

# AGE-FRIENDLY BOSTON ACTION PLAN 2017



**DEDICATED TO:**

Boston's older residents who remain vital to the vibrancy of our city.

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:**



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*“We are dedicated to making  
Boston the best city in the  
world for older adults.”*

*- Mayor Martin J. Walsh*

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For more info, visit: [Boston.gov/age-friendly](https://www.boston.gov/age-friendly)

## LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

It is my great honor to introduce the Age-Friendly Boston Action Plan: our city's blueprint to make Boston the best city and place in which to live. This plan is the result of deep neighborhood engagement and the help of community partnerships.

What does it mean to be an age-friendly city?

It means a city that adapts its structures and services to be accessible and inclusive to residents of all ages and abilities. To understand what makes a true age-friendly city, we went to every corner of Boston asking older adults about the strengths and challenges they face on a daily basis. Many people said they cherish Boston's rich history, educational and cultural opportunities, and top-notch hospitals. They also enjoy our world-class park system, our proximity to the ocean, and the growing diversity of our neighborhoods.

Just as important, they also identified the challenges they encounter. This three-year plan will help address some of these challenges while building on our considerable strengths.

We are dedicated to making Boston the best city in the world for older adults. That's why one of the first actions I took as Mayor was having Boston join the World Health Organization's network of age-friendly cities. We have a great respect for our older population. They are the ones who built our city. We recognize their continued contributions in making Boston the successful city it is today.

Older adults are also important to the future of our city. They represent the fastest growing sector of the population. We want people to continue to live and thrive here, and we must make sure we can accommodate all of their

needs. That's why we are committed to addressing all kinds of issues that affect seniors in our city: from housing, to health, to mobility, to utility rates. Right now is a very exciting time for the City of Boston. We are growing and expanding in many ways. The population is growing and becoming more diverse. Our economy is thriving and technology is advancing. These factors present us with limitless opportunities for our future. Above all, we share a responsibility to ensure these opportunities reach everyone in our city, across all ages and abilities.

We keep this goal in mind with every planning effort we embark on, whether it's how we grow affordable housing, how we make our streets safer and more accessible, how we make the arts available to everyone, or how we help enhance the quality of life in Boston for older adults.

Our Age-Friendly Boston Action Plan reflects multiple viewpoints, ages and cultures. We expect these goals to be accomplished within three years based on our efforts to identify realistic, concrete actions we feel confident we can accomplish. Once completed, with the help of our residents and community partners, we will measure our progress and start the process anew. We will never pause on our efforts to improve quality of life for all of Boston's older adults.

Again, I want to say thank you to everyone who helped us with this effort, whether big or small. It is a great pleasure to be the mayor of a city where people step up and give their time and energy to making Boston the best it can be for all residents.



**Martin J. Walsh**  
Mayor, City of Boston

## LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER

I am proud and excited to be launching Boston's Age-Friendly Action Plan. I am proud because this plan is truly grounded in community input. From the listening sessions, to the survey, to the workgroups, to our Action Planning Committee, Boston residents are at the heart of this Action Plan. And I am excited because, together, we crafted a plan that will have significant impact over the three-year implementation period and beyond.

This plan focuses on specific goals the City of Boston and its partners are committed to achieving within the next three years to continue to make our city a place where people can live and age well. It is also important to note the amazing breadth of age-friendly work that is happening in our community beyond this plan. Becoming age friendly is a process of continual improvement, and that requires engagement by all of us: our community organizations, residents, business leaders, funders, and state and federal partners.

We could not have done this work without the collaboration of our leadership team. I would like to thank our partner and co-author, the UMass Boston Gerontology Institute's Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging. They worked hand in hand with us. Their research and facilitation expertise, planning and analytical skills, and thoughtful approach kept us moving

towards our goals. And the work of UMass Boston would not have been possible without funding from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. The Foundation's commitment and leadership around age-friendly communities is impressive, and we are especially thankful for their support of the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative. In 2014, we entered the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Network through their United States partner, AARP. I'd like to thank them for being a driving force for this plan, guiding us, sharing best practices from other communities, and supporting our progress to date.

Most of all, we are deeply grateful to the thousands of community residents who contributed their voices, their skills and their time to making this a meaningful plan. Without their leadership and participation, this project would not be possible.

On behalf of the Commission on Affairs of the Elderly, it is my honor to share this holistic roadmap toward achieving an even more age-friendly Boston.



**Emily K. Shea**  
Commissioner on Affairs of  
the Elderly, City of Boston



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## INTRODUCTION

With a growing older population, now is the time to embark on creating a more age-friendly Boston. The city has always led the nation in issues of social significance, and aging is no exception. In order to prepare and plan for this demographic shift, Boston joined the **World Health Organization's (WHO)** network of age-friendly cities in 2014, under the leadership of Mayor Martin J. Walsh. Recognizing that aging and urbanization were major forces shaping the 21st century, the WHO created a framework for cities all over the world to use as a resource. In 2015, the City of Boston also committed to becoming dementia friendly, and those concepts were integrated into City staff training and the age-friendly planning process.

In many ways, Boston, with its network of neighborhoods and proximity to services, is an ideal place to live if you are an older adult. We have renowned hospitals, a robust public transportation system, beautiful parks and many opportunities to experience art, culture and education. Relatively compact, Boston is consistently ranked highly on nationwide scores of walkability. The city's neighborhoods encourage social integration, well-being, and independence—all factors that contribute to an age-friendly city.

The City of Boston's **Commission on Affairs of the Elderly (the Elderly Commission)** will lead the implementation of the Boston Age-Friendly Action Plan, in partnership with other relevant city agencies, nonprofit organizations, community members, and local advocates.

### KEYWORDS:

**THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)** developed the Age-Friendly City Framework in 2005, identifying the development of age-friendly communities as a key goal worldwide. Since then, 380 cities and towns across 37 countries have joined the WHO in their efforts towards creating an age-friendly world.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, AARP functions as the partner organization to facilitate age-friendly efforts.

**THE COMMISSION ON AFFAIRS OF THE ELDERLY** (referred to as the Elderly Commission) is a city department charged with connecting Boston's older residents to resources and information about government benefits and programs, housing, transportation, advocacy, volunteer opportunities and social engagement. In addition, the Commission administers and monitors grant funding to Boston nonprofit organizations that support older residents and those who care for them.



WE HEARD:

*“I moved here because I thought it was easier to age in the city. Access to health care certainly is easier and walking is healthier than using a car.”*

– BOSTON RESIDENT

*“I’ve lived in Boston all my life... I love Boston and I have seen many changes!”*

– BOSTON RESIDENT

## BACKGROUND

### AGING TRENDS

Mirroring world-wide aging trends, Boston’s population of older adults is growing. In 2010, there were over 88,000 Boston residents age 60+, making up 14% of the population. By 2030, this number is expected to approach 125,000, comprising 19% of Boston’s population, according to projections by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts.

Boston’s demographic shift is largely due to middle-aged residents staying in the city as they grow older. Aging **Baby Boomers** are impacting the age composition of Boston and communities throughout the United States. In addition to being among the largest generations in history, Baby Boomers are living longer lives and experiencing longer retirements than those who came before them. With longevity comes a desire for engagement, enrichment, health, and activity. There will likely be an increased demand for resources to help meet those goals over the coming decade, during which many Baby Boomers will fully or partially retire and redirect their time and interests. Some research suggests that migrating into downtown urban centers in retirement is emerging as an appealing option for Baby Boomers.<sup>4</sup>

Older adults in Boston want to stay in Boston as they age. Aging successfully in a community of neighbors and supports requires options for maintaining independence, and housing that is appropriately matched with function and finances. These options should also consider and address fears of social isolation. Many older adults will remain active and in good health well into their later years. Others will age with some level of disability requiring services or

accommodations. Currently, four out of ten Boston older adults live with a disability, including difficulty walking or climbing stairs (29%), or difficulty dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home (11%).<sup>5</sup> Some Boston residents may seek to remain in the community with significant levels of illness and disability as they age.

Given these trends and realities, we have a responsibility to grow and develop in a way that consciously addresses the city’s diverse aging population.

#### KEYWORDS:

Boston’s status as a **“MAJORITY-MINORITY”** city was secured in 2000, when the share of residents who identified as Hispanic or as African American, Asian or other nonwhite races rose above 50% for the first time. This movement toward a relatively larger community of color is shared by older Bostonians; 47% of adults age 60 or older identified as persons of color in 2015<sup>2</sup>

Foreign-born residents contribute to this **DIVERSITY**. Their immigrant paths largely account for the diversity of languages spoken at home by older Boston residents. Among today’s residents age 65 and older, 10% speak Spanish, 9% speak an Asian language (such as Chinese or Vietnamese), and 15% speak some other Indo-European language (such as Italian, Portuguese, or Russian)<sup>2</sup>

**“BABY BOOMERS”** refers to the large cohort born following World War II and continuing to the mid-1960s.<sup>3</sup>

## BOSTON IN CONTEXT

Boston's older residents have helped shape the history and character of this great American city. As we plan for the future of aging in our urban environment, it is important to highlight the unique features that play a role in aging well in Boston.

### Through Architecture

Boston boasts architecturally impressive structures and historic landmarks. Just as we age, so do our buildings, which can pose a challenge for adults seeking to age in place. According to the American Community Survey (2015), over half of Boston's housing units were built before 1940.<sup>5</sup> Many of these housing units have features that can be challenging for older adults with physical limitations, like multiple levels, lack of elevators, narrow hallways, and steep stairs. The creation of more age-friendly housing options in the city could allow Boston's senior residents to remain in their beloved communities as their needs change. The City supports efforts by older adults to maintain their properties, which benefits the entire community. For example, the City's "Senior Home Repair Program" provides low-interest or zero-interest loans to make repairs, such as replacing heating systems, fixing roofs, or updating bathrooms, which make homes safer and more livable.

### Through Transportation

Boston is not only the birthplace of the American Revolution but also of the country's first mass transit system. The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) operates the 5th largest public transportation network in the United States, serving 176 cities and towns in eastern Massachusetts.<sup>6</sup> A Senior CharlieCard pass is available to residents age 65 or older and offers significantly reduced fare for trips on

the bus, subway and commuter rail systems. Residents who cannot or do not wish to drive can still access necessary services and desired amenities through the MBTA. A paratransit service operated by the MBTA, "THE RIDE," offers door-to-door, shared-ride transportation to residents who cannot use fixed-route transit because of a disability. The City of Boston's Elderly Commission sponsors the Senior Shuttle, providing over 38,000 free rides annually to older Boston residents going to medical appointments or grocery shopping. Moreover, in partnership with the taxi companies, the City operates a Taxi Coupon program, which provides discounted taxi rides to residents over 65 or with a disability. In 2016, this program provided \$198,740 in transportation subsidies to Boston residents

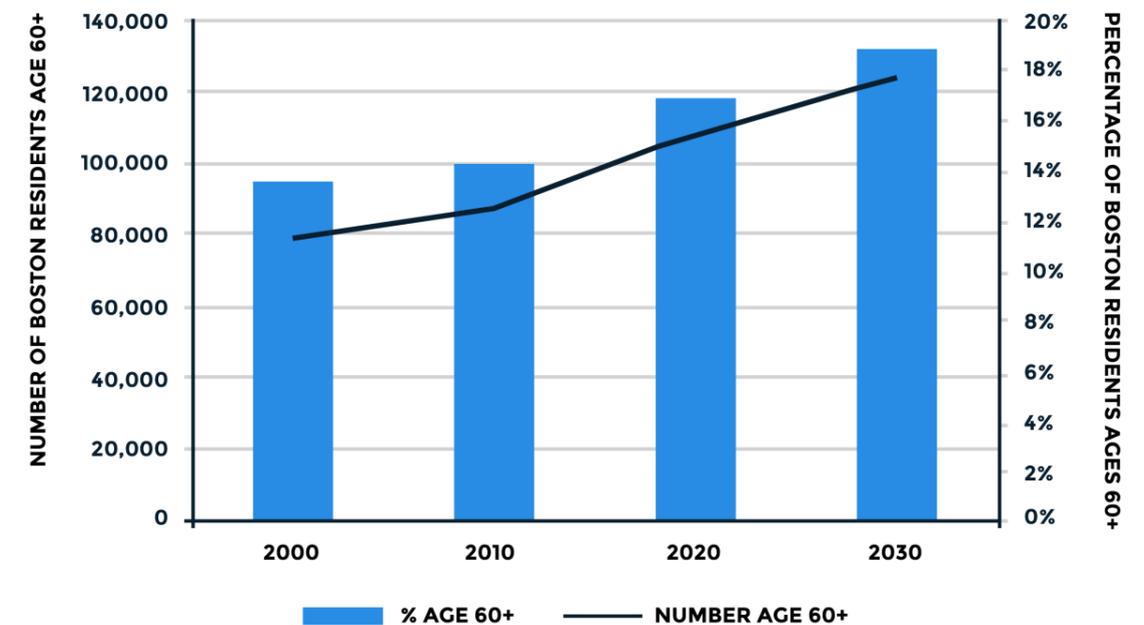
### Through Medical Care and the Community-Based Aging Services System

The proximity of world-class medical and health care is a significant benefit of living and aging in Boston. In addition to being the origin of the community health center model,<sup>7</sup> Boston is home to world-class hospitals and other innovative medical care options for older adults. Just as important is Boston's strong system of long-term support services, which assist older adults in remaining in the community as they age. Services like home-delivered meals, Adult Day Health programs, caregiver supports, and assistance with daily care are as vital as good medical care to aging well in the community.

### Through Community

The many distinct neighborhoods of Boston serve as hubs of culture and history. Over time, they have become informal organizational structures shaping the quality of life for residents. Each neighborhood has its own social landscape that is grounded in familiar community centers, churches, restaurants, grocery stores, libraries and parks. In addition, these neighborhood-level amenities support residents in meeting their daily needs. The City of Boston understands the importance of an open dialogue between the

neighborhoods and city hall. Each neighborhood is supported by a neighborhood liaison, both within the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services and at the Elderly Commission, to provide open communication between residents and city services. Although the "age-friendliness" of Boston transcends its neighborhoods, it is important to recognize that these neighborhoods tie together segments of Bostonians under unique identities and provide local community within a larger urban environment.



34% of all homeowners are age 60+, compared to 19% of all renters who are age 60+. 61% of homeowners age 65+ have lived in their homes for at least 25 years. 45% of households headed by a Boston resident age 65+ do not have a vehicle available; this is higher than for households headed by residents age 35-64 (28%).<sup>5</sup>

## INTERSECTING INITIATIVES

Under the leadership of Mayor Martin J. Walsh, the City has undertaken the first city-wide master planning process in 50 years. *Imagine Boston 2030*<sup>8</sup> is a vision for Boston in 2030, the city's 400th birthday. It is focused on the physical structures, economic growth, public investment, health of the population, and environment. At the same time, many other planning processes are taking place or have recently been completed. Mayor Walsh has made interdepartmental working groups and task forces a priority of his administration. The Elderly Commission has been included in these working groups, inviting older adults to participate directly in workshops and public engagement. Ensuring that older adults are included in other city plans increases the likelihood of achieving age-friendly goals.

### KEYWORDS:

**IMAGINE BOSTON 2030:**<sup>8</sup> A vision for Boston in the year 2030 with an emphasis on physical structures, economic growth and the health of the population and environment.

**GOBOSTON 2030:**<sup>9</sup> A plan for the future transportation needs of the city.

**VISION ZERO:**<sup>10</sup> A collaborative effort to reach zero fatal and serious traffic and pedestrian crashes in the city by 2030.

### HOUSING A CHANGING CITY:

**BOSTON 2030:**<sup>11</sup> A comprehensive housing plan detailing efforts to create additional housing as well as stabilize existing housing by 2030.

**CLIMATE READY BOSTON:**<sup>12</sup> A plan to increase Boston's ability to thrive in the midst of climate risks.

**RESILIENT CITY:**<sup>13</sup> Boston will work towards resiliency in the face of 21st century physical, social, and economic challenges that can negatively impact city life.

**BOSTON CREATES:**<sup>14</sup> A cultural plan outlining current efforts and ideas for maximizing arts and culture to harness the power of creativity.

**BUILDBPS:**<sup>15</sup> A master plan of facilities investments and curriculum and instruction reforms aligned with the school district's educational vision.

# DEVELOPING OUR AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN

## PROCESS OVERVIEW

The WHO outlines a five-year process to become an age-friendly city. It begins with defining what it means to be age friendly in a specific community, assessing the current needs of the residents, planning and implementing action towards improving the conditions, and finally evaluating success of the initiative by measuring the collective impact.

## UNDERSTANDING THE AGE-FRIENDLY DOMAIN FRAMEWORK

The WHO framework includes eight domains, a set of important features that make up a city, that, if adapted to accommodate an older population, ensure an environment where residents of any age can thrive. They are: housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services, outdoor spaces and buildings, and transportation. The *Age-Friendly Boston Initiative* utilized this framework throughout its development to provide a structure for envisioning Boston's potential. The domains do not stand alone; rather, they are interwoven with one another in multiple ways. For example, without reliable transportation an older adult may find it challenging to attend religious services, to get to their place of employment, or to participate in recreational or other activities. Together, these domains illustrate the components necessary for people to age as healthy, engaged members of the community.



### KEYWORDS:

#### AGE-FRIENDLY BOSTON INITIATIVE:

There are many important stakeholders in the age-friendly community. For the purpose of this report, the Initiative refers to the partnership between the City of Boston, AARP Massachusetts, and UMass Boston's Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging (funded by Tufts Health Plan Foundation).



## BY THE NUMBERS

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**30 LISTENING SESSIONS,  
INCLUDING SESSIONS IN  
ENGLISH, SPANISH, CHINESE,  
AND HAITIAN CREOLE**



**800 RESIDENT ATTENDEES**



**3,600 SURVEY RESPONDENTS**



**70 ORGANIZATIONS  
REPRESENTED**



**6 TRANSLATED LANGUAGES**

### CONDUCTING THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The goal of the needs assessment is to determine the city's "age-friendliness" through listening and surveying the community. The Age-Friendly Boston Initiative committed to engaging a wide array of stakeholders in identifying and assessing Boston's strengths and challenges as a city for older residents.

The process included listening to older adults and consulting with organizations and City departments. A large, diverse group of residents age 50+ participated in the needs assessment in a variety of ways—through public listening sessions, focus groups, a community survey, and special events. The Age-Friendly Boston Initiative employed a grassroots strategy, which included partnering with community organizations and conducting surveys at farmer's markets and neighborhoods. The results from the needs assessment process were compiled and presented in a report<sup>16</sup> which is the basis for the Boston's Age-Friendly Action Plan.

To develop concrete action items, the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative continued to engage multiple stakeholders: convening domain-specific workgroups, re-engaging the community, and creating an action planning committee.

### CONVENING DOMAIN-SPECIFIC WORK GROUPS

The Age-Friendly Boston Initiative convened eight domain-specific work groups, in alignment with the community engagement focus of the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative. These groups were made up of resident advocates, local aging service providers, and City staff. The participants had special knowledge about the domains, and were likely to be charged with implementation. The work group members were tasked with developing specific Action Items for recommendation to a committee established to develop the Age-Friendly Boston Action Plan. It was critical to include their perspectives in the planning process, not only for their expertise, but also for their buy-in and engagement. These productive events led to the Action Items of the Boston Age-Friendly Action Plan.

## RE-ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

The Age-Friendly Boston Initiative organized two community engagement events that were facilitated by UMass Boston researchers. These participatory events were designed with two goals in mind. First, they functioned as a mechanism for reporting back to the community and informing residents of the transition to the action phase of the Initiative. Second, these events provided contextual feedback from a range of residents about prioritizing action for the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative. These gatherings validated the action items by the people who stand to be affected by the Action Plan.

Approximately 80 residents took part in these events in two neighborhoods of Boston (Dorchester/Roxbury and West Roxbury). Each event was hosted by a community partner organization and covered four domains. Small groups were formed and led by a member of the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative leadership team. Action item themes receiving the highest priority ratings were reported to the Action Planning Committee. This type of process is one that will be continued throughout the initiative, with periodic reporting back to the community to receive feedback and support as well as to publicize improvements made.

## CREATING THE ACTION PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Age-Friendly Boston Action Planning Committee (Planning Committee) was comprised of 12 community members, many of whom had expertise in particular domain areas such as housing and transportation. (See page 74 for a list of members). This group reviewed the work group's proposed Action Items and the priorities generated from the community engagement events. The Planning Committee met seven times during the Fall of 2016, and crafted a first-draft of recommendations and action items.

## BY THE NUMBERS

*Community stakeholders involved in the action planning process included:*



**80 PARTICIPANTS  
IN THE COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT EVENTS**



**77 WORK GROUP  
PARTICIPANTS**



**62 COMMUNITY  
ORGANIZATIONS AND  
CITY DEPARTMENTS**

# HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

Age-friendly Boston requires a shift in policies, practices and attitudes across all sectors of city life. This Age-Friendly Action Plan represents a starting point to address many of the concerns and suggestions heard throughout the community engagement process. During the winter of 2017, the Commission reviewed individual action items, consulted with City Departments, and prioritized based on feasibility and need. The improvements included in this plan are tangible, concrete steps to improve quality of life for older residents. Using this plan as a guide, the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative will continually assess progress, evaluate accomplishments and continue to take on new areas of action. Details of each of these planning methods can be found in Appendix A.

## 5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Over the course of developing this Action Plan, themes emerged that cross-cut multiple Age-Friendly domains. These themes were formulated into a set of principles to guide implementation. These principles are meant to be broad in scope and address the impact that this plan will have on the entire community of Boston.

### 1. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Communities of color represent the largest area of older adult population growth. Collectively, we will strive to develop, maintain, and communicate an awareness of and sensitivity to diversity among Boston's older adult population with a specific emphasis on the varying needs among racial and ethnic groups in the city. Attention to cultural and linguistic differences among residents is emphasized.

### 2. Generational Interdependence

An Age-Friendly Boston recognizes that the concerns and interests of older adults are directly connected to those of younger generations, including their children, grandchildren, younger neighbors and friends. In addition, the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative emphasizes that efforts to improve the buildings, features and services for older adults will positively impact the quality of life for residents of all ages.

### 3. Clear and Consistent Communication

Communication is an integral part of the success of each Action Item within every domain and is essential to creating an Age-Friendly Boston.

### 4. Combat Ageism

Identifying strategies and best practices to reduce ageism ensures that Boston is the beneficiary of the talents and energy of older adults and promotes a culture of respect for older residents. At the core of an age-friendly city is the recognition of older adults' contributions to the community.

### 5. Creative Partnerships

Boston is rich with dedicated and impactful organizations that work with and on behalf of older adults. The Age-Friendly Boston Initiative commits to leveraging the strengths of existing relationships with community organizations and nonprofits. It also will forge new partnerships between the public and private sectors, including arts and culture groups, the business community and faith-based organizations. We will also continue to work in collaboration with other City departments to pursue the goals of an Age-Friendly and Dementia-Friendly Boston.

## 3 TOPICS OF INTEREST

In addition to the domains laid out by the World Health Organization, the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative addresses additional topics of interest with significant impact on some Boston residents: dementia, economic insecurity, and social isolation. Action items that aim to address these issues will be indicated by the following symbols: **D** **E** **S**

### 1. Dementia **D**

The Tufts [Healthy Aging Community Profile of Boston](#)<sup>17</sup> estimates that 16.5% of Boston residents age 65+ have Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, which represents over 11,000 people in 2015. In the 2012 publication "Dementia: A Public Health Priority," the World Health Organization states, "The time to act is now by promoting a dementia-friendly society globally."<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, in the aging community, it has been said that "a dementia-friendly community is age friendly, but an age-friendly community is not necessarily dementia friendly." With this in mind, the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative has interlaced key strategies to address the unique needs of people with dementia within this Action Plan.

### 2. Economic Insecurity **E**

The Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston developed an Elder Economic Security Standard Index (Elder Index) assessing the cost of basic necessities (housing, transportation, food and health care) of adults aged 65+. The Elder Index defines the financial situation for older adults. In Boston 72% of older women living alone and 61% of older men living alone have incomes below the Elder

Index, meaning that they have less income than it costs to live in the city.<sup>19</sup> Throughout each domain, an effort was made to implement Action Items that would help address this gap for older adults in Boston so they can live in economic security.

### 3. Social Isolation **S**

The association between social isolation and health is as strong as the epidemiological evidence linking smoking and health.<sup>20</sup> It is associated with a wide array of physical and mental health problems and is a significant risk factor for cognitive impairment and dementia.<sup>21</sup> Older adults who are socially isolated are also more vulnerable to weather emergencies like extreme heat and flooding as well as other emergencies. Thirty-eight percent of Boston residents over 60 years old live alone; these individuals may be at higher risk for social isolation. Factors like physical mobility, sensory impairment, language proficiency, and mental health status also put older adults at risk for social isolation. Action items in this plan focus on methods to improve social connection and community engagement.

#### KEYWORDS:

#### MA HEALTHY AGING DATA REPORT AND COMMUNITY PROFILES

The MA Healthy Aging Data report helps people understand the older adults living in their community - their age, health status, living arrangements, strengths and vulnerabilities. These community data profiles were funded through the Tufts Health Plan Foundation and the research led by the Gerontology Institute at UMASS Boston.<sup>17</sup>

## 8 AGE-FRIENDLY BOSTON DOMAINS: DEFINED

This report is organized by domains, or specific areas of city life. Here are the definitions of these key domains.

### **🏠 Housing:**

Safe, affordable and well-designed housing that can be adapted as residents age contributes to independence, security, and quality of life.

### **🚌 Transportation:**

Affordable, accessible transportation allows residents to freely travel around the city, promotes participation, helps maintain networks and supports equity of mobility.

### **☀️ Outdoor spaces and buildings:**

Public spaces that are accessible, well-lit and well-marked, with shade and places to sit allow for comfort and independence.

### **🏥 Community support and health services:**

A wide network of medical and non-medical services promote well-being and quality of life.

### **💼 Civic engagement and employment:**

Paid employment builds social capital, and generates income and purpose. Being involved in issues that affect the lives of older adults contributes to empowerment and affects social change

### **🗣️ Social participation:**

Activities and events are affordable, held at convenient times and accessible by public transportation.

### **♥️ Respect and social inclusion:**

Older adults are included and consulted on community projects, planning initiatives, and all aspects of city life.

### **📡 Communication and information:**

An effective distribution of information about events, programs and opportunities, preferably in centralized locations, is an essential feature of an age-friendly city.

## ORGANIZATION WITHIN DOMAINS

Led by the Elderly Commission, the City of Boston, in collaboration with a variety of community partners, will take specific actions to achieve these goals and guiding principles. Action steps for each of the eight domains are described in the next section of this plan. The collective “we” statements used in this action plan represent both City departments and the potential partners vital to the implementation of these action items.

Each domain is organized into the following sections:

**WE ENVISION...** includes overarching goal statements relative to each domain.

These statements represent how Boston can be shaped to be more inclusive and supportive of older residents.

**WE HEARD...** describes the results of the community needs assessment process that informed the action planning process, and subsequently, the action items that are presented in this document. All quotations in this section come from Boston residents through one of two primary sources: 1) comments made during one of the 25 public listening sessions or; 2) write-in responses to one of the open-ended survey questions.

**WE ARE...** outlines initiatives, programs or partnerships that the City of Boston is already participating in that will encourage age-friendliness beyond the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative.

**WE WILL...** lays out a set of recommended action items for each domain. This section includes both the broad theme of action as well as the individual steps necessary to address each theme.

Following this structure, keywords related to each domain are also referenced in each domain-specific section.

## PARTNERS, INDICATORS AND TIMELINE

Broad engagement by City departments and community partners are key to the success of the plan implementation. Details about potential community partners, proposed indicators of success and timeline goals are outlined in Appendix B. Some partners have been engaged already, and others will be added as the plan moves forward.

## 🏠 HOUSING

### WE ENVISION...

...a city in which safe, appropriately designed housing options are available and affordable for older residents, including housing with services that help them stay at home.

### WE HEARD...

- Many older Boston residents need more housing they can afford.
- 55% of survey respondents say they do not believe there are sufficient and **affordable housing** options available in their neighborhoods.
- Older Boston residents want downsizing options, including housing with services.

- 63% of survey respondents say that more housing with services needs to be developed for seniors in Boston.
- Boston seniors need help accessing affordable home maintenance services, so they can live safely in their homes.
- Nearly 90% of older adults report wanting to stay in their home for as long as possible.

#### KEYWORDS:

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** Refers to housing for which the occupant is paying no more than 30% of his or her income for housing costs, including utilities. Affordable housing initiatives are meant to serve very low- to moderate-income households.



### WE HEARD:

***“I have my own home. I need to repair it but I have no money to repair it. Can the city make loans available to the elders, so that they can pay it back in small amounts?”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“There is not enough attention and services provided for senior homeowners. Seniors in elderly complexes seem to have more services provided to them.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“My wife and I have lived in South Boston for the last 34 years. We love it here and would prefer to remain in our home but as we get closer to retirement I don’t know that it will be financially feasible.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

## WE ARE...

It is important to note there are already quite a few accomplishments that have been made or are underway. Led by the [Department of Neighborhood Development](#), City departments and community partners are working collaboratively to meet the goals of Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030. This plan highlights goals for housing seniors in a special Senior Chapter of the plan. According to the plan, “Between 2010 and 2030, Boston will gain 22,500 senior households.” Since the launch of the plan, the City has been working towards developing 5,000 additional units of [senior housing](#) (including 1500 affordable), and providing increased housing stabilization and support services for Boston’s seniors.

### Housing Production, Security, and Investment

Over the past two years, despite the elimination of [Section 202](#) federal funds for new elderly housing construction, 264 new units for low-income seniors have been either permitted or completed. The City worked to establish new funding resources and identified parcels of City-owned land for development of senior housing, which has helped build a 192-unit pipeline. Private developers have permitted 101 new middle- and market-rate units for seniors to date. Additionally, almost 700 senior households living in privately-owned subsidized housing were provided with added housing security through affordability extensions beyond the year 2030. Mayor Walsh also invested \$3 million to make improvements to common areas in 21 Boston Housing Authority Elder and Disabled housing buildings.

### Enhancing Stabilization Services, Housing Education, and Creative Solutions

In 2016, Mayor Walsh created the Office of Housing Stability and expanded the Elderly Commission’s Housing Unit to promote stable housing for Boston residents through coordination of services and enhanced access to information. Many senior homeowners benefit from the ongoing foreclosure programs and senior homeowner repair services that Boston has to offer. In addition, Mayor Walsh launched Senior Saves, a program to help low-income older adults access energy efficient furnaces, and also expanded the Senior Property Tax Work Off program, where seniors contribute their skills and expertise to the City while getting a discount on their property taxes. Through its Housing Innovation Lab, the City has also been exploring creative solutions for middle income housing and the possibility of expanding housing options including best practices and feasibility of accessory dwelling units.

#### KEYWORDS:

**SENIOR HOUSING:** [Housing designed for adults age 55 and older.](#)

**DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT (DND):** [A City department that works with communities to improve Boston’s neighborhoods through investing public resources. They create housing options, support tenants and homeowners and manage the City’s real estate.](#)

**THE SECTION 202 PROGRAM:** [Federal grants for affordable senior housing. Currently not being funded.](#)

**BOSTON HOME CENTER:** [The City’s one-stop shop for home buyers and homeowners. The Center helps Boston residents purchase, improve, and keep their homes.](#)

## WE WILL...

### Recommendation #1:

Encourage age-friendly development, alternative housing options and communities.

- **S Action Item A:** We will encourage universal design principles and features to allow for aging in place, paying particular attention to the layout of kitchens and bathrooms. We will encourage the development of common areas and shared spaces to reduce social isolation.
- **Action Item B:** We will require developers who are seeking funding from the City for senior housing to either have services embedded in the housing or to have a plan for connecting people to services.
- **Action Item C:** We will explore creation of a “Homeshare” network, matching older homeowners with rooms to rent with others who need to rent a room, such as graduate students or other older adults.
- **Action Item D:** We will convene a workshop to share information about the “[Village](#)” [model](#) in neighborhoods not currently covered by a “Village”.

### Recommendation #2:

Advocate for affordable housing and services for older adults.

- **E Action Item A:** We will advocate at the state and federal levels for increasing funding towards [housing vouchers](#) and increasing the value of the vouchers.
- **E Action Item B:** We will support advocacy efforts to expand vouchers for use in obtaining support services within housing units.
- **E Action Item C:** We will support the efforts of community partners advocating

for the reinstatement of the federal Section 202 funding to support new low income housing development.

### Recommendation #3:

Improve education about housing and housing services available in Boston.

- **E Action Item A:** We will educate older adult homeowners about how to access existing housing support services, such as the home repair and modification resources, information about selling a home, reverse mortgages and tax-relief programs.
- **E Action Item B:** We will educate older adults who are renters about the resources available to assist with remaining housed or finding appropriate housing, as well as their rights as tenants.
- **Action Item C:** We will conduct an inventory of existing programs and services that help older adults stay in their homes and compile them into an easy-to-access, centralized location.

#### KEYWORDS:

**VILLAGE MODEL:** [Grassroots non-profit membership organizations created to help residents stay in their homes. Provide volunteer services including transportation, inspiring health and wellness programs, home repairs, social and educational activities. The first Village started here in Boston and is called Beacon Hill Villages.](#)

#### HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER

**PROGRAM:** [The federal government’s major program for helping very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford housing in the private market. The participant chooses any housing that meets the requirements of the program](#)

**Recommendation #4:**

Support older Boston homeowners through tax relief programs.

- **(E) Action Item A:** We will create a public information campaign similar to the Earned Income Tax Credit Campaign, to increase the use of the [Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit](#).
- **(E) Action Item B:** We will increase awareness of the programs and exemptions available to help senior homeowners reduce property taxes by creating and delivering a comprehensive training for older adults. We will host training opportunities throughout the neighborhoods of Boston targeting areas with high percentages of senior homeowners. We will make sure that information about these programs is easily accessible on the City website and also in promotional materials.
- **(E) Action Item C:** We will pursue legislation that will increase the income and net worth limits for the 41C elderly exemption program to reflect the impact of inflation. The limits have not been adjusted since 2004. Raising the limits will enable more seniors with limited incomes to participate in the program.
- **(E) Action Item D:** We will seek to increase the work-off credit maximum for the City's Senior Property Tax Work Off Program from \$1000 to \$1500 for FY 2019.

**Recommendation #5:**

Support housing for Boston's most at-risk seniors.

- **Action Item A:** As part of the Boston Homeless Elder Prevention Task Force (HELP), we will work with partner organizations to streamline and coordinate the system of assistance for older adults needing housing or looking to maintain housing.
- **Action Item B:** We will house all chronically homeless elders over 50 with long-term supportive services.
- **(E) Action Item C:** We will aggressively pursue additional policies and tools to prevent the displacement of low and moderate-income seniors, ensuring that they can continue to live in the communities and neighborhoods they love.
- **Action Item D:** We will explore potential solutions to assist senior homeowners with severely distressed properties.

**KEYWORDS:**

The Massachusetts **"CIRCUIT BREAKER"** tax credit program is a program for adults age 65 + whose property taxes and half of the water and sewer bills are more than 10% of their annual gross income (or for renters, if their rent is greater than 25% of their income) and who meet a few other rules.



## ☼ TRANSPORTATION

### WE ENVISION...

...A city in which older residents can safely travel where they want and need to go.

### WE HEARD...

- Public transportation is an asset, but some older adults struggle with access.
- 22% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with the affordability of public transportation.
- Older residents value Boston's walkability, but walking conditions could be improved.

- 30% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with the availability of maintained sidewalks.
- Older residents want more options for travel, and need more information about options that already exist.

Survey results suggest a lack of knowledge about transportation resources. For example, one-third to one-half of respondents gave "neutral" responses to questions about van rides or other senior transportation options and volunteer driver programs, respectively.



### WE HEARD:

***“I wish there were a better way for seniors to feel independent without a car. I fear giving up driving because I still want to be able to leave the house whenever I please. Finding other options is very confusing and difficult.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“As a Bostonian, the city serves us well. The Elderly Commission’s programs and services are helpful, especially the taxi coupons for which the monthly allotment should be increased.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“We need to focus on street crossings, light timing and coordination. There are many streets that are confusing or dangerous, where and when to cross is not clear. The time allowed, at crosswalks, is not sufficient for the distance needed to cross.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

## WE ARE...

The City of Boston is committed to streets that work for everyone, whether you're walking, cycling or driving. Boston adopted Complete Streets design principles as published in city's [Complete Streets](#) Guidelines. Complete streets aims to improve quality of life in Boston by creating streets that are both great public spaces and sustainable, multimodal transportation networks, embracing innovation to address climate change and promote healthy living. The City recently released its Transportation action plan, [GoBoston 2030](#), and the [Vision Zero](#) action plan. Through Vision Zero, improvements are being made to busy streets and intersections, such as Massachusetts Avenue. The Commission participated on the interdepartmental task force for both plans, bringing an aging perspective to the table, and engaged older adults in opportunities for community input during the planning processes.

### **Accessibility and Transportation Options**

The City, through the Elderly Commission, runs the Senior Shuttle, a transportation option providing over 38,000 rides to older Boston residents every year. The City is committed to investing in accessible, energy-efficient vehicles. Since 2014, the Commission has added 10 wheelchair-accessible vehicles, making a total of 14 accessible shuttles out of a fleet of 27.

#### KEYWORDS

**THE RIDE:** A state funded service that provides door-to door, shared ride, transportation to eligible individuals who cannot use fixed-route public transit because of physical, cognitive or mental disability.

**SENIOR SHUTTLE:** Free shared-ride transportation service provided by the City of Boston through the Elderly Commission. Provides door-to door trips to medical appointments, food shopping or recreational activities within the City of Boston.

**VISION ZERO:** A public initiative committed to eliminating fatal traffic crashes in Boston by 2030.

**WALKBOSTON:** Nonprofit pedestrian advocacy organization dedicated to improving walking conditions in cities and towns in Massachusetts.

**COMPLETE STREETS:** A transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

## Safety for Pedestrians

Through Vision Zero, the City is making many improvements to pedestrian safety including identifying problematic intersections that threaten safety of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists through the Department of Transportation: a "Safety Concerns Map." Some improvements for pedestrians include: revised signal timing policies to include more Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI) in all signals that are concurrent in downtown Boston, solar-powered speed boards placed around the city to create awareness and slow drivers, and the installation of automatic walk signals instead of push button signals. The default speed limit has been lowered to 25/MPH, and a [Neighborhood Slow Streets](#) program has been established for implementation in 2017. A "Rapid Response Team," a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency group, was created to analyze crashes and recommend appropriate street design changes, community outreach and judicial and legislative follow-up. Seven rapid implementation projects are underway in locations where there have been fatal crashes. Finally, the City is partnering with WalkBoston to study [age-friendly walking](#) in three pilot areas in Boston neighborhoods--Mattapan Square, East Boston and the South End--and make improvements in the walking environment for older adults, including lighting at night.

#### KEYWORDS:

**NEIGHBORHOOD SLOW STREETS:** New mechanism for creating traffic-calming measures. Focused on reducing the number and severity of crashes on residential streets, lessen the impact of cut-through traffic on Boston's neighborhoods.

**LEADING PEDESTRIAN INTERVAL (LPI):** Typically gives pedestrians a 3-7 second head start when entering an intersection.

#### WHAT PROMOTES AGE-FRIENDLY

**WALKING?** Funded by a Tufts Health Plan Foundation grant, WalkBoston has been working in collaboration with the Elderly Commission and other city departments to develop a system to address walkability for seniors. When determining whether a neighborhood is walkable for older adults, factors under consideration are: sidewalk conditions, sidewalk maintenance, ADA compliance, benches, lighting, shade, public restrooms, traffic speed, signal timing, street crossing distance, as well other things such as places to walk to for basic necessities.

## WE WILL....

### Recommendation #1:

Optimize publicly-funded transportation options for older adults in Boston.

- **Action Item A:** We will improve and expand the Elderly Commission's partnership with the MBTA to better serve older adults in Boston.
- **Action Item B:** We will advocate to maintain the MBTA/RIDE coverage area and affordability.
- **Action Item C:** We will modernize and increase the efficiency of the senior shuttle including the purchase of additional new, accessible, energy-efficient vans. We will explore potential service changes including hours and days of operation and expanding types of rides.

### Recommendation #2:

Optimize private transportation options for older adults.

- **Action Item A:** We will assess current training capacity of taxi and ride share companies, for serving people with disabilities or mobility limitations. We will explore the possibility of creating an "age-friendly" driver certification program.

### Recommendation #3:

Improve older adults' knowledge of and access to transportation options

- **Action Item A:** We will educate older adults about ways to access public and private transportation options, including ways to access discounted rates and passes as well as travel training opportunities.

- **Action Item B:** We will publicize the taxi coupon program as a means of promoting travel options for older adults.
- **Action Item C:** We will partner with the MBTA to expand access to the Senior CharlieCard.

**Recommendation #4:** Improve pedestrian safety in partnership with Vision Zero.

- **Action Item A:** We will support strategies of Go Boston: 2030 and Vision Zero to regulate new city speed limits and neighborhood "Slow Zones."
- **Action Item B:** We will employ a comprehensive, age-friendly strategy when re-designing public spaces near high concentrations of older adults. This includes addressing sidewalks, crosswalks, signal timing, pedestrian ramps, places to rest, and shade.
- **Action Item C:** We will expand the use of audible crosswalk signals and longer walk times.
- **Action Item D:** Working in accordance with the City's Sidewalk Maintenance Plan, we will explore age-friendly strategies for repairing sidewalks, including using materials and surfaces that are more easily managed by pedestrians, especially those with mobility challenges, and those who use wheelchairs or walkers.



## ☀️ OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

### WE ENVISION...

...A Boston in which older adults are able to safely and easily access the natural and built environment, including public buildings, parks and green space.

### WE HEARD....

- Boston's older adults value greenspace.
- 97% of Bostonians live within a 10 minute walk of a park and people said parks were a real asset to life.
- Many older Boston residents want better accessibility features in public areas.
- 31% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with the availability of benches in public areas and along walkways.
- Some seniors, especially those with disabilities, feel unsafe going to parks.
- 20% of survey respondents do not feel safe going to public parks.
- Many older adults want better access to public restrooms.
- 50% of survey respondents do not think that public restrooms are available in convenient locations.



### WE HEARD:

***“I’d like to be able to easily find out if there are neighborhood councils or meetings in my neighborhood.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“The greatest problem for active Boston seniors is the lack of public bathrooms. The few that exist whether in private or public buildings are not publicized. Why isn’t there a list of public bathrooms in Boston?”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

## WE ARE...

### Improving City Parks

Since 2014, the number of programs in City parks has increased from 171 to 834, and the City has increased its investment in parks by over \$7 million. Maintenance workers and seasonal ranger positions have been added to increase park cleanliness and safety, and recycling programs are being piloted in six different locations. In 2016, a collaboration formed between the Elderly Commission, the Parks Department, and the Design for Aging Committee (DFA) from the Boston Society for Architects. This collaboration led to a more structured senior engagement strategy, involving older adults and DFA in two City park redesigns.

### Pedestrian Ramps and Sidewalk Accessibility

Mayor Walsh is committed to accessibility for people in Boston. In addition to parks, the City of Boston is committed to building pedestrian ramps in the city. In the last year alone, 900 were completed. Calls to 311 are helping to prioritize the Sidewalk Maintenance Plan. Since 2014, the City has installed 1,776,866 square feet of new sidewalk and ramps, or about 12 miles of brand new sidewalk and 29 miles of partial repairs on various sidewalks around the city. The City also brought 2,481 pedestrian ramps into ADA/MAAB compliance between January 2014 and September 2016.

In 2016, Mayor Walsh called for commercial buildings to be held accountable for shoveling their sidewalk, and he supports increasing fines for businesses that do not shovel

## WE WILL...

### Recommendation #1:

Ensure the consideration of older adults' needs and opinions in park and public space design.

- **ⓓ Action Item A:** We will develop a set of recommendations for age-friendly and dementia-friendly park features to use as a guideline when designing City-owned parks and green spaces.
- **Action Item B:** We will create a system that promotes older adult participation in all park planning processes.

### Recommendation #2:

Educate older adults about how they can help improve the safety of Boston's outdoor spaces.

- **Action Item A:** We will promote the use of **Boston 311** to encourage residents to report problems or concerns related to outdoor spaces.
- **Action Item B:** We will encourage older adults to get involved with neighborhood associations or friends groups to address safety concerns, promoting the idea of "community policing," and utilizing Boston Police Department communication tools such as "**Text a Tip.**"

### Recommendation #3:

Improve awareness of currently available public restrooms.

- **Action Item A:** We will identify the location of current public restrooms in **Boston Main Streets** and other business areas and determine the best ways to communicate this information to the public.

### Recommendation #4:

Mitigate effects of extreme heat on vulnerable populations, especially older adults living alone.

- **Action Item A:** We will develop an action plan to expand Boston's tree canopy and other types of green infrastructure to provide shade and means of other cooling. It will focus on neighborhoods with the greatest need, including those with high numbers of older adults.<sup>13</sup>

#### KEYWORDS:

**BOSTON 311:** is the telephone number that connects residents with Constituent Service Center Representatives who are ready to help resolve non-emergency questions and concerns.

**TEXT A TIP: ANYTIME,** anywhere, individuals can simply text the word "TIP" to CRIME (27463) and report a crime anonymously to Boston Police Department's Crime Stoppers unit.

**BOSTON MAIN STREETS:** Each neighborhood Main Streets organization is a small, independent non-profit responsible for beautifying and strengthening their local business districts.

## + COMMUNITY SUPPORTS AND HEALTH SERVICES

### WE ENVISION...

...A Boston that offers health care and support services in accessible locations, including in home, with staff that are culturally and linguistically matched to the older resident's needs.

...A Boston that recognizes the specific needs of Boston residents living with dementia, their family members and their caregivers, and creates supportive communities that promote quality of life within these populations.

### WE HEARD...

- Older adults want better access to good quality food they can afford.
- One-quarter of survey respondents are dissatisfied with the availability of affordable, quality food.
- Education is needed about available services, especially among those who are isolated.



### WE HEARD:

***“As I become less mobile, I am concerned about my access to services.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

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***“I enjoy living in the city close to supermarkets, pharmacies, and all. I can be more independent than if I lived in the outskirts of town, where I would have to depend on my personal transportation to run errands.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

- The most often mentioned recommendation related to community supports and health services was further investment in education about options for senior care.
- Residents with dementia and other long-term conditions need better access to services and supports.
- One out of four survey respondents who have a disabling condition are dissatisfied with their access to physical and mental health services.

## WE ARE...

### Improving Connection and Information

The Commission partners with organizations across the city who form Boston's aging network, a series of providers who create a comprehensive community care system for older adults and their caregivers through a mixture of federal, state, city and private funding. To help older adults and their caregivers connect to this network, Commission staff are trained to offer specialized information and referral (I&R) services and work hand in hand at this task with our I&R community partner, Boston Elder Info. Over the past two years, the Elderly Commission trained nine staff members as SHINE (Serving the Health Information Needs of Everyone) counselors. With this training, they are able to provide important counseling, free health insurance information and assistance to people on Medicare and their caregivers.

### Building Blocks for a Dementia-Friendly Boston

Since 2014, the City of Boston has partnered with the Alzheimer's Association to raise awareness about the disease through events like the annual Alzheimer's Walk. Over the past two years, with the help of the Alzheimer's Association, all first responders (Police, Fire, EMS) were trained to understand dementia and learn how to approach and communicate with people who have the disease.

In collaboration with Boston Centers for Youth and Families Grove Hall Senior Center, the Commission is also leading the city's first *memory café*, "Thanks for the Memories," giving people with dementia and their care partners a safe space to gather and connect. Attendees can engage in artistic and cultural activities, such as "Meet me at the Movies," a program where classic film clips are shown to spark thoughts and memories.

#### KEYWORDS:

**MEMORY CAFÉ:** Informal gathering of people with dementia and their caregivers to share resources and receive support. Concept originated in Europe.

## WE WILL...

### Recommendation #1:

Promote outreach to support services and access to benefits, and focus on reaching seniors who are isolated.

- **Action Item A:** We will encourage the Commission's Title III funded organizations to adopt new outreach and marketing approaches to better reach Boston older adults. New approaches may include: partnering with local libraries or community centers to market programs and services, posting notices in grocery stores, sending information out with staff members who visit older adults' homes, or using social media or robo-calls to reach older adults and their families.
- **S Action Item B:** We will build relationships with faith based organizations to specifically target and provide support to socially isolated elders at risk.
- **S D Action Item C:** We will develop a working group to identify strategies to reach isolated seniors with the goal of preventing crises, creating more positive outcomes.
- **E Action Item D:** We will place additional emphasis on assisting older adults to access public benefits including increasing benefits outreach and developing a comprehensive system for tracking benefits enrollment and retention.
- **S Action Item E:** We will identify areas of Boston with the highest concentrations of older adult residents and go door to door to ensure that they are connected to information and resources.
- **D Action Item F:** We will continue to

identify and pursue opportunities to raise awareness about Alzheimer's Disease information and resources.

### Recommendation #2:

Ensure that older adults have access to high quality, affordable food.

- **Action Item A:** We will identify areas with limited food resources and utilize the City's Senior Shuttle to transport seniors to grocery stores with affordable, healthy food.
- **E Action Item B:** We will educate older adults about options for improving their access to food, including but not limited to, availability of delivery service options, pop up mobile markets, food benefits like SNAP and Bounty Bucks, and congregate and home delivered meals programs.
- **Action Item C:** We will explore options for increasing access to nutrient dense foods and goods by reducing mobility and transportation barriers.
- **Recommendation #3:** Enhance older adults' safety through education.
- **D Action Item A:** We will convene a group to explore current processes for intervention for people with dementia who have wandering behaviors and identify ways to improve current protocols and communication to improve risk management.
- **Action Item B:** We will continue to collaborate with community partners who are experts on fraud, elder abuse and financial exploitation to raise awareness warning signs and avenues for assistance. We will consider multiple methods, including the City's communication channels, local television and community newspapers, to spotlight these resources.

## **🏠 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT**

### **WE ENVISION...**

...a Boston in which older adults have access to work opportunities as well as to rewarding volunteer opportunities.

...a Boston where older residents are involved with making decisions in both public and private sectors and are regularly consulted by elected officials.

### **WE HEARD...**

- Older Boston residents want more work opportunities.
- Half of survey respondents disagree that there are adequate employment opportunities available to older adults in Boston.
- Older Boston residents need information about available volunteer opportunities that are close to where they live and fully utilize their skills and talents.



### **WE HEARD:**

***“I’m relatively healthy. I’m already 70, but I still want to keep working. I applied for at least 20 jobs, but nobody hired me.”***

**- BOSTON RESIDENT**

***“There are not adequate opportunities for seniors to get together to volunteer on a regular basis. This type of interaction could benefit the overall community and provide regular socialization for seniors.”***

**- BOSTON RESIDENT**

***“I am trying to figure out where to get information about volunteering. Specifically, I was thinking of some place on the web.”***

**- BOSTON RESIDENT**

- Residents' top recommendation for improving civic participation and employment was to improve the dissemination of information about available opportunities.
- Many older residents do not feel that their perspectives are heard by local policy makers or leaders.
- 36% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with the extent to which local policymakers take into account the interest and concerns of older residents.

## WE ARE...

### Refocusing on Workforce Development

In 2014, the City refocused its workforce development strategy through the creation of the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (OWD). OWD seeks to promote economic self-sufficiency and works to connect low-income residents with job training and employment opportunities and to promote lifelong literacy and educational pathways.

### Enhancing and Aligning Civic Engagement

In 2014, the City, recognizing the importance of Civic Engagement, elevated it to a cabinet level position. In 2017, Mayor Walsh launched Boston's first city service plan, Emerging Boston. In addition, a new volunteer unit was created at the Commission, aligning the senior volunteer programs and expanding volunteer management capacity. The Commission continues to recruit additional older adults who qualify for the [Property Tax Work-Off Program](#) after the City expanded the opportunity from a 50 person limit to 100 people. This increase in participation allows us to further develop opportunities for older adults to use their skills and expertise to further the work we do in City departments.

## KEYWORDS:

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CABINET:** is the cabinet in City Hall that oversees the Elderly Commission, the Office of Neighborhood Services, 311 and others. The main goal of this cabinet is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of city services and create opportunities for constituents to be involved in local government.

**PROPERTY TAX WORK-OFF PROGRAM:** Qualified senior homeowners get the opportunity to work-off up to \$1,000 on their property tax bill by volunteering for a City agency.

**AARP:** is a national interest group who support their age 50+ membership in living active, healthy and civically engaging lives.

## WE WILL...

### Recommendation #1:

Communicate the value of older workers.

- **Action Item A:** We will develop and implement a strategy for a public awareness campaign promoting the value of older workers and combating the stereotypes about aging.
- **Action Item B:** We will promote the value of older workers to Boston area businesses.

### Recommendation #2:

Better connect older adults to employment opportunities and resources.

- **Action Item A:** We will work to identify the barriers to employment for older adults in the city.
- **Action Item B:** We will create a comprehensive list of existing opportunities for training and skill development and connect residents with the information.
- **Action Item C:** We will consider ways to expand the most successful existing training programs.

### Recommendation #3:

Enhance and promote volunteer opportunities for older adults.

- **Action Item A:** We will explore ways for the City to recognize volunteers, such as developing a "Volunteer of the Year" award.
- **Action Item B:** We will identify City offices and departments that could benefit from additional volunteers, and publicize these opportunities to older adults who may be interested.

- **Action Item C:** We will establish the Emerging Boston portal, a web-based tool that will connect residents to volunteer opportunities within the City and link to other Boston-based volunteer organizations.

### Recommendation #4:

Ensure the perspectives and needs of older adults are included in all City planning and policies.

- **Action Item A:** We will explore strategies for older adults to be more deeply involved in policy making and advocacy. We will work in collaboration with community partners and older adults for effective solutions.
- **Action Item B:** We will incorporate the voice of Boston's older residents by ensuring that an older resident or representative of the Elderly Commission serve on relevant internal working groups or task forces.

## ■ SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

### WE ENVISION...

...A Boston with an array of affordable and accessible social and recreational opportunities for older adults in conveniently located places.

### WE HEARD...

- Many older Boston residents want more opportunities for recreation.
- More than 20% of all survey respondents are dissatisfied with the availability of recreational opportunities.

- Older Boston residents want more things to do in their own neighborhoods.
- More than 25% of survey respondents age 50-69 are dissatisfied with opportunities for informal sharing and interaction in their neighborhoods.



### WE HEARD:

***“I like having so many interesting cultural options. I like the way that Boston feels both small and large.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“We love living in the city and appreciate your efforts to amplify the needs of seniors, finding ways for us to be more active and involved in city life and civic engagement opportunities.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“The city needs to do more to make seniors aware of existing programs. Boston has a lot of programs and resources, but I do not know how to access them.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

## WE ARE...

### **Encouraging and Supporting Senior Programming**

The City supports 17 neighborhood locations to provide ongoing senior programming, including 14 Commission grantees funded through Older Americans Act money and three City-run senior centers. We organize and implement a full calendar of over 100 events and programs a year including our annual “Older Americans Month” celebration, a calendar of events focused on Boston’s older adults throughout the month of May. As part of the Boston Aging Strong program, the Commission created and is airing an exercise series for older adults through Boston Neighborhood Network TV.

Additionally, our community centers, parks, libraries and other locations are filled with events programs and activities good for older adults and people of all ages. In libraries alone, there are over 140 offerings every month that older adults take advantage of, including computer classes, yoga, the “Never Too Late Group”, a history series and concerts.

## WE WILL...

### **Recommendation 1:**

Create and promote a network of social engagement opportunities for older adults.

- **Ⓢ Action Item A:** We will map existing opportunities for social engagement for older adults in Boston.
- **Ⓢ Action Item B:** We will identify gaps in programming by looking at current opportunities by location, offering type, targeted population(s), and accessibility.

- **Ⓣ Action Item C:** We will enhance opportunities for social engagement, both through the City and by partnering with organizations, leveraging existing resources and public spaces as well as working to fill the identified programming gaps.
- **Ⓢ Action Item D:** We will make information about the opportunities for social engagement accessible to Boston’s older adults.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

#### **DIVERSITY IN PROGRAMMING**

Boston residents are fortunate to have so many opportunities to stay engaged in activity and connected to others. We are committed to supporting programming that appeals to our diverse older adult population. It is important that opportunities for engagement span neighborhoods and offer something for everyone, whether you like the arts, cultural activities, want to stay fit and healthy or connect with others through intergenerational programs. We are committed to opportunities that are welcoming to everyone including older adults who don’t speak English, the LGBT senior population, people with dementia, or people with disabilities.

**NEVER TOO LATE GROUP** is one of the oldest running groups for older adults in the United States. Members enjoy a variety of cultural activities in Boston’s Central Library.



## ♥ RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

### WE ENVISION...

...A city where older adults and their needs are valued and heard by both the public and private sectors.

### WE HEARD...

- Ageism and respect for older adults is a concern in Boston.
- 40% of economically-insecure survey respondents do not believe older residents are treated respectfully.
- Older Boston residents have concerns about fraud and abuse.
- Older adults identified fraud and exploitation concerns related to aging in the city.



### WE HEARD:

***“I recommend a city-wide campaign for greater sensitivity of seniors and people with disabilities in the city.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“I would like to see day programs and drop in activities, especially for seniors with memory impairment with services to support those who care for them.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“I feel we need to reach out to LGBT seniors and make spaces for them.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

## WE ARE...

### Utilizing the Skills, Knowledge and Talent of Older Adults

The City's multiple planning processes over the past two years have been an opportunity for Boston's older adults to share their thoughts, ideas and expertise. Boston has actively encouraged the participation of older adults during the community process. In addition, the Commission hosts the Mayor's Senior Advisory Council, a group of seniors from across Boston tasked with advising the Commission on aging issues and providing ongoing guidance and input. Advisory Council members partner with the Commission during their Older Americans Title III grant making process, assisting with grant award decisions for neighborhood aging services by serving as grant readers. The Commission brought different ages together through the intergenerational raised bed garden project at the Codman Square library. As part of the Age-Friendly Initiative, Boston's older adults were highlighted through the "Celebrating Boston Senior's Age-Friendly Boston" photo and video displays. The photos were displayed in the Mayor's Neighborhood Gallery in Boston City Hall and are now on display at the AARP Massachusetts office.

## WE WILL...

### Recommendation #1:

Support age-friendly customer service.

- **Ⓧ Action Item A:** We will explore the creation of an "Age-Friendly/Dementia-Friendly Business Designation" in Main Streets districts. We will study best practices from programs from other initiatives as well as past experience with "Elder-Friendly Business Districts."
- **Ⓧ Action Item B:** We will develop front-facing training for City staff that will educate employees on the unique needs of older adults, including those with dementia, taking into account cultural and language diversity. The training will help empower City employees in their interactions with older adults, and help older adults receive improved service at City Hall.

#### KEYWORDS:

##### DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY BUSINESS

**DESIGNATION:** To receive designation, a business or organization commits to the following: Complete DFC training for management and 50% of their front-line employees. Designate a team leader to be liaison between their organization and the DFC task force

- Be open to discussions regarding environment changes (e.g. lighting, signage, layout, etc.)
- Be willing to share DFC training materials with any new hires and all employees that did not attend training
- Undergo an on-site visit/follow-up training on an annual basis to recertify its dementia friendly status

### Recommendation #2:

Address [ageism](#) through public education.

- **Action Item A:** Using the Frameworks Institute's Gaining Momentum Communication Toolkit, we will develop a campaign targeting ageism and seek funding and partners to implement it.
- **Action Item B:** We will create recognition awards for older adults who have contributed to the community and publicize their contributions through Seniority Magazine and other avenues.

### Recommendation #3:

Promote inclusive programs and services for older adults.

- **Action Item A:** We will host trainings for Boston area public and private housing staff targeting managers, resident service coordinators, and other on-site staff, on managing dementia-related behaviors.
- **Action Item B:** We will encourage and facilitate administration of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) awareness training for senior housing providers in Boston

#### KEYWORDS:

**AGEISM**, defined by the Framework's Institute, "is discrimination against older people due to negative and inaccurate stereotypes."

## COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

### WE ENVISION...

...a city in which an effective communication system reaches and engages community members of all ages, including older adults.

### WE HEARD...

- Boston older adults do not feel adequately informed.
- 30% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with how activities and events are communicated to older residents.

- Older adults depend on a wide range of media.
- Over half of survey respondents prefer newspapers and TV as sources of information about programs, activities and services in their community. Nearly 40% prefer the internet.



### WE HEARD:

***“I think the city has a lot I am unaware of. I would like to see a means by which, by the time you reach a certain age, we could be notified by mail or e-mail. We need a location for all different types of information. More awareness of available programs with a wider distribution is needed.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“I am hearing impaired and my first language is not English, so it can be difficult to understand information.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

***“I signed up for phone messages from the City and have been impressed by the process. It was especially helpful around the time of the Marathon bombings and when weather is very bad.”***

- BOSTON RESIDENT

## WE ARE...

### Improving Access through Communications

There are many communication efforts already underway throughout the City. The City provides free internet and access to computers through the Central Boston Public Library and all 24 neighborhood branches. The City increased access to free WiFi in 180 locations throughout the city through the “Wicked Free WiFi” program. The Mayor hired the City’s first Chief Digital Officer to build a digital services team working to improve access to city resources. Their work includes a redesigned city website: [Boston.gov](http://Boston.gov). There has also been the launch and expansion of **Boston 311**, an easy-to-remember telephone number that connects residents with highly-trained Constituent Service Center representatives who can answer requests for non-emergency City services and information, 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Residents can opt-in to receive emergency alerts through a citywide system, available in four languages, notifying user by text or phone call when there is an emergency.

### Communications at the Elderly Commission

At the Commission, we have hired our first Communication Director, forming a new dedicated unit. This team maintains current communication channels, including **Boston Seniority Magazine** and social media channels. The City partnered with Comcast to provide access to affordable internet services to low-income seniors through The Internet Essentials Senior Pilot. Our partners “Tech Goes Home” and Comcast also collaborated on expanded computer training for older adults through a train-the-trainer model. Additionally, the Commission uses a robocall system to reach seniors during extreme weather, with important safety and contact information.

#### KEYWORDS:

**BOSTON 311:** *The City’s 24/7 constituent services call center dedicated to connecting residents to city services, increasing civic engagement and providing a quality experience. Constituent advocates are ready to help with any requests or questions residents have.*

#### BOSTON SENIORITY MAGAZINE:

*Monthly publication that covers news, topics, events, and other issues of interest to older Bostonians.*

## WE WILL...

### Recommendation #1:

Develop a Senior Communication Plan.

**Action Item A:** We will develop a strategic Senior Communications Plan that will serve as a roadmap for communications across all channels, including traditional and new media. This plan will pay particular attention to strengthening audience engagement and recognizing and reflecting Boston’s diversity of languages, cultures, neighborhoods, and interests.

**Recommendation #2:** Review and determine communications best practices to better reach our audience.

**Action Item A:** We will conduct and analyze marketing research about the communications preferences of older adults. This will include reviewing national and local trends, as well as understanding best communication practices that other cities employ when informing older residents about resources, services, and activities. Within this review, we will identify strategies that allow us to reach diverse populations. We will honor what is already happening.

**Action Item B:** With the help of the Mayor’s Press Team and the Department of Innovation and Technology, we will investigate current and potential uses of communication methods and new technology, taking into account a wide range of technological abilities.

**Action Item C:** We will review all current external communication methods that exist at the Commission, to understand our own baseline metrics.

**Action Item D:** As part of the Communications strategy, we will identify the most popular sources for news and information and use this knowledge to deepen outreach to

neighborhood-based newspapers, cable television, web-based news outlets, church newsletters and bulletins.

**Recommendation #3:** Enhance existing communication channels, using the determined best practices and marketing research, and leveraging community partners to expand reach.

**Action Item A:** We will develop even more holistic, effective ways to share important information about programs, services and events with older adults, leveraging our community partners.

**Action Item B:** We will develop a marketing piece that lists the most important phone numbers for older residents. This piece of collateral will also carry over to our digital properties on the [Boston.gov](http://Boston.gov) website and social media.

**Action Item C:** We will build upon our existing communications channels, like social media, **Boston Seniority Magazine** and the **Seniors Count TV** show, with an emphasis on creating consistent, engaging content.

**Action Item D:** We will leverage city data to advance equity. The City will pursue a study on 311 services and use the data to serve residents by increasing resident access and awareness, and identifying gaps in service. Working with the City’s Language Access Coordinator, 311 data will be centralized with responses and translated into multiple languages to improve accessibility.

#### KEYWORDS:

**SENIORS COUNT TV SHOW:** *Weekly cable television show hosted by Elderly Commission staff with guest experts on topics of interest to older Boston residents.*

## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

Multiple City departments and partner organizations will be critical to the success of this Action Plan. The Age-Friendly Boston Initiative will convene an advisory committee to steer implementation of the Action Plan. Smaller groups will be organized with relevant partners in order to move other action items into implementation.

### LOOKING AHEAD

The Age-Friendly Action Plan is the culmination of two years of broad community participation and planning, with the remaining three years for implementation of the Action Plan. During these three years, the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative will work both with the relevant departments in the City as well as with community partners to accomplish the specific action items. We will hold community meetings with residents to keep people informed about the progress, asking for feedback and support. Older adults are our most valued allies in the achievement of a more age-friendly Boston.

We will also continue to synthesize all existing planning efforts, integrating the perspective of seniors until it becomes routine to include older adults in all areas of social, cultural, economic and political life in the city. We will publish annual progress reports to keep the public informed about the efforts and keep ourselves on track.

With our community partners, the Age-Friendly Boston Initiative will continue to make progress towards a diverse, vibrant community which empowers all individuals to age well and have full lives in the city. We will work towards transforming concepts around aging. For example, instead of just thinking about how

we can serve older adults, we are also thinking about how older adults serve the larger Boston community with their wisdom and experience.

As one of the members of a local community group, “60+ Veterans,” remarked, “We don’t get old, we get valuable.” Just like race, religion, and culture--age diversity strengthens community bonds by deepening understanding across the lifespan and universally connecting us to one another as human beings.

Together, we have continued the aging conversation in Boston. Now, it is time for action.

## APPENDIX A. ACTION PLANNING METHODS

### Domain-Specific Work Groups

The Age-Friendly Boston Initiative<sup>[1]</sup> identified and invited participants for the domain-specific work groups. Each meeting began with an overview of the major themes within each domain that had emerged from the needs assessment results. Participants formed smaller sub-groups, each focusing on one of these themes. Work group members were instructed not to consider cost or feasibility; but instead to focus on creative solutions that would address problems outlined in each domain. These small group discussions used group process techniques of brainstorming to gather information about the specific action items developed, but also to capture the process and content of discussion. Each small group discussion was documented by a member of the UMass Boston research team through note-taking.

Operating under a Results Based Accountability framework, the small group discussions were broken into three sections to guide the group towards the development of desired outcomes and related action steps to be taken toward each identified outcome. Work group members were asked to generate goals for each domain-related theme by beginning with the generation of problem statements to guide them.

- What are the immediate, most pressing problems related to the theme?
- What do you hope to accomplish to address this problem?
- What are the concrete action items that need to take place to meet these goals?

### Community Engagement Events

The residents who attended these events were briefed on the emergent themes within each domain and presented with potential action items developed by the work groups. Participants discussed and rated the items. The multi-voting approach used at these events allows for all attendees to participate with equal weight, avoiding the frequent group challenge of balancing more vocal participants with individuals who do not readily participate. Multi-voting is used to illustrate group preference and often, to narrow down or prioritize from a large list of possibilities.

Action items were prioritized in a series of four rounds, one for each domain. First, participants were presented with a list of possible areas of action meant to address each domain. They had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss as a group. Many shared stories from their own experiences and the experiences of their friends and family. Following discussion, each participant was given three stickers and instructed to place their stickers on the action items they believed to be most important. Participants were invited to use these stickers at will. For example, they could place all three stickers on one theme or spread them across three separate areas of action. After four rounds of this activity were complete, the results were tabulated, and the highest-ranked areas of action within each domain were reported to the Action Planning Committee.

### Action Planning Committee Meetings

At each meeting, the committee was charged with reviewing drafted action items in a specified domain, identifying overlap and gap areas, evaluating feasibility, and agreeing on overall plan goals. The Elderly Commission and a member of Mayor Walsh’s cabinet attended each meeting and participated in the discussions of feasibility, which proved to be invaluable to this committee’s process and success. Drafts of the action items were circulated for each meeting and were further revised and prioritized.

# APPENDIX B.

## ACTION ITEMS

DOMAIN: HOUSING						
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS		
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> Encourage Age-Friendly development, alternative housing options and communities.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will encourage universal design principles and features to allow for aging in place, paying particular attention to the layout of kitchens and bathrooms. We will encourage the development of common areas and shared spaces to reduce social isolation.	Department of Neighborhood Development	Final design and construction of each unit/building	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will require developers who are seeking funding from the City for senior housing to either have services embedded in the housing or to have a plan for connecting people to services.	Department of Neighborhood Development	Service plans in place at time of loan closing	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will explore creation of a "Homeshare" network, matching older homeowners with rooms to rent with others who need to rent a room, such as graduate students or other older adults.	Housing Innovation Lab, Elderly Commission	1. Research completed 2. Pilot developed	1	2	
	<b>Action Item D:</b> We will convene a workshop to share information about the "Village" model in neighborhoods not currently covered by a "Village".	Beacon Hill Village, JP at Home/Ethos, Elderly Commission	Workshop completed		2	
	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will advocate at the state and federal levels for increasing funding towards housing vouchers and increasing the value of the vouchers.	Elderly Commission, Department of Neighborhood Development, AARP	Advocacy partners and opportunities identified	1	2	3
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> Advocate for affordable housing and services for older adults.	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will support advocacy efforts to expand vouchers for use in obtaining support services within housing units.	Elderly Commission, Department of Neighborhood Development	Advocacy partners and opportunities identified	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will support the efforts of community partners advocating for the reinstatement of the federal Section 202 funding to support new low income housing development.	Elderly Commission, Department of Neighborhood Development, AARP	Advocacy support given as needed	1	2	3

DOMAIN: HOUSING CONTINUED						
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS		
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> Improve education about housing and housing services available in Boston,	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will educate older adult homeowners about how to access existing housing support services such as the home repair and home modification resources, information about selling a home, reverse mortgages and tax relief programs.	Elderly Commission, Department of Neighborhood Development, AARP, Ethos, community partners.	Number of homeowner educational opportunities completed	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will educate older adults who are renters about the resources available to assist with remaining housed or finding appropriate housing, as well as their rights as tenants.	Elderly Commission, Department of Neighborhood Development, community partners	Number of renter educational opportunities completed	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will conduct an inventory of existing programs and services that help older adults stay in their homes and compile them into an easy-to-access, centralized location.	Elderly Commission, UMass Boston Gerontology, AARP	1. Inventory completed 2. Information posted in centralized location	1	2	
<b>Recommendation #4:</b> Support older Boston homeowners through tax relief programs.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will create a public information campaign similar to the Earned Income Tax Credit Campaign, to increase the use of the Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit.	Elderly Commission, Boston Tax Coalition, Assessing Department, Action for Boston Community Development, Ethos	1. Outreach strategy developed 2. Outreach strategy implemented	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will increase awareness of the programs and exemptions available to help senior homeowners reduce property taxes by creating and delivering a comprehensive training for older adults. We will host training opportunities throughout the neighborhoods of Boston targeting areas with high percentages of senior homeowners. We will make sure that information about these programs is easily accessible on the City website and also in promotional materials.	Elderly Commission, Assessing Department	1. Training developed 2. Number of trainings provided	1		
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will pursue legislation that will increase the income and net worth limits for the 41C elderly exemption program to reflect the impact of inflation. The limits have not been adjusted since 2004. Raising the limits will enable more seniors with limited incomes to participate in the program.	Elderly Commission, Assessing Department, Intergovernmental Relations	1. Legislative strategy identified 2. Income and net worth limits raised		2	
	<b>Action Item D:</b> We will seek to increase the work-off credit maximum for the City's Senior Property Tax Work Off Program from \$1000 to \$1500 for FY 2019.	Elderly Commission, Assessing Department, Intergovernmental Relations	City Council approval obtained	1	2	3

DOMAIN: HOUSING CONTINUED						
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS		
				1	2	3
<b>Recommendation #5:</b> Support housing for Boston's most at-risk seniors.	<b>Action Item A:</b> As part of the Boston Homeless Elder Prevention Task Force (HELP), we will work with partner organizations to streamline and coordinate the system of assistance for older adults needing housing or looking to maintain housing.	Boston Homeless Elder Prevention Task Force members	Streamlined system of assistance further developed	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will house all chronically homeless elders over 50 with long-term supportive services.	Boston's Way Home Initiative through the Department of Neighborhood Development, Boston Housing Authority, Executive Office of Elder Affairs and community partners	Number of chronically homeless people over 50 housed	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will aggressively pursue additional policies and tools to prevent the displacement of low and moderate-income seniors, ensuring that they can continue to live in the communities and neighborhoods they love.	Department of Neighborhood Development	1. Initial set of policies complete 2. Community process for additional policies ongoing	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item D:</b> We will explore potential solutions to assist senior homeowners with severely distressed properties.	Department of Neighborhood Development	Launch of pilot program	1	2	3
DOMAIN: TRANSPORTATION						
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> Optimize publicly funded transportation options for older adults.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will improve and expand the Elderly Commission's partnership with the MBTA to better serve older adults in Boston.	MBTA, Elderly Commission, Transportation Department	Partnership enhanced with the MBTA	1		
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will advocate to maintain MBTA/RIDE coverage area and affordability.	Mass Senior Action, Boston Center for Independent Living, Elderly Commission	Support partners in their advocacy work	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will modernize and increase efficiency of the senior shuttle including the purchase of additional new, accessible, energy efficient vans. We will explore potential service changes including hours and days of operation and expanding types of rides.	Elderly Commission	Percent increase in energy efficient, accessible vehicles in shuttle fleet	1	2	3
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> Optimize private transportation options for older adults.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will assess current training capacity of taxi and ride share companies, for serving people with disabilities or mobility limitations. We will explore the possibility of creating an "age-friendly" driver certification program.	Elderly Commission, Taxis, Ride shares, Boston Police Department Hackney Unit, UMass Boston Gerontology	1. Needs assessed 2. Training developed		2	

DOMAIN: TRANSPORTATION CONTINUED						
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS		
				1	2	3
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> Improve older adults' knowledge of and access to transportation options.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will educate older adults about ways to access public and private transportation options, including ways to access discounted rates and passes as well as travel training opportunities.	Elderly Commission	1. Communications strategy developed 2. Communications strategy implemented	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will publicize the taxi coupon program as a means of promoting travel options for older adults.	Elderly Commission	1. Communications strategy developed 2. Communications strategy implemented	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will partner with the MBTA to expand access to the Senior CharlieCard.	Elderly Commission, MBTA	Number of Senior Charlie Card passes facilitated by the Elderly Commission	1	2	3
<b>Recommendation #4:</b> Improve pedestrian safety in partnership with Vision Zero.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will support strategies of the Go Boston: 2030 and Vision Zero to regulate new city speed limits and neighborhood "Slow Zones."	Transportation Department, Vision Zero	1. Traffic calming measures implemented 2. NSS locations established	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will employ a comprehensive, age-friendly strategy when re-designing public spaces near high concentrations of older adults. This includes addressing sidewalks, crosswalks, signal timing, pedestrian ramps, places to rest, and shade.	Boston Transportation Department, Department of Public Works, WalkBoston	Number of areas redesigned near high concentrations of seniors	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will expand the use of audible crosswalk signals and longer walk times, particularly in senior-dense neighborhoods.	Boston Transportation Department	1. Number of audible crosswalk signals installed 2. Number of crossings with increased walk times	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item D:</b> Working in accordance with the City's Sidewalk Maintenance Plan, we will explore age-friendly strategies for repairing sidewalks, including using materials and surfaces that are more easily managed by pedestrians, especially those with mobility challenges, and those who use wheelchairs or walkers.	Department of Public Works, WalkBoston	Length of sidewalks repaired using Age-Friendly materials	1	2	3
DOMAIN: OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS						
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> Ensure the consideration of older adults' needs and opinions in park and public space design.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will develop a set of recommendations for age-friendly and dementia-friendly park features to use as a guideline when designing City-owned parks and green spaces.	BSA Design for Aging Committee, Parks Department, Elderly Commission	1. Recommendations developed 2. Process for use of recommendations developed	1		
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will create a system that promotes older adult participation in all park planning processes.	Parks Department, Elderly Commission, community partners	Ongoing partnership formed	1		

DOMAIN: OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS CONTINUED						
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS		
				1	2	3
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> Educate older adults about how they can help improve the safety of Boston's outdoor spaces.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will promote the use of Boston 311 to encourage residents to report problems or concerns related to outdoor spaces.	311, Elderly Commission	1. Communications strategy developed 2. Communications strategy implemented	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will encourage older adults to get involved with neighborhood associations or friends groups to address safety concerns, promoting the idea of "community policing," and utilizing Boston Police Department communication tools such as "Text a Tip."	Boston Police Department, Elderly Commission	1. Communications strategy developed 2. Communications strategy implemented		2	3
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> Improve awareness of currently available public restrooms.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will identify the location of current public restrooms in Boston Main Streets and determine the best ways to communicate this information to the public.	Boston Main Streets, Elderly Commission, UMass Boston Gerontology	Map created		2	
<b>Recommendation #4:</b> Mitigate effects of extreme heat on vulnerable populations, especially older adults living alone.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will develop an action plan to expand Boston's tree canopy and other types of green infrastructure to provide shade and other means of local cooling, particularly in neighborhoods with the greatest need, including those with high numbers of older adults.	Climate Ready Boston, Resiliency Strategy, Parks Department	Percentage of tree canopy increased			3
DOMAIN: COMMUNITY SUPPORTS AND HEALTH SERVICES						
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> Promote outreach to support services and access to benefits, and focus on reaching seniors who are isolated.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will encourage The Commission's Title III funded organizations to adopt new outreach and marketing approaches to better reach Boston older adults. New approaches may include: partnering with local libraries or community centers to market programs and services, posting notices in grocery stores, sending information out with staff member who visit older adults' homes, or using social media or robo-calls to older adults and their families.	Elderly Commission, Title III grantees	1. RFP changed 2. Partners adopting additional outreach approaches.	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will build relationships with faith-based organizations to specifically provide support to socially-isolated elders at risk.	Elderly Commission, Friendship Works, faith-based organizations, other community partners	1. Outreach plan developed 2. Relationships formed 3. Process for two-way communication developed	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will develop a working group to identify strategies to reach isolated seniors with the goal of preventing crises, creating more positive outcomes.	Boston Emergency Medical Services, Boston Police Department, Boston Fire Department, Inspectional Services Department, Assessing, Boston Water & Sewer Commission, Boston Housing Authority, Ethos, Central Boston Elder Services, Boston Senior Home Care, Dementia-Friendly Boston	Coalition formed	1		

DOMAIN: COMMUNITY SUPPORTS AND HEALTH SERVICES CONTINUED						
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS		
				1	2	3
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> Promote outreach to support services and access to benefits, and focus on reaching isolated seniors.	<b>Action Item D:</b> We will place additional emphasis on assisting older adults to access public benefits including increasing benefits outreach and developing a comprehensive system for tracking benefits enrollment and retention.	Elderly Commission	1. Tracking system developed 2. Benefits enrollment increased	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item E:</b> We will identify areas of Boston with the highest concentrations of older adult residents and go door to door to ensure that seniors are connected to information and resources.	Elderly Commission, Civic Engagement Cabinet, Ethos, Central Boston Elder Services, Boston Senior Home Care, UMass Boston Gerontology	Completion of door to door campaign	1		
	<b>Action Item F:</b> We will continue to identify and pursue opportunities to raise awareness about Alzheimer's Disease information and resources.	Alzheimer's Association, Dementia Friendly Massachusetts, Elderly Commission	Number of public awareness opportunities pursued	1	2	3
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> Ensure that older adults have access to high-quality, affordable food.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will identify areas with limited food resources and utilize the City-run Senior Shuttle to transport seniors to grocery stores with affordable, healthy food.	Office of Food Initiatives, Boston Public Health Commission, Senior Shuttle, community partners	Pilot project in neighborhood with limited access to healthy groceries	1		
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will educate older adults about options for improving their access to food, including but not limited to availability of delivery service options, pop up mobile markets, food benefits like SNAP (including HIP-Healthy Initiatives Program), and congregate and home-delivered meals programs.	Office of Food Initiatives, Elderly Commission, community partners	1. Communication strategy included in communication plan 2. Communication strategy implemented	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will explore options for increasing access to nutrient dense foods and goods by reducing mobility and transportation barriers.	Office of Food Initiatives, Boston Public Health Commission, Elderly Commission, emergency food programs, mobile markets, supermarkets	Pursue and form partnerships with transportation and mobile market providers		2	
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> Enhance older adult's safety through education.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will convene a group to explore current processes for intervention for people with dementia who have wandering behaviors and identify ways to improve current protocols and communication to improve risk management.	Boston Emergency Medical Services, Boston Police Department, Boston Fire Department, hospitals, Central Boston Elder Services - Protective Services, Elderly Commission, Alzheimer's Association	1. Group convened 2. Current process and gaps identified		2	
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will continue to collaborate with community partners who are experts on fraud, elder abuse and financial exploitation to raise awareness warning signs and avenues for assistance. We will consider multiple methods, including City's communication channels, local television and community newspapers to spotlight these resources.	Elderly Commission, Greater Boston Legal Services, AARP, Boston Police Department	1. Communication strategy developed 2. Communication strategy implemented	1	2	3

DOMAIN: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT						
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS		
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> Communicate the value of older workers.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will develop and implement a strategy for a public awareness campaign promoting the value of older workers and combating the stereotypes about aging.	Elderly Commission, Economic Development cabinet, AARP	1. Creation of campaign 2. Implementation of campaign		2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> Action Item B: We will promote the value of older workers to Boston area businesses.	Economic Development Cabinet, Boston Main Streets, AARP, Operation ABLE, Elderly Commission	1. Communication strategy developed 2. Communication strategy implemented		2	3
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> Better connect older adults to employment opportunities and resources.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will work to identify the barriers to employment for older adults in the city.	Office of Workforce Development, Operation ABLE, Elderly Commission, UMass Boston Gerontology	Barriers to employment identified	1		
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will create a comprehensive list of existing opportunities for training and skill development and connect residents with the information.	Elderly Commission, Office of Workforce Development	1. Comprehensive list created 2. Promotion strategy included in Communications Plan	1	2	
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will consider ways to expand the most successful existing training programs.	Elderly Commission, Office of Workforce Development	Identify best (highest enrollment, most job placement) training programs		2	3
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> Enhance and promote volunteer opportunities for older adults.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will explore ways for the City to recognize volunteers, such as developing a "Volunteer of the Year" award.	Elderly Commission, Civic Engagement Cabinet	Establishment of award		2	
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will identify City offices and departments that could benefit from additional volunteers, and publicize these opportunities to older adults who may be interested.	Elderly Commission, City Departments	1. Identification of volunteer opportunities 2. Process developed to share opportunities with public			3
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will establish the Emerging Boston portal, a web-based tool that will connect residents to volunteer opportunities within the City and link to other Boston-based volunteer organizations.	Civic Engagement Cabinet, Department of Innovation and Technology	Creation of portal		2	
<b>Recommendation #4:</b> Ensure the perspectives and needs of older adults are included in all City planning and policies.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will explore strategies for older adults to be more deeply involved in policy making and advocacy. We will work in collaboration with community partners and older adults for effective solutions.	Intergovernmental Relations, Mass Senior Action Council, Massachusetts Council on Aging, AARP, Civic Engagement Cabinet, Elderly Commission, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Ethos	1. Strategies identified 2. Strategies implemented	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will incorporate the voice of Boston's older residents by ensuring that an older resident or representative of the Elderly Commission serve on relevant internal working groups or task forces.	Elderly Commission, Boston residents, City Departments	Older resident or representative serve on relevant City working groups	1	2	3

DOMAIN: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION						
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS		
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> Create and promote a network of social engagement opportunities for older adults.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will map existing opportunities for social engagement for older adults in Boston.	Elderly Commission, community and City partners, UMass Boston Gerontology	Baseline assessment mapped	1		
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will identify gaps in programming by looking at current opportunities by location, offering type, targeted population(s), and accessibility.	Elderly Commission, UMass Boston Gerontology	Gaps identified	1		
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will enhance opportunities for social engagement, both through the City and by partnering with organizations, leveraging existing resources and public spaces as well as working to fill the identified programming gaps.	Elderly Commission, Boston Public Libraries, Parks Department, Boston Center for Youth and Families, Arts and Culture, community partners	1. Plan to fill gaps developed 2. Plan implemented		2	3
	<b>Action Item D:</b> We will make information about the opportunities for social engagement accessible to Boston's older adults.	Elderly Commission, community partners	1. Communications strategy developed 2. Communications strategy implemented		2	3
DOMAIN: RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION						
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> Support Age-Friendly customer service.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will explore the creation of an "Age-Friendly/Dementia-Friendly business" designation. We will study best practices from programs from other initiatives as well as past experience with "Elder-Friendly business districts."	Office of Business Development, Main Streets, AARP, Ethos, UMass Boston Gerontology	Compile best practices and identify which ones would work best in Boston		2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will develop front-facing training for City staff that will educate employees on the unique needs of older adults, including those with dementia, taking into account cultural and language diversity. The training will help empower City employees in their interactions with older adults, and help older adults receive improved service at City Hall.	Elderly Commission, City Departments, UMass Boston Gerontology, Alzheimer's Association	1. Training developed 2. Training implemented	1	2	3
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> Address ageism through public education.	<b>Action Item A:</b> Using the Frameworks Institute's Gaining Momentum Communication Toolkit, we will develop a campaign targeting ageism and seek funding and partners to implement it.	Elderly Commission, City Departments, community partners, UMass Boston Gerontology, AARP	1. Securing funding 2. Launching campaign	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will create recognition awards for older adults who have contributed to the community and publicize their contributions through Seniority Magazine and other avenues.	Elderly Commission, City Departments, community partners	Recognition award established		2	

DOMAIN: RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION CONTINUED					
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS	
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> Promote inclusive programs and services for older adults.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will host trainings for Boston area public and private housing staff targeting managers, resident service coordinators, and other on-site staff, on managing dementia-related behaviors.	Private housing providers, Boston Housing Authority, Alzheimer's Association, Elderly Commission, UMass Boston Gerontology	Completed training	1	
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will encourage and facilitate administration of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) awareness training for public and private senior housing providers in Boston.	Elderly Commission, Department of Neighborhood Development, Fair Housing and Equity, LGBT Aging Project, Boston Housing Authority, Ethos	Completed training		2
DOMAIN: COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION					
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> Develop a Senior Communication Plan.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will develop a strategic Senior Communications Plan that will serve as a roadmap for communications across all channels, including traditional and new media. This plan will pay particular attention to strengthening audience engagement and recognizing and reflecting Boston's diversity of language, culture, neighborhood, and interests.	Elderly Commission with advisors, Ethos	Completed Communication Plan	1	
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> Review and determine communications best practices to better reach our audience.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will conduct and analyze marketing research about the communications preferences of older adults. This will include reviewing national and local trends, as well as understanding best communication practices that other cities employ when informing older residents about resources, services, and activities. Within this review, we will identify strategies that allow us to reach diverse populations. We will honor what is already happening.	Elderly Commission, UMass Boston Gerontology	Research completed and strategies identified	1	
	<b>Action Item B:</b> With the help of the Mayor's Press Team and the Department of Innovation and Technology, we will investigate current and potential uses of communication methods and new technology, taking into account a wide range of technological abilities.	Elderly Commission, Department of Innovation and Technology	1. Investigation completed 2. Ideas included in the Communication Plan	1	
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will review all current external communication methods that exist at the Commission, to understand our own baseline metrics.	Elderly Commission	1. Review completed 2. Baseline measures used in development of Communication Plan	1	
	<b>Action Item D:</b> As part of the Communications strategy, we will identify the most popular sources for news and information and use this knowledge to deepen outreach to neighborhood-based newspapers, cable television, web-based news outlets, church newsletters and bulletins.	Elderly Commission	Compilation of a list with priorities identified for outreach	1	2

DOMAIN: COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION CONTINUED						
RECOMMENDATION	ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	INDICATORS	YEARS		
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> Enhance existing communication channels, using the determined best practices and marketing research, and leveraging community partners to expand reach.	<b>Action Item A:</b> We will develop even more holistic, effective ways to share important information about programs, services and events with older adults, leveraging our community partners.	Elderly Commission with input from Boston's older residents and community partners, Ethos	1. List of partners identified 2. Process for sharing information developed		2	3
	<b>Action Item B:</b> We will develop a marketing piece that lists the most important phone numbers for older residents. This piece of collateral will also carry over to our digital properties on the Boston.gov website and social media.	Led by Elderly Commission - partners include those with phone numbers listed	1. Marketing piece developed 2. Dissemination of marketing piece		2	
	<b>Action Item C:</b> We will build upon our existing communications channels, like social media, Boston Seniority Magazine and the Seniors Count TV show, with an emphasis on creating consistent, engaging content.	Elderly Commission	Enhanced content in Commission's communication channels.	1	2	3
	<b>Action Item D:</b> We will leverage city data to advance equity. The city will pursue a study on 311 services and use the data to serve residents by increasing resident access and awareness, and identifying gaps in service. Working with the City's Language Access Coordinator, 311 data will be centralized with responses and translated into multiple languages to improve accessibility.	311	Updated outreach approach developed for 311 using City data.	1	2	

## APPENDIX C.

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# SPECIAL THANKS TO:

All of the Boston residents who made this Action Plan possible.

## **Age-Friendly Boston Leadership Team:**

UMass Boston Gerontology Institute's Center on Social and Demographic Research on Aging - Jan Mutchler, Hayley Gleason and Caitlin Coyle

AARP Massachusetts - Mike Festa, Kara Cohen, Valerie Spain, Sandra Albright, Robert Haynes

## **Our Funding Partner**

Tufts Health Plan Foundation - Nora Moreno-Cargie

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## **City Partners & Community Organizations:**

60+ Veterans

[AARP Grove Hall Chapter](#)

ABCD Elder Services

[ABCD Mattapan Family Service Center](#)

ABCD North End/West End Neighborhood Service Center

[ABCD Thelma D. Burns Building](#)

All Saints Episcopal Church

[Allston/Brighton Community Development Corporation](#)

B3 Advisory Council

[Beacon Communities](#)

Beacon Hill Village

[Boston Alliance for Community Health](#)

Boston Arts Center (South End)

[Boston Centers for Youth and Families - Curtis Hall](#)

Boston College School of Social Work

[Boston Elder Info.](#)

Boston Housing Authority

[Boston Parks and Recreation](#)

Boston Planning and Development Agency

[Boston Police Department](#)

Boston Public Health Commission

[Boston Public Libraries](#)

Boston Senior Home Care

[Boston Transportation Department and the Vision Zero Taskforce](#)

Bowdoin-Geneva Neighborhood Association

[Bunker Hill Tenant Task Force](#)

Cape Verdean Community Unido

[Cape Verdean Adult Day Health](#)

Cape Verdean Multi-Service Center

[Caregiver Homes of Massachusetts](#)

Castle Square Group

[Cedar Grove Civic Association](#)

Central Boston Elder Services

[Charles Street A.M.E. Church](#)

Charlestown Town Council

[Church of the Holy Spirit](#)

DEAF inc.

[Design for Aging subcommittee of the Boston Society of Architects](#)

The Disabilities Commission

[Dorchester Public Health Group](#)

East Boston Social Center

[Elder Health Care Disparities Coalition](#)

Elder Service Plan Wellness Center, East Boston Neighborhood Health Center

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Ellis South End Neighborhood Association

[Emmanuel Church](#)

Encore Greater Boston Network

[Ethos](#)

Fenway Community Development Corporation

[Foley Senior Residences](#)

Friends of Charlestown Navy Yard

[Friendship Works](#)

Generations, Inc.

[German Centre Senior Place](#)

Goldenaires, Shelburne Community Center

[Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center](#)

Greater Boston Nazarene Compassionate Center, Pastor Zephir

[Grove Hall Community Center](#)

Haitian Multi Service Center

[Healey Park Seniors](#)

Healthy Dorchester, Bowdoin Street Health Center

[Hebrew Senior Life](#)

Highland Park Neighborhood Coalition

[I'm Still Here Foundation](#)

Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción

[IORA Health](#)

Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center

[Jamaica Plain/Egleston Square Elder Network](#)

Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly

[John W. McCormack Civic Association](#)

Julia Martin House

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Kit Clark Senior Services

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LGBT Aging Project

[Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly](#)

Lower Mills Civic Association

[MAB Community Services](#)

Mariner's House (North End)

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Massachusetts Senior Action Council

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[MIT Age Lab](#)

MSPCC Grandparents Group

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Nate Smith House

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Rogerson House, Roslindale

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Roxbury Tenants of Harvard

[Savin Hill Apartments](#)

Senator Linda Dorcea Forry

[Senior Advisory Council for the Commission on Affairs of the Elderly](#)

Seniors on the Move, Roxbury YMCA

[South Boston Neighborhood House](#)

Twelfth Baptist Swingers, Twelfth Baptist Church

[Uphams Corner Elder Services](#)

USDA Jean Mayer Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging

[Veronica B. Smith Senior Center](#)

Vine Street Fishing Club, Vine Street Community Center

[WalkBoston](#)

West Roxbury Business Association

[Zelma Lacey House](#)

## **Special thanks to our neighborhood liaisons:**

Carl and Arnetta Baty

Joanne Prince

[Josephine Bruzzese](#)

[Patti O'Neil](#)

Sandra Harris

Martha McDonough

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## **Photography courtesy of:**

Cassandra Baptista

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**And to the countless other people who have contributed to this plan, we are deeply grateful.**

