

EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN SUDBURY: ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE *LIVABLE SUDBURY ASSESSMENT*

Background. The Livable Sudbury Assessment utilizes a distinctive framework that emerged from discussions among town leaders in 2017. In addition to the assessment's being based on the 2007 World Health Organization (WHO) framework, it would also examine qualities of equity and inclusion as they influenced, and were impacted by, the WHO eight domains of livability. Sudbury's assessment of *livable* was, thus, intentionally designed to encompass residents of all ages, to be dementia-friendly, and to promote fairness to all and inclusion of all. Brief definitions and examples of equity and inclusion are provided below, followed by a summary of major findings from the report and a sample of recommendations.

Definitions. *Equity* as characteristic of a livable community means that there are no disparities of intent or outcome in residents' access to opportunities in the eight domains. For example, housing is both shelter and a "platform for maintaining social networks and connecting [people] to neighborhood amenities."¹ Equitable housing in a rural community like Sudbury will ensure that developments have transportation options that support residents' social networks and allow them to access neighborhood amenities. There will be neither intent to discriminate among individuals or outcomes of disparate access to amenities.

Inclusion as characteristic of a livable community means that no resident is excluded—by intent or lack of outreach—from participating in opportunities in the eight domains. For example, the town's beautiful and inviting open spaces will be (as far as possible) available to individuals with mobility limitations. And, inclusive civic engagement of residents will result from effective communication and information about opportunities as well as invitation (and means) to participate in them.

Major Findings From the Assessment

- **“[Themes] of inclusion intersect with feelings of belonging, satisfaction with the community, and isolation.”**
 - “30% of survey respondents chose at least one attribute on which they had felt excluded (skin color, race or ethnicity; sexual orientation; age; gender; religion or cultural background; income; or disability)... with income as the most frequently marked attribute.”
- **A sizable percentage of residents is financially insecure and may feel excluded on the basis of income**
 - “Median household income of renters is... \$34,545.”
 - 25% of renters are “cost-burdened,” spending at least 30% of their incomes on housing (rent and utilities).

- 25% of homeowners with, and 14% of homeowners without a mortgage, are “cost-burdened,” spending > 30% of income on housing
- “13% of households report incomes below \$50,000.”
- 25% of survey respondents were neutral or disagreed with the statement: “I have adequate resources to meet my needs.”
- “Cost of living was the #1 concern shaping respondents’ ability to continue living in Sudbury.”
- **Vulnerable segments of the population are at risk of isolation**
 - “12% survey respondents ... do not know anyone living within 30 minutes on whom they could call for help.”
 - “29% of those who are not financially do not have nearby support, and among ethnic minorities, one-third do not. “
 - 40% of “respondents with participation limitations do not know anyone living within 30 minutes on whom they can rely for help when needed...”
 - 20% of respondents (higher among some groups) are not satisfied with opportunities for informal sharing and interaction in their neighborhoods.

Sample of Recommendations

- Prioritize areas in which disparity and exclusion are most impactful and design/ implement remedies
 - Connect housing developments with transportation/safe walking routes.
 - Support residents with participation limitations by means of isolation-minimizing resources.
 - Build broad-based coalitions (faith communities, disability organizations, etc.) to ensure inclusion; “stigmatized illnesses and disabilities, including addiction, are of special concern with regard to inclusion.”
 - Seek opportunities to strengthen connections within neighborhoods...
- Address shortcomings in the communication and information domain
 - Reduce dissatisfaction with “the extent to which local policy makers take concerns into account,” by improving dissemination of decisions and actions.
 - Increase utilization of town amenities by improving (a) residents’ awareness, (b) information on the amenities, and (c) contact instructions as needed...

ⁱ Quotations are taken from: *Livable Sudbury: A Community Needs Assessment*. Prepared by the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging, Gerontology Institute, John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies, University of Massachusetts, Boston (January 2019). All references to a WHO domain name are underscored.