA has two primary functions: (1) advocating for the inclusion of residents of all ages in town life; and, (2) sponsoring programs to enhance the lives of adults at all levels of physical and cognitive ability.

History of ACOA

In 2012, as part of the comprehensive planning process, the Town of Bowdoinham completed an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the community to ensure that residents have the opportunity to age optimally in the community (http://www.bowdoinham.com/needs-assessment-aging-bowdoinham). In response to the findings, the Town of Bowdoinham Select Board appointed the ACOA to address issues and concerns of older residents.

Bowdoinham was the first community in Maine accepted as part of the WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities in 2014 (agefriendlyworld.org/en/property/bowdoinham/). Later that year, ACOA updated the Age-Friendly assessment as part of its participation in the WHO pilot of its Guide to Measuring the Age-friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators. Bowdoinham was one of three communities in the United States and 13 communities worldwide asked to pilot the guide.

ACOA consists of up to 11 members and two alternates appointed by the Select Board. The by-laws stipulate that all members must be residents of the Town of Bowdoinham. The committee meets monthly. Meetings are recorded and minutes from the meeting are shared on the town website (http://www.bowdoinham.com/aging-bowdoinham-committee-minutes-0).

The Committee cannot accomplish all of the Age-Friendly work using only ACOA members. Task forces are formed to focus on specific initiatives of ACOA. Task force leaders and members may or may not be members of ACOA. Monthly reports of task force activities are made at the ACOA meeting.

Current ACOA sub-committees and designated chair:

• Accessibility (Co-Chaired by Robert Curtis and Maureen Booth)
• Age-Friendly Business and Organizations (Chaired by Maureen Booth)
• Celebrate Bowdoinham and other Community Events (Chaired by Rachelle Tome)
• Communication and Marketing (Chaired by Patricia Melander)
• Community Luncheons (Co-Chaired by Dianah Moser and George Oliver)
• Health and Wellness (Chaired by Kathy Pszczolkowski)
  o Bowdoinham Outdoors (Co-Chaired by Linda Jariz and Dick Rose)
  o Wellness Fair (Kathy Pszczolkowski)
  o Activities (e.g. Line Dance, Yoga, Matter of Balance, Tai-Chi, etc.)
• Resources (Chaired by Rachel Evans)
• Social Programming for Older Residents (Co-Chaired by Diana Moser and Theresa Turgeon)
  o Arts Connections (Gracia Woodward)
  o Bridge (Martha Cushing)
  o Craft Thursdays: (Nan Curtis)
  o Cribbage (Theresa Turgeon)
  o Coffee Café (Diana Moser)
  o Shipmates Senior Club (Theresa Turgeon)

Special task forces are formed as needed to work together on special events, such as the 2017 World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event.

Although they are not task forces of ACOA, three partner volunteer groups also provide monthly reports to ACOA:

• The Village Lodge Handy Brigade (ACOA liaison, Joan Smith)
• Rides in Neighbors Cars (ACOA liaison, Joan Smith)
• Bowdoinham Food Pantry (ACOA liaison, Joanne Savoie)
• Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative (ACOA liaison, Linda Jariz)
• Bowdoinham Historical Society/Merrymeeting Hall Community Center (ACOA liaison, Theresa Turgeon)
Summary of Age-Friendly Assessment, Updates, Planning, and Evaluation Process

The eight domains of livability--accessibility of outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation, communication and information, and community support and health services--were used to frame Bowdoinham’s Age-Friendly planning process. In 2012, as part of the update to the Bowdoinham Comprehensive Plan, the town completed an Age-Friendly assessment to identify the strengths of the community to meet the needs of residents at all stages of life and to learn what aspects of the community needed improvement so that people have access to the community supports they need to maximize their health and well-being. In 2014, Age-Friendly Bowdoinham participated in a pilot of the WHO Guide to Measuring the Age-friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators. For consistency, the Guide was used again in 2019 when ACOA completed the latest update to the assessment.

This process evaluation is of the action plan developed by members of ACOA during the first part of 2016 (February—August, 2016). Data from program evaluations, the 2012 Age-Friendly assessment, 2014 WHO pilot data, and the 2015 Age-Friendly Library Assessment were the basis of the action plan. Reports from all data gathering efforts are available online at: [http://www.bowdoinham.com/aging-bowdoinham-committee](http://www.bowdoinham.com/aging-bowdoinham-committee).

ACOA Strategic Planning Meetings

On Monday, February 13, 2016 from 1:00 to 5:00, ACOA members met for a retreat. At the meeting, the committee:

- Reviewed and revised Mission, Vision, and Value statements
- Updated existing goals and developed new goals based on assessment reports and other data. A list of the goals is included under each domain in this plan (see below).
- Discussed current subcommittee responsibilities
- Began the process of developing action steps and metrics to measure success.

All members remained involved in developing a final action plan.

As part of the regularly scheduled monthly ACOA meetings in March, April, May, June, and July action steps were developed in one or more domain.

A representative of each sub-committee served on ACOA throughout the planning process. Sub-committee chairs ensure that the action steps adopted by ACOA reflected the feedback that each sub-committee has received from the community and fell within the capacity of the volunteers serving on the sub-committee to effect change. All ACOA members and all sub-committee members are volunteers. At the August 21, 2016 ACOA meeting, the completed plan was reviewed. It was unanimously approved by ACOA.
Oversight Mechanism:

- At each meeting, monthly reports of the sub-committees that organize the Age-Friendly work will be reviewed by the ACOA members. Progress will be noted and necessary adjustments made to the plan by ACOA members after hearing the committee reports.
- The action plan will be revised annually; each monthly meeting of ACOA will include a special focus on one of the eight domain plans to update the plan and discuss progress toward goals.

Process Evaluation

In 2019, the Advisory Committee updated the 2012 and 2014 Age-Friendly assessments using the WHO Guide to Measuring the Age-friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators. The data was included in the domain descriptions and, thus, informed the process evaluation of the 2016 action plan. Data about the core indicators of the community’s age friendliness provided a broad overview of aging in Bowdoinham. ACOA wanted to hear directly from folks what they identified as key features of aging in the community by learning what residents identified as the benefits of aging in Bowdoinham and what they thought the town should do to increase its age friendliness. Members of the focus group clearly shared their desire to age in Bowdoinham. Participants were proud of Bowdoinham’s reputation as a good place to live and a place that welcomes people who move into town from other places.

Among the strengths of Bowdoinham identified by residents in the focus group conducted during the 2019 update to the Age-Friendly Assessment:

1. A positive attitude toward people of all ages and their contributions to Bowdoinham.
2. The community tradition of neighbor-helping-neighbor.
3. Opportunities to engage in meaningful volunteer work.
4. ACOA monthly activity and resource list that keeps folks aware of activities in town and nearby.
5. ACOA-sponsored social and recreational opportunities that give older residents a chance to meet neighbors who share their interests.

Items 4 and 5 above are a direct result of the work done by ACOA in response to 2012 Age-Friendly Assessment. ACOA distributes a monthly activity and resource list, provides recreational opportunities for different interests and fitness levels, and sponsors social opportunities, primarily through the Coffee Café that is open three hours/week in space donated by the Bowdoinham Fire Department. These efforts have been met with enthusiasm.

The primary barriers to aging in the community identified were:

1. Accessibility to town services, public spaces, and other buildings open to the public by residents with mobility limitations that require use of a walker or wheelchair.
2. Care Partner support.
3. Opportunities for alternative transportation to meet the needs of residents who are no longer able to drive or who chose not to drive.
4. Availability of housing options for residents who wanted to age in the community, even when they were no longer able to maintain their current homes.
5. Finding someone to help with chores in the home and with basic home maintenance.
2014 Age-Friendly Action Plan and 2019 Outcomes

Physical Environment

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Accessibility to public buildings and to outdoor spaces have a major influence on the independence, mobility, and quality of life of people of every age. Safe accessible infrastructure is a key aspect of building an Age-Friendly community. Outdoor spaces and buildings—including sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, trails, outdoor spaces where community wide events are held, and buildings open to the public—should accommodate a range of physical ability and support the ability to age in the community.

Walkability. Bowdoinham has a central, historic village area where homes and businesses are located within close proximity to one another. The majority of municipally and privately owned public spaces are located in the historic village area—the Town offices, Bowdoinham Public Library, Mailly Waterfront Park, the Merrymeeting Arts Center, Merrymeeting Hall (our newly developing community center), and several small businesses. In 2010, Bowdoinham adopted a Walkable Village Plan to repair existing sidewalks and invest in additional sidewalks in order to encourage walking throughout the village district and to bring foot traffic into the heart of the village district. By 2019, approximately 90% of the historic village district had sidewalks. However, only one-third of sidewalks (and no street crossing) are wide enough to be accessible to a person using a wheelchair or walker and none are accessible to a person with vision impairment.

ACOA is advocating for improvements to a crosswalk that takes people from the paved sidewalk on Main Street to Mailly waterfront park. The Three Robbers Pub, Bowdoinham Food Pantry, and Skate Park. Currently, there is no crosswalk at that site. ACOA is working with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition of Maine and Maine Department of Transportation to develop a safe crossing.

Accessibility of Public Spaces and Buildings. About 71% of publicly owned buildings and 54% of privately owned buildings that are open to the public are wheelchair accessible (see Table 3, Appendix 4).

Town-owned buildings are generally accessible to a person using a walker or wheelchair. A significant exception is the Town office, housed on the first floor of the Coombs Municipal Building. The Coombs Municipal Building was built in the early 20th century. The historic building is beloved by the community but has many barriers for a person using a wheelchair or walker. For example, door thresholds are higher than 3/4”; there are step-ups between offices that cannot be maneuvered by a person using a wheelchair. Special accommodations can be made to meet someone in one of the two meeting rooms on the second floor of the Coombs Building (ramp accessible, with an ADA compliant door leading into the building). In 2014, one of the challenges of using the ramp was that only one parking space was available for people using the ramp to visit the library, use the public Wi-Fi or desktop computer available in the business center, or have a meeting in
one of the public rooms. It was unclear if the town owned land that would allow creation of a 6-vehicle parking lot near the ramp entrance. ACOA worked with the Town Select board, town manager, and Code Enforcement Officer to establish the claim and continues to advocate for creation of the parking lot. ACOA is also working with the Bowdoinham Public Library to refurbish the existing second floor entrance to create a welcoming, convenient and safe entrance that will become the main entrance to the library and to public meeting rooms.

In 2012, ACOA presented the Town Manager with a list of changes to increase accessibility of the Coombs Building. Many recommendations were implemented—cleared hallways of clutter, replaced round door knobs with lever knobs, increased lighting, insured that the ramp is clear of obstructions—trash, leaves and snow, improved the safety of the exterior stairway that leads to second floor at the front of the Coombs building (added heated stair treds and a central railing), installed a doorbell that can be heard in the town offices when someone needs to gain access to the ramp entrance door (kept locked at all times), and installed ADA compliant doors at the ramp entrance and front door. In addition, the Bowdoinham Public library has made several changes to make the space more usable for people living with a disability. The organization has increased the number of talking books (and players) and large-print books, added ADA signage, created a welcoming quiet room for people who want to read quietly, placed a sign with town office and library hours at the ramp entrance, increased lighting, and moved the library return box from the top of the exterior stairs to parking lot level. To raise awareness of the accessibility improvements to the Combs Building, ACOA co-sponsors activities with Bowdoinham Public Library and the Bowdoinham Historical Society that are held in the building. ACOA will continue to work with both organizations to offer social and life-long learning opportunities in the space.

About half of privately owned buildings that are frequented by the public are accessible to a person using a wheelchair (see Table 3 in Appendix 4). Places of worship and organizations that offered lifelong learning opportunities—the Long Branch School and Merrymeeting Arts Center—were the most accessible. Stores and voluntary associations were the least accessible.

Mailly Waterfront Park is the site of a most town-sponsored events. Recent improvements include the creation of wide paths that accommodate a person using a wheelchair or a walker and accessible picnic benches. For people using walkers and people who are unsteady on their feet, going over the uneven turf between the paths and the picnic tables remains a barrier to enjoying a picnic lunch at the park. The lack of bench-style seating in the park or in the gazebo is a barrier for people who have difficulty standing for a long time. ACOA will continue to advocate for accessibility of Mailly Waterfront Park and to raise awareness of the accessibility features by promoting events scheduled in the park.
In 2017, the Town voted to relocate the Public Works Department from the waterfront area adjoining Mailly Waterfront Park to a new location. As part of the re-location, Bowdoinham has started a revitalization plan that includes a skate park as well as accessible kayaking, walking trails, and the addition of more accessible picnic benches. ACOA will continue to work closely with the town as it implements these changes.

**Accessible Parking.** Accessible parking is an important aspect of building an Age-Friendly community that encourages inclusion of people of all abilities in all aspects of community life. Of the 40 municipal parking spaces in Bowdoinham, 7 (17.5%) are designated for people with disabilities. Most of the publicly accessible businesses and organizations in the historic village area of Bowdoinham have two or more designated parking spaces for people with a disability but not all spaces are clearly marked.

There are two municipal parking lots in Bowdoinham. The municipal parking lot near Mailly Waterfront Park includes 29 spaces; four spaces are designated for people with disabilities. The Coombs Municipal Building, which houses the Town Office and Bowdoinham Public Library, has 10 parking spaces, two of which are designated handicapped spaces. Currently, there is one parking space at the ramp entrance behind the Coombs building. If someone who needs the ramp drives themselves to the library and leaves the car in the allocated space, other people who need the ramp have to wait for the person occupying the space to leave or come back another time. ACOA will continue to work with the Town to create better parking options for those who need to use the ramp.
Domain Plan: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Goal: To increase use of public events, outdoor spaces, and community events by adults of all ages and abilities in Bowdoinham.

Collaborating Organization(s): Town Planning Department, Bowdoinham Public Library, Bowdoinham Recreation Department, and Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative

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<tr>
<td>Continue to advocate for accessibility of Mailly Waterfront Park through the Waterfront Revitalization Project.</td>
<td>1. Advocate for continuation of accessible paths during revitalization of the Waterfront; 2. Advocate for Accessible picnic benches and adult outdoor gym equipment in the revitalized area. 3. Advocate for Kayak condo and expanding accessible access as part of the re-vitalization project. 4. Advocate for benches in Mailly Waterfront Park</td>
<td>Resources: • Partnership with Recreation and Planning Depts, • Good will of Select Board. Barrier: Need to raise funds for accessibility features.</td>
<td>A count of improvements made. After completion of revitalization project, monitor usage and satisfaction/usability of the facilities.</td>
<td>ACOA Accessibility Committee Partners: Recreation and Planning Departments.</td>
<td>Implementation started, 2015. Goal is ongoing. One member of ACOA is appointed to the Bowdoinham Community Development Committee to advocate for including an accessibility lens in changes as they are made.</td>
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Progress:

Action Step 1: The extension of the waterfront park at the site of the Fertilizer Factory (and then Public Works Dept.) currently includes one wide, gravel path that is accessible. There has been significant public support for the project and for making the area fully accessible. The cost of financing the new public works department and increase in the MSAD 75 school budget have put the project on hold until funds can be raised. ACOA will continue to advocate for accessible paths. One member of ACOA is appointed to sit on the Recreation Department Committee that oversees the project.

Action Step 2: Two additional accessible picnic tables have been added to Mailly Waterfront park. Adult exercise equipment cannot be added to the park until money is raised to fully fund the project. ACOA will continue to advocate for the addition of adult exercise equipment with the park is fully developed.

Action Step 3: Two Kayak condos have been established at the waterfront park. Funds were raised by Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative. The condos are maintained by the Bowdoinham Recreation Department. Accessible access to Merrymeeting Bay for people using kayaks remains limited. The project is on hold until the park is fully developed. ACOA continues to advocate for accessible access.

Action Step 4: Seven benches have been added to Mailly Waterfront park and to the downtown village area. Funds were raised by Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative. The benches were built and placed by Mark Favreau, a local builder/contractor Placement—Near the Fire Department, at
Merrymeeting Hall, at the Canon, at Bowdoinham Central School, in front of the old town office, and 2 along the path from the boat launch area to the newly developing area of the waterfront park. The action step is considered completed but ACOA may advocate for additional benches in the new section of the waterfront park when it is completed.

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<tr>
<td>Increase awareness and use of existing accessibility features of Mailly Waterfront Park</td>
<td>1. Annual participation in Celebrate Bowdoinham at Mailly Waterfront Park. 2. Promote use of the waterfront thru Bowdoinham Outdoors group. 3. Advocate for handicapped parking during Celebrate parade 4. Publicize events for adults, such as the Summer Concert Series, on the Facebook page, in monthly calendar, and in “This week in Bowdoinham” e-posts.</td>
<td>Resources: - FaceBook page, - Monthly Activity and Resource Calendar, - “This week in Bowdoinham” e-newsletter.</td>
<td>Count of people participating in B-Ham Outdoors waterfront events and interact with ACOA at “Celebrate Bowdoinham”. Count of people who use accessible parade parking. Likes and shares for FB posts of events at Mailly Waterfront Park.</td>
<td>ACOA Communications &amp; Marketing; Celebrate Committees; Health and Wellness, B-Ham Outdoors Partners: Bowdoinham Planning Dept.; Bowdoinham Recreation Department, Bowdoinham Historical Society</td>
<td>Implementation started, 2015. Goal is ongoing. One member of ACOA is appointed to the Bowdoinham Recreation Committee to advocate for accessible activities at the waterfront.</td>
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Progress:

Action Step 1: ACOA has participates in the annual Celebrate Bowdoinham event. ACOA displays the adaptive tool kit and other resources. In 2016, a healthcare fortune teller was added to promote the ACOA annual wellness fair. Since 2017, ACOA has sponsored a storytelling booth for residents of all ages to share tales of their life in Bowdoinham. The stories are archived by the Bowdoinham Historical Society. The ACOA tent includes space for people of all ages to gather to socialize or play games. The booth has been visited by: 2014—56 people; 2015—72 people; 2016—88 people; 2017—162 people (17 stories were recorded); 2018—79 people (7 stories recorded); 2019—169 people (22 stories recorded by people ranging in age from 4 to 98).

Action Step 2: Bowdoinham Outdoors group (a sub-committee of the health and wellness committee, ACOA) brings together people for snow shoeing at the park and on Merrymeeting Bay during the winter months. In the summer, the group organizes, on average, a weekly kayak trip for adults. Events are placed on the Age-Friendly Bowdoinham FB page, The Bowdoinham Recreation FB page, and on the Bowdoinham Friends and Family Facebook page. ACOA has found that using the Bowdoinham Friends and Family group is more effective than promoting on the Age-Friendly FB page or on the town Recreation Dept. FB page. A total of 36 different people participated in the snow shoe hikes in 2019 (some people participated in multiple hikes) and 43 joined a kayaking trip.

Action Step 3: An area has been opened at the Alcove (old post office) so that five people can watch the annual parade from their cars. Since 2015, when the change was made, all of the spaces have been occupied during the parade. ACOA continues to work with the Celebrate committee to expand accessible parking for the parade.
Action Step 4: The Age-Friendly Bowdoinham FB page currently has a following of 285. It is used to publicize events and they are also shared on partner FB pages (Bowdoinham Recreation Dept, Bowdoinham Public Library, Bowdoinham Historical Society) and on Bowdoinham Friends and Family. The monthly calendar includes listings of all events planned by ACOA and by ACOA working in partnership with other organizations. The calendar is sent out electronically in weekly e-updates and a hard copy is distributed to the 38 residents who have requested it because they do not have access to the electronic updates.

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<td>Increase awareness of accessibility changes to the Coombs Municipal Building &amp; advocate for additional changes</td>
<td>1. Continue to advocate for improved ramp parking</td>
<td>Resource: Partnership with the Bowdoinham Public Library and Bowdoinham Historical Society.</td>
<td>Improvements made to ramp parking. Number of adult programs co-sponsored with the historical society and/or library</td>
<td>ACOA Accessibility Committee; Coffee Café (Activities) Partners: Bowdoinham Public Library and Bowdoinham Historical Society</td>
<td>Implementation started, 2015.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Work with the library to maintain and improve opportunities for adults of all ages and abilities to enjoy the library.</td>
<td>Barrier: Legal barriers (prop. ownership) to improve ramp access.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal is ongoing. One ACOA member sits on the town building committee to advocate for accessibility improvements to the town offices—whether the town decides to rehab the existing structure or build new.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Continue to co-sponsor events with the library and historical society.</td>
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Progress:

Action Step 1: Parking to use the ramp and ADA entrance to the library and public meeting rooms continues to be limited to one car. ACOA has worked with the town to establish that the municipality owns land adjacent to the Coombs Municipal Building that could be used to develop a six-car parking lot and, thus, expand access to the accessible entrance to the library. This action step has not been completed. Work is ongoing.

Action Step 2: In 2015, ACOA partnered with the Bowdoinham Public library to learn what older residents of Bowdoinham need to enjoy the best possible use of the library. The assessment showed that access was a significant barrier to people participating in library activities. A task force was formed to develop a way to enhance accessibility of the library. An architect was contracted to develop plans. The plans were presented to the town manager. One barrier to implementing the plan is that the first and second floors of the Coombs municipal building will have to be brought into compliance (fire safety). The town owns the building so is financially responsible for those changes. In 2019, the town manager convened a building committee to develop a plan to bring the first-floor town offices into compliance with current fire and safety standards. The committee is chaired by the Chair of the Select Board. The goal is to make recommendations that can be presented to residents at Town Meeting in June 2020. This goal is ongoing. ACOA continues to take an active role advocating for changes in the Coombs Municipal Building to make the library more accessible. ACOA does not have a representative on the town building committee nor is it taking a position as the committee decides whether it will recommend (1) renovating the historical Coombs Municipal Building or (2) developing a new town.
office near the new public works department and post office (at the edge of town). After a decision has been made about the direction the town will take, ACOA will advocate for accessibility features in the town office.

The assessment also showed that people wanted more lifelong learning opportunities and, specifically, technology education. ACOA has worked with the library to develop a monthly speaker series on a wide range of topics of interest to Bowdoinham residents. Technology classes and one-on-one tutoring are offered weekly—from 10-12 on Tuesday.

The Age-Friendly Library assessment found that older people wanted a quiet place in the library—away from the busyness of the main room and children’s hour. The space has been created in the Graduate Room, which also doubles as public meeting space. The space is well-utilized by people who want to read quietly and by craft, book, and special interest groups.

The assessment showed that it would be easier for people to remember when the library is open if the hours were predictable. That change has been implemented.

In addition, a small library has been established in the congregate housing unit on Preble Street and at the food pantry to make it easier for older people to get books. Home delivery is also available. Volunteers from the ACOA Rides In Neighbors Cars program rotate the books at the two small libraries and deliver books to people who cannot get their books at the library.

Action Step 3: ACOA co-sponsors Tech Tuesday with the library as well as a monthly speaker series. Additional events that have been co-sponsored with the Bowdoinham library is a series of “Appy Hour” talks to help people learn their I-Phones (the three-part series was attended by 17 residents), a monthly poetry reading hour for adults (attended by about 16 residents each month), and a monthly classic movie afternoon (attended by 10-30 residents/month). ACOA works with the Bowdoinham Historical Society and other local historians to sponsor a bi-monthly history speaker series that is attended by 50-70 people each month.
**Transportation**

*Community Strengths and Areas for Age-Friendly Work*

Transportation for non-emergency medical needs, errands, and socialization is available through Rides in Neighbors Cars, a volunteer rides program that serves Bowdoinham and Bowdoin. The program receives significant technical support from ACOA but is an independent organization.

Rides in Neighbors Cars is an all-volunteer group of Bowdoin and Bowdoinham residents who provide rides for socialization, shopping, medical appointments, and other errands on an as-needed basis. Payment is not required but riders are encouraged to make a small monetary contribution to cover the volunteer expenses. The organization also does some fund-raising to cover expenses. The primary expense for the group is the cost of a cell phone to take calls and the cost of gas cards. Volunteers are offered gas cards to cover their mileage expenses.

For the first two years that the program operated, there were more volunteers than there were people requesting rides. Needing to rely on others for transportation is avoided by many residents because it means becoming “dependent”. As one ACOA member noted, “even when people know they can call and get a ride for a medical appointment, to go shopping, or to meet a friend—whatever they need a ride for, they don't call”. However, since the beginning of 2017, Rides in Neighbors Cars has seen a significant increase in the number of rides requested and has started to recruit new volunteers for the program.
**Domain Plan: Transportation**

*Goal 1: To provide ongoing help with volunteer recruitment and technical assistance to Rides in Neighbors Cars.*

**Collaborating Organizations: Rides in Neighbors Cars**

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<tr>
<td>To provide assistance for Rides in Neighbors Cars to increase the number of volunteers who provide rides for people through Rides in Neighbors Cars.</td>
<td>1. ACOA will help recruit drivers for the Rides in Neighbors Cars program by: (a) including posts about the work of Rides in Neighbors Cars on the Age-Friendly Bowdoinham Facebook page and (b) inserting information about the program once/year in the bi-monthly ACOA column in the <em>Bowdoinham News</em>. 2. ACOA will provide space for Rides in Neighbors Cars to share information about the program at ACOA-sponsored events, such as the Annual Wellness Fair 3. ACOA will advocate with AARP Safe Driving Program to offer a safe driving class for volunteers and other community residents once/3 years.</td>
<td>Resources:  - Partnership with Rides in Neighbors Cars,  - Age-Friendly Bowdoinham FB  - Bi-monthly column in Bowdoinham News.  - Monthly Calendar of Activities and Events  - Events.</td>
<td>• # FB posts and response (likes, comments).  • Yearly article in <em>Bowdoinham News</em> (Y/N)  • % inc. in volunteers  • AARP Safe Driving Class (y/n).  • Survey of volunteers to learn about their experiences as drivers.</td>
<td>ACOA Publicity Committee working with the Rides in Neighbors Cars.</td>
<td>Implementation started, 2015. Goal is ongoing</td>
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| To provide assistance for Rides in Neighbors Cars to increase the number of residents that sign up with Rides in Neighbors Cars to meet their transportation needs. | 1. ACOA will promote the Rides in Neighbors Cars program as a viable alternative to driving a private vehicle in FB posts and in its column in the bi-monthly Bowdoinham News. 2. ACOA will list Rides in Neighbors Cars as a resource in the monthly activity and resource calendar. 3. ACOA will provides space for Rides in Neighbors Cars to have a table/fund-raise at events sponsored by ACOA. | Resources:  - Partnership with Rides in Neighbors Cars,  - Age-Friendly Bowdoinham FB  - Bi-monthly column in Bowdoinham News.  - Monthly Calendar of Activities and Events  - Events. | • # FB posts and response (likes, comments).  • Inclusion in monthly calendar (Y/N)  • Yearly article in *Bowdoinham News* (Y/N)  • % inc. in people using the service. | ACOA Publicity Committee working with the Rides in Neighbors Cars. | Implementation started, 2015. Goal is ongoing |
Progress:

- # FB posts and response (likes, comments). Weekly FB posts are made on the Bowdoinham Age-Friendly FB page and is liked by 3-4 people. To expand awareness on social media, ACOA develops a monthly Rides in Neighbors cars post on the Bowdoinham Friends and Family page.
- Information about Rides in Neighbors cars is included in the monthly calendar that is emailed or snail mailed to residents. It is also included in the weekly e-update of ACOA and related activities that is distributed by ACOA.
- Yearly article in Bowdoinham News (Y/N). One ACOA article in the bi-monthly Bowdoinham News is dedicated to covering Rides in Neighbors Cars. In addition, each newsletter includes a small ad for Rides in Neighbors Cars.
- % inc. in volunteers. In 2015, Rides in Neighbors Cars had four fully trained volunteer drivers and one volunteer coordinator. In 2019, the number of volunteers has grown to 13 and two volunteers dedicate their time to the administrative aspects of the program.
- % increase in riders. In 2015, 3 residents used Rides in Neighbors cars to meet their need for rides to medical appointments, errands, or social opportunities. In 2019, 37 residents were enrolled in the program. The program reported that, to date, it is has not needed to turn down a requested ride.
- AARP Safe Driving Class (y/n). An in-person AARP Safe Driving class was held in 2018. To bring new volunteers on board, Rides in Neighbors Cars pays for new recruits to take the online class or to attend the AAA Mature Driver Course.
- Survey of volunteers to learn about their experiences as drivers. Surveys of drivers and riders are completed annually by ACOA. Results are available in the Rides in Neighbors cars annual report.
Housing

Community Strengths and Areas for Age-Friendly Work

Home ownership is common in Bowdoinham. The majority of people 60+ live in homes that they own. About 72% of older homeowners have lived in the same home for 20 years or more. There are a limited number of rental units available for Bowdoinham residents 60+ who are no longer able to maintain their own homes or for seasonal workers who work on one of the town’s 24 active farms.

When Bowdoinham residents can no longer live independently and need services and supports that are not available in the community, a move to another town is often necessary. However, a move from Bowdoinham is not always welcome. If people cannot age in their current home, they want to be able to live in an appropriate home in Bowdoinham.

ACOA has also developed supports to keep people who need some help to stay in their homes. During the current action plan, pursuing the creation of housing alternatives was beyond ACOA’s capacity. However, the need is real. In the upcoming five-year plan ACOA will work to formalize an informal home sharing program that has started in the community (with two matches).

ACOA will also continue to administer the rental program it has started for seasonal farm workers. The program provides much-needed income for some of Bowdoinham’s older residents and provides the housing farmers need to attract workers.

Help with home maintenance. In response to the need for help with basic chores and routine maintenance, ACOA provided technical assistance needed for the Village Lodge Masons to develop a volunteer Handy Brigade that provides help with chores, connects people to vetted contractors, and provides project management to older and disabled homeowners that live in Bowdoinham, Richmond, or Bowdoin. Projects have included building ramps, adding a lock to a shed, and managing a modification project to allow a local resident to return home from rehab. ACOA will continue to raise awareness of the service and provide technical advice and administrative support.

Making homes safer. To increase safety in the home, ACOA worked with the Bowdoinham Volunteer Fire Department auxiliary to start a sand bucket program that brings home delivered sand buckets to 37 older residents who are not able, during the winter months, to get their own sand from the Public Works department.

When the Handy Brigade worked with local homeowners they found that many of our homes do not have working smoke detectors, CO detectors, working fire extinguishers, or proper reflective address signs. ACOA is working in partnership with the Bowdoinham Fire Department and Mason’s Handy Brigade to address these issues.

To meet the need for information about devices that can be used in the home or in the car to make life easier for someone living with a disabling condition, the ACOA Accessibility Committee created an accessible tool table. The devices are shown at the Bowdoinham Public library and are available for 3-week loans by anyone (resident or non-resident of Bowdoinham) who would like to try the device in their own environment. ACOA will continue to add tools to the table, based on feedback from residents.
### Domain Plan: Housing

**Goal 1:** To provide information about tools and devices that can make every-day life in the car or at home easier to people in Bowdoinham, Bowdoin & Richmond  
**Collaborating Organizations:** Bowdoinham Public Library; Cote Hardware; UNUM Insurance

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| To maintain and grow Bowdoinham’s Tool Table | 1. Showcase tools at the Annual Wellness Fair & other events (as appropriate).  
2. Create a revolving display of tools at Bowdoinham Public Library;  
3. Work with Cote Hardware to provide local source to buy desired tools;  
4. Work with UNUM to update tool catalog prn. | Resources:  
- Current tool table  
- Partnership with B-Ham Public Library  
- Technical advice from UNUM. | • Monitor how many people are borrowing tools through BPL  
- Y/N Annual Wellness Fair display | Accessibility Committee working with the Bowdoinham Public Library and Cote Hardware | Implementation started, 2015.  
Goal is ongoing |

### Progress

Based on feedback and requests from residents, 17 additional tools have been added to the toolkit. Over the past three years, an average of 8 tools have been checked out from the library each week. An unexpected benefit of the tool table is that borrowers represent people from all adult age groups. The can openers have been particularly popular with young moms. Based on community interest in gardening, several tools have been added for adaptive gardening. The tools are chosen and tested by master Gardener Nan Curtis who has continued to be a prolific gardener, even though she needs a wheelchair to facilitate mobility. A special adaptive gardening newsletter is shared as part of the “Not Your Mother’s Garden Club” that grew up around the adaptive gardening project. Regular references are made to the tools available to borrow from the tool table.

The Adaptive tool table is re-located each year for display at the Annual Wellness Fair.
Goal 2: To support an independent organization (the Masons) that is providing volunteer service to help people with simple home maintenance and to contract/manage out home repair and modifications that are beyond the scope of a volunteer-based program.

Collaborating Organizations: Village Lodge Masons (Handy Brigade)

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<td>Ensure that residents know about and have access to the Village Lodge Handy Brigade for help with home chores &amp; maintenance, referral to a contractor, and/or help with project management.</td>
<td>1. ACOA will promote the Handy Brigade program in FB posts and in its column in the bi-monthly Bowdoinham News. 2. ACOA will provide space for the Handy Brigade to have a table/fund-raise at events sponsored by ACOA. 3. Bowdoinham ACOA will offer ongoing technical support (including fielding phone calls and making referrals) to support the work done by the Masons Handy Brigade.</td>
<td>Resources:  - Partnership with Masons Handy Brigade,  - Age-Friendly Bowdoinham FB  - Bi-monthly column in Bowdoinham News.  - Monthly Calendar of Activities and Events  - Events. Barrier: Confusion that Handy Brigade is an ACOA program.</td>
<td>Monitor statistics—  - volunteers,  - number of people requesting services,  - mean number of services needed  - satisfaction with services.</td>
<td>Masons Handy Brigade; ACOA Publicity Committee</td>
<td>Implementation started, 2015. Goal is ongoing</td>
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Progress:
- volunteers—the number of volunteers has grown from 13 when the program started to 39.
- number of people requesting services—A total of 97 households have benefitted from the program in 2017 and 2019. 29 were located in Bowdoin; 17 are Bowdoinham residents; 51 are resident of Richmond.
- mean number of services needed—the mean number of services needed by each household was 3.6
- satisfaction with services—ACOA administered a satisfaction survey of residents who requested services and asked volunteers about their experiences providing the services. Older residents are overwhelmingly happy with the service provided. One participant said, “I was a teacher at the primary school. One of my students was the Mason who came to put in my screen windows. It was wonderful to hear how he is doing and to hear about his family. When he was putting in the screens, he noticed that my doorbell doesn’t work so he changed the battery and it worked! I like the program because it is people we know and trust who come to the house.” Volunteers find the work fulfilling. One volunteer wrote, “This program is why I love living in Bowdoinham. It is a good feeling to be able to help my neighbors with simple chores. The wife loves coming with me to chat with people while the work crew is fixing what needs fixing.” Full results of the annual surveys can be viewed in the annual report of the Mason’s Handy Brigade.
Goal 3: Raising awareness of local and regional housing options.
Collaborating Organizations: Bowdoinham Estates

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| Provide information about Bowdoinham Estates and other housing options available to residents of Bowdoinham | 1. Write one article/year and one FB post per month highlighting housing options for people at different stages of life in Bowdoinham.  
2. Work with Bowdoinham Estate to offer one event/year or an ongoing activity that is open to community residents.  
3. Provide copies of the monthly calendar and event fliers to be distributed at Bowdoinham Estates for all ACOA activities. | Barriers:  
• Willingness of B-Ham Est. Mgmt. to allow community events and activities.  
• Willingness of town residents to attend events at Bowdoinham Estates.  
• Willingness B-Ham Est. residents to participate in activities offered in other places in Bowdoinham | • Article (y/n)  
• FB (y/n)  
• Distribution of calendars and fliers (Y/N)  
• Event/Activity: Y/N  
• Number of participants in event or activity held at Bowdoinham Estates:  
• Percentage increase in participation by residents of Bowdoinham Estates in town activities. | ACOA Activity planning group working with Bowdoinham Estates management | Implementation started, 2015.  
Goal is ongoing |

Progress:
- Article (y/n): Articles have discussed co-housing, downsizing, renting an ADU, and what is required to move to Bowdoinham Estates
- FB (y/n): Monthly FB posts have been scheduled on the Age-Friendly Bowdoinham FB page.
- Distribution of calendars and fliers (Y/N): Each month, calendars are distributed at the monthly dinner hosted by the Historical Society at Bowdoinham Estates
- Event/Activity: Y/N—Activities have included a collage workshop, cribbage/game night, movie night, and a senior prom. The collage workshop, cribbage/game night, and senior prom were attended by people who live in the community, as well as by residents of Bowdoinham Estates. Collage Workshop (2019): 12 Bowdoinham Estates residents, 11 community residents; Cribbage (2019): 5 Bowdoinham Estates residents and 5 community residents; Senior Prom (2019): 17 Bowdoinham Estates residents and 32 Bowdoinham residents (maximum capacity of the community room is 50).
- Percentage increase in participation by residents of Bowdoinham Estates in town activities—The number of community residents attending events at Bowdoinham Estates has nearly doubled. Prior to the initiative, approximately 20 community residents attended the monthly dinners hosted by the Historical Society. The people attending the four annual events hosted by ACOA do not always overlap with the monthly luncheon participants but they occasionally do. Anecdotally, ACOA has heard that older people are more aware of Bowdoinham Estates and the option of moving into one of the apartments if they choose to down-size.
Goal 4: To make it safer for Seniors who need to leave their homes during winter snow and ice seasons by providing buckets of sand.
Collaborating Organizations: Bowdoinham Public Works,

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<td>Start a Sand Buckets home-delivery program for adults who cannot get their own sand from the DPW.</td>
<td>1. Develop volunteer base of people willing to deliver buckets; 2. Develop a list of people who want sand buckets and sand—with contact information 3. Publicize the program on FB, monthly calendar, and in the Sept., Nov., Jan. and March editions of the Bowdoinham News; 4. Request donated buckets from Cote Hardware or Home Dep; 5. Match people who need sand with people who will deliver.</td>
<td>Resource: • Existing Public Sand Pile. Barrier: • Buckets • Volunteers</td>
<td>• Number of volunteers. • Number of participants. • Satisfaction of volunteers and participants</td>
<td>ACOA working with Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Program was implemented in 2017. Goal is ongoing</td>
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Progress: The sand bucket program has been taken on by the Bowdoinham Volunteer Fire Department JR Auxiliary. In 2019, 54 sand buckets were delivered.

Goal 5: To identify housing options for Bowdoinham’s seasonal farm workers (added in 2017).

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<tr>
<td>To develop a program that will allow people with extra space (land for campers, accessory units, or space within their home) to house the growing number of farm workers.</td>
<td>1. Develop policies and procedures that people can use when they rent out space 2. Publicize the program to farmers through BCDI and their newsletter; 3. Publicize the program to Bowdoinham homeowners/landowners through BCDI, town newsletter, Facebook, etc.; 4. Develop a list of residents with space they are willing to rent to seasonal workers; 5. Match seasonal workers with seasonal renters.</td>
<td>Resource: • BCDI (partner on this initiative). • Social Media outlets Barrier: • Resident resistance • Lack of available space</td>
<td>• Number of matches</td>
<td>ACOA working with Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative</td>
<td>Program was implemented in 2017 (first matches were in the 2018 growing season). Goal is ongoing</td>
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Progress: In 2019, 18 seasonal working families found accommodation with Bowdoinham residents. 78% of renters were age 60 or older.
Goal 6: To improve fire and CO safety of older adults living in Bowdoinham
Collaborating Organizations: Bowdoinham Fire Department; Red Cross

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<td>Promote Red Cross Fire Safety Inspection and Smoke Detector Program and provide CO detectors to people who need them</td>
<td>1. Promote Red Cross Program in FB posts and in one bi-monthly <em>Bowdoinham News</em> column/year; 2. Work with BFD to host a resident Fire and CO Safety Day; 3. Acquire 20 CO detectors for initial stock—to be given by BFD to residents who indicate financial need; 4. Work with Cote Hardware to provide proper reflective signs.</td>
<td>Resources:  - Partnership with Bowdoinham Fire Dept,  - Red Cross Program  - Age-Friendly Bowdoinham FB  - Bi-monthly column in Bowdoinham News.  - Monthly Calendar of Activities and Events</td>
<td>• Number of people attending educational event  • Satisfaction with the event.  • Number of people who request CO detectors from the BFD.</td>
<td>ACOA working with Bowdoinham Fire Department and Cote Hardware</td>
<td>Implementation started in 2017. Goal is ongoing. Bi-annually, ACOA and the Handy Brigade will partner with the Bowdoinham Volunteer Fire Department and Auxiliary to install Smoke Detectors and CO Detectors.</td>
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<td>Provide Education and access to Reflective Address Signs</td>
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<td>Barriers:  - Funding for CO Detectors  - Reflective address signs</td>
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**Progress:**
- Number of people attending educational event—79 residents attended a one-time educational event. Speakers were Arthur Frizzle, Bowdoinham Fire Department, and Eric Gagnon, Red Cross.
- Satisfaction with the event. Nine out of ten residents would recommend the event to their neighbors and would attend a follow-up event.
- Number of people who request CO detectors from the BFD: 23
- Number of people who ordered reflective signs through BFD: 589
Social Environment

Social Participation

Community Strengths and Areas for Age-Friendly Work

Opportunities to join in social and cultural activities abound for folks in Bowdoinham. The Town sponsors a series of summer waterfront concerts. The Merrymeeting Arts Center offers exhibits as well as hands-on art programs for adults. The Bowdoinham Historical Society sponsors lectures and special exhibits. Author talks and book clubs are regular offerings of the Bowdoinham Public Library. Combining participation in Merrymeeting Arts Center events, Bowdoinham Historical Society lectures and exhibits, the library book clubs and author talks, and the lifelong learning opportunities sponsored by ACOA, approximately 44% of adults 60+ participate in life-long learning opportunities within Bowdoinham.

Older residents are well represented as board members and fund raisers for the three local cultural organizations—the Bowdoinham Public Library, Merrymeeting Arts Center, and the Historical Society. Almost 3/4 of the library trustees and Friends of the Library, the group involved with fundraising for the library, are over age 60 but less than 15% of regular library patrons are aged 60 or more. To attract a larger number of older patrons, the library partnered with ACOA on an Age-Friendly library initiative.

Leisure-Time Physical Activity in a Group. Bowdoinham is a rural community with a wealth of informal recreational opportunities—hiking, ice-fishing, ski mobiling, kayaking, biking, skate boarding, etc. ACOA has added to the opportunities by offering formal exercise opportunities. About 18.7% (n=102) of Bowdoinham residents 60+ participated in an ACOA-sponsored exercise program (Line Dancing, Carefree Walking, gentle yoga, Bowdoinham Outdoors, Matter of Balance, or Video Exercise group), Silver Sneakers, or Zumba Gold/Zumba Tone.

One of the challenges of offering physical activity programs for adults is that wellness levels are very different for newly retired Baby Boomers who have spent a lifetime exercising at the gym and physically frail residents who are aging with a disability. ACOA will continue to meet the challenge of providing a wide array of physical activity opportunities to meet the needs of all the people who want to participate.

Opportunities for Adults to Participate in Age-Segregated Opportunities. One of the needs identified in the 2012 Age-Friendly assessment was for a central gathering place where adults can gather for social and recreational opportunities. ACOA has used its energies to grow a program of choices that will encourage folks to remain active and engaged in the community in ways that are meaningful to them. Current offerings include Bridge, Cribbage, trips, life-long learning opportunities, and a crafting group. They are offered in available places throughout the community.

Despite the increase in the number of activities for older adults and efforts to increase awareness through various communication channels, the committee has not engaged all of the residents in town. There are people who remain isolated by choice, circumstance, and/or technology. To reduce barriers to involvement in Age-Friendly Bowdoinham activities, ACOA started a weekly “telephone tree” to provide weekly updates (similar to the “this week in Bowdoinham” e-updates) to residents who do not have Internet access and would like to receive a weekly call. The weekly calls will include a list of the activities planned for the week and any other updates that are shared in the “This Week in Bowdoinham” email (see Communication and Information).

Goal 1: To maintain and increase the number of social opportunities available to Bowdoinham residents.

Collaborating Organizations: Merrymeeting Arts Center, Bowdoinham Historical Society, Bowdoinham Public Library, Bowdoinham Fire Dept., Bowdoinham Recreation Dept.

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<td>To provide a wide array of social opportunities that enhance community engagement and prevent social isolation of adults in Bowdoinham</td>
<td>1. Continue to recruit volunteers or local businesses willing to provide social opportunities. 2. Plan social activities in collaboration with Bowdoinham Public Library, Bowdoinham Historical Society, Recreation Dept., and Merrymeeting Arts Center, directed by residents.</td>
<td>Resources:  - Ongoing relationships with local organizations.  - Space donated by Bowdoinham Fire Dept.</td>
<td>Monitor Statistics  - Number of Opportunities (Target one partnership activity with each organization/year)  - Attendance</td>
<td>ACOA Activity Planning Committee Partnerships: Merrymeeting Arts Center; Bowdoinham Historical Society/Merrymeeting Hall, Bowdoinham Public Library, Bowdoinham Fire Department.</td>
<td>Implementation started, 2015. Goal is ongoing.</td>
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Progress:
- 2-3 events have been held each year with the identified partners.
- The number of people attending events that ACOA has partnered with other organizations to offer has varied from 7 to 123
- Satisfaction with the event. We have collected one-page satisfaction surveys from participants after each event. Overall, 9/10 participants felt their time was well invested in the event, would recommend it to a friend, and planned to attend future events. When satisfaction surveys were not good, the events or activities were re-designed to be more appealing to a broader audience.

Additions (sponsored by ACOA but currently acting independently with regular reports of their success to ACOA):
- Bowdoinham has a large number of LGBTQ folks aging in our community. ACOA knew that no one representing that community had attended a focus group in 2012 or 2014. A special focus group was organized by George Oliver and Theresa Turgeon. One identified need was for social support. To answer the need, Joanne Joy and Howard Solomon co-chair “SAGE 6-Rivers”. The group has grown from 8 to 17 regular participants from 2016-2019.
- Aging Alone, a group for people aging alone was started in 2017. Anecdotally, ACOA heard about the growing need for social support among the many older people aging alone in Bowdoinham. The group is organized by co-chairs Patty Melander and Peggy Muir. On average. In 2019, there were 42 members of the group and about 10 people attended the monthly meetings. The group also plans outings to restaurants and organizes outings.
Respect and Social Inclusion

Community Strengths and Areas for Age-Friendly Work

Since 2012, the Town of Bowdoinham has made significant strides toward encouraging residents of all ages and abilities in all aspects of community life. As part of its Comprehensive Planning process, the Town of Bowdoinham made a noteworthy commitment to include older adults and people living with disabilities and appointed ACOA. Since then, the Town planner has implemented many of the changes requested by ACOA to increase accessibility to town sponsored events such as Celebrate Bowdoinham. When a group of residents conducted a safety and accessibility assessment of the Town office, most of the recommended changes (e.g. clearing clutter from hallways, changing doors knobs to lever handles) were implemented immediately by the Town Manager. Partnership requests by ACOA have been welcomed by local organizations, as described throughout this action plan. All of these are signs that Bowdoinham has a positive social attitude toward its older residents.

Although ACOA has done a great deal to include people of all ages and abilities in its activities and in the community, there is more work to be done. ACOA will continue to advocate for inclusion and work with partners to create opportunities for inclusion in town wide activities as well as other aspects of life in Bowdoinham.

Internet access. Dial-up Internet service is available throughout the Town. However, broadband, high-speed Internet service is only available in a few parts of Town. To meet the need for universal Internet access, the Bowdoinham Public Library makes high-speed, wireless Internet available. In addition, the Town Office provides space for a “business center” with Internet access, a desktop computer and space for residents to use their own technology. When the Bowdoinham Public Library and Town Office are closed, Internet access is available from the parking lot shared by the Town Office and library. Thus, all residents, as long as they have portable technology, have access to the Internet, but sometimes it’s only from their cars.

ACOA requested that one member of ACOA be appointed to represent older residents when the town established a broadband committee. Theresa Turgeon represented ACOA on that initiative. In 2019, the Town of Bowdoinham was awarded a ConnectME grant. All areas underserved by high-speed internet will have the opportunity to sign up with Lincoln Communications Initiative (LCI) by the end of 2020. Although the connectivity will be available, ACOA is concerned that some residents may not be able to afford to pay for the program. ACOA is working with the Bowdoinham Public Library to establish a hotspot loan program.

In response to the Age-Friendly Library initiative, the Bowdoinham library started to offer weekly technology lessons for adults. The majority (87.5%) of focus group indicated that they used the Internet for a wide variety of purposes that included email, social networking, banking, shopping, paying bills, playing bridge and other games, watching movies, finding recipes, looking for information, and reading the newspaper.

Including Isolated Residents. During a community-wide food security initiative in 2016, ACOA learned that many of our isolated residents who have mobility limitations miss gardening even more than they miss attending community events. In Bowdoinham, gardening is more than a hobby, it indicates that a
person is productive, able to continue desired pursuits, and is self-sufficient. For this project within the larger effort to reach isolated residents, ACOA applied for and received an AARP Challenge Grant to give elevated beds to isolated residents who use the food pantry and created a garden club open to all residents but tailored to provide information and ideas for the elevated raised beds. In addition, Age-Friendly Bowdoinham sponsored three community meals (spring, summer, fall) featuring fresh produce from the gardens and/or from our local farmers. The meals, like the gardening club, were open to all residents. The goal of the project is inclusion.

Partners for the project include:

- Masons’s Handy Brigade (building and setting up the elevated bed gardens. In year two of the project, Longbranch School took over the work of building the elevated beds, while the Mason’s Handy Brigade continued to install the beds. That has been the pattern moving forward.
- U-Maine extension for education tailored to the elevated bed gardens
- Bowdoinham Public Library—provides reduce cost plants to elevated bed gardeners, based on the inventory remaining after the Annual Plant Sale
- Not Your Mother’s Garden Club developed in year 1 and is now an independent group planning the garden club meetings
- Second Baptist Church and volunteer chefs who provide the space and cooking skills for the quarterly free garden meals
- Bowdoinam Farmer’s Market for coordinating the donation of local farmers for the meals. Special thanks to Left Field Farm, Six Rivers Farms, Stone Cipher Farm, Tender Foot Farm, and Maggies for their generous donations.
## Domain Plan: Respect and Social Inclusion.

### Goal 1: Maintain and increase inclusion in town-wide activities

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| Advocate for ongoing improvement of the accessibility of town-wide events | 1. Create a yearly plan for ACOA involvement with community events.  
2. Annual Celebrate Bowdoinham task force will plan/activities that encourage participation by all ages. | Resources  
- History of town approval & citizen support of changes  
- Changes that have already been made to increase accessibility.  
Barriers:  
- Funding/Cost | • Y/N One-year plan for involvement.  
• Y/N-ACOA presence at Celebrate, and other town-wide activities | Accessibility Committee and Celebrate Task Force  
Goal is ongoing. ACOA is currently advocating for more designated parking for people to watch the Celebrate Parade. All other goals have been accomplished. |

### Progress:

- **Y/N One-year plan for involvement.** In January of each year, ACOA and other town organizations collaborate on a calendar of the major events that will be offered by each organization. The meeting is hosted by Town Planner, Nicole Briand. ACOA participates and advocates for accessibility for all of the events and, when appropriate, agrees to participate.

- **Y/N-ACOA presence at Celebrate, and other town-wide activities.** In the past four years, ACOA has actively participated in Celebrate Bowdoinham, the Smelt Festival, Open Farm/Studio Day, annual Roadside Clean-Up, the Equinoxian, and provides food (raising funds for Rides in Neighbors Cars and the Handy Brigade) for one of the monthly summer concerts.
**Goal 2:** To create an opportunity for isolated older residents to engage in a meaningful task and to participate in a community activity that celebrate their productivity.

**Collaborating Organizations:** Cote Hardware, U-Maine Extension, Master Gardiner, Long Branch School, Village Lodge Handy Brigade

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<td>To create an elevated or vertical bed gardening program for residents who are isolated/cannot participate in on-the-ground gardening.</td>
<td>1. Develop policies and procedures. 2. Identify residents in Bowdoinham, Richmond, and Bowdoin that qualify for the program and are interested. 3. Work with Cote Hardware, Long Branch School, and the Handy Brigade to design and create elevated beds. 4. Work with U-Maine Extension to get a Master Gardener to oversee the project and to provide technical assistance for the gardens 5. Recruit a local volunteer leader for the Garden Club 6. Extension of current scholarship fund for participants who cannot afford to buy seed/equipment needed.</td>
<td>Resource: Strength of partnerships. Barrier: • Need to raise funds for elevated beds. • Attitude against receiving “charity”. • Need to recruit volunteer leader of gardening club</td>
<td>• Number of Elevated Beds distributed to residents. • Number of people attending garden club. • Satisfaction of people with elevated beds • Number of people attending community meals.</td>
<td>ACOA Accessibility and Activity Committees Partners: Masons Handy Brigade, Longbranch School, Bowdoinham Food Pantry, Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative (BCD), Percy’s Garden, Bowdoinham Public Library (adaptive garden tool loan program), Not Your Mother’s Garden Club</td>
<td>Program implemented in 2017. ACOA will continue to promote the elevated bed garden program, partnering with Long Branch and will continue to promote raised bed gardens at Percy’s Community Garden. In addition, we are advocating for raised beds at Fairwinds Farm strawberry fields. Not Your Mother’s Garden Club is functioning independently and organizes the three farm to table community meals that are held each year.</td>
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**Progress**

Bowdoinham ACOA was a winner of a Challenge Grant from AARP. Funds from the grant were used to kickstart an elevated bed garden program. In 2015, six elevated beds were distributed to six households in Bowdoinham, Richmond, and Bowdoin. The Mason’s Handy Brigade assembled and set up the beds. In
2016, the Longbranch School offered to make the elevated beds and sell them to residents at cost. ACOA and the Bowdoinham Food Pantry collaborated on a Sewell Grant that allowed the Food Pantry to purchase ten of the beds for people who could not afford to purchase their own. In 2016, 16 households installed a unit (10 for people with low income, 6 additional units purchased by community members. Between 2017 and 2019, an additional 33 units were provided to older households or people living with a disability.

ACOA also collaborated with BCDI and Percy’s Farm to develop a community garden with some raised beds for people who can drive but cannot garden on the ground. Seven raised beds were developed in the Community Garden.

- Number of Elevated Beds distributed to residents. 55
- Number of people attending garden club. Average attendance at Not Your Mother’s Garden Club varies from 12 to 25 and includes residents from Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, and Richmond. Not Your Mother’s Garden Club was started as part of this initiative but participants now run the club with minimal support from ACOA.
- Satisfaction of people with elevated beds. All of the residents who have received the beds have enjoyed them. The only complaint has been that they are not large enough. Households can purchase additional units through Longbranch and the Masons Handy Brigade will set them up. The total cost to purchase an elevated bed is $12.50
- Number of people attending farm totable community meals. Community meals have been shared three times each year (summer, fall, and Thanksgiving) and have been attended by 50+ participants each time.
Civic Participation and Employment

Community Strengths and Areas for Age-Friendly Work.
Bowdoinham residents pride themselves on their community spirit. There are no lack of neighbors willing to offer a helping hand if someone needs it and no lack of volunteers to provide the many social, cultural, recreational, and educational programs available in Bowdoinham. Municipal volunteers man the fire department, serve on EMS, raise funds for the community, and participate in the many town committees that keep Bowdoinham on a sustainable path.

Older Adult Participation in local decision-making. One measure of participation in local decision making is the proportion of eligible people who voted in the most recent election. About 74.3% of residents aged 60+ have voted within the past four years. Older residents are active participants at the Town’s annual Town Meeting and volunteer on many of the Town committees. ACOA had no goal to increase participation in local decision making listed in the 2014 but continues to encourage people of all ages to be as engaged as possible in our community.

Volunteer Opportunities. Several local organizations depend on volunteers to fulfill their mission. Organizations such as the Bowdoinham Public Library, Bowdoinham Community School, Historical Society and the Merrymeeting Arts Center rely on volunteers for fund-raising as well as to plan and implement programming and events. For example, the Bowdoinham Snowbirds are a club for snowmobile enthusiasts. To keep the trails open, volunteers work countless hours to groom the trails, negotiate passage on private land, etc. Almost 25% of the members of the snowbirds who groom trails are age 60+. Older adults are also active volunteers at the food pantry, serving on volunteer municipal boards, and forming informal helping relationships with their neighbors.

The Bowdoinham Community School has seen significant budget cuts that have forced it to eliminate arts and music programming. The School worked with ACOA to create a revolving list of 8-week long “electives” that are led by community volunteers in everything from agriculture to zoology. Older volunteers teach crochet, gardening, chess—any skill they are willing to share. The program is very popular with the children and with the adults who volunteer.

Older adults clearly represent a valuable resource for the Town of Bowdoinham. During focus groups held as part of the 2019 update to the Age-Friendly assessment, volunteer experiences were described as self-fulfilling and satisfying. Volunteering was confirmation that skills and interests mastered over a lifetime were valued in the community.

ACOA has been a real bonus for me to get involved and to get to know people better. I led a mushroom walk and to have other people interested in something I am interested in was very rewarding and now I am offering an after-school “elective” at the Community School (2019, Age-Friendly assessment update, community focus group)

Providing an array of volunteer opportunities to engage older residents is one way that Bowdoinham is an age friendly community.
## Domain Plan: Respect and Social Inclusion

**Goal 1: Increase awareness of volunteer opportunities available to residents of all ages**

Collaborating Organizations: Handy Brigade, Rides in Neighbors Cars, Bowdoinham Public Library, Fire Dept., Bowdoinham Community School, etc.

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| To provide the information people need to use their talents and interests to work on a diversity of projects that will make the community a better place for all ages. | 1. Regular FB posts about volunteer opportunities (and sharing of partner organization’s requests for volunteers). 2. Once/year column on volunteering in the *Bowdoinham News*. 3. Include requests for volunteers in monthly calendar/resources. | Resources:  
- Bowdoinham FB  
- Bi-monthly column in Bowdoinham News.  
- Monthly Calendar of Activities and Events | Y/N for all steps.  
- Increase in the number of volunteers working with ACOA, Handy Brigade, and Rides in Neighbors Cars | ACOA publicity committee working with local organizations: Handy Brigade, Rides in Neighbors Cars, Bowdoinham Public Library, Fire Dept., Bowdoinham Community School, etc. | Implementation started, 2015.  
Goal is ongoing |

### Progress

- Each week one FB post in Age-Friendly Bowdoinham highlights volunteer opportunities available to support Age-Friendly Bowdoinham or our partner organizations.
- Each year, one column in the Bowdoinham News is dedicated to volunteer appreciation. The article includes information about volunteer opportunities.
- Each of the monthly activity calendars includes a list of volunteer opportunities available with Age-Friendly Bowdoinham and with partner organizations.
- In 2012, there were 4 volunteers actively engaged in the age friendly work. The number has increased each year. By 2016, when this plan was developed, 54 volunteers were engaged in the age friendly work. In 2019, more than 72 people volunteered either regularly, seasonally, or for occasional events.
Goal 2: To make Bowdoinham a more beautiful community.

Collaborating Organizations: Handy Brigade, Rides in Neighbors Cars, Bowdoinham Public Library, Fire Dept., Bowdoinham Community School, etc.

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| Start a Roadside Clean-up Program—an extension of the Town “Green-Up Day” | 1. Create policies and procedures (frequency of clean-ups, area covered, where is trash delivered, items too large for hand pick-up)  
2. Raise funds for and purchase necessary equipment (safety vests, plastic gloves, pokers and garbage bags).  
3. Recruit volunteers.  
4. Create a rotating schedule for volunteers to cover the village area from April 01 to October 31.  
Note: Town of Bowdoinham will provide Garbage Tags. | Resources:  
• Bowdoinham FB  
• Bi-monthly column in Bowdoinham News.  
• Monthly Calendar of Activities and Events  
• Older adults willing to volunteer their time | • Y/N for all steps.  
• Number of volunteers who work on the roadside clean-up campaign. | ACOA  
**Partners:**  
Bowdoinham Department of Public Works | Program was established in 2017, goal is ongoing |

Progress

The Roadside Clean-Up program went into effect for Earth Day 2017. 23 volunteers collected 39 large bags of trash during the clean-up. In 2019, 49 volunteers participated and collected 56 bags of roadside trash. With the larger number of volunteers, ACOA has been able to expand the program from covering the Village area to including all of Main Street, the downtown village area, and two neighborhoods (the Abbey area of East Bowdoinham and the Brooklyn Bridge area of west Bowdoinham).
**Personal Well-Being**

**Communication and Information**

*Community Strengths and Areas for Age-Friendly Work*

One of the significant barriers to aging in Bowdoinham that was identified in the 2012 Age-Friendly Assessment was the lack of information about local social and recreational opportunities and about regional services to help residents.

In 2012, ACOA began to distribute a monthly list of activities and resources. The list is mailed to residents who request it and is available at the Town Office, Three Robbers Pub (local restaurant), Bowdoinham Country Store, and the Bowdoinham Public Library. Three years later, in 2015, residents who participated in the Age-Friendly Library initiative focus group stated that they were confident that they knew where to find information about activities and events within Bowdoinham:

> I like the activity and resource list you (ACOA) send out each month. The calendar is very handy. I put it on the refrigerator. I still forget some things that I want to go to but at least I know they are happening. We plan out what we are going to do at the start of the month, when your calendar comes. *(2015 Age-Friendly Library initiative participant)*

Currently, about 39% of 60+ residents (n=286) receive the monthly postal or e-mail.

Additional changes that have been made to improve communication include:

- This week in Bowdoinham weekly e-letter.
- Bi-monthly column in the Bowdoinham News
- Facebook Page
- Distribution of an Age-Friendly Bowdoinham brochure with information about activities and services of interest to adults and a brief listing of local and regional resources.

In 2016, when this plan was developed, two gaps remained. Although ACOA created a brief listing of regional and local resources that is published in the Age-Friendly Bowdoinham tri-fold, ACOA had not created a local resource list for people to use if they want to find out more about a particular service. The Resource Committee completed the Resource Guide in 2018. AARP Maine printed copies and they were distributed to older residents.

The second gap in the area of communication was the need to provide timely information about local activities and events to people who receive ACOA communication exclusively by postal mail. Postal mail recipients were not aware of last minute changes to the schedule and did not receive the weekly reminders about ongoing activities and special events of interest to adults in Bowdoinham.

To address the need, ACOA established a weekly “This Week in Bowdoinham” phone call for residents who want to receive the calls and are not on our email list. Community volunteers make calls to up to five residents each. They are trained to provide a high-quality service and to direct people to regional resources when needed. The program started in September, 2018.
## Domain: Communication and Information
Also part of the following domains: Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion

### Goal 1: To Increase access to information about the activities and events planned for Age-Friendly Bowdoinham

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| To continue “This Week in Bowdoinham” e-letter and start a program of weekly calls to share “This week in Bowdoinham” information. | 1. Research need for weekly email/phone call  
2. Develop policies and procedures  
3. Recruit volunteers  
4. Train volunteers  
5. Place information about program on FB, monthly mailed calendars, and in Bowdoinham News | This Week in Bowdoinham e-letter. Barriers: Finding volunteers; Finding participants | • Count of volunteers,  
• Count of participants. | ACOA Publicity Committee and Activity Committee | Program was implemented in 2018. Goal is Ongoing |

**Progress:**
Currently, 9 volunteers are trained and provide weekly calls to 33 older residents of Bowdoinham and Bowdoin

### Goal 2: Maintain and Improve the number of ways information about activities and events is available.

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| Continue to make information about activities and events widely available. | 1. Continue to distribute a monthly activity and resource list;  
2. Yearly update of Age-Friendly Bowdoinham brochure;  
3. Contact press with information about special events. | Current Communication Venues. | Information provided (y/n) | Publicity & Marketing Committee | Implementation started, 2015. Goal is ongoing |

**Progress:**
- In 2019, the monthly calendar was distributed to about 39% of Bowdoinham’s older residents.  
- Yearly updates are made to the ACOA brochure in September.  
- The publicity and marketing sub-committee works with a local reporter to increase awareness of our programs and activities.
Goal 3: To increase access to regional services available to help adults living in Bowdoinham when help is needed.

Coordinating Organizations: Bowdoinham Public Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Resources and Barriers</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Committee/Partnership</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To create a resource manual/folder | 1. Research local Services  
2. Create brief resource directory to be distributed with ACOA monthly Activity and Resource list;  
3. Create a detailed "catalog" of services with in-depth information;  
4. Make hard-copy catalog available through the BPL (reference). | Barriers:  
• Time to research material  
• Need to update frequently  
• Publication (online/hard copies) | • Number of guides distributed,  
• Number of times that detailed catalog is consulted in the Bowdoinham Public Library. | Resource Committee Partnerships: Bowdoinham Public Library; MidCoast-Parkview Hospital | Completed in 2018, using AARP Maine template  
Goal is completed. |

Progress:

100 copies of the resource guide were printed by AARP Maine. Five were retained by the Bowdoinham Town Office and by the Bowdoinham Public Library for display. An additional copy is available at Merrymeeting Hall. The remaining 89 were distributed to residents who do not have easy access to the electronic version of the Resource Guide. In 2019, AARP printed an additional 100 copies. They will be included in town welcome baskets when the new resident is 50 or older.

Goal is completed: Updates to the Resource Guide will not be made. Rather, ACOA has developed a refrigerator magnet with basic information (211, AAA, Elder Abuse Prevention, the town office, fire department, Bowdoinham Country Store, Hardware Store, Three Robbers Pub, Bowdoinham Primary School, Food Pantry, Recycling Center, Town Office Number, Farmer’s Market, and Merrymeeting Arts Center). These will be a permanent part of the welcome packets and distributed to residents of all ages. The magnets were sponsored by local businesses that are included on the magnets. Work on the project was transferred to the Bowdoinham Community Development Committee.
Community Support and Health Services

Community Strengths and Areas for Age-Friendly Work

With age, comes the increased risk of functional limitations that make it difficult to accomplish tasks of daily living without assistance. In an age friendly community residents who need access to in-home help with routine activities of daily life can find the needed services.

About 35% of Bowdoinham’s residents aged 65 and older were living with a disability\(^1\) that interfered with daily life in 2019. Difficulty walking, late onset hearing and vision loss that cannot be corrected using hearing aids or eyeglasses, and cognitive disabilities increase the need for formal or informal help with tasks that were easily completed before the onset of disability.\(^2\) For people living with age-related changes in physical health, it is vital to have access to information about maintaining health and about the services and supports available to support people living with a disabling condition.

Bowdoinham does not have any local health care providers. One of the needs that ACOA has recognized is increasing awareness of regional services. ACOA includes a dedicated team of volunteers who have offered many different types of physical activity. In 2014, ACOA expanded its physical activity option with its first annual Wellness Fair, now entering its sixth year. The wellness fair includes a free flu shot, balance assessment, blood pressure checks, dental clinic, and opportunities to learn more about maintaining wellness, living with chronic disease, healthy snacks, and volunteer opportunities.

There are several home care agencies that include Bowdoinham in their service area. However, costs can be prohibitively high for people who pay privately. In addition to the base rate, Bowdoinham residents have to pay a mileage premium that averages $23/visit.

One of the challenges to aging in Bowdoinham that was identified in 2012 and in 2019 was the need for care partner support. ACOA has worked with Brunswick Area Respite to offer a monthly support group for people caring for a loved one with dementia. Rides in Neighbors Cars provides rides to people who attend the Brunswick Respite Program located in Brunswick (a one hour round trip) to allow loved ones who provide care to enjoy the full-time, without using time for transportation.

\(^1\) The Census Bureau counts a person as having a disability if they answered "yes" to having had a sensory disability (blindness, deafness, or a severe hearing or vision impairment that cannot be corrected with the use of hearing aids or lenses); physical disability (a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying); or cognitive disability (a condition lasting six months or longer that made it difficult to perform learning, remembering, or concentrating).

\(^2\) Independent living refers to the ability to independently accomplish tasks, such as shopping and getting to medical appointments, which takes place outside the home. Self-care refers to the ability to accomplish everyday personal care within the home (e.g. bathing, dressing) without assistance.
## Domain Plan: Community Supports and Health Services.

**Goal 1: Maintain & increase access to wellness programming and information about health**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Resources and Barriers</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Committee/Partnership Responsible</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain current programming and create additional recreational programming to meet the needs of active older adults as well as older people with mobility limitations and chronic illnesses that require less physical activity.</td>
<td>1. Recruitment of volunteers who are qualified to offer wellness activities and/or are willing to 2. Find spaces to offer programming 3. Promote activities using all ACOA communication channels.</td>
<td>Current volunteers working to offer recreational programming. Barriers: Recruiting volunteers qualified and willing to offer desired activities.</td>
<td>• Number of classes  • Number of participants</td>
<td>Wellness Committee. Partnerships: Bowdoinham Recreation Dept.; Cathance Fitness Center</td>
<td>Implementation started, 2015. Goal is ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An added goal in 2020 will be to increase the number of residents trained to offer CPS and to increase the number of AEDs available in our community from two to six.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Resources and Barriers</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Committee/Partnership Responsible</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a venue for older residents to learn about chronic disease management; wellness; and health related issues.</td>
<td>Organize annual wellness fair</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Number of vendors  • Number of participants;  • follow-up surveys</td>
<td>Wellness Committee. Partnership: Wellness Fair Providers</td>
<td>Implementation started, 2015. Goal is ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Progress:**
- Number of classes: Line dancing, folk dancing, yoga, kayaking, snow shoe trips, hiking, golf, Matter of Balance and Tai Chi have been offered. More than 200 residents of Bowdoinham, Bowdoin, or Richmond participate in one or more program annually.
- At the 2019 Wellenss Fair, there were 28 vendors, including a pop-up food pantry, dental clinic, eye clinic, balance checks, flu clinic, Red Cross blood donation drive, and chair massage. The event was attended by 98 residents. During the Wellness Fair, AARP Maine sponsored a shred truck. About 112 residents brought items to be shredded.
### Goal 2: Maintain and increase access to caregiver supports

**Collaborating Organizations: Brunswick Respite Care**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Resources and Barriers</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Committee/Partnership Responsible</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-sponsor a care partner support group</td>
<td>Publicize widely through inclusion in activity and resource calendar; FB posts; once/year column in Bowdoinham News.</td>
<td>Partnership with Brunswick Respite Barriers: Lack of local resources</td>
<td>• Number of participants</td>
<td>ACOA Partnership: Brunswick Respite Program</td>
<td>Group was established in 2017. Goal will not be continued.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Progress:**

Support group was established in 2017. About 7 residents of Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, and Richmond attended the group. At the end of 2019, a new opportunity opened in Brunswick—a support group for people with dementia that happens concurrently with the support group for care partners. A consistent problem for care partners was the need to find someone to care for the person with dementia while they attend the support group. With the new program, the problem was eliminated. Rides in Neighbors Cars will continue to provide rides to care partners/people living with dementia to attend the group in Brunswick.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of Bowdoinham Village by Margaret Campbell
Appendix 2: Participation and contact hours by activities/programs for 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Contact Hours³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridge lessons/playing</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cribbage</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese making</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolates</td>
<td>07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting with Wendy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knitting Class</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Tutorials</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise Plus</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line Dancing</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai Chi</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking Group</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Summer Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Glazer Concert</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo-Caching</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayaking</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickle ball</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mushroom Walk</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch with Lynn</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Seniors Luncheons</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Luncheon Speakers</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie Afternoons</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipmates Trips</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate Bowdoinham tent</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness Fair</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ Contact hours are calculated include hours spent providing direct contact with residents multiplied by number of hours direct contact as made and does not include preparation, travel, or set-up time required for a volunteer to offer a class or plan an event.
Appendix 3: Sidewalks per Walkable Village Plan, Bowdoinham, Maine, USA, 2014
Appendix 4: Updated Assessment

As part of the five-year process evaluation, Age Friendly Bowdoinham completed an assessment to show the outcomes of some of the work accomplished since 2012 and to make sure we are building on the changes implemented as we develop the next five-year action plan (2020-2025). For consistency, the assessment was based on the WHO Guide to Measuring the Age-friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators that Age Friendly Bowdoinham piloted in 2014. The assessment compiles data from several sources, including publicly available information obtained through the US Census Bureau, along with quantitative and qualitative data collected from Bowdoinham residents and from other key groups. Combining multiple types of data to create a picture of aging in our community is consistent with WHO efforts to identify ways in which cities and rural places may measure their age friendly accomplishments.

Quantitative Data

The emphasis in the guide to assessment developed by WHO was on using existing data. As an initial step toward understanding characteristics of Bowdoinham’s residents age 60 and older, a demographic profile of Bowdoinham, using data from the 2010 US Census and from the American Community Survey (ACS)—a large, annual survey of the population that is conducted by the US Census Bureau. Additional data was gathered from state databases and from municipal officials and social, recreational, and religious organizations that work with Bowdoinham’s older residents. Data was gathered throughout the month of September, 2019 and first week of January, 2020.

Safety and Accessibility Survey

The Advisory Committee on Aging’s Safety and Accessibility sub-committee completed a safety and accessibility assessment of all buildings, publicly and privately owned, that are open to the public and the Mailly Waterfront Park. The survey was conducted between 15 December 2019 and 9 January 2020. The members of the sub-committee co-wrote the final report during the week of 12 January 2020.

Focus Groups

Two focus group were conducted—one with community members (n=18; conducted 07 January 2019) and one with community stakeholder (n=6; conducted 09 January 2019) to provide a more detailed picture of aging in Bowdoinham than could be gleaned from secondary data alone. To recruit older residents, an article was published in the Bowdoinham News about the community focus group, an email or postal mail invitation was sent to each of the community residents (n = 217) who are on the
ACOA distribution list, and fliers were placed at the Three Robbers Pub, the Bowdoinham Town Library, the Town Office, and the Post Office. ACOA also conducted a focus group of stakeholders with an interest in aging in Bowdoinham (n=6).

**Defining Core Indicators of Age-Friendliness**

Small towns and rural areas often lack some of the amenities measured in the WHO’s Age Friendly Communities Indicator Guide — public transportation, access to medical and social services within the Town’s geographic boundaries, access to supportive housing, and other amenities associated with urban life. Small municipalities find alternatives to “big-city” services by creating volunteer networks of neighbor helping neighbor. Residents of small places adapt to the dearth of services, preferring the rural lifestyle to the services available in larger municipalities. Many of the operational definitions provided in the Guide were altered to reflect the local context, the goals of ACOA and the Town of Bowdoinham's age friendly initiative, and the availability of data (for definitions used and summary of data, see Appendix 5).

**Results**

As the population of Maine, Sagadahoc County, and the Town of Bowdoinham ages, the particular needs of older residents will have to be addressed. The term “older adult” covers a wide range of ages and needs—from a recently retired 63 year old in good health who wants to find local opportunities to be physically active to a 103 year old who wants to find exercise opportunities that will improve balance, from a 60 year old who needs information about resources to help caring for older parents or grandchildren with work responsibilities to an 84 year old who wants to find volunteer opportunities. A commonly expressed goal among a majority of middle-aged and older adults in Bowdoinham is to remain living in their homes in our community as long as possible. Since 2012, the community has added an aging lens to community and economic development. This report summarizes an updated assessment of how Age Friendly Bowdoinham has moved the needle to make the community a better place for people of all ages to live, work, enjoy recreation, and conduct business.

**Demographic Profile**

Older residents of Bowdoinham have diverse needs that place unique demands for the ongoing development of an age friendly Bowdoinham. Among them are changing physical and social needs of that can threaten the independence and well-being of older residents if community supports and targeted services are not available to encourage optimal aging. Many retirees experience constraints
associated with living on fixed incomes that could limit their choices, and reduce quality of life. This section provides a demographic profile of Bowdoinham’s aging population that identifies current needs.

**Age Structure and Population Growth**

Between 1990 and 2010, Bowdoinham’s median age rose from 33.9 to 43.7 (6,7,8). In recent years, the majority of Bowdoinham’s population growth has been driven by an increase in the number of residents aged 50 and over. During the decade between 2000 and 2010, the total population grew by 10.3% but the number of residents between the ages of 60 and 79 grew by 82.5% (7, 8). Figure 1 shows the change in the proportion of Bowdoinham residents aged 60 and above from 1960 to 2010.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Bowdoinham residents aged 60+, 1960-2010**

![Graph showing percentage of residents aged 60+ from 1960 to 2010.]


Population growth in Bowdoinham has been concentrated in older age groups during the last decade. For the total population of all ages, the Town of Bowdoinham experienced a 3% decline between the 2000 and 2010 censuses; however, the absolute numbers of residents in the Boomer and Senior cohorts grew substantially during this time period (Table 1). The segment of the population age 45 to 59 increased in size by 26.2%— a rate slightly higher than the 22.9% seen in Maine overall. The older population increased by 61.2% in Bowdoinham, compared to a 26.3% increase for the state. Over the next ten years, the aging of the Boomer cohort will continue to swell the proportion of older residents in Bowdoinham and in Maine in general.
Table 1: Population growth between 2000 and 2010: Maine, Sagadahoc County, and Bowdoinham

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Ages</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>1,328,361</td>
<td>1,274,923</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>321,016</td>
<td>261,086</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>300,740</td>
<td>238,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagadahoc County</td>
<td>35,293</td>
<td>35,214</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>9001</td>
<td>7336</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>8236</td>
<td>5766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowdoinham</td>
<td>2,889</td>
<td>2,612</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 Census, Summary File 1, Table QT-P1; and 2000 Census, Summary File 1, Table QT-P1.

**Economic Security**

Economic security is measured as the proportion of older people living in a household with a disposable income above the risk of poverty threshold. Median household income for householders aged 65 and over in Bowdoinham was $68,417 in 2019 (9). According to the US Census Bureau, a “householder” is the person reported as the head of household, typically the person in whose name the home is owned or rented. Figure 2 shows the proportion of Bowdoinham households headed by a person aged 65 and older living at various income levels. Among Bowdoinham’s older households there is significant income disparity, with 5.7% of households with income less than the federal poverty level⁴ and 4.8% with annual income of $200,000 or more (10, 11).

![Figure 2: Household income of Bowdoinham householders aged 65 and over, 2018](image_url)

Source: US Census, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Table B19037

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⁴ In 2019, the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a household of one was $11,670 and $15,730 for a household size of two (12).
The Elder Economic Security Index (Elder Index) provides a detailed county-specific measure of poverty that applies specifically to the typical costs of older households. The Elder Index determines poverty based on the true cost of housing, food, transportation, and health care. Different thresholds are provided based on household size and for costs associated with renting or owning, with having a mortgage or without a mortgage5 (Table 2).

### Table 2. Elder Economic Security Index, Sagadahoc County, Maine, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Older Adult Living Along</th>
<th>Couple, Household Size 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Owner w/o Mortgage</td>
<td>Renter, single bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing (includes utilities, taxes &amp; insurance)</td>
<td>$507</td>
<td>$761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>$252</td>
<td>$252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$293</td>
<td>$293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care (Good)</td>
<td>$470</td>
<td>$470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>$304</td>
<td>$304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly and Yearly Totals</th>
<th>Elder Index Per Month</th>
<th>Index Per Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$1,826</td>
<td>$21,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$2,080</td>
<td>$24,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$2,627</td>
<td>$31,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$2,836</td>
<td>$34,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$3,090</td>
<td>$37,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$3,637</td>
<td>$43,644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.basiceconomicsecurity.org/EI/location.aspx](http://www.basiceconomicsecurity.org/EI/location.aspx)

Most (83%) older residents of Bowdoinham live in their own homes; among non-renters, 62% of households headed by a single resident and 57% of households with two or more residents owned their home without a mortgage in 2010 (13, 14). Based on the proportion of older households who rent a

5The Elder Economic Index, developed by Wider Opportunities for Women and the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, examines what older adults and older couples need in order to age in place with dignity. The index does not include the cost of “extras” (e.g. meals out, gifts, electronic equipment, cost of pets). People living below an adequate income to meet day-to-day needs may have to make difficult choices about heating their home, purchasing nutritious food, or buying prescription drugs. Estimates are made for single individuals and for couples living in their own home with or without a mortgage or living in rental housing (see Table 5). For more information about the Elder Economic Index: [http://www.basiceconomicsecurity.org/more-info.aspx](http://www.basiceconomicsecurity.org/more-info.aspx)
home and households with/without a mortgage, this analysis estimates that an older adult living alone in Bowdoinham needs about $24,984 to meet basic expenses—housing, food, transportation, and medical care for a person in good health. The estimate for couples is $38,165.

Federal poverty lines (FPL) were considerably lower than the Elder Economic Index. Households at 100% of FPL are eligible for public assistance so cannot meet minimal needs without assistance. Older residents of Bowdoinham who rent or own their own home with or without a mortgage need income well in excess of FPL to stave off poverty. An older person living alone and renting a one-bedroom apartment in Bowdoinham would need an income equal to more than twice FPL to meet basic housing, medical, and nutritional needs. An elderly couple paying off a mortgage would need nearly three times FPL to meet basic needs. For the purposes of this analysis, the thresholds set by the Elder Economic Security Index are used as the bare minimum needed for economic security.

Using the Economic Security Index, the number of older adults struggling financially in Bowdoinham is alarming. More than 1/3rd of all older households fall below the Elder Economic Standard Index in 2018 (see Figure 3). The greatest risk for living below economic security was experienced by residents aged 75 and over, by women who lived by themselves, and by people who depended solely on social security income in retirement. About 35.2% of residents over age 75 had an income too low to meet routine everyday expenses; compared with 18% of residents between the ages of 65 and 74 (15).

Figure 3: Economic security of Bowdoinham residents, aged 65+, 2018

Source: US Census, 20013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Table B17024; B19215
Median income for a man over age 65 living alone was $67,917, while median income for a similarly aged woman was $22,679, less than the minimum needed for economic security (16). Median Social Security income was $18,656 (74.7% of income needed for economic security in a single person household and 97.8% for a couple with both receiving the median social security payment) (17). Median retirement income was considerably higher, at $28,085. Bowdoinham residents who retired with a pension to supplement Social Security income were relatively affluent compared to their peers who depended solely on Social Security.

**Existing Services to Support Older Residents Who Lack Economic Security**

The one in three households headed by an older resident of Bowdoinham who live below economic security may have to do without nutritious food or make difficult choices about heating their home, using gas to go to a social event or opportunity for physical recreation, or keeping pets. About 1/3rd of all Bowdoinham residents who use the food pantry, are age of 60 or older (Joanne Savoie, unpublished data, December 19, 2019). Thus, some of the financial struggles of older residents are being assuaged by the community. However, it is important to recognize that asking for financial help through the Town’s General Assistance fund or at the food pantry can be especially difficult in a small town:

> No I think there are barriers. I don’t think it is lack of interest so much as it is part of it is our fierce independence. Part of that whole “I’ll be here to help you but I’m not going to ask you to help me”. I think some of that is a lot of what is going on. There are some people who because of whatever they are thinking they don’t want to use things like the food bank or services. It is embarrassing to access things that are available to low income people, especially in a small community. *(ACOA support group)*

ACOA attempts to minimize the cost of participating in the social and recreational opportunities that it sponsors so that all residents will be able to access programs without requesting financial help. The exception is the ride program, which requests a donation for gas paid directly to the volunteer who provides a ride. For residents who live below economic security, those most likely to struggle to pay the costs associated with car ownership, it may be difficult to pay for rides and embarrassing to admit that they cannot afford to reimburse a volunteer’s expenses. This may be especially true for the 3.5% of older Bowdoinham residents who live on less than 50% of FPL (18).
Many people choose to leave the labor force between the ages of 65 and 70; some people want or need to work beyond normal retirement age. Participation in paid employment can be a positive indicator of social participation and inclusion. However, it can also be a negative indicator if people want to retire but cannot afford to stop participating in paid work. The majority (76.6%) of Bowdoinham’s residents age 65 and older were no longer in the labor force in 2019 (see Appendix 5). Of those who were employed in the past 12 months, 92% were between the ages of 65 and 74 and 8% were aged 75 or older (19). Among older Bowdoinham residents who reported that they either worked in the past 12 months or wanted to work in the past 12 months, 6.5% were unemployed (20). The overall rate of unemployment for Bowdoinham residents was about 3.0% (21), less than half of that experienced by Bowdoinham’s older workers.

There are limited opportunities for employment by the small businesses in town. However, one ACOA member noted:

> They don’t turn anyone down in the agricultural field. Whether the people are up for it... washing vegetables and things like that. (Stakeholders focus group).

For older entrepreneurs, the Town offers a few possibilities. The Town does not have a public sewage system; it would not be possible to start a business in the historic village such as a restaurant or laundromat that requires access to a sewage system:

> Certain facilities, even though they may be needed and well utilized, we don’t have the infrastructure that would support that because a laundromat or another restaurant could certainly do just fine downtown but just so we’re limited by the lack of infrastructure. (Stakeholder focus group)

However, the Town encourages sole entrepreneurships and small businesses with fewer than four employees by not requiring a license from the Town. Starting a business that is not dependent on walk-by business but that can draw on a customer base both within Bowdoinham and in the surrounding area, would be a relatively simple matter for an older resident of Bowdoinham. Approximately 45.9% of workers between the ages of 65 and 74 in Maine are self-employed (22). Thus, encouraging small business and sole entrepreneurship is one of the age friendly policies implemented by the Town of Bowdoinham.
Social and Health Services

With age, comes increased risk of functional limitations that make it difficult to accomplish tasks of daily living without assistance. In an age friendly community residents who need access to in-home help with routine activities of daily life can find the needed services. The availability of data about the number of Bowdoinham residents who receive in-home care through a private home care service is limited. To measure access to needed in-home help, this study reports the proportion of older Bowdoinham residents who have a disability that are receiving publicly paid home-based services (see Appendix 5). Approximately 19.3% of older adults (aged 65+) in Bowdoinham who have a disability and meet income qualifications for Medicaid received home-based care in 2017 (23).

About 35% of Bowdoinham’s residents aged 65 and older were living with a disability⁶ that interfered with daily life in 2018 (24). The need for assistance with personal care or independent living increases with age and with the onset of hearing, vision, cognition, or walking difficulties. Difficulty walking, late onset hearing and vision loss that cannot be corrected using hearing aids or eyeglasses, and cognitive disabilities increase the need for formal or informal help with tasks that were easily completed before the onset of disability—-independent living and with self-care.⁷ Figure 4 shows self-reported disability by age. With the exception of hearing, Bowdoinham residents aged 75 and older were more than twice as likely to report disability than their younger counterparts. Walking and hearing were the most common types of disability for residents aged 65-74. Walking remained the most common problem for residents who had attained age 75. However, the next most common report was difficulty with independent living. For older residents, the lack of formal supports, such as transportation and chore services to help residents with independent living tasks, may create a significant barrier to aging in the community.

⁶ The Census Bureau counts a person as having a disability if they answered "yes" to having had a sensory disability (blindness, deafness, or a severe hearing or vision impairment that cannot be corrected with the use of hearing aids or lenses); physical disability (a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying); or cognitive disability (a condition lasting six months or longer that made it difficult to perform learning, remembering, or concentrating).

⁷ Independent living refers to the ability to independently accomplish tasks, such as shopping and getting to medical appointments, which takes place outside the home. Self-care refers to the ability to accomplish everyday personal care within the home (e.g bathing, dressing) without assistance.
Generally, men who had reached the age of 75 reported more difficulty with self-care and with independent living than did women of the same age. About 34.8% of men and 17.9% of women aged 75 or older in Bowdoinham reported difficulty with self-care activities (e.g. dressing, bathing) (25). When asked about difficulty with independent living—the ability to do errands alone—about 65.2% of men and 17.9% of women aged 75 or older indicated some limitations (26).

In 2017, approximately 27% (n = 31) of Bowdoinham’s older residents (aged 65+) who had a disability were income qualified for MaineCare (Maine’s State-administered, Federally-funded Medicaid program) that would pay for home health care if it was medically needed (27, 28). In 2017, 19.3% of individuals in that group received in-home care (29, 30). There is no publicly available data about the proportion of older residents with a disability who pay privately or who have long-term care insurance that covers the...
cost of home-based care. Because of the small size of the community and concerns about protecting the privacy of clients, home care agencies whose service area includes Bowdoinham did not release data about the number of clients in the community.

Positive social attitude toward older people

Although difficult to measure, an age friendly community encourages older residents to feel respected and socially included in community life. In the past two years, the Town of Bowdoinham has made significant strides toward encouraging older residents to be actively engaged in all aspects of community life. As part of its Comprehensive Planning process, the Town of Bowdoinham made a significant commitment to include older adults in community life when it appointed the Advisory Committee on Aging. Requests made by ACOA have been answered positively by community organizations, such as the Second Baptist Church, Bowdoinham Library, and Town Landing (restaurant) as well as by town officials. When space was needed for older residents to meet regularly, the Second Baptist Church provided space and coffee at no charge. When interest in a community Trivia game became known, the Town Landing, the only restaurant in town, started the once/month “Lunch with Lynn”, which provides a $5 lunch special followed by a trivia game. The library purchased exercise videos recommended by ACOA and added material about home modifications to its offerings. The Friends of the Library added outside seating to make waiting easier at their annual plant sale. The Town planner implemented all of the changes requested by ACOA to increase accessibility to town sponsored events such as Celebrate Bowdoinham. When a group of residents conducted a safety and accessibility assessment of the Town office, some of the recommended changes (e.g. clearing clutter from hallways, changing doors knobs to lever handles) were implemented immediately by the Town Manager. All of these are signs that Bowdoinham has a positive social attitude toward its older residents.

The community focus group talked about the role of older adults in the community. Older residents, especially those who have been active in the community for many years, act as mentors for the younger residents:

Bowdoinham wouldn’t be such a strong community if it weren’t for the older adults in town. It is that simple. There wouldn’t be a community without us. You need the older adults to sort of entice the younger generation to come in and ...give them responsibilities so that they feel that they are part of the group... If the young people feel comfortable then the older people really feel as though what they worked so hard on establishing is not going to disappear. I mean something like the plant sale. If it weren’t for the younger generation, it could have stopped a number of years ago... We now feel as though who knows how long it will go on. I mean we have three generations
working on it now. I hope it keeps going for as long as it can. And I think it is important for younger people to see older people and that they have a brain (laughter).

(community focus group)

Older residents play an important role in the community. The residents of Bowdoinham are known throughout the area for their civic engagement. Residents who moved to town when they were raising children have continued their pattern of community involvement as they have grown older. As one focus group participant surmised, since “we don’t act old”, older community members are accepted by all ages in the community:

it’s as if there isn’t an age barrier if you will. The people there, even the kids, are very accepting of older people. (community focus group)

Infrastructure

Accessibility to public buildings and to outdoor spaces have a major influence on the independence, mobility, and quality of life of people of every age. Safe accessible infrastructure is a key aspect of building and age friendly community. Outdoor spaces and buildings—including sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, trails, outdoor spaces where community wide events are held, and buildings open to the public—should accommodate a range of physical ability and support the ability to age in place.

Walkability

Bowdoinham has a central, historic village area where homes and businesses are located within close proximity to one another. The majority of municipally and privately owned public spaces are located in the historic village area—the Town offices, Bowdoinham Public Library, Mailly Waterfront Park, the Merrymeeting Arts Center, and numerous small businesses. In 2010, Bowdoinham adopted a Walkable Village Plan to repair existing sidewalks and invest in additional sidewalks in order to encourage walking throughout the village district and to bring foot traffic into the heart of the village district (see Appendix 1). By 2019, approximately 90% of the historic village district had sidewalks. The Walkable Village Plan includes the growth area that is immediately outside the historic village. About 30% of the sidewalks that are planned for this area have been completed (see Appendix 3, Nicole Briand, Director of Community Planning and Economic Development, unpublished data, 7 January 2019). All sidewalks (but not street crossing) are wide enough to be accessible to a person using a wheelchair and are accessible to a person with vision impairment.

Walkability also refers to the extent that a community supports all types of recreational walking. Walking paths abound throughout the Town limits of Bowdoinham. The Snow Birds snowmobile club
maintains 44 miles of snowmobile trails on privately owned land (Jim McGee, President, unpublished data, January 15, 2020). Property owners have generously given permission for outdoor enthusiasts to use the trails for walking, cross-country skiing, and snow-shoeing as well as for use by ski mobilers. In addition, the State of Maine maintains two wildlife refuges that include walking areas. The one mile walk at Wildes Road Wildlife Management Area takes the walker through wide-open meadows and ends with a view of Merrymeeting Bay. The John Detweiler trail also takes the traveler on a path through an abandoned farmstead and ends with a view of the Abagadasset River. The Red Rose Preserve is a one-mile loop trail through field and forest behind the Bowdoinham Community School.

Accessibility of Public Spaces and Buildings

One way to measure the accessibility of public spaces and buildings is by counting the number of spaces and buildings open to the public that are fully accessible by wheelchair. About 71% of publicly owned buildings and 54% of privately owned buildings are accessible (see Table 3).

In the assessment of public buildings and spaces completed by the Safety and Accessibility subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Aging, town-owned buildings were seen as generally accessible to a person using a walker or wheelchair (see Table 3). A significant exception was the Town office, housed on the first floor of the Coombs Municipal Building. Town residents come to the Town office to purchase tickets to pay for municipal curbside trash collection, register dogs, apply for building permits, pay for hunting/fishing licenses, and to access a host of other municipal services. The Coombs Municipal Building was built in the early 20th century. The historic building is beloved by the community but has many barriers to accessibility for a person using a wheelchair or walker. For example, door thresholds are higher than 3/4” and there are step-ups between offices that cannot be maneuvered by a person using a wheelchair.
Table 3: Accessibility of public-access buildings and public spaces, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Fully Wheelchair Accessible</th>
<th>Service for older people</th>
<th>Buildings are well-signed outside and inside, with sufficient seating and toilets, ramps, railings and stairs, and non-slip floors.</th>
<th>Public toilets outdoors and indoors are sufficient in number, clean, well-maintained and accessible.</th>
<th>Designated parking for people with disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Buildings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowdoinham School</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coombs Municipal</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building—Town Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coombs Municipal</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes^8</td>
<td>Yes (indoor)</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building—Bowdoinham Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Department</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes^8</td>
<td>Yes (indoor)</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes^14</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling Barn^9</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Hall</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes^14</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outdoor Spaces</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailly Waterfront Park</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>summer only</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Privately Owned Buildings, by category</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Learning and Cultural Opportunities^10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places of Worship^11</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Exception—no non-slip floors in the community room, kitchen, or bathrooms
9 The recycling barn is privately owned leased by the Town.
10 All of the places where lifelong learning and cultural events take place that are open to the general public were included.
11 All of the places that are designated as places of worship were included in this category.
Although special accommodations can be made to meet someone in one of the two meeting rooms on the second floor of the Coombs Building, the difficulty of access to the Town office by residents who use either a walker or wheelchair for mobility has a negative effect on quality of life. In 2012, ACOA presented the Town Manager with a list of changes to increase accessibility of the Town office. Some recommendations were implemented—clearing hallways of clutter, replacing round door knobs with lever knobs, increasing lighting, and ensuring that the ramp access was clear of obstructions. However, it is a historic building so not all of the recommendations could be made without changing the historical look of the building. William Post, Town Manager, continues to work toward finding creative solutions to protect the historic look of the building while correcting the remaining accessibility issues.

The second floor of the Coombs Municipal Building, which houses the Bowdoinham Public Library as well as two meeting rooms, is fully accessible to a person using a wheelchair or walker. A ramp is available at the back of the building that leads to an entrance to one of the second-floor public rooms. A single parking space is available for people who use the ramp to visit the library, use the public WiFi or desktop computer available in the business center, or have a meeting in one of the public rooms. ACOA continues to work with the Bowdoinham Public Library, elected officials, and the town manager to actively advocate for improvements.

About half of privately owned buildings that are frequented by the public are accessible to a person using a wheelchair (see Table 3). Places of worship and organizations that offered lifelong learning opportunities—the Long Branch School and Merrymeeting Arts Center—were the most accessible. Stores and voluntary associations were the least accessible.

| Stores and Essential Services | 33% | 33% | 17% | none | 33% |
| Voluntary Associations | 50% | none | 50% | 50% | 50% |

12 All of the stores (places that sell groceries, dry goods, and other merchandise that are open to the public) and essential services (e.g. banking, food pantry) were included in this category

13 All of the voluntary associations (e.g. Snow Birds, Grange, Ladies Auxiliary) that meet in town were included in this category
Outdoor spaces were not accessible to people with mobility challenges. While some of the focus group participants said that the Mailly Waterfront Park, where a number of town-sponsored summer activities take place, was fully accessible, others disagreed. For people using walkers and people who had trouble standing for long periods of time, going over the uneven turf was a barrier to participating in the summer concerts and to enjoying the view of the bay from the gazebo. Focus group participants noted that accessibility is a barrier to full social inclusion:

The area by the waterfront is difficult. It’s not paved and the turf has lots of ups and downs that make it hard to walk to the gazebo.

There are barriers in the Town—especially for people who can’t be up on their feet for that long. Going to the concerts or even Celebrate is hard. Without good mobility, people lose their independence and their ability to participate in the Town. All of the activities and stuff are good but not for people who are aging and have a hard time walking.

I really think that accessibility for people who have mobility issues is extremely limited and I’d really like to see the Town take an attitude toward that similar to the attitude they have toward providing food for the hungry because I think it is that basic.

In the upcoming years, ACOA will support the Town of Bowdoinham as it continues to make improvements in town-owned buildings and public spaces that will make a more accessible, supportive, and inclusive community for older residents.

**Accessible Parking**

Accessible parking is an important aspect of building an age friendly community that encourages inclusion of older residents in all aspects of community life. Of the 40 municipal parking spaces in Bowdoinham, 7 (17.5%) are designated for people with disabilities (see Appendix 5).

There are two municipal parking lots in Bowdoinham. The municipal parking lot near Mailly Waterfront Park includes 29 spaces; four spaces are designated for people with disabilities. The Coombs Municipal Building, which houses the Town Office and Bowdoinham Public Library, has 10 parking spaces, two of which are designated handicapped spaces.

There is one parking space at the ramp entrance to the Coombs building. The ramp is located at the back of the building to allow access to the library and second floor meeting rooms in the Coombs Building.
Currently, there is only one parking space at the ramp. If someone who needs the ramp drives
themselves to the library and leaves the car in the allocated space, other people who need the ramp
have to wait for the person occupying the space to leave or come back another time. The majority of the
people who use the ramp, however, do not drive themselves. The person driving helps the person
needing the ramp into the building and then moves the car so that other people can use the ramp
access if it is needed. The Advisory Committee on Aging is working with the Town Office to create better
parking options for those who need to use the ramp. Most of the publicly accessible businesses and
organizations in the historic village area of Bowdoinham have two or more designated parking spaces
for people with a disability, but not all spaces are clearly marked.

**Internet access**

Dial-up Internet service is available throughout the Town. However, broadband, high-speed Internet
service is only available in parts of the Town. To meet the need for universal Internet access, the
Bowdoinham Public Library makes high-speed, wireless Internet available. In addition, the Town Office
provides space for a “business center” with Internet access, a desktop computer and space for residents
to bring their own laptop. The Town Office Business Center is located on the Second floor of the Coombs
Municipal Building, across the hallway from the Bowdoinham Public library. However, when the
Bowdoinham Public Library and Town Office are both closed, Internet access is only available from the
parking lot shared by the Town Office and library. All residents, as long as they have equipment, have
access to the Internet, but sometimes it’s only from their cars. ACOA-sponsored technology lessons are
available at the Shipmates Senior Club.

The majority (87.5%) of focus group participants indicated that they used the Internet for a wide variety
of purposes that included email, social networking, banking, shopping, paying bills, playing bridge and
other games, watching movies, finding recipes, looking for information, and reading the newspaper.
However, only one person in the focus group had accessed the Bowdoinham Town website looking for
information about ACOA-sponsored activities and events. Focus group participants depended primarily
on email or land mail communication from ACOA about its events.

**Transportation**

The accessibility of public transportation is measured as the proportion of housing within the coverage
area of a service that offers door-to-door rides for non-emergency medical appointments and, also, of a
service that provides transportation for non-medical needs (e.g. errands, socialization, shopping) rides
Town residents who participated in the focus groups identified transportation as one of the largest barriers to aging in Bowdoinham. As one participant put it, “When people can’t drive anymore, they lose independence no matter what”.

**Non-emergency medical transportation**

Coastal Trans, Inc (CTI) provides fully accessible non-emergency medical transportation for Bowdoinham residents who are low-income and qualify for state of Maine administered Medicaid health insurance (MaineCare). To qualify for MaineCare a resident aged 65 or over must have unearned income (e.g. Social Security or other retirement income) of no more than 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL, $972.50/month for person living in a household of one, combined $1310.83 for two people living in the same household) and a combination of earned and unearned income of no more than 250% of the FPL ($2431.25 for those living alone and $3277.08 for couples ). To qualify for MaineCare, a person between ages 60 and 65 must have a disability that meets the Social Security Administration medical standards and meet the aforementioned income requirements. For residents that meet income and age or disability qualifications, CTI provides up to a maximum of two rides each week to mental health services, medical care, and rehabilitation services. CTI does not offer Bowdoinham residents transportation for shopping or other errands or for socialization.

In 2019, although 18% ($n = 59$) of Bowdoinham’s older residents (aged 65+) qualified for CTI transport to non-emergency medical appointments , the service was only used by a minority of eligible residents (approximately 5.1%, $n = 3$) (J. Huff, Transportation Director, unpublished data, December 22, 2019). Coastal Trans rarely provides privately paid rides for medical appointments or for non-medical reasons. Older residents who do not meet income qualifications to receive non-emergency medical rides have very limited access to the service. One of the members of the community focus group told about her experience trying to get a non-emergency medical ride for her husband:

> My husband was in a wheelchair and I had to take him to Portland and ahh... I said, ‘can’t the people from Brunswick (Coastal Trans)?’ They come up this way for somebody... and take him to Brunswick and stuff. And I ended up paying $400 to take him to Portland. (community focus group)

**Non-medical transportation**

Limited transportation for non-medical needs is available through SEARCH-Greater Bath and a Rides in Neighbors Cars, a small transportation program sponsored by ACOA. SEARCH-Greater Bath, matches isolated older adults with community volunteers who—in some cases—provide transportation as part of
their work with a client (http://www.ccmaine.org/a-z-services/search-program-elderly-services). In 2014, one person in Bowdoinham was matched with a volunteer through SEARCH-Greater Bath. By 2019, there were 13 matches (Christine Szalay, Program Coordinator, unpublished data, January 09, 2020). SEARCH does not provide transportation to residents who do not participate in the program; transportation provided by SEARCH volunteers is not intended to meet all of a participant’s needs for transportation. ACOA supports Rides in Neighbors Cars, an all-volunteer transportation program. Volunteers provide rides for socialization, shopping, and other errands. Payment is not required but riders often make a small contribution to support the service. The ACOA-sponsored program has remained small because very few residents have requested transportation, not because of a lack of volunteers. Needing to rely on others for transportation is avoided by many residents because it means becoming “dependent”. As one ACOA member noted, “even when people know they can call and get a ride for a medical appointment, to go shopping, or to meet a friend—whatever they need a ride for, they don’t call”.

There is no public bus service in Bowdoinham. Private-pay taxi service is available. The approximate cost for a round-trip ride from Bowdoinham to Topsham, the nearest service center community, is $32.60 ($5.50 for first mile in each direction, $1.50 for each additional mile for an estimated 8.2 mile each way—outgoing and ingoing). Limited transportation options are a particular hardship for care partners:

The hardest part of being a caregiver in Bowdoinham is accessibility and transportation. It is a great community but when you are a caregiver, it can be isolating. If your person can’t go somewhere, neither can you. (community focus group)

Neither SEARCH nor Rides in Neighbors in Cars can provide handicapped accessible rides. It is challenging for people with mobility limitations to get in and out of the private vehicles driven by volunteers.

**Transportation alternatives**

Participants in the community focus group talked about transportation systems in larger neighboring communities:

What works in Brunswick is a regularly scheduled bus. I think that people who have some need also like the independence of that. The buses there have certain times. You can go or you can not go. It doesn’t matter. It’s happening all the time. It isn’t something that you need to arrange in advance like something you do with individuals that are volunteering or agreeing to take you. (community focus group)
Although a regular bus schedule appealed to many of the participants, some pointed out that a small community could not support a similar transportation system and, even if it was possible to work with neighboring communities to provide a regularly scheduled single pick-up at, for example, the municipal parking lot, people who didn’t drive and didn’t live within walking distance of the pick-up would still be dependent for rides from neighbors and friends to get to the bus and to get from the drop-off point back home. Lack of convenience was one of the trade-offs participants in the community focus group made for the less tangible aspects of living in Bowdoinham—of community, rootedness, and the natural beauty of the area. One participant in the community focus group pointed out:

But that is where you make a trade. Why are you in Bowdoinham? I mean if we want to be with all those services in Brunswick, then move there. (community focus group)

**Housing**

Home ownership is common in Bowdoinham. The majority of older residents live in homes that they own. About 72% of older residents in owner occupied housing have lived in the same home for 20 years or more (34). Housing that met the needs of young families may not provide the structural and design features needed by older residents living with functional limitations. When Bowdoinham residents can no longer live independently and need services and supports that are not available in the community, a move to another town is often necessary. Participants in the community focus group noted that Richmond, Topsham and Brunswick all have long-term care facilities as well as assisted living and other supported housing options for Bowdoinham residents who need help performing daily tasks.

If I become physically or mentally unable to live on my own, I will probably have to move to town (Brunswick or Topsham), which I wouldn’t like. I would like to see the community develop programs that encourage and support residents to stay in their homes as long as possible. (Stakeholder focus group)

**Affordability**

This study measures the affordability of housing by examining the proportion of older people who live in a household that spends less than 30 percent of their equalized disposable income on housing. The total proportion of Bowdoinham householders aged 60 and over who spend less than 30 per cent of their equalized disposable income on housing was 69.2% in 2018 (35).

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14 Householder refers to the person(s) whose name is listed on a rental lease agreement (renter-occupied housing) or on the deed to a home (owner-occupied housing). If more than one person is listed on a rental agreement or on
The majority (83%) of Bowdoinham householders aged 60 and over live in owner-occupied homes (36). Affordability of housing differs dramatically for those who own homes with a mortgage payment and those who own their homes without a mortgage. The median monthly housing expenses (e.g. mortgage, home maintenance expenses, property taxes, heating and cooling costs) for a householder aged 60 or older with a mortgage was $1,347—more than twice the median monthly expenses of $569 paid by a householder without a mortgage (37). Among Bowdoinham householders aged 60 or older who lived in owner-occupied housing, 72.8% paid less than 30% of their equalized disposable income on housing.

The median rent paid by the 17% of older householders who rented an apartment or home in 2019 was $765 (38). Older residents of rental housing were more likely to live alone than were residents who lived in an owner-occupied dwelling (81.07 vs. 31.89 respectively) (39). The mean Social Security income for a Bowdoinham resident in 2019 was $18,656 (40). A single person living on the mean social security income without any additional earned or unearned income who pays the median rental fee for a one-bedroom apartment ($765) would have to pay 49.2% of their monthly income for rent. Among Bowdoinham residents living in rental housing, slightly more than half (51.6%) paid less than 30% of their equalized disposable income on rent.

**Accessibility**

Accessibility of housing is measured as the proportion of new and existing houses that have wheelchair-accessible entrances (i.e. sufficient width, ramps). Although building permits are required to add a ramp to an existing structure, most of the residents who install ramps do so without a permit. Anecdotally, the codes officer for the Town of Bowdoinham knows of several homes that have ramp access but could find no permits on file. One of the barriers to getting a permit for a ramp is the need to comply with land use code. Especially in the village area of Bowdoinham, many existing homes were built too close to the road to satisfy the 10- or 20-foot set-back required by Bowdoinham’s land use code. However, by state law, the Town is required to provide a disability variance (Title 30-A § 4353(4) of the Maine Statutes) if the addition is needed by a person with a disability who regularly needs to enter and exit the home. Thus, it is possible to add a ramp to almost any single family or multi-family home in Bowdoinham. However, getting a permit takes time, especially if a variance is required, and costs money, which can be

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a deed to a home, the two householders designate one person to be the “householder”. If the designated person is aged 60 or above, the household is included in the discussion of affordability and housing.
major deterrents when a person experiences a sudden change in ability that requires the addition of a ramp.

**Housing Alternatives**

There are a limited number of rental units available for older Bowdoinham residents who are no longer able to maintain their own homes. Bowdoinham Estates is the only multi-family unit exclusively for older and disabled adults (n=25 units). Generally, residents qualify for income-based rent. Low income residents pay no more than 33% of their monthly income to rent an apartment, which makes the units affordable. There is a waiting list for prospective tenants of Bowdoinham Estates. Beside the waiting list, another barrier for residents to move to Bowdoinham Estates is the lack of community knowledge about the availability of apartments:

I wonder how many people in the community even know what it (Bowdoinham Estates) is, know that there is a wait-list involved or that the apartment rent is based on income. We drove by the sign for years and had no idea. All I knew was the name on the sign, nothing else, so it would never have occurred to us that, if we had to down-size, we could apply for an apartment and stay in Bowdoinham (community focus group).

No support services, activities or amenities are provided by Bowdoinham Estates to its tenants. The units are for people who can live independently. One barrier that the community focus group identified to aging in Bowdoinham was the lack of assisted living, long term care facilities or supportive housing options:

I guess one of the things that Bowdoinham lacks is that when elderly people get to the point where they can’t take care of themselves in their own place, where do they go? There is nothing for them here in Bowdoinham to speak of (community focus group).

ACOA has developed programs and supports for older adults who are active, who can leave their homes independently and who want to participate in the social and physical activities sponsored by ACOA. Although implementing supports that would help people to stay in their homes has been discussed by ACOA, it is not an issue that ACOA has had the capacity to pursue.

**Information**

One of the significant barriers to aging in Bowdoinham that was identified in the 2012 *Aging in Bowdoinham* report was the lack of information about local social and recreational opportunities and about regional services available to support aging in the community. An age friendly community
provides information about services, socio-cultural and recreational activities, and opportunities for civic engagement. This report measures access to information by looking at the proportion of older residents who receive information from ACOA about local services, programs and events that may be of interest to older people (see Appendix 5).

In Maine, there are five Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)\(^{15}\) that provide information and referral by phone and in person though the Aging and Disability Resource Centers that are housed within each of the AAAs (http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads/aging/resource/adrc.html). Spectrum Generations serves the area that includes Bowdoinham (http://www.spectrumgenerations.org/). Information and referral is available by phone and in person. The information and referral specialists hired by Spectrum Generations are trained to provide information about social services, educational opportunities, long term care, health insurance, and care partner supports. The service is well publicized and universally available to all residents of Bowdoinham.

In 2012, ACOA began to distribute a monthly list of activities and resources. The list is mailed to residents who requested it and is available at the Town Office, Town Landing (local restaurant), and the Bowdoinham Public Library. Currently, about 26% of older residents (n=142) receive the monthly mailing. Residents who participated in the focus group for this report stated that they were confident that they knew where to find information about activities and events within Bowdoinham:

> I like the activity and resource list you (ACOA) send out each month. The calendar is very handy. I put it on the refrigerator. I still forget some things that I want to go to but at least I know they are happening. We plan out what we are going to do at the start of the month, when your calendar comes.

In 2013, the Senior Center opened one day each week for about five hours. In 2019, two additional mornings were added at Merrymeeting Hall. The ACOA member who acts as the director of the Shipmates Senior Center has become an important resource for residents:

> That’s what I think has been so great about the Thursday group (Shipmates Senior Center) because I got to know Theresa (ACOA member, Senior Center Director) and anytime there was something, any problem I had, whether it was computer or someone

\(^{15}\) Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs, http://www.n4a.org) were created by the Federal government to support older adults who are aging in their community. A local Area Agency on Aging is administered by the State AAA but is partially funded through the Federal Government Older Americans Act. Local Area Agencies on Aging, such as Spectrum Generations provide information and referral to social services, administer federally-funded nutritional programs for older adults and provide various supports for care partners.
to help with a specific problem. I would go there. She was affiliated with the Town office, too. She is kind of a go-to-person for everything you need.

In 2014, ACOA successfully advocated for the Town to hire a Coordinator of Older Adult Services. Because the Coordinator has regularly scheduled office hours (5 hours/week), there has been a steady increase in the number of older residents requesting information and referral from the Town. In 2015, at the suggestion of ACOA, the monthly Activity and Resource List began to include monthly feature articles about formal services available to older Bowdoinham residents.

**Civic Engagement**

**Participation in local decision-making**

One way to measure participation in local decision making is to record the proportion of eligible voters who voted in the most recent local election or legislative initiative. Bowdoinham’s older residents are actively involved in all aspects of community life. About 74.3% of residents aged 60+ have voted within the past four years. Of those, approximately 81.6% of active voters participated in the most recent election. Older residents are active participants at the Town’s annual Town Meeting and are actively involved in many of the Town committees.

**Volunteer Opportunities**

The rate of volunteering among Maine residents aged 65+ was 25.1% in 2018. Residents aged 65-74 were more likely to participate in formal volunteer opportunities than were their older peers (32.2% and 21.6% respectively). Older people gave an average of 80 hours/year of service (41). About 70% of all volunteers in the Town of Bowdoinham in 2019 were aged 60+ (see Appendix 5).

Several local organizations depend on volunteers to fulfill their mission. Organizations such as the Bowdoinham Public Library, Historical Society and the Merrymeeting Arts Center rely on volunteers for fund-raising as well as to plan programming and events. Older residents play a key role. For example, 33% of the women who belong to the Fire Department’s Ladies Auxiliary have achieved the age of 60 (Suzie Uhle, President, unpublished data, January 20, 2020). 71% of the members of the Bowdoinham Public library Board are aged 60 or more (Bowdoinham Public Library, 2019). Without their dedication and hard work organizing the library plant sale, the annual book sale, and other fund-raising events, it would not be possible for the library to offer the programming that it provides to the community. Although only half of the total membership of Historical Society is over age 60, they represent about 70% of the core group who work on events and exhibits throughout the year (Elizabeth Steen, Treasurer,
unpublished data, 28 December 2019). Currently, 75% of the Executive Board of the Merrymeeting Arts Center has reached or surpassed the age of 60 (Laleah Parker, Manager, unpublished data, 30 December 2019). The Bowdoinham Snowbirds are a club for snowmobile enthusiasts. To keep the trails open, volunteers work countless hours to groom the trails, negotiate passage on private land, etc. Almost 25% of the members of the snowbirds who groom trails are age 60 or more (Jim McGee, President, unpublished data, January 15, 2020). Older adults are also active volunteers at the food pantry, serving on volunteer municipal boards, and forming informal helping relationships with their neighbors. All of the members of the Advisory Committee on Aging are over age 60. Together, they give more than 1200 of volunteer time each year to provide services and advocacy for Bowdoinham’s older residents.

Older adults clearly represent a valuable resource for the Town of Bowdoinham. Volunteering and civic engagement were mentioned as part of the culture of Bowdoinham and one-way newcomers could get to know other residents:

We moved here in July but by the end of August/September I got a post card from the Ladies’ Auxiliary at the Fire Department asking if I would like to come and join. And so I went to the first meeting. Instantly, I had friends…. (community focus group)

A large majority of focus group participants (69%) spoke about volunteering and making a contribution to the community. They mentioned volunteering in the community not only in terms of generosity but was a way to “give back”. Volunteering was framed as a positive experience—as providing enjoyment, fulfillment, stimulation, social interaction, and a way to remain engaged with the community. Formal and informal volunteering were discussed by members of the focus group. Several participants shared stories about neighbors reaching out to help neighbors:

Almost 6 years ago now, I needed to have bypass surgery so I was pretty down. The neighbors, for about 2 or 3 weeks, scheduled it so that someone brought food every day. In the spring, I broke my ankle and I was really down! They were absolutely incredible—the thought and care... you know... they brought food for another 2 or 3 weeks.... I was really, really grateful for my neighbors. And the food was great! We had everything from vegetarian to elegant deserts. My husband said he was going to break my other ankle (laughter) That is what is great about Bowdoinham—it is Mayberry and better. Neighbors care about each other. (community focus group)

Formal volunteer experiences were described as self-fulfilling and satisfying. Volunteering was confirmation that skills and interests mastered over a lifetime were valued in the community.

I think ACOA has been a real bonus for me to get involved with what goes on in the community. And to get to know a few people a little bit better. I have to be doing something. I am not someone who is going to sit around and chat very well. I don’t do
the senior center but I led a mushroom walk and to have other people interested in something I am interested in was very rewarding. (*community focus group*)

Providing an array of volunteer opportunities to engage older residents is one way that Bowdoinham is an aging friendly community.

**Well-Being**

Well-being is affected by factors in the larger community, including access to desired activities, opportunities to find meaningful volunteer work, transportation, and housing supports. Well-being is also affected by individual factors, such as economic security and functional ability. ACOA promotes the quality of life of Bowdoinham’s older residents by advising the Select Board and municipal departments about policies that enhance well-being and by sponsoring services and programs that encourage all older residents remain as active and engaged in the community as they want to be.

**Socio-Cultural Activities**

Regular participation in socio-cultural activities is important for people as they age. Regular participation in the many organizations in Bowdoinham that offer face-to-face formal and informal religious, social, and cultural opportunities is a sign of the inclusion of older people in the everyday life of the community. Not all organizations that offer socio-cultural opportunities for Bowdoinham residents keep detailed records about the age composition of participants but 14% of Bowdoinham’s older residents (n=81) have attended at least one cultural event sponsored by the ACOA (see Appendix 5).

Informal and occasional opportunities to participate in socio-cultural affairs abound in Bowdoinham. Each summer, the Town of Bowdoinham sponsors a series of waterfront concerts. Once each month a local person with a converted barn welcomes residents of all ages to a potluck and musical concert. The Bowdoinham Guild of Artisans sponsors a yearly sale of work by local artists. Although the exact percentage of older residents attending these events is not known, older adults are frequent and enthusiastic supporters.

Older residents are over-represented as board members and fund raisers for the three local cultural organizations—the Bowdoinham Public Library, Merrymeeting Arts Center, and the Historical Society. Almost 3/4 of the library trustees and Friends of the Library, the group involved with fundraising for the library, are over age 60 but less than 15% of regular library patrons are aged 60 or more (Kate Cutko,
Library Director, unpublished data, 16 December 2019). Older residents who are involved with the library find a source of social engagement and intellectual stimulation:

I joined the Loose Ladies Book Club a few years after we moved to town. I’ve made some good friends there. We talk about books but we also have fun. It’s a good way for new people to get to know people. The library is the best place to find out what’s going on around town as well. Kate (the librarian) is a great resource. She does a lot to bring people into the library who may not usually come. It’s a wonderful resource for this community. (community focus group)

To attract a larger number of older patrons to the library, the Town librarian has requested ACOA’s assistance to increase the age-friendliness of the library. One of ACOA’s goals has been to work with all of the municipal departments, town committees, and local organizations to increase awareness of the needs of older residents. ACOA welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the Bowdoinham Public Library. ACOA is working to increase accessibility to the library’s ramp entrance and has recommended the addition of physical fitness DVDs for older residents and materials about home modification. ACOA includes the library book clubs in its monthly activity and resource calendar. Future plans include hosting an open house for older residents to learn more about the library’s online catalog system, working with the library to offer a class about using the library holdings and databases for genealogical research, and sending emails to the ACOA distribution list about special library events that may be of interest to older residents.

Merrymeeting Arts Center (http://merrymeetingartscenter.org/about-us/) provides opportunities for all ages to both participate in art and enjoy art. Three of four board members are aged 60 or older. Older adults are more likely to attend exhibits and events than they are to participate in art. Approximately 75% of the people attending exhibits have achieved their 60th birthday but none have participated in classes or “doing” art (Laleah Parker, Manager, unpublished data, 30 December 2019). The vision of Merrymeeting Arts Center is to “develop community by providing a place where everyone can enjoy and participate in the arts”. ACOA is exploring ways in which it can work with Merrymeeting Arts Center to increase participation by older residents in classes and “doing” art.

Bowdoinham Historical Society (BHS, http://www.bowdoinhamhistoricalsociety.org/) was established in 1970 “to collect and preserve records and physical objects relating to the history of Bowdoinham”. About 64% of the officers and trustees of the Historical Society and 50% of the members have celebrated their 60th birthday. However, the mean age of the volunteers who worked on the three largest recent projects of BHS is about 70 years. The three projects—restoring the Jellerson School,
organizing the Lancaster-Bishop Room for archival research, and restoration of the Meeting House—
took considerable time, fund raising skill, and physical labor to complete.

One of the most popular offerings sponsored by ACOA has been trips to various places in Maine. Some
trips have been to places that make things (e.g. ELMS puzzle factory, Savage Oaks Winery), some have
been to cultural spots (e.g. Peary-McMillan Arctic Museum, Margaret Chase Smith Museum). The trips
are a chance to explore places in Maine that residents may not have visited but they are also a social
opportunity:

I like the trips because it gives us a chance to get away for the day with other people
from Bowdoinham. I’ve met some new people and found out that we had some
common interests. (community focus group)

I’d never even heard of some of the places we went! We’re going to take our
grandchildren to some of them this summer. It’s always a job to find something new for
them to do (laughter). (community focus group)

Day trips were a new program sponsored by ACOA in response to a suggestion by the Shipmates Senior
Center planning group. The planning group decides the location for the trips and where the group will
stop for lunch. One of the foundational principles of ACOA has been to solicit feedback from the
community to make sure that ACOA-sponsored activities and events are in line with what older
residents want:

We have learned from the people what they want and moved ahead with activities and
events that the people want, not what we think. Too many times communities or people
who think they are being age friendly try to impose what they think older residents
want. (Stakeholder focus group)

In its two-year history, ACOA has used its energies to grow a program of choices that will encourage
older residents to remain active and engaged in the community in ways that are meaningful to them.

Each month, the Second Baptist Church and Town of Bowdoinham sponsor a “Village Luncheon” for
older residents. After the luncheons, volunteers are asked to share a topic of interest to attendees.
Leslie Anderson, Billie Oakes, and Elizabeth Steen shared their experiences working for the restoration
of the Combs Municipal Building. Jeanine Beaudoin told the group about artifacts she has found near
her home in Bowdoinham. Martha Cushing and Nancy Curtis talked about their trips to European
destinations. Through the monthly luncheons older residents have found new common interests with
other residents and have formed new friendships.

Lifelong Learning
Opportunities for lifelong learning abound in Bowdoinham and in the surrounding area. Merrymeeting Arts Center offers exhibits as well as hands-on art programs for adults. The Bowdoinham Historical Society offers lectures and special exhibits to share the history of the community. Author talks and book clubs are regular offerings of the Bowdoinham Public Library. The Advisory Committee on Aging provides numerous options specifically designed for older residents (see Appendix 2). Focus group participants were enthusiastic about the opportunities for lifelong learning that ACOA has sponsored:

They’ve started cooking lessons. Those are fun! We learned to make cheese but mine isn’t as good as <NAME of INSTRUCTOR>. (laughter). (community focus group)

I appreciate all of the things I am learning. The thing about safety that is coming up. That is something that most people will be facing down the road. If you can keep your health, you know, no falls. I mean things can’t always be avoided but if we can be very careful and take all these things we learn. They are so helpful.

The trips are great! It gives us a chance to get out of the house and go to some interesting places right here in Maine. It’s educational. We’ve learned a lot.

Combining participation in Merrymeeting Arts Center events, Bowdoinham Historical Society lectures and exhibits, the library book clubs and author talks, and the lifelong learning opportunities sponsored by ACOA, approximately 44% of residents who have reached the age of 60 participate in a life-long learning opportunities within town limits (see Appendix 5).

In addition, there are numerous options in the surrounding area. The MidACOAst Senior College and Merrymeeting Adult Education offer formal, classroom-based learning while cultural organizations, such as the Maine State Music Theatre, Peary-McMillan Arctic Museum, and Bowdoin College Museum of Art provide informal learning. Thus, the percentage may be higher than given.

Leisure-Time Physical Activity in a Group

Bowdoinham is a rural community with a wealth of recreational opportunities. About 18.7% (n=102) of Bowdoinham residents over age 60 participated in either an ACOA-sponsored exercise program, Silver Sneakers, or Zumba Gold/Zumba Tone (see Appendix 2). Silver Sneakers, located in nearby Bowdoin, Maine is an exercise program that is covered by many of the “gap” insurance policies purchased by older people to pay for medical care that is not covered by Medicare. For those who do not have an insurance policy that includes the Silver Sneaker Benefit, the cost is $2/class. In 2019, the program had about 60 participants, 16 from Bowdoinham (Stephanie Dustin, Instructor, unpublished data, January 31, 2020), Zumba Gold and Zumba Tone are offered in Bowdoinham for a fee of $5/class. Scholarships are provided for residents who cannot afford the fee. All exercise programs sponsored by ACOA in 2019 were led by
volunteers and offered free of charge. A total of 81 people participated in ACOA-sponsored exercise programs or wellness activities. Free and low cost, organized exercise programs are available to all local residents.

In 2012, when the initial Aging in Bowdoinham report was written, there was a limited variety of exercise opportunities for older adults. In the past two years, ACOA has sponsored a number of activities (see Appendix 2). Focus group participants were pleased to have a variety of organized physical activity opportunities because it gave them a chance to try new things and to find an enjoyable, organized activity that made them feel healthier and stronger:

I like all the things that are being offered. Line dancing was fun. I only went to a few of the classes but it was fun. I went to tai chi and found out it wasn’t for me. <NAME> was in that class and said that if I was looking for more of a stretch, I should try chair yoga at Silver Sneakers so I tried that a few times too. When I moved here, I never thought there would be so many choices—and most of them are free! (community focus group)

I think that what the Committee on Aging has done best are Matter of Balance, the first aid talk (when there is a problem in the home), the wellness fair, just safety in general. Because at our age it is so critical that we don’t get hurt and I have such a desire to be safe, not just for me but for <HUSBAND>. (community focus group)

For many participants, not having to drive outside of town to participate in exercise was a plus:

We’ve been wanting to join an exercise program but life is so busy, it is hard to take time to drive too far. And it doesn’t take much for me to not go to exercise. I’ve noticed some changes in my balance this year, though so we are going to try tai-chi for balance. If it’s in town, I think it is easier, transportation wise. (community focus group)

ACOA includes a dedicated team of volunteers who have offered many different types of physical activity. In 2014, ACOA expanded its physical activity option with its first annual Wellness Fair. The wellness fair included a free flu shot, balance assessment, blood pressure checks, and opportunities to learn more about maintaining wellness, living with chronic disease, healthy snacks, and volunteer opportunities. The participants in the community focus group were universally enthusiastic about the wellness fair:

The wellness fair was excellent! I hope you do it again.

To get our flu shots so early in the season like that and all of the other options that were there. The balance assessment was great.

I picked up a lot of information that I have shared with other people, too.
Your snacks (referring to Snacks provided during focus group) look good but the snacks at the Wellness Fair were amazing! I brought home some of the recipes to try at home. They are great!

One of the challenges of offering physical activity programs for older adults is that wellness levels are very different for newly retired Baby Boomers who have spent a lifetime exercising at the gym and physically frail residents who are aging with a disability. ACOA plans to meet the challenge of providing a wide array of physical activity opportunities to meet the needs of all the older residents who want to participate.

Quality of life

One way to measure quality of life is to examine healthy life expectancy at birth. Healthy life expectancy, defined as the number of years at birth an individual can expect to spend in very good or good general health, for a person born in Sagadahoc County is 79.1 years, slightly lower than the State of Maine 79.2 years but higher than the US 78.9 years (42).

Bowdoinham residents who participated in focus groups were proud of Bowdoinham's reputation in the State of Maine as a good place to live. People who moved to Bowdoinham from other places were attracted by the quality of life offered by the community. Focus group participants who had lived in Bowdoinham for a long time planned to remain in Bowdoinham for as long as possible because of their roots in the community.

When I mentioned I was going to be moving to Bowdoinham, it was interesting. It has a reputation of being a really nice town. Everyone would say ‘It’s really nice there’ And I would say ‘I’m so glad’.

Well, being one of the newest people in the area, we just moved here a year ago, we find people in Bowdoinham to be very friendly which is very unusual, especially when you come from out of the area.

I’ve heard people from Brunswick refer to Bowdoinham as a mythical place. (laughter) It isn’t a go-through place either, it is a place where people are rooted.

Having lived here most of my life, you have a lot of family and connections. At least that is what I think of when I think about aging in this town. I have a lot of relatives and there are a lot of ties there. And then there are the children and the grandchildren and the ties to the school and all of that so <HUSBAND> says, ‘Wouldn’t it be nice to go to Florida?’ and I say, ‘No it wouldn’t be!’ (laughter) Who do I know in Florida? All of my roots are right here in town and I feel a connection to a lot of things in town and I like that feeling.
One of the strengths of the community for older residents is its acceptance of differences in the way residents approach aging. Some older residents want to be involved with activities and events sponsored by ACOA, others do not. Members of the focus group were insistent that lack of involvement did not mean lack of appreciation of the many programs ACOA sponsors for older residents to remain socially engaged and physically active, but was a reflection of the many different things that compete for the time of older residents—from family to hobbies—and of preferences to be or not to be involved.

Bowdoinham is the kind of town that allows people to be and do whatever they want to do. If you want to be involved, you can. But if you don’t want to be involved, that’s all right to. I think people are very accepting of all the different interests that we have.

Before Celebrate (Celebrate Bowdoinham, the Town’s annual festival), I didn’t know there was anything for older people but I saw my friend <name redacted for privacy concerns> in the (Committee on Aging’s) tent and found out about all these things that are going on! I haven’t been able to attend many things because we are busy but it is nice to know it is there when we do have time.

Another strength discussed by participants was the culture of neighbor helping neighbor. Residents prided themselves on respecting the privacy of their friends and neighbors but saw ACOA sponsored activities as one way to keep an eye on their neighbors without prying.

If they have the transportation, they can be involved and that is good so that everybody you know can keep an eye on them. I think that is what Bowdoinham is. We kinda don’t want to pry into somebody’s business but we like to keep an eye on them and make sure everyone is OK. That’s what I see ACOA doing.

Based on what the focus group member shared, ACOA sponsored programming has significantly improved the quality of life of town residents. However, participants discussed several significant barriers to optimal aging in Bowdoinham:

1. lack of transportation alternatives
2. lack of housing options for frail older residents
3. difficulty finding and paying for in-home care
4. lack of caregiver support programs and services
5. rising property taxes that outstrip fixed income resources
6. limited access to high-speed Internet

Quality of life for Bowdoinham residents who are physically fit and socially connected is very good. However, for residents who lack transportation, need to move to a more supportive housing option, who struggle economically, or who are caring for a loved one or friend with a chronic condition, life in Bowdoinham can be challenging:
Barriers often depend on an individual’s social and transportation resources – So for those who have no family, limited friends, do not drive (so not much of a network going and access to services is limited) – the barriers are huge. Conversely – for those with family and friends (even if they don’t drive) the barriers will be less severe. (Stakeholder focus group)

Developing and maintaining relationships with friends and neighbors is an important contributor to quality of life for a person aging in the community and helps older residents to cope with adversity.

ACOA-sponsored programs provide residents 60 and older with opportunities to build friendship networks and support systems that allow them to both give and receive help as they age in the community. Involvement with the Shipmates Senior Center not only helps people to find new interests, meet new people, and build friendships, it confirmed their rootedness in the community:

The friends I have at the Shipmates give me a sense of family and community, of belonging here.

Designing the float was fun! Being in the parade felt great because I could be proud of the club we have created. It felt like the community was behind us.

Summary

Over the past decade, Bowdoinham’s population has become increasingly older. Residents who are age 45 and older make up nearly half of the Town’s population. Bowdoinham is increasingly identified as an age friendly community and, thus, will continue to attract retiree immigrants looking for a home in Maine. As Boomer’s age into retirement and newcomers retire in Bowdoinham, the proportion of the Town’s population over the age of 60 will continue to grow as will the need for the ACOA to sponsor programs and services that will meet the needs and preferences of older residents.

Findings of this study indicate a continued commitment to Bowdoinham by the Town’s older residents. Focus group participants were proud of Bowdoinham’s reputation as highly livable, safe, and age friendly. Among the advantages cited of living in Bowdoinham were the involvement by older residents in all aspects of town life. Bowdoinham does not have formal services to support frail or disabled residents. However, the Town is famous for its shared value of “neighbor-helping-neighbor”. ACOA can harness the power of long-term residents and engage newcomers as volunteers to continue growing the age-friendliness of the community and meet the diverse needs of residents from age 60 to 106.

The generation of “Baby Boomers” (in 2019, aged 54-73) has a reputation for being self-advocating, proactive in seeking out preferred services, and for shaping institutions and systems to meet their specific needs and desires. Thus, as ACOA plans for the future, there will be need for consideration
regarding services that best address the changing needs of older residents over time. Some older residents of Bowdoinham will need programs that help them to maintain health, well-being, and independence as they age with functional limitations or chronic illness. Others will need and want programs that give them opportunities to increase their fitness, civic engagement, and participation in socio-cultural activities. Others will need information and referrals to help them with caregiving responsibilities. ACOA’s aim is to provide all older residents of Bowdoinham with access to supports that will enable them to age safely and with dignity, while maximizing quality of life. In order to meet that goal, ACOA will continue to depend on the Town’s older residents to direct the work of ACOA as it creates, where needed and wanted, a menu of opportunities that will enhance the health, well-being and independence of Bowdoinham’s residents as they age.

The Town of Bowdoinham has made significant strides, in great part due to the work of the Advisory Committee on Aging, to make Bowdoinham an aging-friendly town. However, there is much work yet to be done. The findings from this report will direct the creation of long-range plans to insure that Bowdoinham remains the aging friendliest town in Maine.
References

16. US Census Bureau [online database] American Community Survey, Table B19215: Median nonfamily household income in the past 12 months by sex of


### Appendix 5: Key Indicators of Bowdoinham’s Age Friendliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Indicators</th>
<th>Definition Used</th>
<th>Indicator Value</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Year of Data</th>
<th>Population/ Sample</th>
<th>Additional Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic security</td>
<td>Proportion of older people living in a household with a disposable income above the risk-of-poverty threshold.</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>American Community Survey (5-year estimates, 2014-2018) Table B17024; B19037; B19215 Elder Economic Security Index</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Representative Population of Bowdoinham, aged 65+</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Paid Employment               | Proportion of adults aged 65+ who reported working or wanting to work in the past 12 months  
Proportion of residents aged 65+ who actually worked or wanted to work during the past 12 months who reported being unemployed | 23.4% 6.5%      | American Community Survey (5-year estimates, 2014-2018) Table B23001; B23004 | 2018          | Representative population of Bowdoinham aged 65+      | Not all people who have attained the age of 65 are interested in working. Thus, it was determined that reporting both the percentage of the population who wanted to work was important to understanding the unemployment rate. The reported unemployment rate is based on the population that reported either working or wanting to work and does not include residents who were no longer in the labor force (retired). |
| Availability of social and health services | Proportion of older persons with a disability receiving formal, publicly paid, home-based services. | 19.3%           | Medicaid Claims Data, 2011, analyzed by OADS, 2018.                        | 2015          | Older residents covered by Medicaid (MaineCare)        | The reported proportion of people receiving in-home care only refers to the 27% of older people who have a disability and are covered by MaineCare. There is no publicly available data to report the proportion of older residents with a disability who are not covered by Medicaid (MaineCare) who receive in-home care. |
| Neighborhood walkability      | Proportion of streets that have pedestrian paths which meet locally accepted standards in the: historic village adjoining growth area. | 90% 30%         | Nicole Briand, Town Planner.                                              | 2018          | All streets within the historic village district and growth area that surrounds the historic district (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 3) | Locally accepted standards for pedestrian paths are described in Walkable Village Plan (http://www.bowdoinham.com/files/Walkable%20Village%20Plan-adopted_06-09-10.pdf). High-speed roads and roads outside the village district were not included in the denominator. |
### Appendix 5: Key Indicators of Bowdoinham’s Age Friendliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Publicly owned (%)</th>
<th>Privately owned (%)</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility of public spaces and buildings</td>
<td>Proportion of new and existing public spaces and buildings that are fully accessible by wheelchair.</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>Survey by Advisory Committee on Aging’s Safety and Accessibility Subcommittee</td>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>Choice was made to look at publicly and privately owned buildings. One role of the Advisory Committee on Aging is to advise the Select Board about changes that will make the community more aging friendly. The select board and municipal offices do not have any control over the accessibility of privately owned buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility of priority vehicle parking</td>
<td>Proportion of priority parking spaces at public facilities that are designated for older people or people with disabilities.</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey by Advisory Committee on Aging’s Safety and Accessibility Subcommittee</td>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>There are adequate handicapped parking spaces in the historic village. However, signage for the designated spaces is not always clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access</td>
<td>Proportion of older people with Internet access available in Town.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bowdoinham Public Library</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Not all residents of Bowdoinham live in an area where high-speed Internet is available. The Bowdoinham Public Library has wireless Broadband Internet available 24/7 that can be accessed from the parking lot of the library when the library and town office are closed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility of public transportation</td>
<td>Proportion of housing within the coverage area of door-to-door services for medical appointments.</td>
<td>Medical: 18%</td>
<td>Non-Medical: 0% (see note)</td>
<td>Making Community Happen: <a href="http://www.mchinc.org/rides.html">http://www.mchinc.org/rides.html</a> Unpublished data, Christine Szalay, Director SEARCH</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Note: Transportation for non-medical needs is available through a small ride program sponsored by ACOA and through SEARCH (see text) but neither program is intended to meet all of the social/errand transportation needs of older residents who either cannot or choose not to drive and neither program has handicapped accessible vehicles available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability of housing</td>
<td>Proportion of older people who live in a household that spends less than 30% of their equalized disposable income on housing.</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>American Community Survey (5-year estimates, 2014-2018) Table S0102</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Representative Sample of Bowdoinham residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of information</td>
<td>Proportion of population that receives information about local services, programs and events of interest to older residents.</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Advisory Committee on Aging records</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Bowdoinham residents aged 60+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 5: Key Indicators of Bowdoinham’s Age Friendliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in local decision-making</th>
<th>Proportion of eligible older voters who voted in the most recent local election or legislative initiative.</th>
<th>81.6%</th>
<th>Town Clerk</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Population of Bowdoinham aged 60 and over</th>
<th>Active voters are voters who have voted in the past four years. Approximately 74.3% of Bowdoinham’s older residents are active voters.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in Volunteer Activity</td>
<td>Proportion of older people (age 65+) who report engaging in volunteer activity in the last month on at least one occasion. Median hours volunteered per year. Alternative definition: Percentage of volunteers in local organizations that are aged 60+. Based on a survey of organizations in Bowdoinham that depend on volunteers, about 70% of active volunteers were aged 60+</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>Corporation for National and Community Service, 2018</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Representative survey of Maine residents aged 65+</td>
<td>Data was not available for Bowdoinham or at the county level. Alternative definition allows an understanding of the contribution older adults make to community development without requiring a survey of the population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in socio-cultural activities</td>
<td>Proportion of older adults among all reported visitors to ACOA-sponsored cultural events</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>ACOA attendance records, January – December 2019</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Bowdoinham Residents aged 60+</td>
<td>Excludes many community events that are not sponsored by ACOA (see text).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in life-long learning</td>
<td>Proportion of older people who participated in formal or informal learning opportunities in the past year.</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>Attendance records of organizations offering lifelong learning opportunities in Bowdoinham</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Organizations offering lifelong learning within Bowdoinham: Merrymeeting Arts Center, 80; Bowdoinham Public Library, 36; ACOA, 87; and Bowdoinham</td>
<td>Limited to organizations within Bowdoinham. There are many lifelong learning opportunities in the surrounding area (within 10 miles of Bowdoinham). Thus, the proportion listed may underestimate participation in lifelong learning. Proportion also leaves out people who participate outside a formal organization (e.g. using Internet-based opportunities, piano lessons, self-designed learning, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 5: Key Indicators of Bowdoinham’s Age Friendliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in leisure-time physical activity in a group</th>
<th>Proportion of older people who are a member of a self-organized or institutional leisure-time physical activity group.</th>
<th>17.8%</th>
<th>Attendance records of Silver Sneakers, Zumba, and ACOA-sponsored exercise programs</th>
<th>Limited to formal exercise programs; excludes self-directed exercise programs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>Healthy Life Expectancy at birth same</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>Measure of America: <a href="http://www.measureofamerica.org/">http://www.measureofamerica.org/</a>. Data is derived from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Mortality – All County Micro-Data File.</td>
<td>The State of Maine at 79.2 years of healthy life expectancy is slightly higher than the US (78.9 years). Sagadahoc County, at 79.1 years, has a higher healthy life expectancy than all but Knox, Lincoln, Cumberland, and York Counties in Maine. No readily available public data is available for Bowdoinham, Maine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>