

Commission for the Aging Easton, Connecticut



Easton Senior Survey
Conducted 2019

The Commission for the Aging of Easton, Connecticut embarked on a project to gather information from Easton residents, 60 years of age and older. A survey was developed during mid-year of 2019 to send out for feedback from respondents.

Herewith presented is its background, results and commentary.

~ Lisa V. Tasi, Chairperson, CFA 2020

CFA letter to Easton Senior Residents

Town of Easton, Connecticut
Commission for the Aging
Easton Town Hall
225 Center Road
Easton, CT 06612

Dear Fellow Senior Resident

The Easton Commission for the Aging is embarking on a survey to assist in gathering information that is important to Easton residents, 60 years of age and older.

Your participation matters. Your voice is important. Your responses are confidential and will not be shared elsewhere, (unless you decide to furnish your name). By sharing your answers and opinions you will assist us to learn more about you and guide us to better serve you in the community.

The survey has several goals – gather information about the factors that may likely influence a senior’s propensity to move or determine what type of housing they would seek in relation to possible senior housing and zoning changes; gather information about the increasing parameters of taxes and senior relief for the elderly; gather information on knowledge of social services programs, transportation and other demographics.

Feel free to use the added space to make any additional comments, making sure that your writing is easy to read. Your feedback is important to us.

We will use these survey results to identify your priorities regarding programs and services. We will tabulate the results and with recommendations, as appropriate, present the information to the Board of Selectmen and to those responsible for local town services.

Survey Objectives

The CFA Senior Survey has several objectives.

As stated in the letter which was mailed out to Easton residents 60 years and older, the goals are to gain insight to residents' thoughts about what is important to them and what may or may not be factors in their staying in Easton or leaving Easton.

Gathering their input can set priorities and focus for the Commission to present the information to appropriate Town officials, boards and committees for further study, recommendations and possible action.

Information received from the respondents could reinforce awareness of key Easton programs – the Senior Services and Outreach, the Senior Center and other local groups – as well as foster new ideas and actions.

Survey

- The survey was mailed out anonymously to all Easton residents 60 years and older during the summer of 2019.
- The survey was confidential in nature for all respondents, yet at the same time, allowing the respondents to provide their names and any commentary if they so desired.
- The sections included
 - Housing
 - Taxes
 - Transportation
 - Social Services
 - Technology
 - Demographics
- Of the majority of survey mailed out, to approximately 837 residents, approximately 226 responses were mailed back. This is a quarter of the total, approximately 27.01%. Not all respondents answered all questions and some respondents provided multiple answers to question category, yielding more than 226 total.

Housing

HOUSING

I plan to remain in my home in the foreseeable future.

Yes: 81.41% No : 14.60%

I plan to move in the next three to five years.

Yes:25.22% No: 57.07%

If Yes, what is your main reason ?

Taxes: 31.41%

Family: 28.76%

If I were to leave Easton, for any reason, I am most likely to move to :

North: 13.71% ; East: 13.71%; South: 13.27% ; West: 7.96%

The reason I would choose this location is: Family; Taxes; Amenities; Services.

Housing

If Senior Housing were available in Easton, I would prefer to:

Purchase: 35.84%

Rent: 23.89%

Neither: 32.30%

I would prefer (please select one choice):

A Small Free-Standing House: 43.80%

A semi-attached house: 43.80%

A Condominium: 27.43%

An Apartment: 27.43%

A Community/ Development with Standard Amenities: 17.25%

with the following:

Level One Story: 72.12% ; Two Stories: 6.19% Other: 9.73%

(Note: Any of the above choices would require a zoning change in Easton, CT)

I would expect to pay: \$300,000 : 32% ; \$400,000: 16.37% ; \$500,000: 16.81% ; Above \$500,000 : 0%
or Rent: 24.33% (with average cost range from \$500 to \$4,500/\$5000 month).

Housing

The Survey results present a picture that the majority of respondents lean towards a small free standing home, preferably with on one level, as well as a semi-attached residence, also one level.

The next choice is a condominium, again one level type of structure, with respondents evenly split in answers for choosing an apartment (one level).

A community or development is a third option, with respondents also indicating a one level structure.

Respondents' range for price of housing is approximately @\$300,000 to \$400, 000.

Respondents that answered the above choices with a per month rental option provided cost from as low as \$500/month up to \$4,500-\$5,000/month. The average cost per month for a rental property is \$1,200.

- It must be noted, and as outlined in the survey, any of the above Housing indicators would require a zoning change within the Town of Easton.

Housing

The majority of the Respondents plan to remain in their homes for the foreseeable future.

Also, when polled for the question of if they plan to move in the next three to five years, the majority of respondents answered no.

Choices for moving away from Easton clearly indicates taxes (increase in taxes; CT State taxes). Family is the second most choice.

If moving away from Easton, it is also due to searching out areas which have more amenities; businesses; Infra-structures; hospitals; transportation; entertainment / restaurants.

Some moving away in the near future indicate reasons due to age, family, downsizing to a smaller residence, having another home (second home) which is nearer to other family, or due to employment relocation of a spouse.

Some respondents could not give exact reasons why as certain information was unknown - such as homeowners fees, additional taxes and amenities (dining, elevator, sports activities, association dues).

Housing

Areas for relocation in the State of Connecticut are locally – Fairfield, Trumbull, Westport, Shelton, Waterbury, ‘eastern Connecticut’.

Areas nearby are: Westchester, New York City, Boston, Philadelphia.

Other: Mexico, Puerto Rico, Europe (country not indicated).

East:

Pennsylvania

Washington, D.C.

Virginia

West:

California

Texas

Washington

South:

North Carolina

Florida

Alabama

North:

Massachusetts

Rhode Island

Maine

Housing

Results / Recommendations:

Respondents of the Survey are aware that although there were hypothetical housing options, the actuality is that housing as such cannot be realized due to the existing Planning & Zoning guidelines of the Town of Easton within the greater scope of conservation and environment.

More importantly, resident respondents indicated that while the options presented for Housing possibilities could be realized, practicality dictated environmental concerns as the current status of the Town of Easton is a steward of watershed and part of protected areas, which encompasses many acres, providing sustenance for the area as whole – reservoirs, fresh water and ecosystems. They believe that while they made a choice to live in Easton, they do not believe that housing options presented in the survey are actually realistic and thus due to other issues (taxes, family, age), moving away may be the better final decision.

Housing

Results / Recommendations

It is important to realize that most seniors enjoy the lifestyle of Easton as it is today. It is a rural, protected oasis within the hubbub of suburban / urban sites.

For those who are at the younger age range of the survey, they are able to access any type of amenities in the local area.

The respondents would welcome a type of senior housing, but are aware and cognizant of rules and regulations that are already in place (zoning, environment) and would rather choose to move (downsize or other) instead of disrupting the bucolic nature of the town.

Easton has a rural character as well as a being protected watershed for local/regional water use. Maintaining this environment in the 21st century is very important.

Taxes

I am aware of the Town Tax Relief Program for Qualifying Seniors.

Yes: 91.59% ; No: 19.02%

I am aware of the State of CT Tax Relief Program for Qualifying Seniors or Qualifying People with Disabilities.

Yes: 91.59% ; No: 19.02%

I am concerned that higher taxes will make it more difficult to live in Easton and will require me to leave Easton in the future.

Yes: 91.59% ; No: 19.02%

I am aware of the Town of Easton's Tax Deferral Program for Qualifying Seniors.

Yes: 91.59% ; No: 19.02%

I am aware of Reverse Mortgage Programs offered through Financial Institutions which can pay me a monthly income from the value of my home.

Yes: 91.59% ; No: 19.02%

Taxes

Commentary:

This was mailed in anonymously as a suggestion:

“Could the Commission for the Aging consider modifying / simplifying the Easton Senior Tax Relief Program to include a fixed-reduction amount (i.e., \$500-\$1,500) that could be applied to the property tax of the principal residence of the long-time (I.e., ‘greater than’ >5 years) Easton owner when he/she is over a specific age (i.e., 62, 65, 72 years of age) – regardless of the owner’s income or assets ?

Commentary:

“I was brought up in Connecticut, live in Easton, and I want to stay here. Local and State taxes are too high.”

Commentary:

“Is there a way to factor in children living in the household when calculating needed assistance?”

Commentary:

“Town taxes are way too high”.

Taxes

Results / Recommendations:

Most respondents are aware of all the tax benefit programs that are available to seniors, however, the majority indicate that they cannot apply for any 'senior hardship programs' due to their financial status/portfolio.

However, some respondents are not aware of the tax deferral programs for qualifying Easton Senior residents, nor are they aware of any updates on tax information from Town or the State of Connecticut.

Commentary voiced on the State of Connecticut indicates that 'the current / elected government leaders have destroyed the State for the common taxpayer.' They feel they "do not have a voice with the currently elected-Leadership".

The majority of respondents are concerned about higher taxes within the Town of Easton and most importantly from the State of Connecticut (state income tax purported additional gas tax; toll and car tax).

Commentary: "The excessive amount of spending in the State of Connecticut is a detriment to us all".

There is a need to continue supporting the existing Town Tax Relief program and the Town of Easton should consider additional types of tax programs for seniors (i.e., qualifying or other reasons).

Transportation

I drive my own car.

Yes: 96.01% ; No: 3.98%

I do not drive. I depend on family or friends for transportation.

Yes: 3.98% ; No: no data

I am aware of the Easton Senior Center van service.

Yes: 59.29% ; No: 40.70%

I use the Easton Senior Center Van Service.

Yes: 12.38% ; No: 89.38%

I utilize other transportation services: 19.46%

such as: Taxi; Uber; Lyft; Private Limo ; Other

Transportation

Results / Recommendations

“The Easton Senior Center Van Service meets my needs.”

This statement was not directly answered by the respondents.

The respondents answered more effectively within the context of “I am aware of the Easton Senior Center van service” or “I use the Easton Senior Center van service”.

Most respondents, if they do not drive, rely on family members or friends for transportation. Some respondents, who are aware of the ESC van, believe it is very difficult to schedule a van appointment for their own use as the van is always booked, or is not available within the chosen time frame they need.

Plan for increased service with other towns and established transportation services (local / regional) is key to realize potential future requirements for seniors. The ESC van should not be the only available transportation service for seniors.

Social Services

There is a Municipal Agent in the Town of Easton, Connecticut.

The Agent helps senior citizens with information and referrals to local, state, and federal programs which are available to them – such as Medicare, Medigap Insurance, Medical Prescription Programs, Financial Assistance Programs, Care Giving at Home, Home Repairs and Maintenance.

The Municipal Agent also does Outreach Work and Social Services work and is available to visit Homebound seniors.

Alison Witherbee, MSW, is the Municipal Agent / Social Services Director, and can be contacted at Telephone 203-268-1137.

Social Services

I am aware of all services provided through the Municipal Agent's office.

Yes: 55.75% ; No 51.77%

I review the Municipal Agent's information.

Yes: 55.75% ; No: 51.77%

The Easton Senior Center sends out a monthly newsletter with information about events and programs. It includes news from the Municipal Agent. Are you aware of information?

Yes: 68.58% ; No: 31.41%

I use the Easton Senior Center.

Yes: 27.87% No: 72.12%

Social Services

Respondents varied suggestions for additional activities are:

- Saturday Activities
- Trips to Museums, Plays, Concerts
- Lectures
- Men's Activities
- Saturday activities (other than weekday)
- Yoga
- Pickleball

The majority of these suggestions target activity programs offered via ESC or other venues.

Of importance for outreach and notification are these suggestions:

- Offer assistance with documentation, financial or other
- Mailers to announce important Senior issues; Town-related information and updates.

Social Services

The survey results indicate that while respondents are either aware of the Municipal Agent and the Senior Center, they do not actually use the services provided, or suggest programs or activities that are already being done at the Senior Center (or even Easton Community Center).

Mixed results show that while respondents read the newsletters to be informed, they sometimes are not aware of other things, i.e., basic information like meetings, or town services.

The newsletters are a welcome form of information.

Phone call reminders or card mailers are suggested for any type of Senior information.

Commentary provided “The M.A. was a great source of help for me when I needed help finding dementia care and assisted living arrangements for a family member”.

Commentary “Programs for tax filing and other senior related paperwork have been most useful.”

Social Services

Results / Recommendations:

There is awareness of the senior services, municipal agent and social services and outreach in the Town of Easton. Some respondents, though aware of certain programs and support, may not entirely be aware of other programs or outreach.

The Commission of the Aging will support endeavors by the Municipal Agent / Social Services Director.

The communication between the Easton Senior Center to the Municipal Agent / Social Services Director is most important in order to reach all seniors for outreach programs and services. The sharing of information is also vital between these entities and those of the Town first responders.

Based on target population and beyond, there is the need to anticipate any potential needs of the senior population and to expand upon supporting programs in Town and the local / regional area.

Technology

How do you get your information on the Town of Easton, other than the Easton Senior Center / Municipal Agent newsletter?

A variety of answers included the following: family; neighbor; friends; gossip at local stores; mail; websites; newspaper ; News12 Connecticut; Channel 8 WTNH (ABC Local Affiliate) ; WICC & WEBE Radio stations.

Are you aware of the Town of Easton Website ? (www.eastonct.gov)

Yes :76.10% No: 28.76%

Are you aware of Technology Services at the Easton Public Library ?

Yes :76.10% No: 28.76%

Do you use a computer or smart device?

Yes: 81.85% ; No:13.71%

What is your preferred way of communication ? Landline: 13.71% ; Smart Device*: 81.85%

* Smart Device translates to Smart Phone ; Computer; Laptop; Handheld devices

Technology

Results / Recommendations

Respondents are even with use of smart devices and landlines. A very small portion do not have smart devices (i.e, phone, computer).

Lack of Cellular Coverage is a problem for residents who utilize Smartphone devices.

More respondents are not aware of the Town Website, Technology Services at the Library or other media.

However, when asked if they have smart devices / computers, the majority does. The question is then, why do they not know about all the websites or services for the Town ?

There is no media (newspaper) in Town and most of the respondents believe this is a negative for communication. Respondents keep current on Town Issues by watching the local channel of rebroadcast town and board meetings.

Split results between knowledge of the Town Website and the Easton Library Technology services.

Technology

Results / Recommendations

There is need to expand upon the technology (cell towers) for use of smart phones while also cultivating a population that is informed on all Town and local news. More importantly, the expansion of cell town coverage will enable seniors (and for the matter the entire town) to have access to all First Responders in case of an emergency.

Additional resources or enhanced advertising of the current websites and available services are warranted to address and maintain the latest information.

The 20th Century back up of mailed newsletters or mailed cards is still welcome as an important way to be informed of town meetings, voting for referendums and election issues.

Increase awareness of technology offerings at the Easton Library in tandem with the information provided by the Municipal Agent / Social Services Director; Town of Easton; Senior Center ; First Responders.

Personal

Assistance is available to seniors for a variety of individual needs. The Municipal Agent can refer you to various programs.

I am the primary caregiver for a loved one in at home.

Yes: 10.62% ; No: 72.20%

I have difficulty shopping.

Yes: 10.62% ; No: 72.20%

I need assistance with paperwork regarding Finances; Medicare or insurance forms ; other:

Yes: 10.62% ; No: 72.20%

I would like to meet people / participate in social events.

Yes: 10.62%; No: 72.20%

Personal

Most respondents are not the primary caregivers at home, rather they are sole or married/partners each living independently and without needed extra care.

Most respondents are mobile and can access amenities and services within the area. For the respondents requiring services – transport; difficulty shopping – those respondents are at the older range of the spectrum or may have other needs requiring assistance. They may use the ESC Van or have available family members and friends for outreach and transportation.

They are though aware of services provided in town, i.e., the ESC Van or other local charitable and non profit Organizations (religious; social outreach ; federal programs) that can ameliorate and address any lack in their personal situations.

They are aware of the Municipal Agent and communication of programs available as well as the outreach side of the office. They are also aware of the various social programs offered at the Easton Senior Center.

Demographics

The following information will assist us to better understand the needs of the senior population in the Town of Easton, CT.

Your Age

Male 41.29%

Female 56.19%

Alone 22.56%

Family / Spouse 73.45%

Age

60 + 51%

70+ 45.57%

80+ 23.45%

90+ 5.75%

Demographics

My Annual Income range is:

Less than \$30,000	10.17%
\$30,000 -\$70,000	12.38%
\$70,000 -\$100,000	10.61%
More than \$100,000	27.83%
Prefer Not To Answer	34.51%

- Tabulation indicates that surveys answered jointly by spouses lean towards a skew as the 'annual income range' is more aligned with a 'joint household average income' instead of 'individual household average income'.

I am employed:

Full Time	15.04%
Part Time	11.94%
Retired	61.94%
Prefer Not To Answer	7.52%

Demographics

Survey Tally indicates the following:

The Average respondent is:

Semi-Retired (working Part Time) or Retired

Resides with Spouse / Family

Average Annual Income is in range of \$70,000 to \$100,000

Age is not factored into the equation as majority of respondents fall within the age range of 60 to 70 years.

Next Steps

- Review of the results within the Commission of the Aging and the Municipal Agent / Senior Services Director.
- Share the results with the following entities:
 - Summary of the survey to be shared outward via posting on the Easton Town Website, within the page of the Commission for the Aging and the Municipal Agent/ Senior Services Director.
- The survey will provide a wealth of information to the following entities within the Town of Easton:
 - Board of Selectman
 - Board of Finance
 - Easton Senior Tax Relief Commission
 - Planning & Zoning
 - Conservation Commission
 - Easton Senior Center Commission
 - Easton First Responders (Police ; EMS; Fire)
 - Easton Library Board
 - Other interested Advocates (SWCCA; and other) ; and media related venues.

Easton Commission for the Aging

Survey 2019

Members :

Lisa V. Tasi , chair

Linda Dollard

Anne Hughes

Phyllis Machledt

Karen Martin

Melinda O'Brien

Alison Witherbee, MSW, Municipal Agent / Social Services Director

Easton Commission for the Aging Survey 2019

This survey is published and managed by the Commission for the Aging, Easton, CT.

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