

At Home by High Community Survey Report

Introduction

Across the country, communities are launching “Village” organizations to connect neighbors with neighbors and help people remain in their own homes as they age. These membership-based organizations host social gatherings, plan group outings, and recruit volunteers from the neighborhood to help their members with yard work, errands, transportation, and other daily tasks that become more challenging as people grow older. Columbus is already home to two Villages: Village Connections in German Village, and Village in the Ville in Clintonville.

After learning about their success and researching other Villages across the country, a group of neighbors in the Short North and Southern University District came together to explore the possibility of launching a Village for our neighborhoods, too. We knew that we only wanted to launch if there was sufficient interest in our community, so we developed a planning team, gave ourselves the name At Home by High, and developed a community survey to assess interest. This report shares the results of our survey, which confirmed for us that there is extensive interest in our neighborhood for this type of organization.

We received 203 viable survey responses, representing more than 250 neighborhood residents age 55 and older. What follows is a summary of our survey results.

Key Findings

- An overwhelming majority of respondents (83 percent) stated it is very important or somewhat important to remain in their homes as they age.
- More than half of those surveyed (67 percent) indicated that they would find one or more home services helpful for remaining independent in their homes.
- Many respondents (83 percent) would like to attend more social activities if given the opportunity. There was particular interest in lifetime learning opportunities, community festivals, performing arts events, and get togethers at restaurants, wine bars, and coffee shops.
- Although a majority of older adults stay in contact with their family and community members, 42 percent would like to visit other people more often.
- Even though more than 80 percent of respondents still drive themselves, over 30 percent indicated they would like to receive one or more specific types of transportation assistance.

Data Collection and Response Rate

Target Demographic

The target demographic for the surveys was people age 55 and older who live in the Short North (including Harrison West and Italian Village), the University District (South of 11th Ave, including Weinland Park, Dennison Place, the Circles), and Milo Grogan. Surveys were also distributed to residents at Ohio Living Westminster-Thurber (Westminster-Thurber) on Neil Avenue. While Westminster-Thurber residents

technically live in the Short North, this report breaks them out as a separate group because they received a modified survey to account for services already received through Westminster-Thurber.

Survey Distribution

Data in this report derived from surveys that were distributed as hardcopies and online. Paper surveys were distributed by convenience sampling to homes with people in At Home by High's target demographic (55 years or older). They were dropped off for Westminster-Thurber residents on June 22nd and to other neighborhood residents between July 1, 2017 and July 10, 2017. Online surveys were promoted via social media by various neighborhood residents and associations, including the Short North Civic Association, Harrison West Society, and Italian Village Society, and the Weinland Park Civic Association. Online surveys were promoted from June 12, 2017 to June 30, 2017.

Sample Size

We identified the number of people who fit the target demographic using voter registration data from the Franklin County Board of Elections; data was pulled for all voter precincts in our target neighborhoods and filtered by age. This resulted in a list of 2,565 people. It is important to note that this is an underrepresentation since not everyone is registered to vote. However, it was the most cost-effective and equitable option that we identified for the purpose of sampling addresses. From this total population, we distributed 900 paper surveys to a proportionate sample from each of our target neighborhoods. In cases where two members of the household were in our target age range, we only dropped off a single survey to be filled out for the household.

Response Rate

Of the 900 paper surveys, 131 surveys were returned. We received a total of 77 responses to the online survey. Three of those surveys came from people who live outside the target area and two came from someone younger than 55; those surveys were not included in the analysis.

Of the 203 online and hardcopy responses we received, 56 came from couples that both fit our age requirements. Therefore, the response demographics represent a total of 259 neighborhood residents age 55 or older, or 10% of the target population we identified.

Respondent Demographics

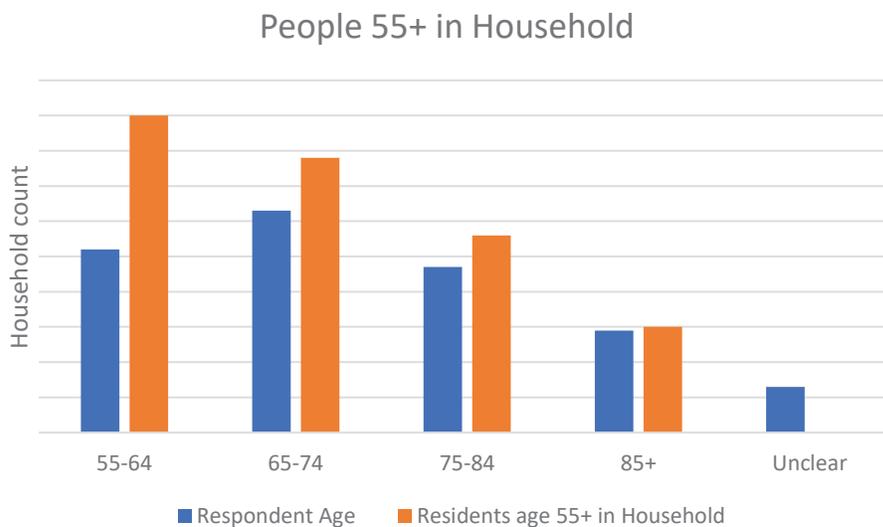
Respondent Age and People Age 55+ in Household

The target demographic for the surveys was people age 55 and older who live in the Short North (including Harrison West, Italian Village, and Westminster-Thurber), the University District (South of 11th Ave, including Weinland Park, Dennison Place, the Circles), and Milo Grogan. While AHBH will accept members as young as 50, we anticipate that most members will be at least 55, and likely closer to their 70s; for that reason we didn't target those 50-55 years old for the survey.

Residents of Westminster-Thurber received a separate set of surveys that were modified to account for services already provided on-site. These residents make up 26% of our target population; the surveys we received from them represent 36% of our respondents. Westminster-Thurber is a “life plan community” offering apartment living, assisted living, rehabilitation, and long term nursing care. Surveys were specifically distributed to those members in apartment living and assisted living.

The age range of all survey respondents was fairly evenly distributed, with similar response rates from most 55+ age categories. The largest number of responses came from people in the 65-74 age range (63 responses). The largest 55+ age category for the household at large was slightly younger, at 55-64 years old. Some 13 respondents did not differentiate their age from that of their partner; we were able to verify that both met our age requirement but could not verify the age category of the respondent. Graph 1, *People 55+ in Household* illustrates number of respondents in an age group (blue); the second bar (orange) represents the number of individuals in an age group in addition to the respondent.

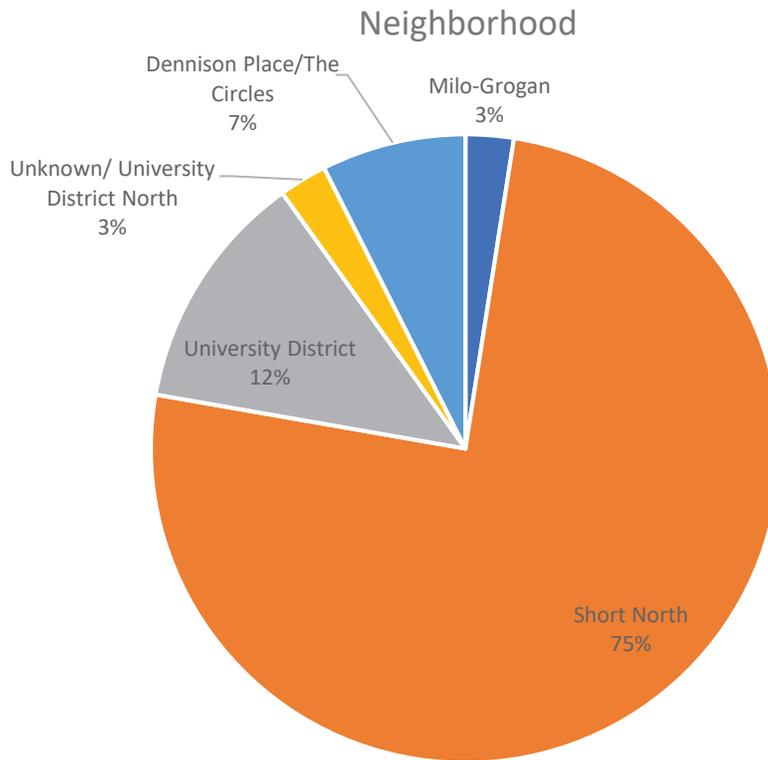
Some 15 respondents indicated that one or more people *under* age 55 also live in their household. Of these, six respondents reported one or more children under 18 in the household.



Neighborhood

The surveys we received from each neighborhood are somewhat proportionate with the 55+ population in the neighborhoods we surveyed. A notable exceptions is that Milo-Grogan represents 6% of our target population but only 3% of our respondents.

Some 55% of respondents live in the 43215 zip code, 41% live in 43201, and 4% live in 43202.



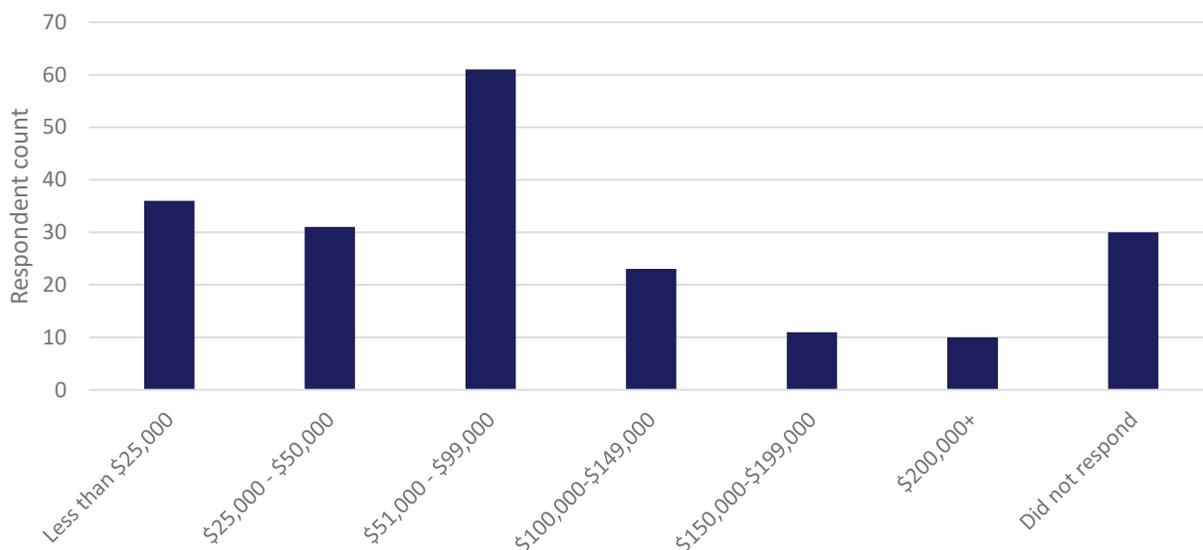
Race/Ethnicity

Of the respondents who selected a race/ethnicity, the breakdown is as follows: White/Caucasian (89%), Black or African American (6%), Asian or Pacific Islander (3%), and Native American or Hispanic/Latino at 1% each. Nine respondents did not answer the question.

Income

The annual household income of respondents varied significantly, with 18% reporting less than \$25,000 in income, and 22% reporting \$100,000 or more. As anticipated, most respondents fell somewhere in the middle, with 31% reporting an annual income of \$51,000-\$99,000. Is the y axis number or percent (I think number) Just added a y axis title!

Respondent Household Income



Type of Home

Given the diverse housing options in the area, it was no surprise that apart from the 80 respondents in Independent Living at Westminster-Thurber, 38% of respondents reported living in multi-family housing¹ such as a condo, apartment, or townhouse, and the other 62% reported living in a single-family house.

People in household

Most respondents either live alone (51%) or with their spouse or partner (40%). Just 3% still have children at home; another 3% live with non-relatives.

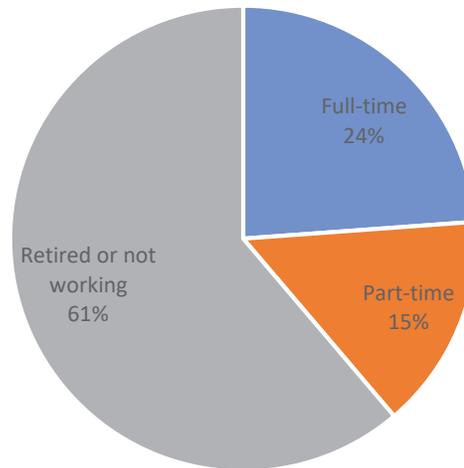
Who is in your household?	Count
I live alone	103
My spouse or partner	82
Non-relatives	6
Spouse or partner and children	5
Other relatives	4
My children	1
Spouse or partner and other relatives	1
Did not respond	3
Total	203

¹ The multi-family housing also includes four respondents in the supportive housing development at Terrace Apartments.

Employment

Respondents were asked to share the employment status of all members of their household over age 50. Results show that 172 people are retired or not working, 67 people are working full time, and 42 are working part-time.²

Employment Status



Caregiving

Of the 203 survey respondents, 2 reported serving as caregivers for children inside or outside the home, 3 reported serving as caregivers for an older adult within the home, and 9 reported serving as caregivers for an older adult *outside* the home.

Family, Community, and Social Network

“Social Participation, Respect, and Inclusion: Honor what each older adult has to offer and encourage participation regardless of age, ethnicity, or race. Provide purposeful opportunities that are accessible, affordable, and person-centered.” - Age-Friendly Columbus

Sense of connection to community

Just over half of respondents (57%) agreed or strongly agreed that they feel connected to their community. Some 29% weren’t sure, and 14% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they feel

² The aggregate responses add up to more than the number of older adults represented in the survey because several people selected both “retired” and “working part-time” and several others shared the employment status of non-relatives living in their household.

connected. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those at Westminster-Thurber reported the least sense of connection to the community, with only 36% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel a sense of connection. The sense of connection also correlates with the amount of time spent living in the neighborhood; those who had lived in the neighborhood for 10 or more years were more likely to report a sense of connection (69% agreement or strong agreement) than those who had lived in the neighborhood for 5 or fewer years (32% agreement or strong agreement).

When asked to comment on their sense of community, those respondents who reported a feeling of connection often referenced knowing their neighbors, helping to organize community events, and having lived in the neighborhood for a long time.

“I’ve lived here for 43 years and have been involved in the community throughout that time.”

“We know pretty much all the neighbors on our street.”

“I’ve been actively involved with community organizations and events since moving here in 2004. Before that I worked in the neighborhood.”

Those who reported feeling less connected were more likely to reference a sense that their neighborhood was catering to younger demographics, that they knew few people, that transportation challenges prevented them from going out, or that they had not lived in the neighborhood long.

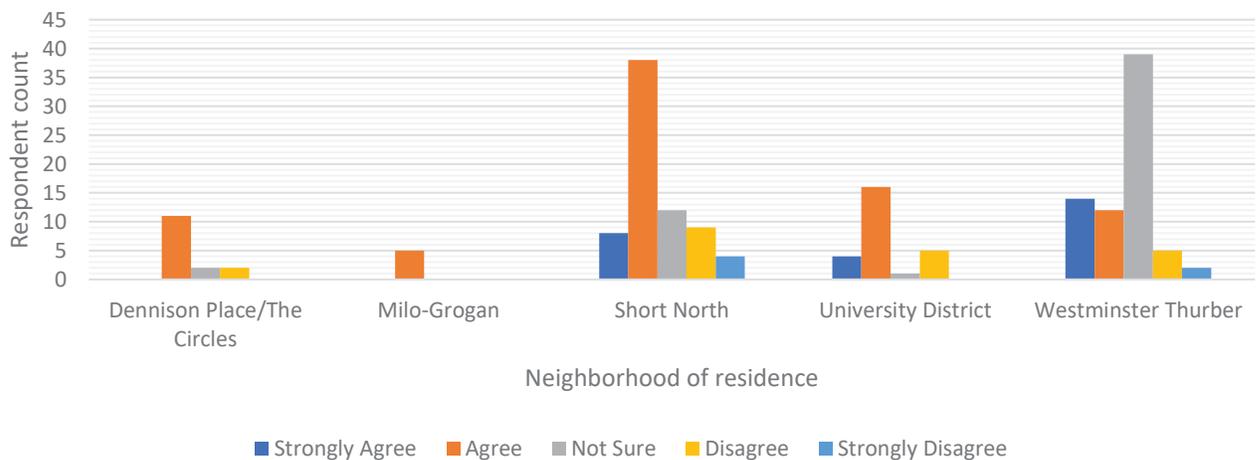
“I’ve lived here a short time and rarely go out.”

“Difficult to park in the Short North. I use a cane and can’t walk long distances.”

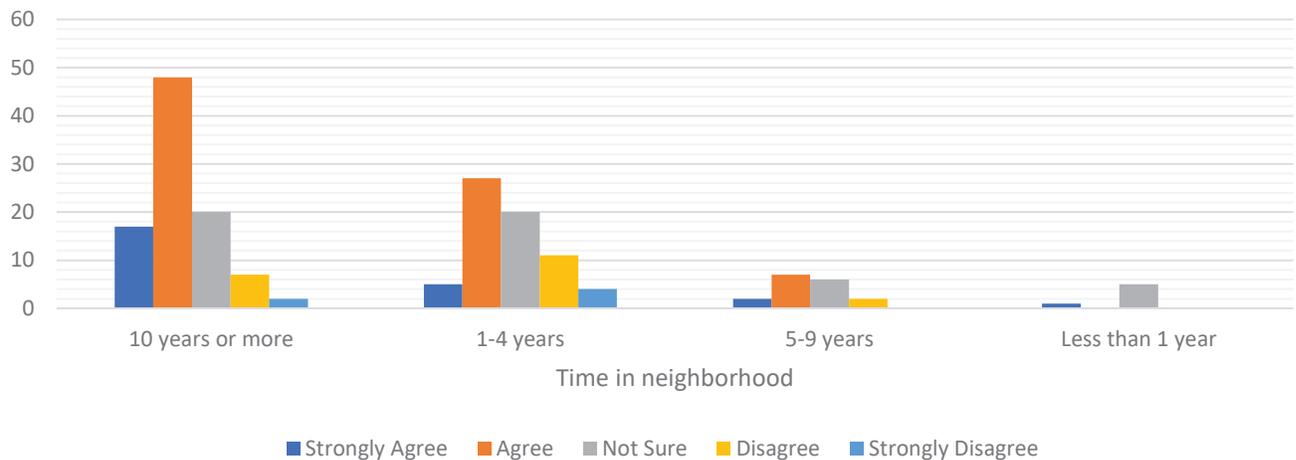
“We have not developed any relationships outside the Westminster community.”

“At one time I [felt connected] but the demographics have changed so I don’t feel so connected.”

Agreement with: I feel connected to my community
(by neighborhood)

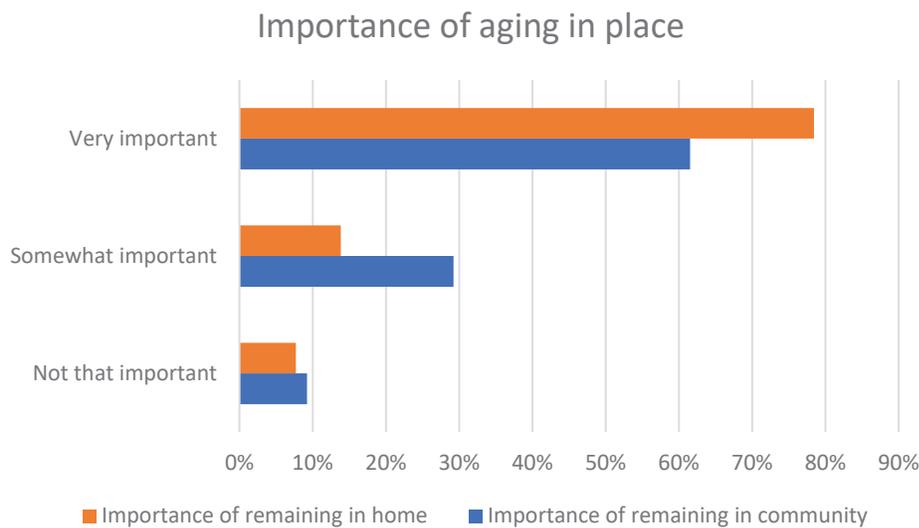


Agreement with: I feel connected to my community (by time in neighborhood)



Desire to 'age in place' in home and community

When asked how important it is that they remain in their own home as they age, 78% of survey respondents said that it is 'very important' and another 14% said it is 'somewhat important.' When asked about the importance of remaining in their community, 62% said that it is very important and 29% said that it is somewhat important.³



³ These questions were not included in the survey for those at Ohio Living, so the response count for both questions is 133 people.

Social connections

In addition to offering services such as assistance with transportation and yard work, At Home by High will offer social opportunities for its members. These might include a walking club, a book club, or a meet-up at a local restaurant or art gallery. For some members, these gatherings will simply be another chance to get out and meet new people, but we anticipate that for others these gatherings will be an otherwise infrequent opportunity to interact with other people.

To measure the current level of social interaction of older adults in our community, we assessed responses to two sets of questions.

- 1) Does the survey respondent live alone or with others?
- 2) How frequently does the respondent visit with family, friends, and neighbors?

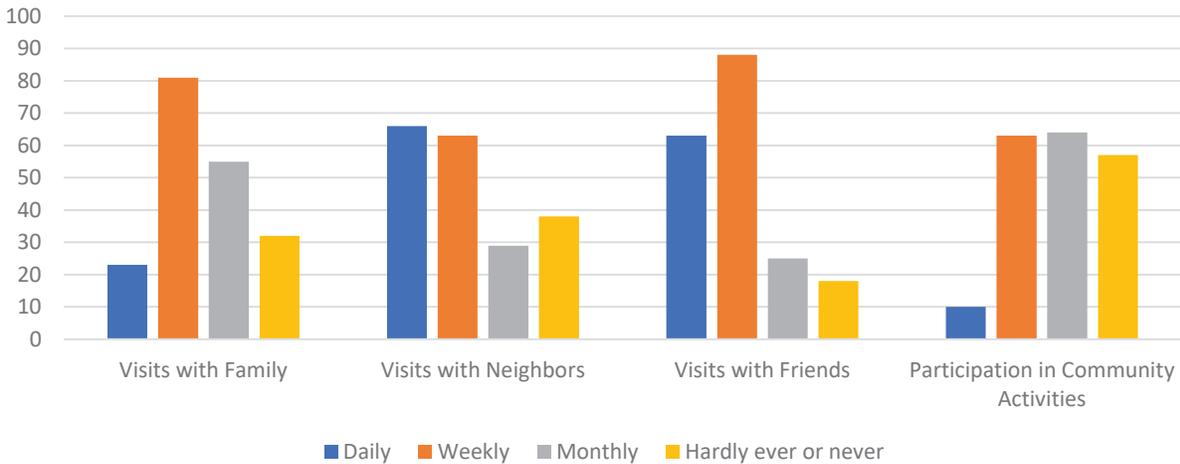
We identified two types of respondents who appear to be at high risk of social isolation. The first was respondents living alone who averaged no more than 1 weekly visit with family, friends, or neighbors. The second was respondents living with a spouse but who hardly ever or never visit with other family, friends, or neighbors. Of those who were surveyed **31 respondents fell into this high-risk category.**

We identified a second category of respondents as potentially being at moderate risk of social isolation. This group either lived alone and averaged no more than two weekly visits, or lived with someone else but averaged only one weekly or monthly visit with other people. Of those who were surveyed **19 people fell into this moderate-risk category.**

We considered all other respondents to be at relatively low risk of social isolation. These respondents reported daily or weekly visits with two or more categories of friends, family, or neighbors, and in many cases lived with other people in the household. **The remainder of the 147 respondents fell into this low-risk category.**

Overall, respondents reported visiting most frequently with neighbors and friends. People reported participating in community activities and events as their least frequent type of social interaction, with 62% of respondents participating in community activities no more than monthly (33%) or hardly ever or never (29%).

Social Visits



Interest in more social interaction

Some 42% of responses reported that they would like to visit other people more often. When asked about what limits their ability to do so, 13 people said that they don't have the time (often because of work schedules). Others, however, went on to share that they didn't see other people as often as they would like because of distance from family (14 people), health or mobility issues (9 people), feeling shy or not knowing others nearby (9 people), or lack of transportation (7 people).

Responses included:

"Don't know many people. Have no close friends."

"Everyone seems too busy."

"Family are all out of state. Sometimes I feel shy going on my own to community things."

"Most friends are deceased [or] disabled."

"My neighbors rent or are new, or so young they have no interest in developing a friendship. I don't know older people who live in the short north."

Interest in social, cultural, and educational activities

Across the country, Villages with a similar model to that of At Home by High offer a variety of social activities for their members. The members often play an active role in selecting which activities will take place. To get a sense for the types of activities potential members in our area might enjoy, we provided respondents with a list of options and asked them to select those that they would like to participate in. The following table shares the number of respondents who indicated that they would enjoy each type of activity, in order of the most frequently selected activities.

Activity	Count of respondents interested in activity
Lifetime learning opportunities (lectures, DIY, art classes, etc)	91
Wine/cheese tasting	82
Community events (resource fairs, holiday parties, festivals)	79
Performing arts events (concerts, plays, movies)	80
Coffee meet-up	76
Breakfast, lunch, or dinner meet-up	72
Cooking/nutrition classes	70
Discussion groups	67
TV or classic movie watch parties	65
Book club	63
Hobbies & crafts	54
Community gardening	45
Group volunteer activities	35
Sporting events (watching live or on tv)	28
Shopping for fun	27
Faith-based activities	23

Transportation and Mobility

Means of transportation

Research shows that the average person outlives his or her ability to drive by 6-10 years.⁴ While Central Columbus has more public and private transportation options (and is likely more walkable) than its suburbs, a lack of transportation can still be a barrier for older adults who need to get to the grocery store or medical appointments, or who want to participate in social activities.

Recent research in Columbus has already shown that the majority of older adults in our city drive themselves rather than relying on other forms of transportation.⁵ Our survey results were quite similar. Overall, 81% of survey respondents report driving themselves to appointments, errands, and other activities. Among respondents age 75 and older, this percentage drops just two points to 79%.

Among those who do *not* drive themselves, the most common alternatives were: walking (20 respondents), receiving rides from others (21 respondents), and/or using COTA (15 respondents). The most commonly selected reasons for not driving were difficulties due to health or mobility challenges (19%) and affordability (16%).

⁴ Foley, Daniel, Heimovitz, Harley, Guralnik, Jack and Dwight Brock “Driving Life Expectancy of Persons Aged 70 Years and Older in the United States” American Journal of Public Health, August 2002, Vol 92, No. 8

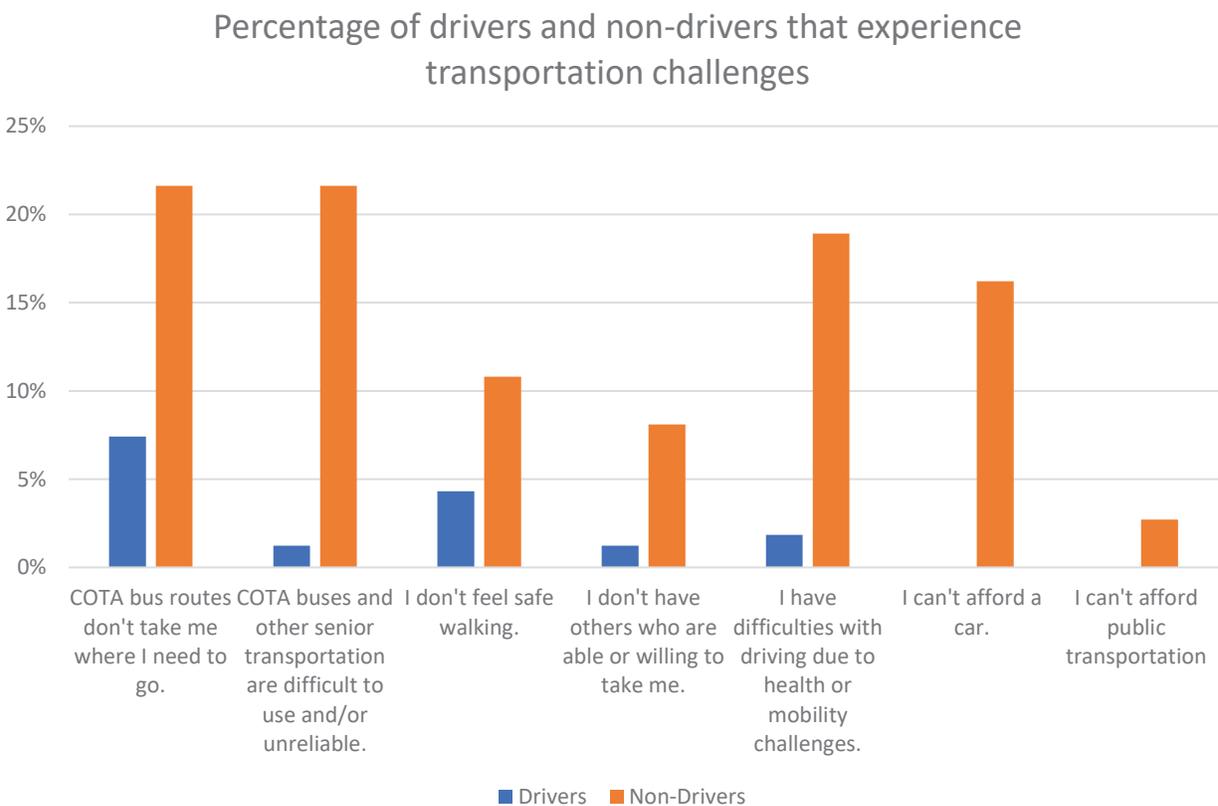
⁵ [Age Friendly Columbus Findings Report](#), February 2017.

Transportation challenges

Unsurprisingly, those respondents who don't drive reported experiencing more transportation challenges than their driving peers. While 93% of drivers reported no problems getting around, only 23% of non-drivers reported no challenges.

For both drivers and non-drivers, the biggest transportation challenge was that COTA bus routes don't take them where they need to go (7% and 22%, respectively). Non-drivers also found COTA and other senior transportation to be difficult to use or unreliable (22%) and didn't feel safe walking (11%).

The following table shows the breakdown of all transportation challenges reported by survey respondents.



Interest in transportation assistance

Across the United States, 94% of Villages offer some form of transportation assistance⁶; often this is one of the Villages' most popular services. A review of At Home by High responses shows that this service would be of interest in our neighborhood as well. When respondents were asked whether they would spend more time away from home if they had additional access to transportation, 29 respondents said yes.

⁶ National Village to Village Network Member Survey Findings, February 2017.

Additionally, over 30% of respondents indicated that they would like to receive one or more specific types of transportation assistance. The most commonly selected assistance was transportation for medical visits (39 respondents), followed by deliveries of groceries, meals, or prescriptions (32 respondents).

Transportation Assistance	Count of respondents interested
Transportation for medical appointments or tests	39
Deliveries (groceries, meals, prescriptions, etc.)	32
Transportation for errands	28
Transportation for weekly activities or exercise classes	16

General Services

Home maintenance activities such as cleaning, yard work, and pet care often pose a challenge for older adults because they represent ongoing needs that are infrequently covered by traditional funding sources. This is certainly the case in Columbus: Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) Age Friendly Columbus report⁷ included a key finding that, “outdoor maintenance is one of the biggest housing challenges facing Columbus older adults, and 44 percent either do not have access to services or are unsure of how to access affordable services. Over half of older Columbus residents do not have access to or are unsure how to access affordable home repair contractors that they can trust.”

More than three quarters of Villages across the country offer services beyond social activities and transportation. The specific services offered depend on the skills and interests of Village volunteers and the needs of their membership. Some 136 AHBH survey respondents (67%) indicated that they would find one or more home services helpful for remaining independent in their homes.

While it’s unlikely that At Home by High will be able to offer a wide variety of home services at launch, we do anticipate building out the menu of services over time. In the meantime, we will identify partners to recommend for some of the most frequently-requested services. One such partner will be the local nonprofit Rebuilding Together Central Ohio. They are launching a program through which At Home by High members will be able to access low-cost home repair services from vetted providers.

Our survey asked respondents to report which types of service would be helpful. The most popular service types were as follows:

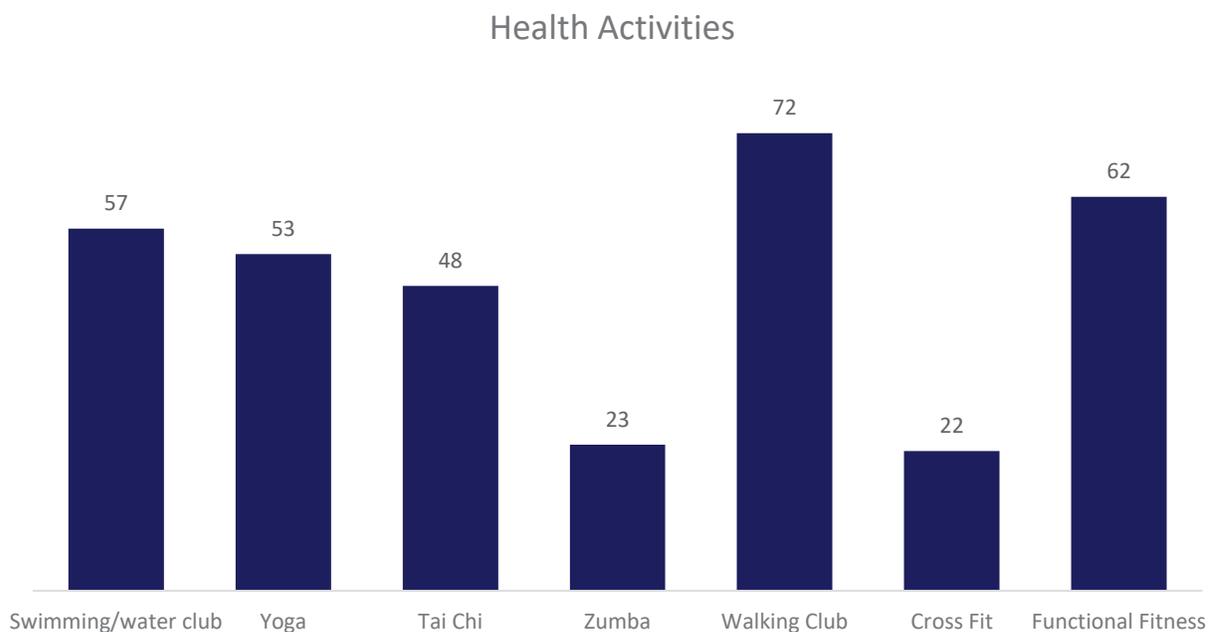
1. Handyman (72 respondents)
2. Technology assistance (58 respondents)
3. Specialized services (electric, plumbing, etc) (56 respondents)
4. Yard work (50 respondents)
5. Monitoring the home and/or taking care of pets while out of town (36 respondents)

⁷ Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (2017). *Age Friendly Columbus Findings Report*. Retrieved from <http://agefriendlycolumbus.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Age-Friendly-Columbus-Findings-Report.pdf>

Health and Wellbeing

Members of At Home by High will have access to a variety of services and activities that help them to maintain or improve their health and fitness. These are likely to include walking clubs and functional fitness programming, along with in-home health and mobility assessments and modifications to homes for mobility and safety.

While nearly 85% of respondents reported exercising every day (91 respondents) or at least several times per week (81 respondents), there was significant interest in participating in additional exercise and fitness activities. The most frequently selected fitness activity by far was a walking club (72 respondents). Conveniently, walking clubs are relatively easy to coordinate and require no equipment or space rentals. There was also significant interest in functional fitness classes, which include strength and balance training (62 respondents). The following chart shares the full range of health activity interests reported:



Respondents also reported two services in particular that would help them remain independent in their homes: modifications to their home for mobility and safety (17 respondents) and in-home health and mobility assessments (14 respondents).

What's next?

At Home by High is off to a promising start. We've submitted our 501c3 application, joined the national Village to Village Network, secured start-up grant funding, and completed our community survey. Now what we need is additional team members to help this organization get to launch. If you have an interest in serving on the board, helping to plan social activities, or becoming a volunteer, we'd love for you to get in touch; our contact information is listed below.

Based on the community survey results, At Home by High's next steps are to:

1. Develop our initial volunteer services and build out a calendar of social activities of interest to potential At Home by High members.
2. Identify and connect with additional partners in the neighborhood who currently offer services and activities of interest to residents.
3. Continue co-sponsoring neighborhood events with Village Connections and Village in the Ville to share information about our organization and recruit members.
4. Develop organizational policies and procedures to ensure a successful launch.

If you aren't able to participate as a planning team member or volunteer and you're over age 50, please consider becoming one of our founding members. Membership requires a small monthly fee to cover the costs of volunteer coordination, volunteer background checks, and administrative costs like running the website. In return, members will have access to social activities, learning events, transportation assistance, help with yard work, and other services provided by community volunteers. Member scholarships will be available as needed; we want everyone who has an interest to participate!

Conclusion

A 2017 study listed Ohio among the worst states for growing old. It ranked 43rd among states for quality of life, as measured by older adult well-being and quality of care (Caring.com, 2017). At Home by High's goal is to make our small pocket of Ohio a place where life satisfaction only *increases* as people get older, and where high-quality neighborhood social activities and services are available to everyone.

The survey results confirmed what our planning team already sensed from living in this community: people want to get to know their neighbors, want more opportunities to participate in social events and classes, and would benefit from additional services that are not currently provided by other community nonprofits. Additionally, survey feedback tells us that people who aren't yet in need of services like the idea of having an organization like At Home by High in the neighborhood. It gives them a sense of comfort to know that the services will be available later should the need arise. We look forward to becoming a one-stop shop for social activities and services in our neighborhoods.

Contact Information

For more information or to get involved as a board member, volunteer, or founding member, please contact our director Katie Beaumont at athomebyhigh@gmail.com.