

# **Tompkins Age-friendly Survey summary**

A Report to the Tompkins County Age-Friendly Center for Excellence

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In 2020 and 2021, we sent a survey on Planning for All Ages to Tompkins County and all municipalities inside Tompkins County, including the City of Ithaca, 9 towns, and 6 villages (Figure 1). The survey explores the extent to which local governments engage in planning and other activities to meet the needs of residents across all age groups –especially seniors and families with children. This survey provides insights into how local governments can promote more livable communities for all residents. By June, 2021, we received 15 survey responses, including Tompkins County, and 14 municipalities (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns, and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden).

Tompkins county is a metro county in the Ithaca, NY Core Based Statistical Area with Ithaca as the principal city. The City of Ithaca is located at the center of Tompkins County, and has the most population and the highest population density (Figure 1A, Figure 1B). The surrounding towns and villages have a higher percent of families with children (age under 18, Figure 1C), and a higher percent of older adults (age over 65, Figure 1D)

Figure 1 Tompkins County demographic structure

Figure 1A Population

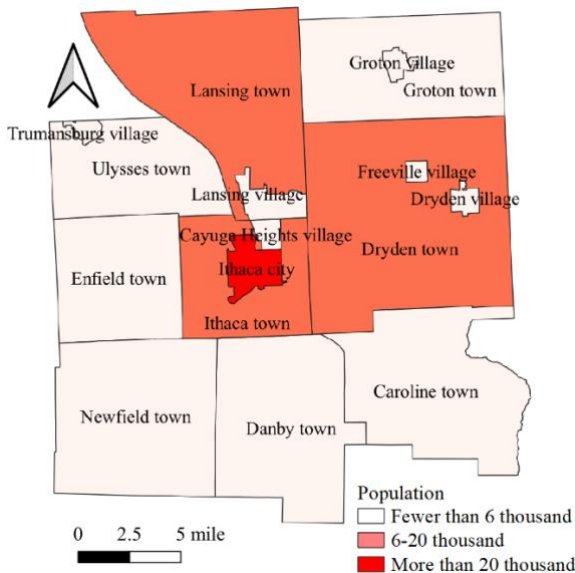


Figure 1B Population density

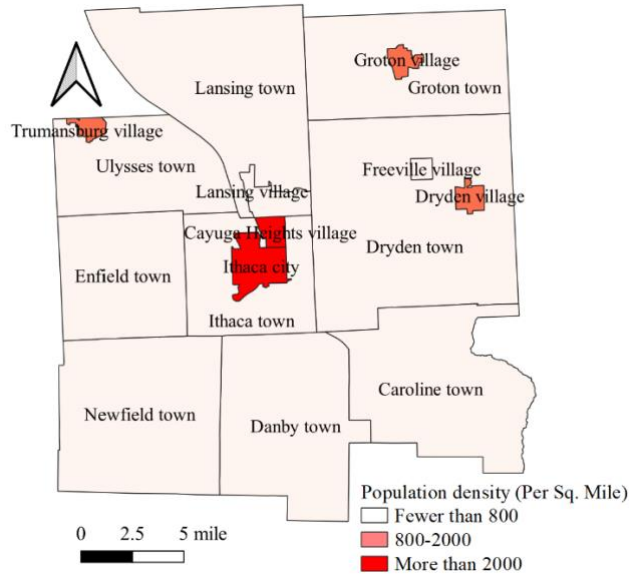
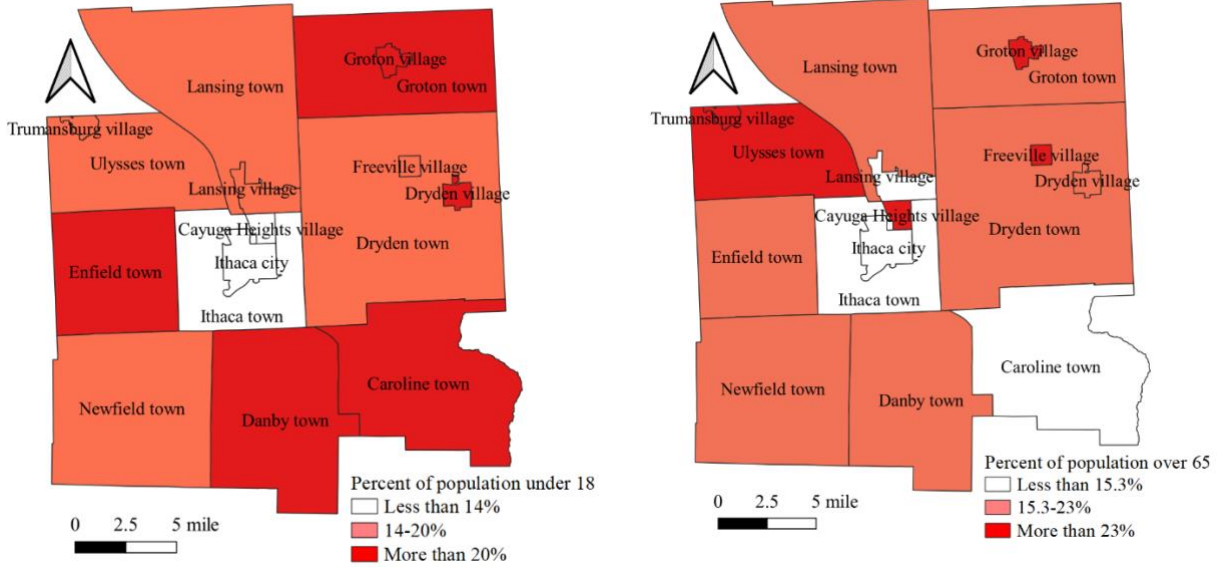


Figure 1 Tompkins County demographic structure (continue)

Figure 1C Percent of population under 18

Figure 1D Percent of population over 65



Data source: American Community Survey 2015-2019

In this paper, we present the survey summaries for Tompkins County and 14 responding municipalities. The Planning for All Ages survey addressed local governments efforts on planning and zoning for all ages, a review of age-friendly built environments and services in the community, the level of cross-agency collaboration in service delivery, and civic engagement of families with children and seniors in planning for their needs. A complete copy of the survey is attached as an appendix to this report. Summary results are presented below.

## Planning

The survey asked if the community has plans, and if the plans specifically address the needs of families with children, seniors, and women. Plans include a comprehensive plan, economic development plan, transportation plan, and emergency plan. Tompkins county has all the plans. Its comprehensive plan pays attention to the needs of families with children and the needs of seniors. Its transportation plan and emergency plan only address the needs of seniors. The

economic development plan does not address the needs of either families with children or seniors. An economic development plan and transportation plan are only found at the county level in Tompkins County.

Each of the 14 responding municipalities in Tompkins County had a comprehensive plan, and about two-thirds of them had an emergency plan (Table 1). Among the municipalities which had plans, about half of them addressed the need of seniors or the needs of families with children (Table 1). The needs of women are addressed in 11% of the emergency plans, but not in any of the comprehensive plans (Table 1)

**Table 1 Municipal Plans Addressing Needs of All Ages in Tompkins Co. NY**

	Comprehensive Plan	Emergency Plan
Yes	100%	64%
If yes, the plan addresses the needs of		
Families with children	50%	44%
Seniors	57%	55%
Women	0%	11%
Schools or school siting	21%	

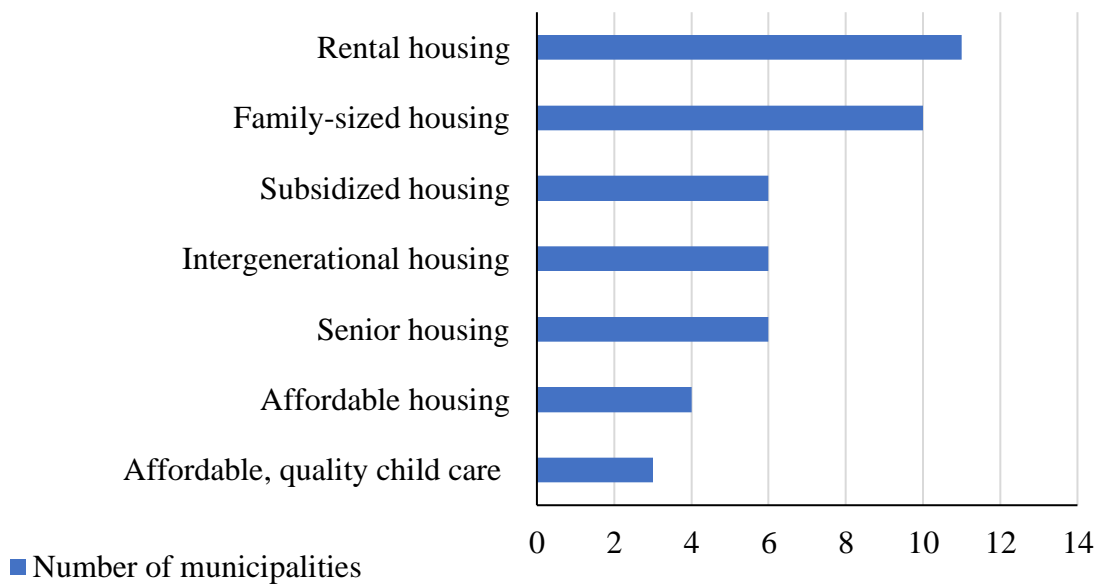
Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020,  
 N=14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)

## Built environment

The survey asked if the community has an adequate supply of housing and affordable quality child care. Tompkins county has an inadequate supply of all types of housing and an inadequate supply of child care. While most communities reported an adequate supply of rental and family-sized housing, few communities reported an adequate supply of affordable housing or child care.

See Figure 2

**Figure 2 Number of municipalities reporting an adequate supply of housing and childcare**



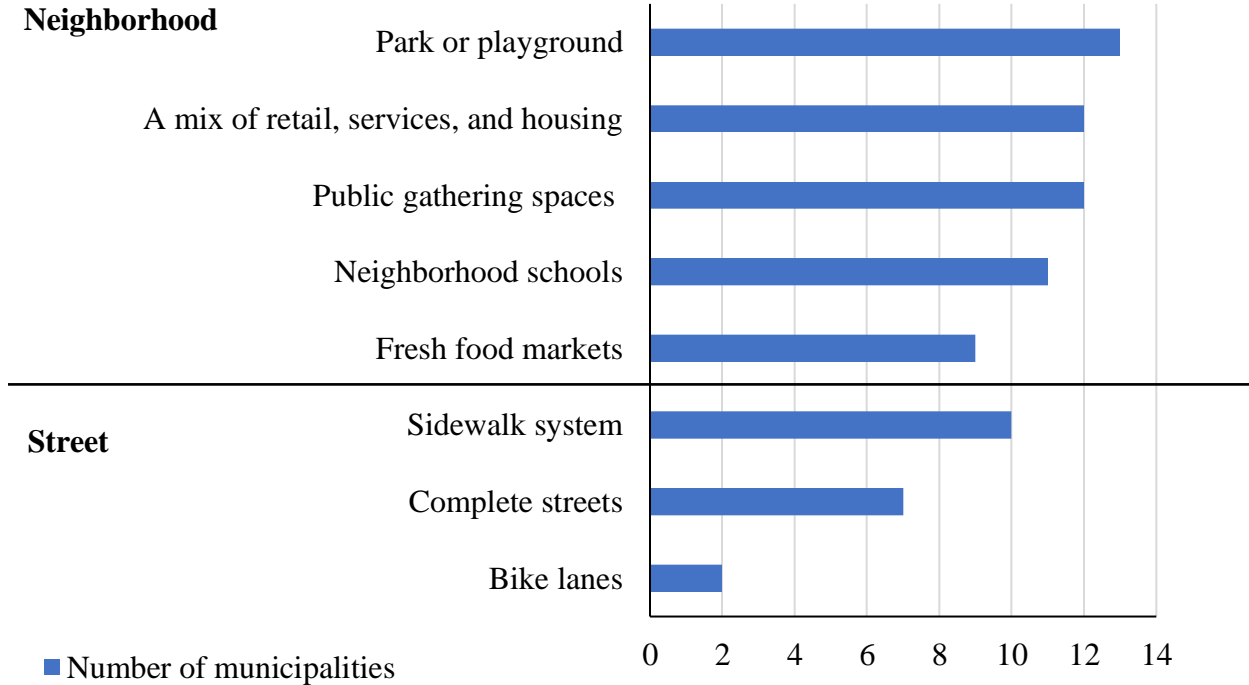
Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020

14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)

The survey also asked what percent of the community is covered by age-friendly built environment features at both the street and neighborhood level (Figure 3). Figure 3 shows that outdoor space and mixed-use neighborhood are the most common neighborhood features found in at least some portion of the community. Walkability is less common than mixed-use neighborhoods (Figure 3). Figure 3 shows that most communities have at least some coverage of sidewalk systems. However, only half of the communities report complete streets designed for

all modes of transit, such as walking, biking, etc. (Figure 3). Also, most communities do not have bike lanes (Figure 3).

**Figure 3 Built Environment Features (found in at least 1% of the community)**



Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020

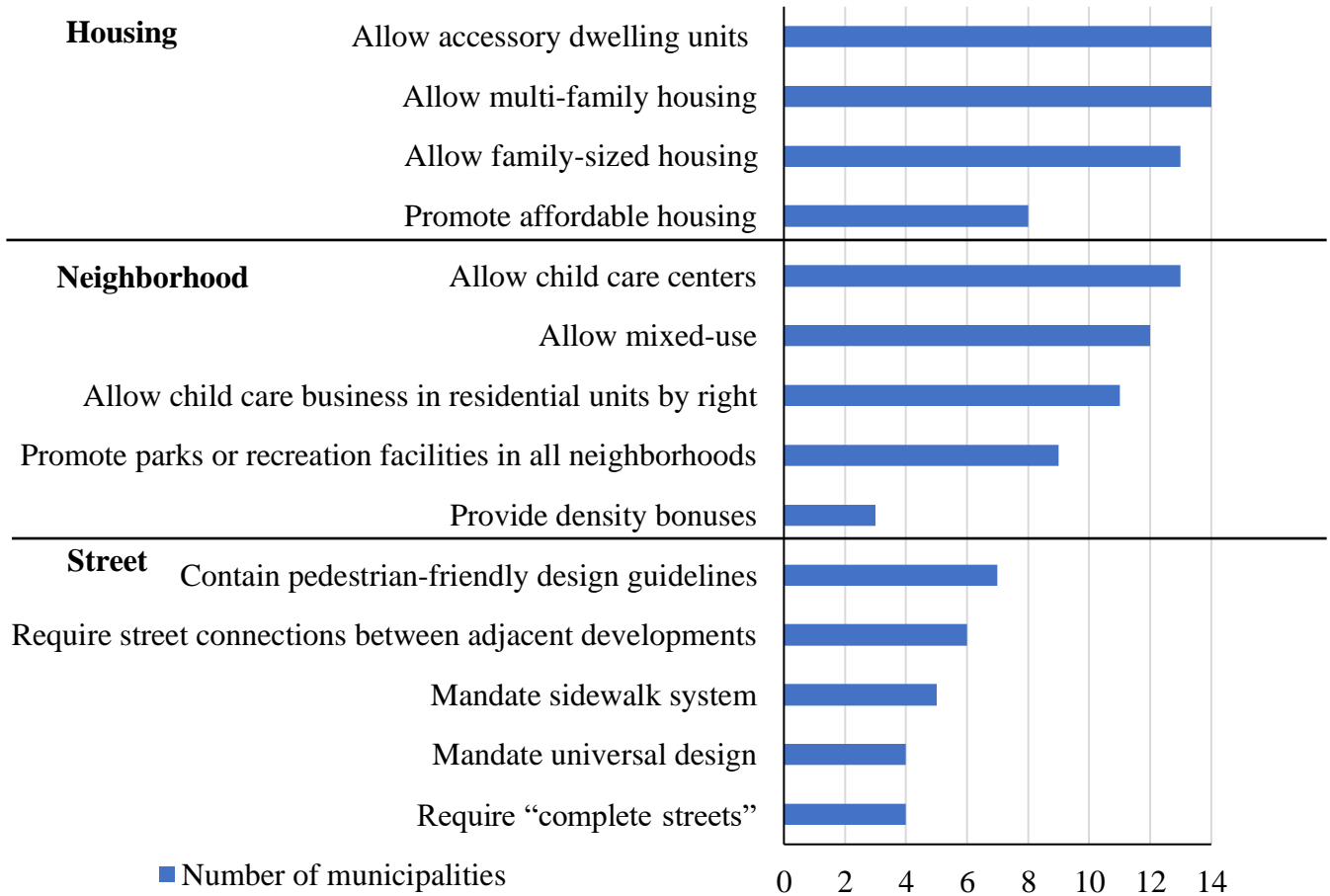
14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)

### Zoning codes

Zoning authority is at the township level in NYS. All surveyed municipalities report some zoning codes which address the needs of children and seniors. Figure 4 shows that all 14 municipalities allow accessory dwelling units and multi-family housing at least at some level. Also, most communities allow childcare centers and childcare businesses in residential areas (Figure 4), which could help address the inadequate supply of childcare shown in Figure 2. As with the built environment, most communities do not have zoning codes which give much attention to street walkability. Only a third of municipalities mandate a sidewalk system, require

complete streets, or mandate universal design to increase access for people with limited mobility (Figure 4).

**Figure 4 Age-Friendly Zoning Codes (covering at least 1% of the community)**



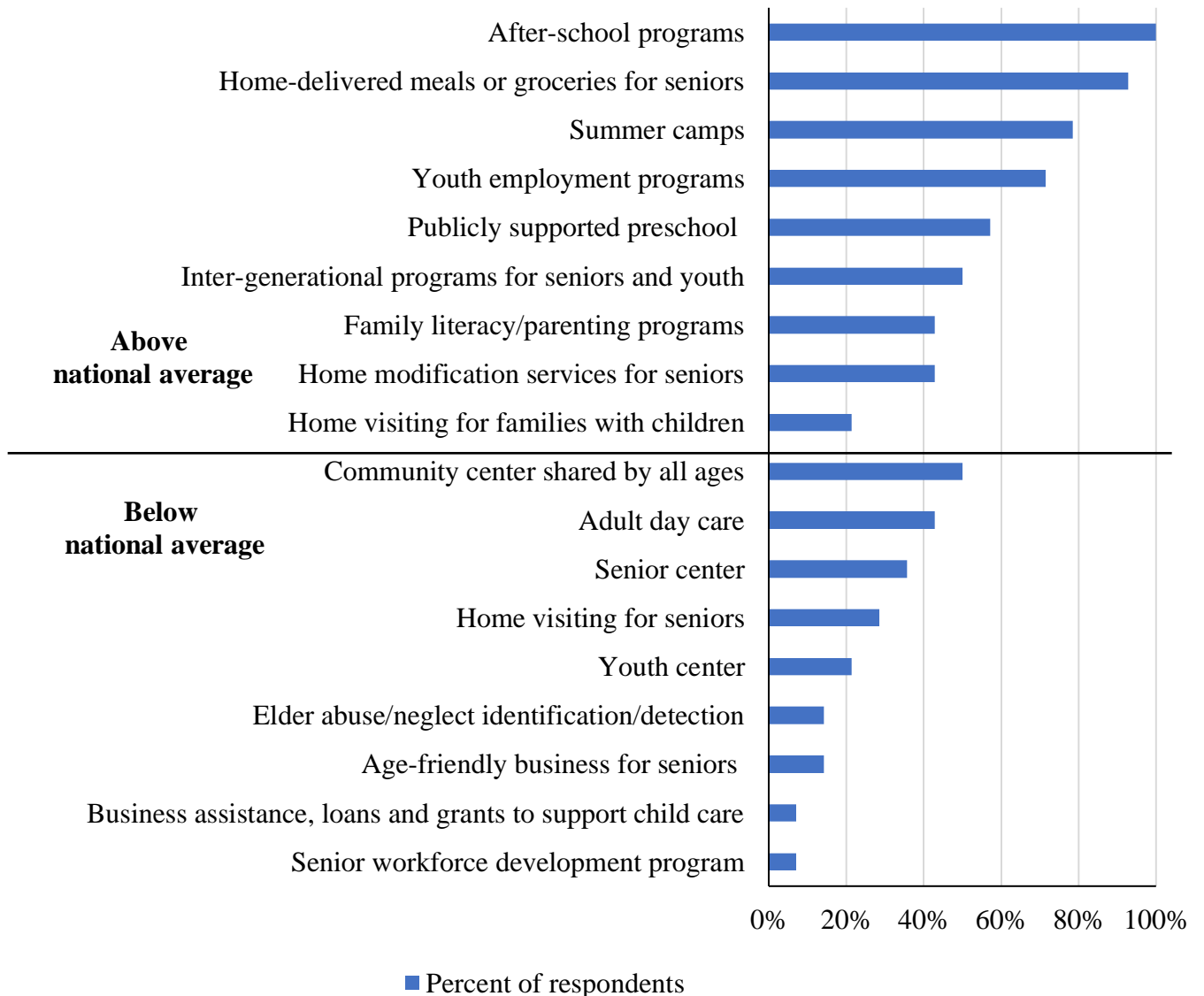
Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020  
 14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)

**Services**

The survey asked which facilities, services, or programs are available in each community. Figure 5 compares the percent of services provided in Tompkins municipalities to the average of respondents across the US. (We also conducted this survey of municipalities nationwide in 2019). All 14 municipalities have after-school programs (Figure 5). Most communities also have

home-delivered meals or groceries for seniors, and summer programs (Figure 5). However, Tompkins municipalities lack economic-related age-friendly services, including senior workforce development program, business assistance to support childcare, and age-friendly businesses (Figure 5). More attention should be given to linking economic development with age-friendly initiatives.

**Figure 5 Available facilities, services, or programs in the community**



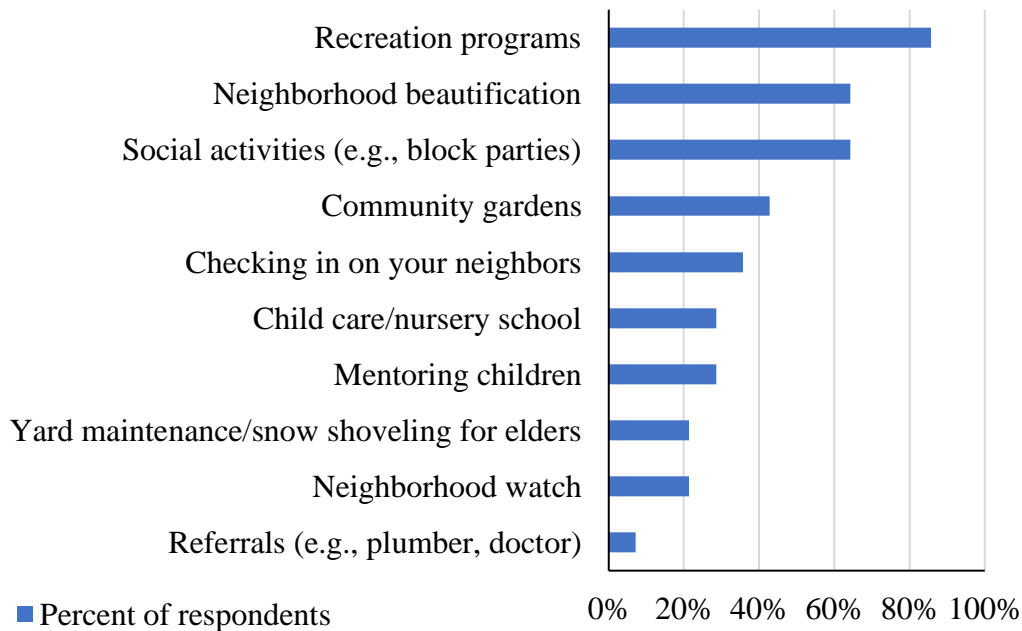
Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020  
 14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)



## Informal networks

The survey asked about informal services supported or facilitated by local government. A higher percent of communities have placemaking services (e.g. recreation programs, neighborhood beautification, and social activities) than health and security-related services (e.g. neighborhood watch and referrals). More than half of the responding municipalities reported that local government facilitates or supports informal networks of residents to provide recreation programs, neighborhood beautification, and social activities (Figure 6). For example, only twenty-one percent of communities have neighborhood watch, compared to 48% in the national survey.

**Figure 6 Informal networks supported or facilitated by local government**



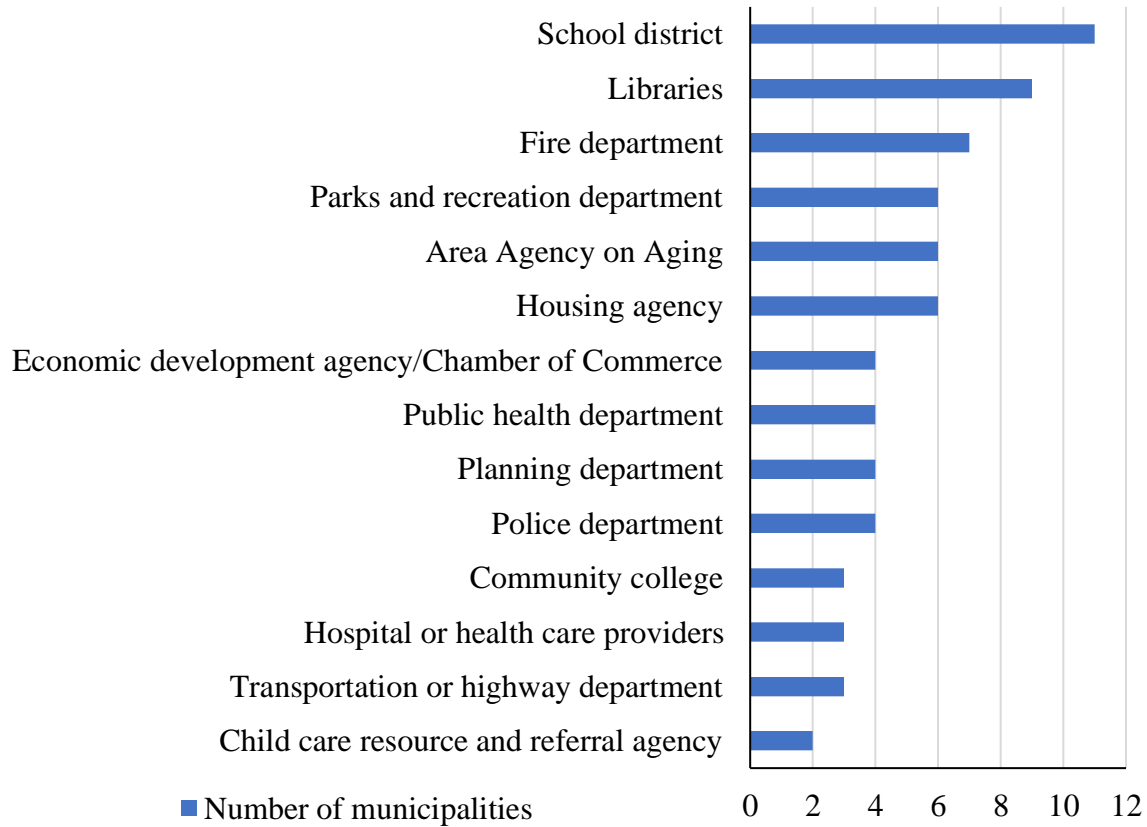
Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020

14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)

## Institutions

The survey asked which institutions are engaged in cross-agency partnership to serve children or seniors (Figure 7), which institutions are trusted by seniors or children (Figure 8), and which institutions deliver information and services (Figure 9).

**Figure 7 Institutions engaged in the cross-agency partnerships to serve children or seniors**



Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020, 14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)

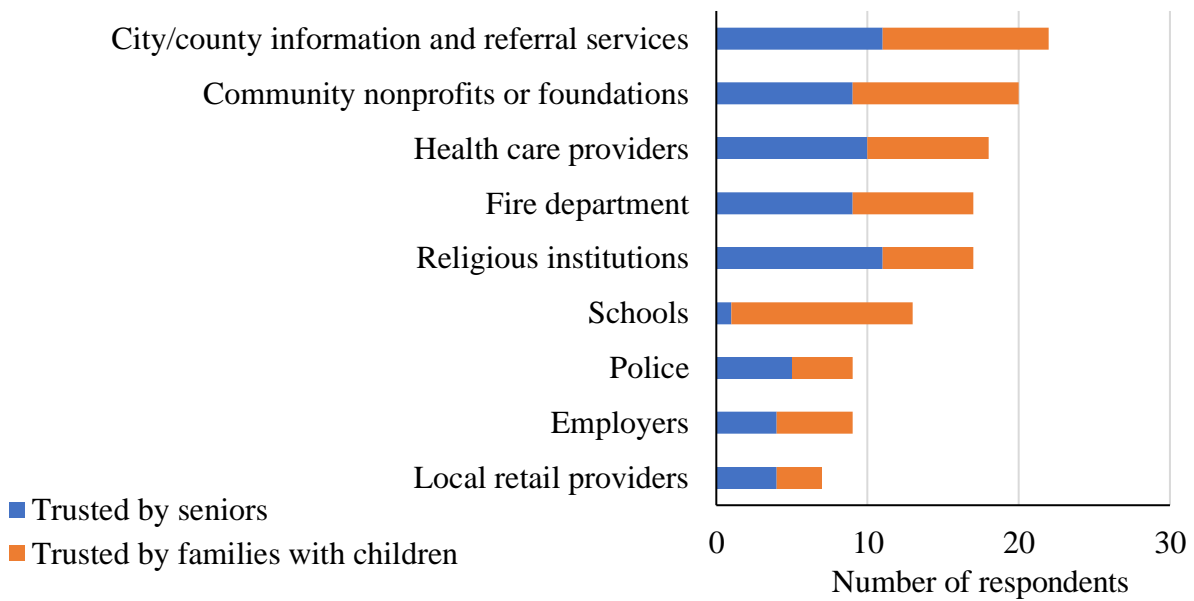
### **Cross-agency collaboration**

Among the 14 institutions measured, the top 3 institutions engaged in cross-agency collaboration are school districts, libraries, and fire departments (Figure 7). The bottom three are hospital or healthcare providers, transportation or highway department, and childcare resource and referral agency (Figure 7). Also, less than a third of responding municipalities reported that the planning department, public health department, and economic development agency engaged in cross-agency partnerships to serve children or seniors. While the Area Agency on Aging and Public health department are engaged in cross-agency partnerships to serve children or seniors across the entire county, these activities may not be reported by individual town respondents.

## Trust

Figure 8 shows that county information and referral services are the most trusted institution used by families with children and seniors for information about services. So are health care providers. The fire department and religious institutions are also trusted by all ages. Schools are the most trustworthy institutions for families with children.

**Figure 8 Institutions that seniors and families with children trust for information about services**

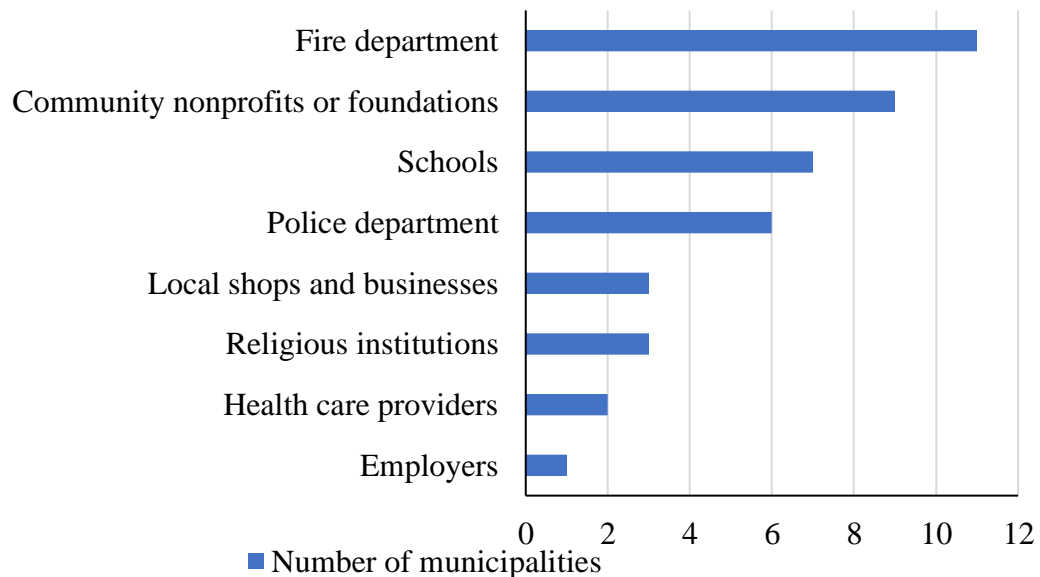


Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020, 14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)

## Information

Tompkins County municipalities report that the most common institution used to deliver information and services is the fire department, followed by community nonprofits and schools (Figure 9).

**Figure 9 Institutions working with local government to deliver information and services**

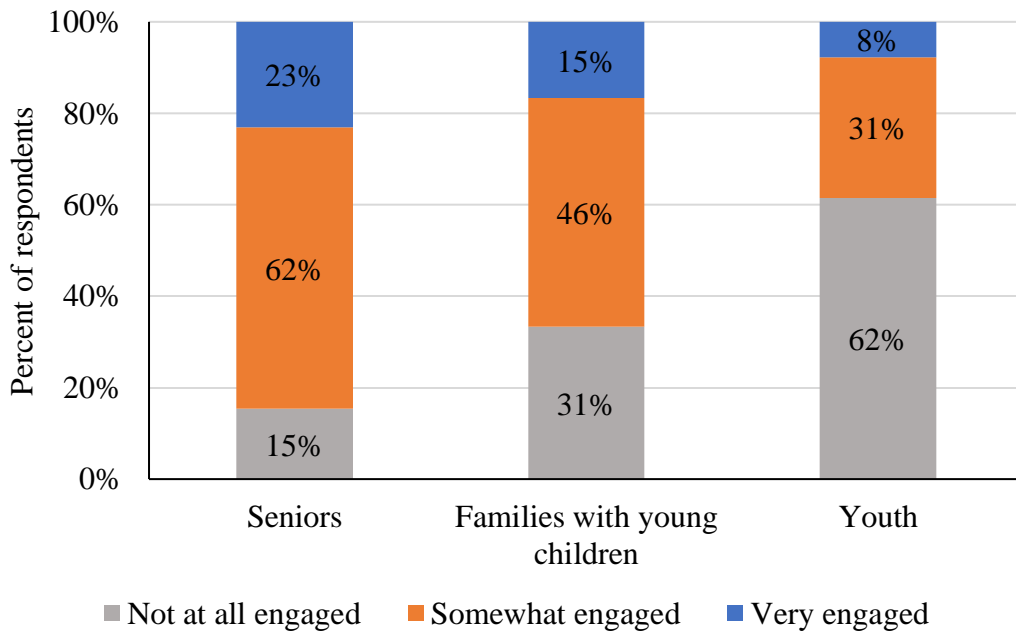


Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020, 14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)

## Engagement

The survey asked about how seniors, families with children, and youth are engaged in planning for their needs. Tompkins county governments reported that seniors are very engaged, and families with children and youth are somewhat engaged. The survey results of 14 municipalities are shown in Figure 10. Seniors are the most active group in planning for their needs, followed by families with young children (Figure 10). However, more than half of the responding municipalities indicated that youth are not engaged in the planning process at all (Figure 10).

**Figure 10 Level of engagement in planning for their needs**



Data source: Planning for all ages survey, 2020, 14 municipalities responding (the City of Ithaca, all of the 9 towns and 4 villages except the Village of Lansing and the Village of Dryden)

### **Conclusion**

The survey shows the importance of town-level government and the need for cross-agency collaboration, especially with schools, fire departments, and libraries in outlying towns. The survey showed that more attention needs to be given to affordable housing and child care and to zoning to increase age-friendly built environment features such as mixed-used, access to food, and walkability. While most comprehensive plans address the needs of seniors, more work is needed to address the needs of families with children and women. County-level economic development and transportation plans need to give attention to the needs of children and seniors and women to address service deficits in the county, especially in the outlying towns.