

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

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Tompkins County Senior Housing Preferences Survey June 2014

Executive Summary

In the spring of 2014, the Tompkins County Office for the Aging launched the Senior Housing Preferences Survey, making it available to the general public via the Office for the Aging's website for a two month period (April-May, 2014), with paper copies also available. A total of 331 responses were collected, with major findings as follows:

- Most survey respondents were age 60-69, with an average age of 67. Most respondents currently live in two-person households (53%) followed by single households (36%).
- Nearly half of the respondents (49%) plan to move in the next 1-5 years. Another 31% plan to move in the next 5-10 years and 20% in the next 10-15 years.
- Respondents' top reason for moving is to reduce maintenance and upkeep/downsizing (50%).
- Ninety percent of respondents plan to stay in Tompkins County when they move. Of these, 57% plan to move to the City of Ithaca, and 19% to the Town of Ithaca.
- Respondents were asked into what type of housing they plan to move, and the most frequently cited response was senior housing complex (24%), followed by condominium (20%) and apartment (20%).
- The top three most important factors related to a future home were affordable cost, single floor design and easy access to public transportation. Sense of community, energy efficiency and closeness to grocery and drug stores were next in importance and nearly equivalent in rating average.
- When asked how many bedrooms they prefer in their future home the majority of respondents (58%) would like 2 bedrooms, followed by 1 bedroom (25%). The majority of respondents prefer only one bathroom (48%), followed by two (36%).
- The most frequently cited price range respondents expect to purchase a home was \$150,000-\$250,000 (37%), followed by \$90,000-\$150,000 (34%). As for renting, 43% of respondents expect to pay between \$500- \$1000 per month, followed by 27% respondents expecting to pay between \$1000 and \$2000 per month.
- Consistent themes repeated throughout 95 narrative comments included: the need for affordable housing options located downtown in the City of Ithaca, close to services and transportation; the lack of housing options for the middle class; and the desire for condominiums.

Introduction and Methods

The burgeoning population of older adults is impacting the demand for housing in Tompkins County. With the increasing aging population, the Office for the Aging felt it important to collect information on the housing needs and preferences of older adults. The information will be shared with municipal planners, developers and builders as they plan, design and construct housing to meet the needs of this growing population.

In the spring of 2014, the Tompkins County Office for the Aging launched the Senior Housing Preferences Survey, making it available to the general public via the Office for the Aging’s website for a two month period (April-May, 2014), with paper copies also available. The survey was advertised in conjunction with the Senior Housing Expo on May 3, 2014, a guest editorial in the Ithaca Journal, an article in Tompkins Weekly, a radio interview on WHCU, multiple postings on the Human Services Coalition List serve and through the Office for the Aging’s Advisory Committee. A total of 331 responses were collected. Of these, 112 responses were captured from attendees at the Senior Housing Expo on May 3, and the remaining 219 were captured electronically through the Office for the Aging’s website.

The survey technique was not a random sampling; rather it was targeted toward older adults who may be considering moving within Tompkins County in the near future. The survey questions were consistent with the housing preference questions utilized in the Office for the Aging’s 2012 Senior Needs Assessment, a random sample survey in which housing preference questions were asked only of people who planned to move within Tompkins County in the next 5 years (N=34). The results gathered most recently in 2014 supplement the 2012 Senior Needs Assessment data.

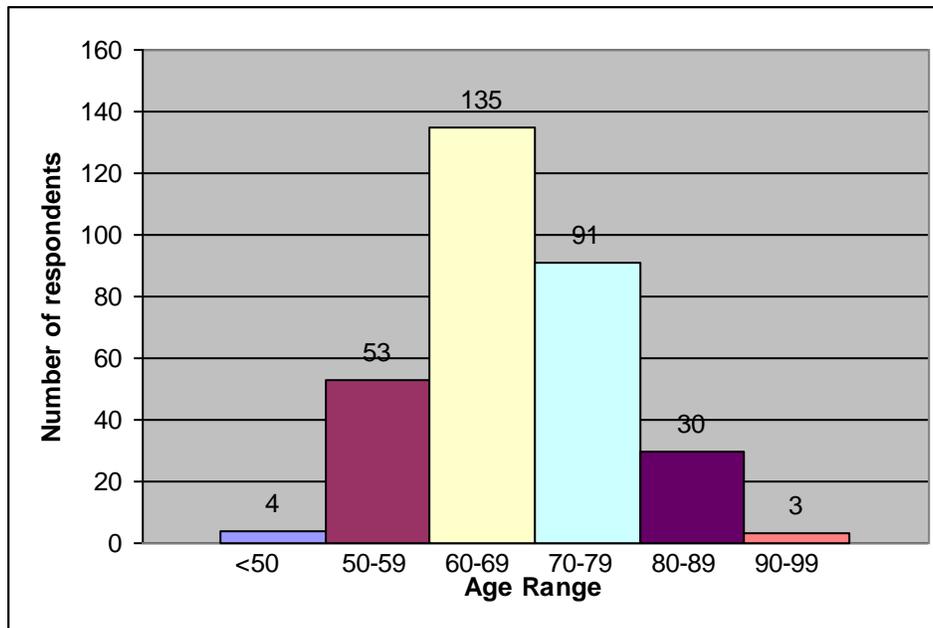
Demographics

Residents from all areas of Tompkins County completed the survey. The majority of respondents 31.7%, (N=105) currently live in the City of Ithaca, followed by the Town of Ithaca (20.8%, N=69) and the Town of Dryden (15.4%, N=51). See Table 1.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Ithaca City	31.7%	105
Ithaca Town	20.8%	69
Dryden	15.4%	51
Lansing	9.1%	30
Outside Tompkins County (please specify)	6.3%	21
Ulysses	5.1%	17
Danby	3.6%	12
Caroline	3.0%	10
Newfield	1.8%	6
Enfield	1.5%	5
Groton	1.5%	5
	<i>answered question</i>	331
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

The majority of survey respondents were between 60-69 years of age with the average age being 67. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Average age of Respondents



The majority of survey respondents consisted of two person households (53.1%, N=171), followed by single householders (36%, N=116), three person households (6.5%, N=21), 4 person households (2.9%, N=9) 5 person households (0.9%, N=3) and 6 person households (0.6%, N=2).

The majority of respondents 71.7% (N=236) currently live in single family homes, followed by apartments (12.8%, N=42). See Table 2.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A single family home	71.7%	236
Apartment	12.8%	42
Two or three family home	5.2%	17
Mobile Home	4.3%	14
Condominium	2.4%	8
Titus Towers	1.2%	4
The home of a relative or friend	0.9%	3
Cooperative Housing	0.9%	3
Town House	0.3%	1
Retirement Facility	0.3%	1
	<i>answered question</i>	329
	<i>skipped question</i>	2

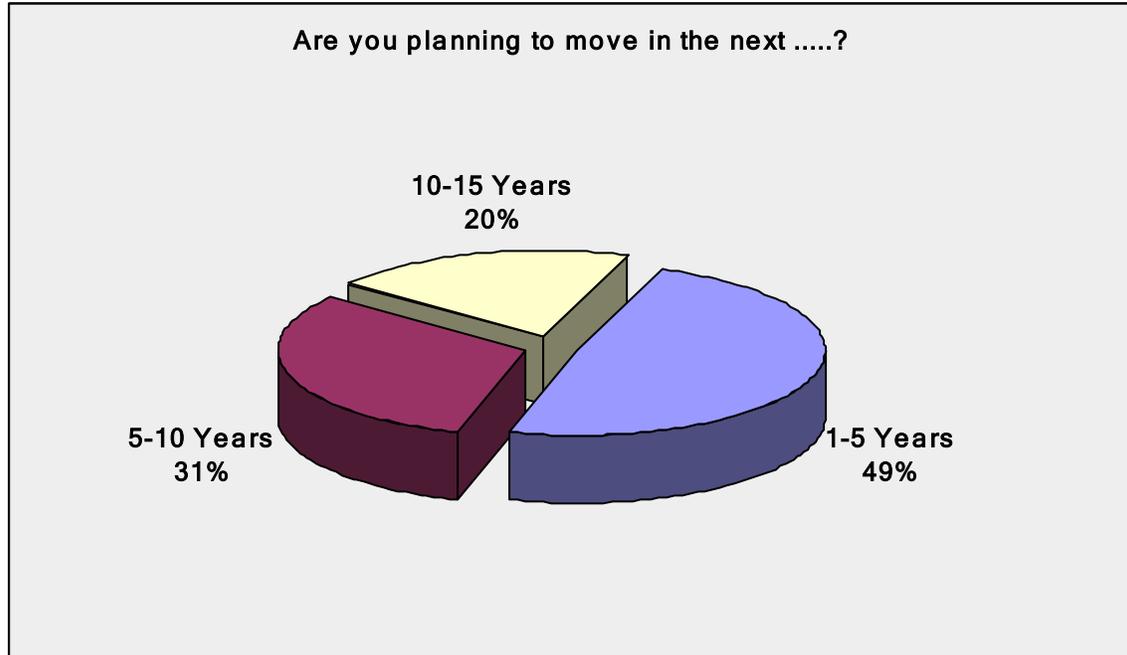
The vast majority of respondents currently own their own homes (81.2%, N=267). See Table 3.

Table 3. Do you own or pay rent on your house (apartment) or is rent provided free?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Own	81.2%	267
Rent	17.9%	59
Rent free	0.9%	3
<i>answered question</i>		329
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Nearly half of the respondents (49% N=130), plan on moving in the next 1-5 years. Another 31% (N=83) plan to move in the next 5-10 years and 20% (N=54) plan to move in the next 10-15 years. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Moving Timeframe



Respondents listed a number of reasons for moving, with the top reason being to reduce maintenance and upkeep/downsizing 50.1% (N=145). See Table 4.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
To reduce maintenance and upkeep/downsizing	50.1%	145
Because of changes in my health	17.6%	51
Because of changes in my finances	6.9%	20
To be closer to family	5.5%	16
To be in a warmer climate	2.4%	7
To be closer to services and work	2.0%	6
Unsure	1.3%	4
Multiple reasons	1.3%	4
Reduce taxes	0.6%	2
More room/buying home	0.6%	2
To be in an age friendly environment	0.6%	2
	<i>answered question</i>	289
	<i>skipped question</i>	53

When asked whether they planned to stay in Tompkins County, 89.9% (N=277) of respondents said yes. Of these, 56.6% (N=123) plan to move to the City of Ithaca, and 19.4% (N=43) to the Town of Ithaca. See Table 5

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Ithaca City	56.6%	123
Ithaca Town	19.4%	43
Just outside Tompkins County	6.7%	15
Dryden	6.7%	15
Lansing	5.4%	12
Unsure	4.5%	10
Ulysses	3.6%	8
Caroline	0.9%	2
Groton	0.9%	2
Newfield	0.9%	2
Danby	0.5%	1
Enfield	0.5%	1
	<i>answered question</i>	234
	<i>skipped question</i>	109

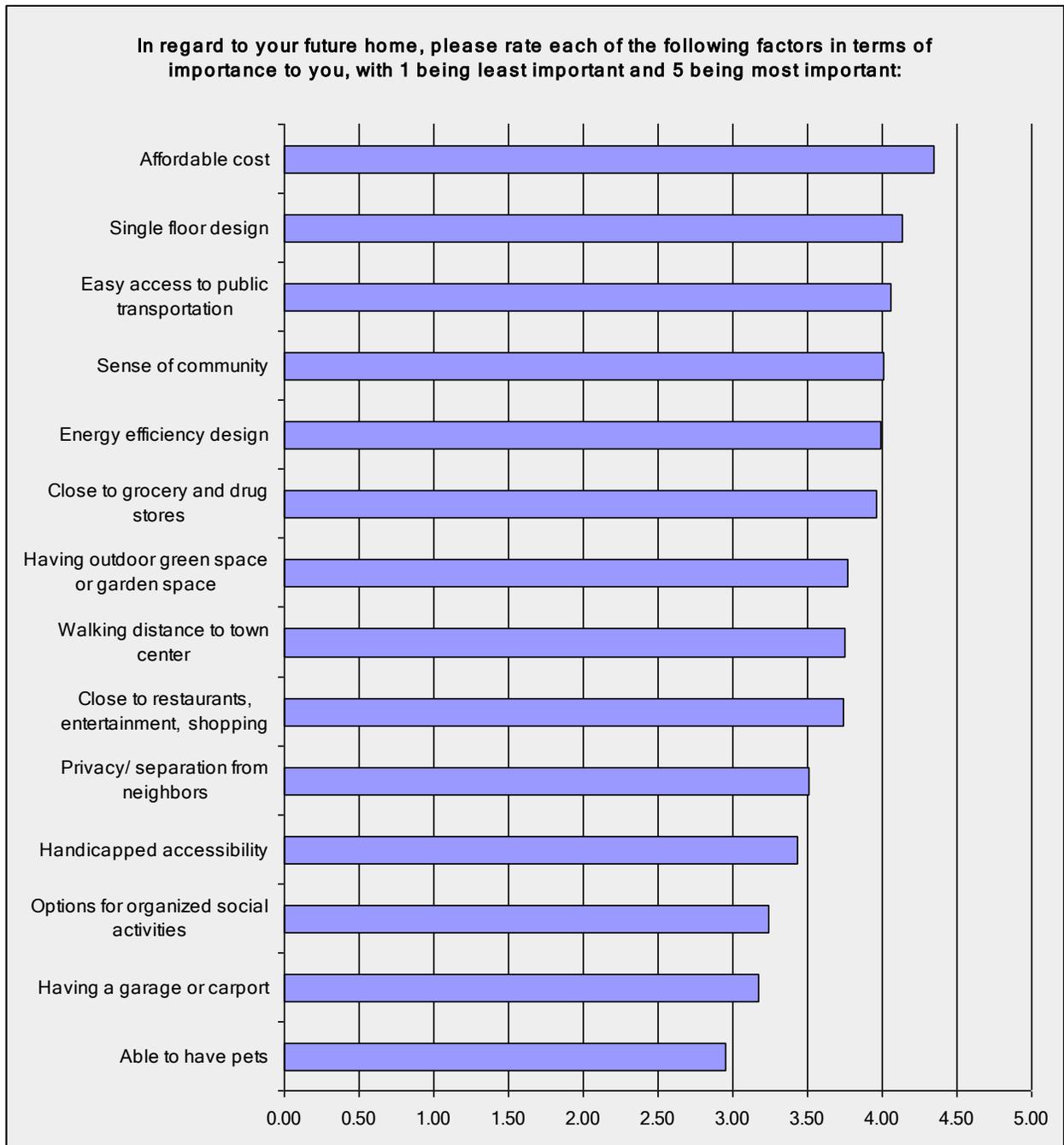
Respondents were asked into what type of housing they planned to move, and the most frequently cited response was senior housing complex (24%, N=58), followed by condominium (20%, N=48) and apartment (20%,N=48). See Table 6.

Table 6. Into what kind of housing do you plan to move:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Senior housing complex	24.2%	58
Condominium	20.0%	48
Apartment	20.0%	48
Single-family home	8.4%	20
Unknown	5.4%	13
Longview	3.8%	9
Townhouse	3.3%	8
McGraw House	2.9%	7
Assisted living	2.9%	7
Duplex	2.5%	6
Moving in with family member	2.1%	5
Kendal	1.3%	3
Titus Towers	0.4%	1
Mobile home	0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>	233
	<i>skipped question</i>	95

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the various factors related to their future home. The top three most important factors were affordable cost (146 out of 252 responses), single floor design (135 out of 248 responses) and easy access to public transportation (111 out of 252 responses). Sense of community, energy efficiency and closeness to grocery and drug stores were next in importance and nearly equivalent in rating average. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Importance Factors Related to Future Home



When asked how many bedrooms they prefer in their future home the majority of respondents (58.1%, N=150) would like 2 bedrooms, followed by 1 bedroom (24.5%, N=64). See Table 7. As for bathrooms, the majority of respondents prefer having only one (48.2%, N=124), followed by two (35.8%, N=92). See Table 8.

	Response Percent	Response Count
0	0.4%	1
Studio	0.4%	1
1	24.8%	64
1.5	3.1%	8
2	58.1%	150
2.5	3.9%	10
3	8.5%	22
4	0.4%	1
5	0.4%	1
Answered question		258

	Response Percent	Response Count
1	48.2%	124
1.5	13.6%	35
2	35.8%	92
2.5	1.6%	4
3	0.8%	2
Answered question		257

Respondents were asked what they expected to pay to purchase or rent their future home. The most frequently cited price range for purchasing a home was \$150,000-\$250,000 (37%, N=48), followed by \$90,000-\$150,000 (34%, N=44). As for renting, 43% of respondents (N=80) expect to pay between \$500- \$1000 per month, followed by 27% respondents (N=50) expecting to pay between \$1000 and \$2000 per month. See Table 9.

Buying						
Answer Options	Less than \$90,000	Between \$90,000-\$150,000	Between \$150,000-\$250,000	More than \$250,000	Response Count	
\$ Price Range	18	44	48	19	129	
Renting						
Answer Options	Less than \$100 /month	Between \$100 and \$500 /month	Between \$500 and \$1,000 /month	Between \$1,000 and \$2,000 /month	More than \$2,000/month	Response Count
\$ Price Range	1	39	80	50	14	184
						Question Totals
<i>answered question</i>						242
<i>skipped question</i>						89

Respondents were offered the opportunity to share narrative comments, and 95 comments were captured. Overall, there were consistent themes repeated through the comments, including the need for affordable housing options located downtown in the City of Ithaca, close to services and transportation. Many people believe that current housing options are very expensive, and rental costs are “over inflated with sky-high

price ranges.” Another consistent theme was a lack of housing options for the middle class. Middle income levels are too high for subsidized housing, but insufficient to cover the cost of many existing options. As stated by one respondent, “Ithaca only caters decent housing to students and people with high incomes.” Fourteen comments specifically expressed a desire for condominiums. Respondents expressed a desire for centrally located housing options that they can own and not rent, with balconies and shared green space or near a park. The entire range of comments is available from the Tompkins County Office for the Aging upon request

Conclusion

The aging population has begun to exert pressure on an already tight housing market in Tompkins County, and will continue to do so for the coming two decades. The main reason older adults desire to move is to downsize from their owner-occupied single family homes to reduce the responsibilities of maintenance and upkeep. Many Tompkins County older adults would like to live within the City or Town of Ithaca. The stated preferences are for housing options which are affordable, on a single floor, and with easy access to public transportation. There is a desire for more housing options for middle income individuals, including both rental and ownership options, and including condominiums.