



Winchester Community-Wide Needs Assessment

Chapter 4 – Summary of Findings

October - 2018



Health Resources in Action
Advancing Public Health and Medical Research

Background and Purpose

In February 2017, the Town Manager convened an “Asa Fletcher Workgroup” to discuss ways the Town of Winchester could utilize Fletcher funds to aid residents in need. The Fund is targeted towards helping “Winchester’s poor.”

After meeting for several months, it became apparent that members of the workgroup did not have a clear indication of what were the “needs” of Winchester residents. Thereafter it was decided to commission a community-wide needs assessment to ascertain what were social service/human service needs in Town. This report provides a summary of all assessment activities and the key themes that emerged from across the data sources.

The assessment report is made up of four chapters

- Chapter 1: Community Data Profile
- Chapter 2: Human Service Provider Interviews
- Chapter 3: Community Survey
- Chapter 4: Summary of Findings



Chapter 1: Community Data Profile

This chapter provides a portrait of the Winchester community based on a wide range of publicly available data sources. Data were included from sources such as the US Census Bureau, MA Department of Public Health, and Winchester Public Schools. Results were presented to Winchester Stakeholders to inform subsequent assessment activities.

- The Winchester population is growing in size and is becoming more racially diverse
- Overall, the Winchester population represents a highly skilled workforce with high levels of educational attainment
- Despite overall high household incomes, some segments of the Winchester population are economically vulnerable (younger adults, older adults, Asian, and Hispanic residents)
- Housing costs in Winchester are high with about 20% of households meeting the definition of 'cost-burdened' (i.e. housing costs exceed 35% of income)
- Over one-third of Winchester residents age 75 or older have some type of disability
- Winchester residents experience higher mortality rates for two key age-related causes (Falls/Accidents and Alzheimer's) compared to the state
- Winchester youth are more likely to report poor mental health and use of alcohol and vaping compared to students in the Middlesex league



Chapter 2: Human Service Provider Interviews

This chapter provides insight to the needs of Winchester residents from the perspective of human services professionals working in Winchester and with Winchester residents. Seven interviews were conducted with 15 professionals. An environmental scan was also conducted to catalogue available social service resources in and around Winchester.

Four themes emerged from across the interviews

- Behavioral health is a growing concern for Winchester residents, especially for youth and older adults.
- Winchester's increasing racial and ethnic diversity is a strength but more needs to be done to support new immigrants and their families.
- The cost of living in Winchester is rising and the supply of affordable housing is not meeting the demand.
- Resources and services are available but more needs to be done to connect residents to them.
- The environmental scan found the highest number of services available were for older adults, children, and families. The lowest number of services were identified for limited English proficiency and housing and financial assistance



Chapter 3: Community Survey

This chapter provides insight to the issues impacting Winchester from the perspective of Winchester residents themselves. An online survey was developed based on findings of the Community Data Profile and input from Stakeholders. Surveys were collected in English, Chinese, and Spanish languages. A total of 1,035 residents completed the Community Survey.

- Overall the most frequently selected issues that survey respondents saw as having the greatest impact on Winchester residents included ‘High cost of living’, ‘Affordable housing’, and ‘Mental health and stress’
- Among survey respondents age 65 and older, the most frequently selected issues were ‘High cost of living’, ‘Affordable housing’, and ‘Aging health concerns’
- Within ‘High cost of living’, concern was greatest for the more specific issue of housing costs and issues associated with home ownership
- Within in ‘Mental health and stress’, concern was greatest for the more specific issue of mental health and stress among middle and high school aged youth
- Support services for older adults and support for independent living where specific issues of high concern among survey respondents age 65 and older
- The specific issue of traffic congestion in Winchester also raised a high lever of concern among survey respondents, with pedestrian and bike safety also being identified as specific issues of high concern



Chapter 4: Summary of Findings

This chapter provides the overall summary of findings from across the assessment data collection methods. In the following pages, specific data points from across the needs assessment are included to show how each issue was identified. Selected quotes from interviewees, stakeholders, and survey respondents are also included to illustrate the community's experience with the issue.

Four overall themes emerged as key issues for Winchester

Key Issue #1 – Cost of Living and Housing

Key Issue #2 – Youth Behavioral Health Issues

Key Issue #3 – Specific Needs of Older Adults

Key Issue #4 – Transportation and Traffic



Key Issue #1 - Cost of Living and Housing



Key Issue #1: Cost of Living and Housing

Issues related to cost of living, particularly cost of housing, emerged across data collection activities as a top concern for the community of Winchester

- ‘High cost of living’ was the most frequently selected issue that impacts Winchester by respondents to the community survey (62.1% of all respondents)
- ‘Affordable housing’ was the second most frequently selected issue that impacts Winchester by respondents to the community survey (35.9% of all respondents)
- Approximately half of all survey respondents rated housing costs and issues related to home ownership a ‘high concern’ (49.5% of all respondents)
- ‘Housing services’ was the second most frequently selected “Missing social service in Winchester” by older adult survey respondents (38.6% of respondents age 65 and older)



Key Issue #1: Cost of Living and Housing

High housing costs may present an increasing barrier to living in Winchester

- The median price for a single family home was more than \$1,000,000 in 2017, according to the Winchester Housing Production Plan
- The Winchester Housing Production Plan also reported that the median rent in the same period for a 2-bedroom unit was \$2,000

“We want all of our teachers or fire fighters to be able to afford to live in town. So they’re not just employees but they’re community members. We want them to be a part of the community that they work in but it’s just not affordable.”

- Human Service Provider Interviewee

“Winchester is an economically gated community. You have your average 50-60 year old living here who knows that their kids aren’t coming back to Winchester anytime soon. The town is becoming unaffordable.”- Winchester Stakeholder

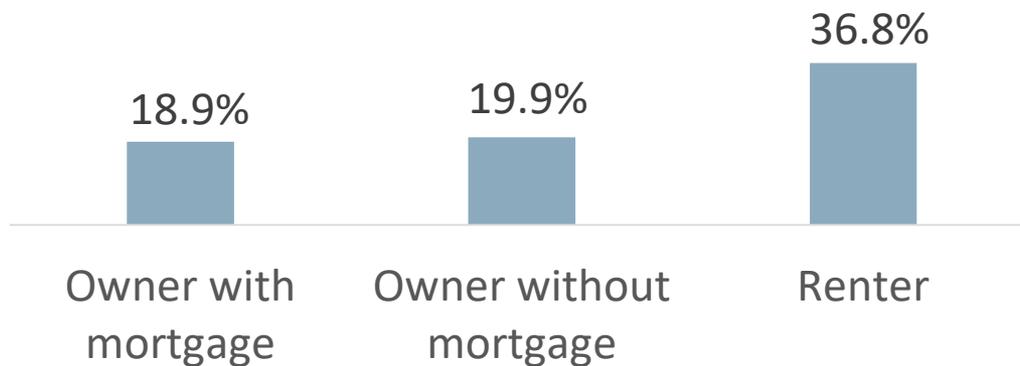


Key Issue #1: Cost of Living and Housing

A sizeable proportion of the Winchester community may be overly burdened by monthly housing costs

- Approximately 20% of owners (regardless of mortgage status) and over 35% of renters in Winchester may be ‘housing cost burdened’*

Percent of Winchester Households that are Housing Cost Burdened* (2016)



“Property taxes have risen too much and too fast for longtime residents to afford.”
– Survey Respondent

*NOTE: Housing Cost Burdened is defined by monthly housing costs that exceed 35% of monthly household income; Note: Selected monthly owner costs are calculated from the sum of payment for mortgages, real estate taxes, various insurances, utilities, fuels, mobile home costs, and condominium fees
DATA SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2012-2016



Key Issue #1: Cost of Living and Housing

Despite the generally high household incomes in Winchester (median household income is \$149,321), there are segments of the population that may be much more economically vulnerable

- Approximately 15% of households have incomes less than \$50,000
- 2.4% of all Winchester residents have incomes that fall below the federal poverty line (which is \$24,600 for family of 4)
- Winchester residents age 18 to 34, age 65 and older, as well as Hispanic and Asian residents, are more likely to fall below the federal poverty line
- 5.1% of students in Winchester public schools are categorized as economically disadvantaged*
- 22% of survey respondents overall and 32.4% of survey respondents age 65 and older indicated that support for low-income families and individuals was a 'high concern'



Key Issue #1: Cost of Living and Housing

“The waiting list [for affordable housing] for families – if you’re a Winchester resident, it’s 10 years. If you’re not, it’s forever.” – Human Service Provider Interviewee

“Supply [of affordable housing] is the lowest percentage demanded by the state. [Winchester] is next to the bottom in the state in terms of low-income housing.”
– Human Service Provider Interviewee

“Winchester’s subsidized housing supply is small, much lower than neighboring and other communities with similar income levels and housing markets, and is less than what is needed to ensure economic diversity and prevent income segregation.”
– Winchester Housing Production Plan

“Because of [housing] trends, many long-time residents and young families are not able to reside in Winchester and contribute to the town's economic development, diversity, and vitality. Increasing and diversifying Winchester's housing supply will help create more housing opportunity for these and older households”
– Winchester Housing Production Plan



Key Issue #2 - Youth Behavioral Health Issues



Key Issue #2: Youth Behavioral Health Issues

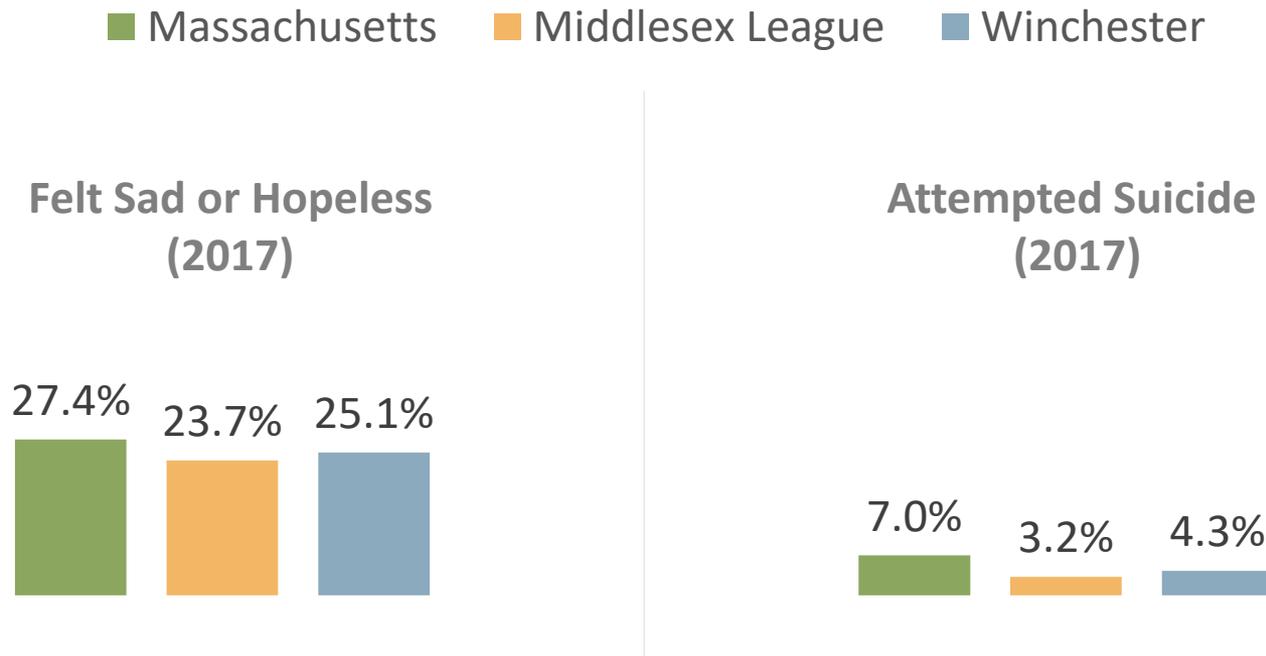
Behavioral health, including issues related to mental health and substance use and abuse, emerged as a concern across data collection methods

- Mental health and stress was the 3rd most frequently selected issue that impacts Winchester by survey respondents (34.0% of all respondents)
- Substance abuse was the 6th most frequently selected issue that impacts Winchester by survey respondents (20.9% of all respondents)
- Nearly half of survey respondents (47.4%) indicated that mental health and stress among middle and high school aged youth was a “high concern”
- Similarly, nearly half of survey respondents (48.0%) indicated that drug use among youth was a ‘high concern’, while 40.7% indicated that alcohol abuse among youth was a ‘high concern’ and 37.9% indicated that tobacco use/vaping among youth was a ‘high concern’



Key Issue #2: Youth Behavioral Health Issues

Existing data from the Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (implemented by Winchester High School) suggest that Winchester students are more likely to report poor mental health than the Middlesex League overall



NOTE: Middlesex League includes the school districts of Arlington, Belmont, Burlington, Lexington, Melrose, Stoneham, Reading, Wakefield, Watertown, Wilmington, Winchester, and Woburn.

DATA SOURCE: Middlesex League Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Winchester Report, analysis by John Snow, Inc., 2017

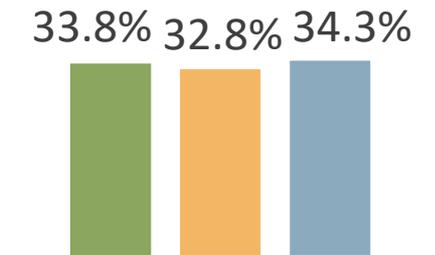


Key Issue #2: Youth Behavioral Health Issues

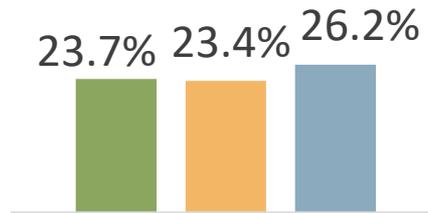
Existing data from the Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (implemented by Winchester High School) suggest Winchester students are more likely to report drinking and vaping than the Middlesex League overall

■ Massachusetts ■ Middlesex League ■ Winchester

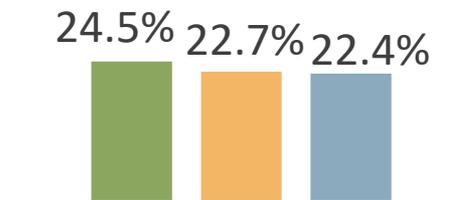
Current Alcohol Use
(2017)



Current Electronic Vapor
Product Use (2017)



Current Marijuana Use
(2017)



NOTE: Middlesex League includes the school districts of Arlington, Belmont, Burlington, Lexington, Melrose, Stoneham, Reading, Wakefield, Watertown, Wilmington, Winchester, and Woburn.

DATA SOURCE: Middlesex League Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Winchester Report, analysis by John Snow, Inc., 2017



Key Issue #2: Youth Behavioral Health Issues

Responses from community survey respondents, stakeholders, and human service providers highlighted some of the specific issues pertaining to youth behavioral health in Winchester

“The youth mental health crisis is the single largest thing that I’ve ever seen. It doesn’t matter what other issues come, that is the largest on my table.” – Human Service Provider Interviewee

“Drug abuse in middle and high schools”
- Survey Respondent

“[Need] teen emotional and educational support that is better than our current offerings” – Survey Respondent

“Bullying of kids who are different in and out of school...lack of acceptance of diversity including LGBTQ and gender non-conformity”
– Survey Respondent



Key Issue #2: Youth Behavioral Health Issues

The need for additional services focused on mental health and substance abuse, in general and for youth in particular, was consistently identified in the assessment

- ‘Mental health care services’ was the 2nd most frequently selected missing social service in Winchester by survey respondents (29.9% of all respondents)
- ‘Services for youth’ was the 3rd most frequently selected missing social service in Winchester by survey respondents (28.9% of all respondent)
- Approximately 25% of all survey respondents rated ‘ability to get mental health services’ and ‘ability to get substance abuse services’ as a “high concern”

“Every year we add more behavioral health supports, but many of our families need more therapeutic services which our schools can’t really provide.” – Human Service Provider Interviewee



Key Issue #3 – Specific Needs of Older Adults



Key Issue #3: Specific Needs of Older Adults

As of 2016, 16% of Winchester residents were age 65 and older, an increase of 7.1% since 2011. Older adults were identified throughout the needs assessment as a vulnerable sub-population in the community

- The population of residents age 65 to 74 increased by 15% between 2011 and 2016 and the population of residents age 85 and older increased by 9.5%
- Nearly half (46.3%) of survey respondents age 65 and older indicated that 'Aging health concerns (health issues, social isolation, falls, etc.)' was a top issue impacting Winchester, the 3rd most frequently selected issue among this age group
- For the population age 65+, hospitalizations due to all-causes, falls, hip fracture, and pneumonia/influenza are higher in Winchester compared to the State
- Half of stakeholders engaged in the assessment process ranked issues related to older adults as a very high concern



Key Issue #3: Specific Needs of Older Adults

Older adults were identified as particularly vulnerable to the high cost of living in Winchester as well as the challenge of living independently in the community

- ‘High cost of living’ was the most frequently selected issue and ‘Affordable housing’ was the second most frequently selected issue by respondents to the community survey who were age 65+ and older
- Half of survey respondents age 65 and older indicated that housing costs and issues associated with home ownership were a “high concern”
- Existing data suggest that approximately 11% of householders age 65 and older in Winchester are living alone while over a third of survey respondents age 65 and older indicated support for independent living was of “high concern”
- Over one third of survey respondents age 65 and older (38.6%) identified housing services as missing in Winchester

“We see some seniors who are in very prestigious homes who can’t afford to heat them or they’re on a very strict budget and that’s where we see a lot of the stigma.”

– Human Service Provider Interviewee



Key Issue #3: Specific Needs of Older Adults

Concerns about mental health and social isolation among older adults was frequently noted across the assessment methods

- Over a quarter of survey respondents age 65 and older (29.7%) indicated that mental health and social isolation for older adults was of “high concern”
- Over a quarter of survey respondents age 65 and older (27.0%) indicated mental health and stress among older adults was of “high concern”

“Isolation – That can cause a lot of problems for us because they don’t reach out until the situation has spiraled.” – Human Service Provider Interviewee

“I think [mental health] is one of the biggest concerns for our program. Starting with elementary school right through the aging population. In the aging population, the recurring theme is depression.” - Human Service Provider Interviewee

“I worry that in these big houses all over town there are people who are really hurting, and we don’t see them. For people who use the Jenks Center, you’re connected...but if you’re not then you’re alone and potentially struggling and no one sees you.”

– Human Service Provider Interviewee



Key Issue #3: Specific Needs of Older Adults

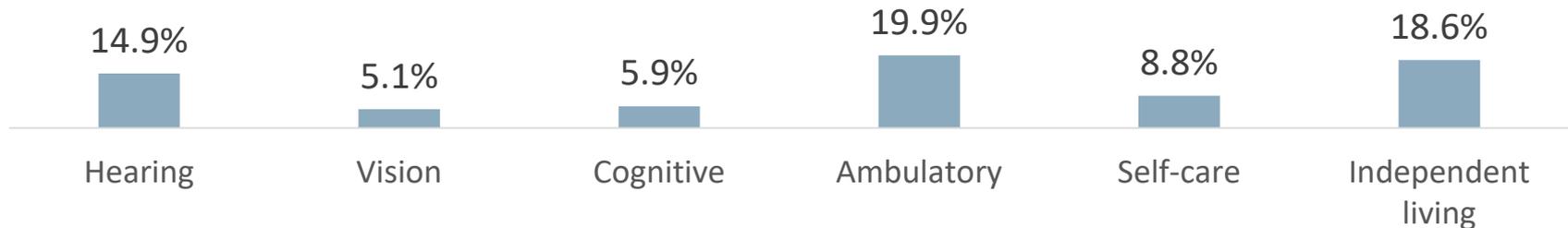
A variety of other types of service needs were identified for older adults living in Winchester

- Existing data suggest that over a third of non-institutionalized adults aged 75 and older (35.1%) in Winchester have some type of disability
- 44.7% of survey respondents who were age 65 or older identified transportation services as missing in Winchester
- Almost one-third survey respondents (31.1%) age 65 and older selected 'Services for older adults' as missing in Winchester
- Between one quarter and one third of survey respondents age 65 and older identified 'support services for low-income older adults', 'memory care services', or 'issues related to healthy living for older adults' as a "high concern"



Key Issue #3: Specific Needs of Older Adults

Percent of the Population aged 75 and older that has a Disability, by type (2016)



DATA SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2012-2016

“Transportation for elderly who can no longer drive” – Survey Respondent

“A population of grandparents have come here with their adult children and they don’t speak English...How can we get those grandparents to be more involved in town? [The Jenks Center] wants to bring in the Chinese grandparents but they’re not going to come if there’s not any Chinese staff.” – Human Service Provider Interviewee

“Elderly housing is very limited. Parents wanted to stay in town, but really no viable elderly housing apartments or community.” – Survey Respondent

“The biggest issues with seniors is the transportation, mental health, and hoarding and we don’t have the resources to address them.” – Human Service Provider Interviewee



Key Issue #4: Transportation and Traffic



Key Issue #4: Transportation and Traffic

Transportation and traffic emerged as a top issue impacting Winchester, including traffic congestion, the availability of public transportation, and transportation services

- Transportation issues were the 5th most frequently selected issue that impacts Winchester by survey respondents overall and the 4th most frequently selected issue by survey respondents age 65 and older
- Transportation services were the most frequently selected missing social service in Winchester by survey respondents overall (30.2%) and by survey respondents age 65 and older (44.7%)
- The majority of survey respondents indicated that that traffic congestion in Winchester was either a ‘moderate concern’ (27.2%) or a ‘high concern’ (36.0%)
- Nearly half of survey respondents indicated that the availability of public transportation was either a ‘moderate concern’ (26.3%) or a ‘high concern’ (19.4%)

“Traffic congestion has progressively worsened for several years. I live on Washington St. and it’s now a parking lot virtually every morning” – Survey Respondent

“Downtown parking – too few long time parking spaces!!” – Survey Respondent



Key Issue #4: Transportation and Traffic

A number of transportation service issues were identified that related to the availability of transportation limiting access to various services in Winchester

- Nearly half of survey respondents age 65 and older reported transportation to activities other than work was either a “moderate concern” (27.7%) or a “high concern” (20.9%)
- Stakeholders engaged in the assessment process indicated that issues related to transportation are a greater concern for the elderly and the working poor in Winchester

“[There isn’t] transportation to and from the food pantry so if you’re in Winchester and are trying to get to Woburn – there are public buses but then you’re lugging back 5 or 6 bags of groceries.” –Human Service Provider Interviewee

“I don’t want people who need [Jenks’ Center] service not to be able to get in. I think if we had a shuttle we could get so many people to come in.”

– Human Service Provider Interviewee



Key Issue #4: Transportation and Traffic

Transportation-related safety was consistently identified as a concern of the community, including motor vehicle safety, pedestrian safety, and bike safety

- Half of stakeholders engaged in the assessment process identified motor vehicle and pedestrian safety as either a “moderate concern” (44%) or a “high concern” (6%)
- Over a third of survey respondents overall indicated that pedestrian safety (37.9%) and bike safety (33.8%) were each a ‘high concern’
- A third of survey respondents age 65 and older indicated that pedestrian safety (33.8%) was a ‘high concern’

“Bike paths that will allow cyclists (adults and children) to bike safely around town without using sidewalks risking collisions with pedestrians and cars coming in/out of driveways. Establishing a network of bike paths will have great positive, practical, social, and physical and mental health impacts and decrease car traffic and the need for parking downtown.” – Survey Respondent



Conclusion



Next Steps

- Completed Needs Assessment will appear on the Town's website
- Press release to media outlets
- Notification to Town Department Heads and local non-profits encouraging them to utilize Needs Assessment for grants, strategic planning, and collaboration
- Completion of resource directory (paper copies and online) available in early 2019
- Council on Aging social worker will provide dedicated hours (1/2 day initially) to assist all Winchester residents
- Creation of Winchester Housing and Human Services Coordinating Council which will meet in early 2019 to prioritize recommendations and enact strategies to accomplish goals
- Further discussion from Council with Town Manager and Select Board regarding possible financial assistance of Asa Fletcher Fund to address key issues identified in Needs Assessment



Stakeholder Thank You

Winchester would like to thank the following stakeholders for their support and participation in the Community Needs Assessment:

- Council on Aging
- Disability Access Commission
- ENKA Society
- Winchester Farmers Market
- Winchester Housing Authority
- Winchester Mt Vernon House
- Winchester Interfaith Community
- Winchester Public Schools
- Winchester Hospital
- Winchester Savings Bank
- Winchester Multicultural Network
- Winchester Housing Trust Fund
- Asa Fletcher Fund
- Northmark Bank



For More Information



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