AGE & DEMENTIA FRIENDLY 
WEST SPRINGFIELD

Abstract

Draft Community Assessment Plan for Age & Dementia Friendly West Springfield

Age Friendly West Springfield Committee

DRAFT Community Assessment & Action Plan
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Introduction

The West Springfield Age and Dementia Friendly Action Plan was prepared with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, West Springfield Mayor William C. Reichelt and Age Friendly Work Group Members: Sandy Burrows, Carly Camossi, Laurie Cassidy, Jeanne Galloway, Bruce Gendron, Katelyn LaValley, Christopher Lizotte, Antonia Golinski-Foisy, Sarah Long, Hailey MacDonald, Susan McCarthy, Tracey Messina, Sharon Putnam, Thomas Quick and Cindy Romaniak. Additional support was received from: The West Springfield Housing Production Planning Committee, Caring Solutions Home Care, Landmark at Monastery Heights Assisted Living and the following Town Departments: Council on Aging and Board of Directors, Community Development Office, Parks & Recreation, Planning Department, Public Library, Public Health Department, Public Works, Town Council and Veterans Services. In order to compile this report the committee held numerous listening sessions, conducted several surveys and online polls to include residents’ voices.

Age Friendly West Springfield Mission

West Springfield’s Age & Dementia Friendly Mission is to design and implement policies, procedures and services that enhance quality of life; enabling those who live, work and play in our community to do so safely and independently regardless of age, income or ability.

Age & Dementia Friendly West Springfield Plan Implementation and Tracking

The West Springfield Age & Dementia Friendly Plan is a living document. The plan will be in effect upon AARP’s acceptance of the plan, which will remain in effect for the next four years (2020–2024).

The West Springfield Council on Aging will be the lead department responsible for collaborating meetings with Department Heads, local businesses and private citizens who will comprise the Age & Dementia Friendly Work Group. The AFWS Work Group will meet twice per year to monitor progress and track outcomes.

The AFWS Work Group will convene public forums as needed during the plan implementation to garner feedback, advice and suggestions from the public.

Existing known outcomes have been added to this plan and others will be tracked based on efficacy related to each applicable domain’s action item. Additionally, outcomes will be evaluated and updated after each Work Group meeting.
What are Age Friendly Communities?

An age-friendly world enables people of all ages and all abilities to actively and inclusively live and participate in their city or town. It is a change in culture where everyone regardless of age or ability is treated with respect. Age Friendly Communities are places that make it easy for people of all ages to stay connected, involved, active and healthy.1 Many cities and communities across the Commonwealth are in the process of taking steps towards becoming Age Friendly communities.

Globally, the population is aging rapidly. Between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world’s population over 60 years will nearly double, from 12% to 22% (Figure 1). Age Friendly Communities provide opportunities for work and leisure for all residents; enabling people of all ages to actively engage in their community and where everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their age. As the U.S. population ages and people strive to stay healthy and active longer, communities must adapt by providing well-designed, livable communities that promote healthy living as well as economic growth.

While Age Friendly communities are singular, the movement itself is global; launched by the World Health Organization as a way to adjust to the projected global demographic shift to an older population. In 2006, WHO brought together 33 cities in 22 countries to help determine the key elements that support active and healthy aging, forming a basis for the guide: Global Age-Friendly Cities.

In the United States, the Age Friendly Communities program is administered by AARP. In Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative and the Massachusetts chapter of AARP work with local communities to foster involvement in the Age Friendly Network of cities and towns. Currently there are four states, (Massachusetts is one) and 361 communities across the United States that have joined the Age Friendly Network, which represents more than 61 million people.

1 World Health Organization (WHO), 2019
The Progression of Age Friendly Planning in West Springfield

Working cooperatively with AARP’s Age Friendly Communities Network, the director of the West Springfield Council on Aging (COA) provided information to the COA Board on the World Health Organization Checklist of Essential Features of Age Friendly Cities; the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Community Profile for West Springfield and AARP’s Public Policy Institute report on West Springfield’s Livability Score. An application for Age Friendly designation was submitted to the Massachusetts chapter of the AARP, and in November of 2016 Mayor William C. Reichelt received a letter welcoming West Springfield as the 124th community to enroll in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

The AARP’s Age Friendly Network encourages states, counties, cities and towns to prepare for the rapid aging of the U.S. population. Age Friendly planning considers the environmental, economic and social aspects of communities that support residents from the cradle through their older years. In January of 2017 Mayor Reichelt and the Council on Aging hosted a press event to announce West Springfield as part of AARP’s Age Friendly Network (Figure 2).

This Plan was produced for submission to the AARP & World Health Organization as the second step in the AARP Age Friendly Planning Process (Figure 3). Once the Plan has been completed, the Town will begin the process of implementing the improvements, policies and programs outlined in the plan. The process of becoming an Age Friendly community is a dynamic one that will require a continuous cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation, therefore this Plan is expected to change and evolve as the town proceeds with the Action items included in the Plan.

Community Compact

In 2020 the Town of West Springfield will sign the Community Compact Initiative; a document that gives Massachusetts cities and towns the chance to make needed improvements through collaboration with and financial support from the Commonwealth. While signing the compact is
completely voluntary, a signed compact positions West Springfield to receive support and funding to improve upon areas of concern. A ‘Best Practice’ example is: Convene leaders of municipal departments, businesses and local citizen groups to work on reviewing and updating the Age and Dementia Friendly Action Plan; prioritizing age and dementia-friendly efforts for the greater good of the Town’s residents and businesses.

**Dementia Friendly Designation**

According to the 2018 Massachusetts Healthy Aging Community Profile *(Appendix D)* the percentage of persons in West Springfield aged 65+ living with Alzheimer’s Disease was 15.7%, which is greater than the state average of 13.6%.

In conjunction with the AARP Age Friendly designation, West Springfield is planning on applying for designation as a Dementia Friendly Community through Dementia Friendly America. To become a designated Dementia Friendly Community, the Town must sign a pledge and commit to raising awareness about how to work with and accommodate for people with dementia in the community.

Over the past year and a half the COA has been providing educational opportunities for residents, businesses and department heads to learn more about dementia, Alzheimer’s Disease and other related dementias. In October of 2019, the Alzheimer’s Association held a training for municipal staff on how to recognize the signs of people with dementia, including how to address someone who is becoming agitated.

The COA partners with the Wingate at West Springfield Nursing Home to offer the public a free monthly Alzheimer’s Support group, which is held on the last Thursday of each month. The support group meets after hours and provides light suppers, resources and conversation to support those caring for a loved one with Alzheimer’s or other related dementia.

**Community Engagement**

The West Springfield COA received funding from the AARP to copy and distribute AARP Livable Communities Surveys and to hold a series of Listening Sessions to gather community input as part of the process for planning for an Age Friendly Community. The COA contracted with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to assist with compiling survey data and conducting listening sessions. In addition, PVPC included Age Friendly planning in the FY20 Work Plan for the Healthy Hampden Mass in Motion program in which West Springfield has participated since 2016. The Mass in Motion program encourages deep community engagement and involvement of vulnerable populations with the goal of promoting active living and healthy eating in order to prevent chronic diseases. In addition to supplementing the work that was funded through AARP, PVPC used Mass in Motion funding to get input from recent immigrants living in West Springfield. PVPC staff met with representatives from the Refugee Resource Center and Ascentria, two
organizations that work with recent immigrants and refugees, and attended English as a Second Language (ESL) class at Ascentria where, through an interpreter, ESOL students were asked general questions about West Springfield.

**Livable Communities Survey**

The AARP Livable Communities Survey is a comprehensive survey that covers each of the eight domains of livability (see below). Approximately 200 surveys were collected online (through Survey Monkey) or hard copies with results tallied by COA staff and volunteers. PVPC staff then combined the results of the hard copy and electronic surveys and created a summary document of tables and charts to show the survey results in Appendix A. In addition to the input collected through the Listening Sessions, the results of the Livable Communities Survey were used to develop the recommendations included in this Plan.

**Listening Sessions**

Staff from the PVPC conducted a series of seven listening sessions at the West Springfield Senior Center and at the West Springfield Public Library from August through October of 2019. The first two listening sessions included a general presentation on the Age Friendly planning process and Eight Domains of Livability while the remaining five sessions were based on one or two of the Domains of Livability. Municipal staff from various departments and organizations that work in some of the domain areas were in attendance at each of the Listening Sessions. Several of the presentations were filmed by the West Springfield local access television station. Attendance at the Listening Sessions ranged from no attendees (at the second General session) to ten people. Each session began with a presentation, and then attendees were asked a few general questions about the assets and needs for making West Springfield a more livable community in the context of an aging population. Finally, attendees were given two dots each to vote on priority needs. Green dots represented the most urgent needs while blue dots represent future needs. Notes from the Listening Sessions and the compilation of priorities from all of the Listening Sessions are included in Appendix B.

**The Commonwealth’s Age Friendly Plan**

In January 2018 Governor Charles Baker enrolled in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities; becoming the third state in the Nation to embrace AARP’s motto to reimagine life (Figure 4) by becoming an Age Friendly State. The Commonwealth’s Age Friendly Plan seeks to “amplify, align, and coordinate local, regional, and statewide efforts to create a welcoming and livable Commonwealth as residents grow up and grow older together.” West Springfield embraces the Governor’s vision and seeks to craft a plan that pairs with the Commonwealth of
Massachusetts’ vision to create programs, services and improvements so that our community is one where everyone who lives, works, visits or plays in West Springfield can thrive.

A Brief History of West Springfield

West Springfield, MA is a city known as the Town of West Springfield. Settled in 1635 and located in Hampden County, the city is also known as "West Side," referring to its location in relation to the Connecticut River and Springfield, MA from which West Springfield originated. West Springfield’s natural character, recreational resources, and close-knit community atmosphere defines the city as does its proximity to Interstates 91 & 90 (the Mass Turnpike), Routes 5, 20 and 147, which offer direct and easy access to work, culture, theater, mountains, lakes and beaches. West Springfield is approximately 30 miles to Hartford, Connecticut, 90 miles to Boston or Albany and 150 miles from New York City. The closest airport, Bradley International Airport, is located in Windsor Locks, CT. Unique to West Springfield is its mix of small neighborhoods:

- Amostown
- Bear Hole
- Center
- Memorial
- Merrick
- Mittineague
- Riverdale
- Tatham

The Federal Census in 2010 recorded 28,391 residents living in West Springfield with more than 6,000 adults 60 years of age and older – almost 25% of the total population. West Springfield offers residents the benefits of small town living while still being convenient to major highways, larger city destinations, job opportunities, transportation, entertainment, and recreation. These desirable attributes of West Springfield have led to increased pressure to develop the remaining open land for housing, placing a heavier burden upon the City for additional services especially for youth and older adults to learn, grow and recreate.

West Springfield, while not very large, boasts it is home to the following:

- The birthplace of the first Morgan horse;
- The Eastern States Exposition, known as “The Big E,” (the 5th largest agricultural fair in the U.S.);
- The Josiah Day House, the oldest known brick salt-box style home in the United States;
- Storrowton Village, an authentic recreated village of 18th and 19th century building assembled around a traditional town green;
- A 351 Megawatt gas fired electric power plant;
- The largest rail yard in southern New England consisting of 240 acres;

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• Mittineague Park and Bear Hole Reservoir;
• Newly Renovated High School;
• Newly Renovated Public Library; and,
• Soon, construction of Coburn Elementary School.

The West Springfield Council on Aging’s Senior Center is located within the historic Ramapogue District on Park Street, just a block from the Josiah Day House. Also within the Ramapogue District are several other notable sites: the Union Street Cemetery, which is the town’s oldest cemetery, established in 1711, and the Park Street Cemetery established in 1758.

Open Space and Recreation Facilities

The most recent Open Space and Recreation Plan was completed by the Parks and Recreation Department in the winter of 2015. The purpose of this Plan is to prioritize open space areas for protection and improvement, and to prioritize resources for the maintenance and improvement of current and future recreation areas. The Parks & Recreation Department offers organized youth sports all year long, maintains three Town pools, and manages several parks for recreational activities. These include Mittineague Park, Cooks Field and Playground, Corson Park, Veteran’s Park, and recreational facilities associated with the West Springfield Middle and High Schools; Fausey, Ashley, Memorial, Mittineague and Coburn elementary schools; and the Town Common and Elm Street Common. In addition, the Bear Hole Reserve, originally serving as an aquifer protection area, is increasingly being used as an important recreational resource and offers a large network of nature trails.

In the Spring of 2019, a new two-mile bicycle and walking path opened along the Connecticut River. This path (Figure 5) is accessible for people walking and in wheel chares, and can be accessed from Route 5. This path is in keeping with the 2017 Massachusetts SCORP report that calls for the development of more multi-use trails.

The Council on Aging offers many low to no cost fitness options in its Center located at 128 Park Street: a free fitness center, tai chi, yoga & chair yoga, dance classes, etc. In conjunction with the West Springfield Department of Public Works and the Housing Authority, the COA also offers organized walks in town parks and in neighborhoods close to Housing Authority properties in an effort to promote physical activity and socialization.

Figure 5 – Connecticut River Shared Use Trail
Refugees and Recent Immigrants

West Springfield is home to a mix of many refugee and immigrant populations with more than 30 spoken languages in our community. To address many of the refugee and immigrant concerns the Town of West Springfield offers support through the West Springfield Refugee Resource Center located at 389 Main Street. Currently (as of 2019), this resource is staffed by a volunteer one day a week.

The Ascentria Care Alliance, a nonprofit organization that helps to assimilate refugees and recent immigrants, is located at 425 Union Street and provides the following services:

- Benefits Assistance
- Citizenship Classes
- Education & Empowerment
- Employment Assistance
- Housing Assistance
- Low Cost Immigration Services
- Workshops & Trainings

The Refugee Center plans to offer future services for the public including: Citizenship and Civic Classes and a Summer Art Class for youth. These services are critical to facilitating the assimilation of new Americans, refugees and immigrants into the West Springfield community. This is important in an Age Friendly Community as many refugees and immigrants are dealing with language barriers and culture change, which benefits families seeking assistance, often expediting resolution of issues.

Community and Health Services Domain

Mental health and well-being are as important in older age as at any other time of life. Mental and neurological disorders among older adults account for 6.6% of the total disability (DALYs) for this age group. Approximately 15% of adults aged 60 and over suffer from a mental disorders\(^2\).

The Town’s Public Health Department provides some medical services as well as environmental and administrative services to the residents, visitors and businesses. The services provided include inspections of licensed facilities, investigation of complaints on a variety of topics, communicable disease investigations and management, Tuberculosis skin testing and disease case management, sharps disposal, seasonal influenza vaccinations, and emergency preparedness and response.

\(^2\) (“Mental health of older adults”, 2019)
The Eight Domains of Livability

The World Health Organization developed a model for assessing communities for their ability to support an aging population that includes eight domains of livability (Figure 6). This model includes elements of both the physical and social environments that are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous as they age. A brief description of each domain is included below along with an Action Plan with recommendations broken out by Domain area. The Age Friendly Work Committee chose to prioritize the following domains for this Plan: Community and Health Services, Housing, Outdoor Spaces, Social Participation, and Transportation. The remaining domains – Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, and Communication and Information – have also been included in this Plan with recommendations based on community input gathered from the survey and Listening Sessions.

The Health Department participates in city wide and regional programs such as the CARE Coalition, Mass in Motion, the Hampden County Addiction Task Force, the Hampden County Health Coalition, the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council, Region 1 Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition, and the Hampden County Health Improvement Plan. Each of these programs provides valuable training, assets, and resources to the City.

The CARE Coalition is a group of individuals representing public and

Figure 6 - WHO's Eight Domains of Livability

Figure 7 - West Springfield CARE Coalition
private entities (see Figure 7) who are focused on reducing alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among the youth of West Springfield. The health department has been a member of the coalition since its inception and has assisted with support through staff time, sharing of messaging via social media, and the acquisition of summer interns. The Coalition has recently received a long term grant through the Drug Free Communities program. This grant will fund a full-time staff position and will increase the outreach and education events the Coalition conducts.

The Mass in Motion program is run in conjunction with the Town of Palmer through the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission with funding from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (Mass DPH). The purpose of the program is to promote active living and healthy eating as a means for preventing chronic diseases. The West Springfield Mass In Motion activities have included walking map development and distribution, corner store study, food desert study, safe routes to school, a health chapter for the Town’s Master Plan, a health addendum for the Housing Production Plan, a Park Access Study. The current focus of the Mass In Motion program in West Springfield is providing assistance to gather community input on the Town’s Age and Dementia Friendly Planning and working with All Farmers to provide permanent farmland for refugee farmers so that they can provide their families and community with culturally appropriate fresh produce.

Participation in the Hampden County Addiction Task Force has connected the town to a group of professionals who conduct outreach to individuals and families impacted by a recent overdose. This program is being conducted in West Springfield primarily at the direction of the Police Department. The health department has obtained special drug mail back packages for distribution during these outreach efforts.

The remaining listed organizations are focused on emergency preparedness and response activities. They vary in scope and size from county based public health to Western Massachusetts wide activities that involve police, fire, corrections, hospitals, public works, transportation, corrections, EMS and other agencies. Each group has worked on such topics as emergency dispensing sites, family reunification, mass evacuation, technical rescue, hazardous materials response, and a myriad of other discipline specific activities.

Redefining healthcare are new services such as on demand care, which offers in-home and at-work mobile healthcare. This new type of healthcare serves to create an integrated, convenient, high-touch triage and care delivery solution that extends the capabilities of a patient’s care team by offering quality medical treatment not only in a person’s home, but at their workplace or other designated place. Older adults often suffer from acute medical conditions that do not warrant a trip to the emergency department (ED). When these acute but not necessarily ED-worthy conditions occur during off-hours, lack of appointment availability with their primary care, or the
inability to leave their homes due to transportation or mobility issues, this service offers a better solution for care.

So how does it work? A consumer calls to request medical care from the mobile health provider who screens the request and assigns a level of risk to patient. A care team is dispatched to the person’s home, work or other location. The team consists of Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant and a medical tech who then treats the condition or illness and then reviews care instructions with the person being treated. The care team then provides a report to the person’s Primary Care Provider. While in the patient’s home they can also determine impediments of care such as fall hazards, nutritional status, and medication compliance. This is a unique glimpse into a patient’s living situation and provides the team with vital information to get the patient the right social resources to improve overall health.

**Housing Domain**

The City of West Springfield identified the need to produce additional affordable housing. Currently, approximately 4% of its year-round housing stock is affordable. According to the Commonwealth’s Department of Housing and Community Development, there are 440 affordable units available for low income households. Yet, within the Greater Springfield area, there are over 35,000 elderly households with income at or below 50% AMI. Of these households, nearly 60% experience a housing cost burden; that is, the household expends more than 30% of their income on housing costs alone. Half of these cost burdened elders (over 10,000 households) expending more than 50% of their income on housing costs.

Additionally, much of the housing stock in the Northeast lacks any of the five universal design features that can help make housing safer for elders. These five design elements include single family living, no step entry, extra wide hallways, accessible electric controls, and level style handles on doors. In West Springfield, less than 27% of the housing stock is single level.

National Housing Policies and programs have underestimated this profound change in demographics. Households of persons 85 years and older are the nation’s fastest growing demographic, yet on a federal level the only housing production program that exclusively targeted elders, the Section 202 program, has not been funded since 2011.

The Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) released a report entitled “Healthy Aging Begins at Home” that asserts that “Over the next 15 years, the explosive growth of the nation’s senior population will present unprecedented challenges with millions of Americans lacking enough savings to fund their retirements. The BPC Report states further in its recommendations that the “First order of

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business is seeking a greater integration of health care and housing, an essential step if the nation is to ensure that limited federal dollars are wisely spent and seniors are effectively served.”

The Sisters of Providence are collaborating with the City of West Springfield to meet the needs of low-income elders through the development of Hillside Residence. The goal of the Hillside Residence project (Figure 8) is not only to address the need for affordable elder housing in West Springfield, Massachusetts, but also to offer a continuum of health, psycho-social, and supportive services to lower income seniors that can serve as a model for other initiatives. The project proposes to demonstrate the benefits gained through integration of Hillside Residence’s affordable elder housing with a Mercy LIFE (PACE) program on this single campus.

**Outdoor Space and Buildings Domain**

The Domain for Outdoor Spaces and Buildings was selected for its importance related to gathering places for the community, which is important for people of all ages and all abilities. This domain focuses on parks, sidewalks, accessible buildings, community gardens, outdoor playscapes, etc.

West Springfield’s parks, playing fields and open spaces (Figure 9) offer a wide variety of opportunities for outdoor enjoyment, including: Mittineague Park, Veterans Park, Cook’s Field, Memorial Field, Coburn Field, Bear Hole Reservoir, Tom’s Launch, West Springfield Bike Path, Town Common, Elm Street Common, Alice Corson Park, Ohio Ave Park, Old Tatham field, as well as school playgrounds, John Ashley, Fausey School, High School, Middle School, Mittineague School, Memorial School and Tatham School.

West Springfield is a developed community with limited undeveloped land. West Springfield regulates development primarily through its Subdivision Rules and Regulations and the Zoning Ordinance. In addition, overlay districts have been defined to further protect natural resources including rivers, water supplies, and floodplain. Development requirements include: storm water management and landscaped buffers. Development is further regulated by state requirements such as building codes that are enforced at the local level.
Smart growth is a term for a planned system of community growth that balances economic development with environmental protection and social wellbeing. The goal of smart growth management is to create a unique sense of place (i.e., community character) by:

- Expanding the range of transportation, employment, and housing choices;
- Equitably distributing the costs and benefits of development;
- Preserving and enhancing natural and cultural resources;
- Encouraging people to live within walking distance to where they work, shop;
- Minimizing impervious surfaces;
- Encouraging walkable communities;
- Designing new buildings to fit within neighborhood character;
- Re-using brownfields and existing structures; and,
- Reducing light pollution.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has developed the following set of ten “Sustainable Development Principles,” which taken into consideration pair well with the philosophy of the Age Friendly movement:

1. Concentrate development and mix uses
2. Advance equity
3. Make efficient decisions
4. Protect land and ecosystems
5. Use natural resources wisely
6. Expand housing opportunities
7. Provide transportation choices
8. Increase job and business opportunities
9. Promote clean energy
10. Plan regionally
Through a Mini Grant from the Mass in Motion program and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the PVPC will be reviewing West Springfield’s land use regulations in the Spring of 2020 to make recommendations for changes that would promote a healthier living environment, specifically for older adults and people with disabilities.

**Public Buildings**

In addition to parks, sidewalks and open spaces, public buildings are places where people can gather. The Council on Aging provides a space for older adults to gather during the day, providing services and programming for a wide variety of interests. The West Springfield Public Library is another building in West Springfield that is actively promoting an Age Friendly environment by providing materials, programming and information applicable to all ages. Computer classes promote literacy and competency with new technologies. Programming funded by the Friends of the Library promotes intergenerational focus and harmony and includes musical performances as well as story hours and summer reading programs. The Library makes use of social media and other modern mainstream venues such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, email notifications, in-house television monitor, Channel 15 as well as traditional paper flyers, pamphlets, posters, which are posted on our community board located in the library’s vestibule. Meeting rooms accommodate events for organizations affiliated with various ages and needs and is handicapped accessible with furniture designed to easily sit and rise by use of chairs with arms. The library is adding a bench to the vestibule for people to sit while waiting for their ride to pick them up, another bench will soon be placed near the Borrower Services desk should a long queue develop while waiting to check out materials. And for those independent individuals who want a little autonomy, there are self-check kiosks that are easy to use. We have a beautiful elevator that everyone loves to ride.

WSPL materials collections is made up of all formats, including Large Print books (hardcover and paperback) regular print, newspapers, magazines, audio books, books on CD, DVDs, and CDs. Additionally, there are downloadable titles (Ebooks) for various E-readers (Nook, Kindle, Kobo etc.). The Library is expanding and upgrading collections in many different languages to appeal to the more than 30 languages spoken in our community. Signage in the library is large and in color. Signs for public restrooms also feature the universal symbol/image that are easily identifiable for most, even children. Finally, the Library is cataloging puzzles for the public to borrow as well as use in-house, but the most Age Friendly aspect of the Library is the staff greeting users with kindness, patience, respect, and speaking clearly. Accepting people just the way they are is a great step in normalizing every age and ability.

West Springfield uses these recommendations as guiding principles for managing, maintaining and improving the city for generations to come.
Social Participation and Civic Engagement Domain

Social participation is important for residents of all ages, but particularly for older adults who may have lost a partner or the ability to drive. Civic engagement is one way for residents to participate in the policies and programs that affect the town where they live. Residents are encouraged to participate in local government by volunteering to work on boards, committees and ad hoc committees. The Town of West Springfield currently has a variety of methods for encouraging social participation among its residents. Residents often find socialization in targeted groups through religion at the local mosque and churches, children’s play spaces at the Boys & Girls Club and schools, with older adults at the Senior Center, and day programs for exceptional adults. There are also social clubs open to residents such as the Irish Cultural Center, Dante Club, American Legion, and Tatham Social Club that require a membership club. All residents can stay physically active through athletic leagues sponsored by the Town, local churches, the Boys & Girls Club, and other privately-run leagues. Fees for these leagues vary, running from free (proof of hardship required) to high-costs for privately-run leagues. Outdoors spaces like Mittineague Park and Bear Hole offer the general public a chance to gather and enjoy nature with others. Finally, there are large-scale events open to the public, both free and fee-based, such as the Big E, various travel clubs, theaters, and shopping outlets.

Participation in person has been affected as people have fewer children (promoting engagement with the school community) and as social media has become a larger and easier method of participation. Internet usage continues to increase in society and offers a way for individuals of all ages and abilities to participate in discussion, electronic events, and remain up-to-date on community news. In addition, websites allow information on various events and resources to be disseminated to individuals who may not otherwise be aware of them.

Participation in each type of category requires ways and means. In West Springfield, in-person socialization is facilitated through private cars, public transportation (PVTA, COA Van), and walking, biking, etc. along good sidewalks. The ability to participate in some events, not all, requires financial stability for the individual or grant/sponsorship to reduce or eliminate costs for participants. Participation in electronic socialization requires technological equipment and internet access. Both methods require a common language to be spoken or read between
individuals and a cultural tolerance. Immigrants continue to join the West Springfield community and often, being first-generation Americans, they do not speak English which is the language spoken at most public gatherings. As a result, social participation tends to be divided among ethnic groups. West Springfield is a community with many languages spoken. At the present time there are more than 30 languages spoken! Because there are so many languages spoken language barriers do exist.

**Transportation Domain**

As one ages transportation issues become increasingly more difficult and ever more important. Persons with mobility limitations of any age also have difficulty with safe and accessible transportation. This past fall the Council on Aging conducted a comprehensive review of the available transportation options in and around the West Springfield area. This outcome of this review revealed older adults who were no longer able to drive had available options that promoted autonomy and independence. The review included public, private and alternative transportation services. However, the review also noted transportation options were in some cases expensive so residents without financial resources are impacted more.

With more drivers, pedestrians and cyclists it is imperative cities and towns seek to keep roadways, walkways and bike paths safe for all. The adoption of Complete Streets Policies in West Springfield safeguards projects and designs are planned, designed and implemented to ensure safe and comfortable multimodal transportation (auto, bike, pedestrian, etc.).

The Council on Aging operates an eight-passenger handicapped accessible van for travel in and around West Springfield for nominal costs; fifty cents one way in Town each way and a dollar out of Town each way. The service is accessible, affordable, and efficient; providing older residents autonomy, independence, self-sufficiency and ability to fully participate in their community.

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority operates both fixed route bus service in Town as well as Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Service provides a shared-ride, door-to-door van transportation for individuals with disabilities that prevent them from riding the city bus service. PVTA provides paratransit service throughout the Pioneer Valley within 3/4 mile of a bus route.

Several survey respondents stated while private companies do provide transportation services in and around West Springfield, these services can be expensive for low income households.

**Respect and Social Inclusion Domain**

Age Friendly communities must be welcoming to all. West Springfield values and respects all our citizens. With over 30 languages spoken in our community we strive for inclusivity in all we do as a community; community participation is promoted at every level of government, boards, commissions and committees.
The Bridges Together is one example of how impactful this intergenerational program is and how important it is as an example of reducing ageism in our society. Older adult volunteers are trained to work alongside teachers, paraprofessionals students in the public school system.

The high school’s Gay Straight Alliance is a student run organization that functions to promote a safe school for all students. In addition, the club serves as resource for LGBT youth and the high school community.

*Figure 10: West Springfield High School, "Get Involved"*
# Domain Action Plans

## Civic Engagement Action Plan

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Lead</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase Awareness of Hiring Older Adult Workers</td>
<td>Council on Aging Human Resources</td>
<td>Held 50+ Job Fairs to promote flexible jobseekers, second careers; Partnered with AARP on Age related job fair; Safeguard hiring practices and standards that prohibit discrimination.</td>
<td>2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster ‘Age Friendly’ attitude within Town</td>
<td>Human Resources Council on Aging Mayor’s Office Town Attorney</td>
<td>Policies and procedures promote inclusion of all ages and abilities as well as anti-discrimination, anti-bullying and anti-harassment. Routine trainings support policies and procedures.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote trainings for older adults, youth</td>
<td>Library, Council on Aging W.S. Schools</td>
<td>Intergenerational trainings offered on smartphones, computers. School job fairs include careers in aging services.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote opportunities for citizens to participate in government</td>
<td>Mayor’s Office Department Heads</td>
<td>Post positions available; Educate public via Facebook community forums and public access channel. Publicize vacancies in local press.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase public input, feedback and suggestions</td>
<td>Mayor’s Office, Town Departments</td>
<td>Solicit public feedback via surveys, questionnaires on Facebook; Solicit public feedback via surveys, questionnaires on website; Solicit public feedback via suggestion boxes, email, phone calls, Mayor’s open office hours.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide excellent customer service</td>
<td>Mayor’s Office, Town Departments</td>
<td>Train front line staff on customer service; Respond to inquiries in timely fashion; Provide resources when/where appropriate Take time with those who need one-on-one assistance.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catalog existing and available community, social services and health services.</td>
<td>Community Development Office Mayor’s Office</td>
<td>Created Town Resource Guide listing all available community, social services and health services.</td>
<td>2019</td>
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<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> Successful outcome publishing &amp; sharing resource guide with Department Heads and the public at large</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitate collaboration with community service providers to establish safety nets for at-risk clients.</td>
<td>Council on Aging Health Department Library Veterans Office</td>
<td>Explore mental health services and options for at risk clients; Collaborate with local Housing Authority to provide additional health services to at-risk clients’ Collaborate with local mental health providers to expand knowledge of mental health services for at-risk clients. Collaborate with local company, ‘Dispatch’ to provide at-risk clients for in-home medical services when/where needed; Collaborate with local nursing home to provide Alzheimer Support Group at the Council on Aging; Collaborate with local assisted living facility to promote aging resources.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educate consumers, Department Heads and elected officials on the needs of vulnerable</td>
<td>Emergency Planning Committee Members, Council on Aging</td>
<td>Participation on Emergency Preparedness Meetings to advocate for vulnerable populations; Educate at-risk consumers on emergency preparedness.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educate consumers on communicable health concerns.</td>
<td>Health Department Mayor’s Office</td>
<td>Alert public on flu precautions. Alert public on Equine Encephalitis when applicable. Alert public on mosquito breeding when applicable.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educate and promote active living and healthy eating.</td>
<td>Mass In Motion, Council on Aging, Park &amp; Recreation, WS Schools</td>
<td>Offer recreational programs to promote active living and healthy lifestyles to help prevent chronic disease. Offer educational programs to promote active living and healthy lifestyles to help prevent chronic disease. Offer nutritionally balanced meals in WS Schools and WS Council on Aging.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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## Outdoor Space & Buildings Action Plan

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<td>Create trails, parks and bikeways that are age friendly.</td>
<td>DPW, Planning, Parks &amp; Rec., Central Maintenance, Mayor’s Office</td>
<td>Created Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway; Created raised garden beds in Mittineague Park; Updated trails in Mittineague Park; Irish Cultural Center created an all-inclusive trail and bike path. Encourage public to take advantage of available free trails, parks, bikeways.</td>
<td>2019 2018 2019 2019 Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve existing recreational facilities &amp; park lands to provide safe recreational opportunities for all residents. Walking trails, benches, picnic tables and restrooms should be designed to accommodate all users including people in wheelchairs and people with strollers.</td>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation, Central Maintenance</td>
<td>Review recreational buildings and facilities. Held Focus Group on 5/21/19 to get feedback on how adults and people with disabilities use parks and access parks. Information is provided in a manner that is accessible. Outcome: Focus Group provided relevant info to assist in the development of land use plan.</td>
<td>Ongoing 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop partnerships between schools and older adults to participate in maintaining school gardens</td>
<td>COA, WS School Dept.</td>
<td>Recruit volunteers to assist with tending gardens at Fausey Elementary School</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>Explore the possibility of opening school gymnasiums to the public during hours when they are not used by the schools to encourage exercise by residents of all ages.</td>
<td>WS School Dept. Park &amp; Rec.</td>
<td>Publicize opportunities to utilize public buildings and outdoor space to promote healthy living lifestyles.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target vacant, abandoned or blighted structures for commercial and/or residential redevelopment. Include universal design requirements in all publicly funded projects.</td>
<td>Mayor’s Office, Blight Task Force, Building Dept. Town Attorney</td>
<td>Removed and returned to viable property 17 derelict properties.</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create opportunities for older adults to engage with young people.</td>
<td>Council on Aging (COA)</td>
<td>Promote Bridges Together Program Schedule Intergenerational Programming in the COA</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire young people about the possibility of entering careers with older adults.</td>
<td>School Dept. COA</td>
<td>Include information on Gerontology at Career Fairs Offer local college and university internship opportunities</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>Empower older adults to become advocates and champions for younger people, improving their lives and experiences while stopping ageism against them.</td>
<td>COA</td>
<td>Promote Bridges Together Program, which pairs older adult trained volunteers to work with students and teachers in elementary schools in Town. Promote and encourage older adults to read to kindergarten youth during school sessions.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider changing the name of the ‘Senior Center’ to reduce ageism.</td>
<td>Mayor, COA</td>
<td>Survey residents about name changes to reduce and eliminate stigma associated with the word ‘senior.’ Outcome: There were many positive comments about renaming the Center, which are being taken into consideration. The Center will be working with the High School Art Dept. to create sample logos.</td>
<td>2019, Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer internships for local colleges and universities.</td>
<td>Council on Aging Health Dept., Library Veterans Office</td>
<td>Provide internship opportunities for local nursing, social service students to promote aging services as a profession.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Host public forums on LGBTQ, Drug Awareness, Vaping, Smoking and other public health concerns.</td>
<td>Mayor’s Office, W.S. Schools, Library, Health Dept., Council on Aging</td>
<td>CARE Coalition hosted public health forums on alcohol awareness, drug use.</td>
<td>2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote and encourage participation in the High School’s Gay Straight Alliance.</td>
<td>W.S. Schools, Mayor’s Office, Departments</td>
<td>Gay Straight Alliance is a student run organization that functions to promote a safe school environment and serves as resource for LGBT youth.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote community awareness of Dementia and other related cognitive impairments.</td>
<td>Council on Aging, Mayor’s Office, Town Council</td>
<td>Provide educational opportunities to learn about Alzheimer’s Disease and other related dementias. Sign Dementia Friendly paperwork from Dementia Friendly Massachusetts</td>
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<td>Implement complete streets policies when completing road improvements</td>
<td>DPW</td>
<td>Dept. of Public Works reviews projects to make sure it meets the spirit of the complete streets policy.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implement and enforce traffic calming measures.</td>
<td>Mayor, DPW, Traffic Safety Committee, Town Council</td>
<td>Traffic calming measures involve multiple departments.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase walkability in the Union and Main Street corridor of West Springfield</td>
<td>DPW</td>
<td>Systematically fund pedestrian walkability improvements through multi-year processes.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study available local transportation companies.</td>
<td>Council on Aging</td>
<td>Held meeting with local transportation companies to find out about their services and specialties. Compiled list of local resources to share with constituents when needed/necessary. Outcome: Positive feedback provided. Received sufficient information to create an internal resource directory for local Transportation Services.</td>
<td>2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educate and inform consumers about on-demand transportation options.</td>
<td>Council on Aging, Library</td>
<td>Offer technical assistance with resources/software applications (local taxi services, local hospital transportation services, Uber, Lyft, etc.)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>Sidewalks, public parking around public buildings are maintained to reduce trip hazards, encourage walking.</td>
<td>DPW, Planning, Mayor’s Office</td>
<td>Town Municipal Lot repaved with upgraded crosswalks. Outcome: Improved walkability at Municipal Town Hall, Police Dept. and School Dept.</td>
<td>2019</td>
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