

**State:** Massachusetts

**Community Name:** Sunderland

**Population Size:** 3659

**Percentage of Residents Above Age 60:** 16

**Community Structure:** Town

**Other:**

**Community Type:** Rural

**Elected Official Signing the Letter of Commitment Name:**

**Title:**

**Office Mailing Address:**

**Community Contact Name:**

**Email:**

**Position:**

**Telephone:**

**Role:**

While one person is listed as the primary Community contact for communication purposes, the development of Sunderland as an AARP Age Friendly Community is a collaborative effort of all of our COA members. Our Primary Community Contact, (currently [REDACTED]) will oversee the development and utilization of communication tools to solicit widespread community input in identifying wants and needs, to develop appropriate projects to meet those needs, and to ensure the continued growth of Sunderland as an Age Friendly Community. This will involve staying in touch with existing established groups (Sunderland Women's Club and other Civic groups), local service partners (South County Senior Center, TRIAD, Valley Neighbors, Deerfield & Whately COAs), and professional partners providing services to Elders in our area (Area Agency on Aging, Commonwealth Aging Services Access Point (ASAP)). This individual will also be responsible for making sure developments and progress is communicated to our Town Government (Town Administrator & Selectboard).

**Older Adult Involvement:**

Quite simply, they will have a seat at the table. They must be directly involved. We need to encourage their participation in the processes and solicit their opinions on what they want and how all stakeholders can work together to make changes & improvements happen. One of our biggest challenges, however, in engaging with

older adults in our age-friendly efforts are avenues of communication. We need to learn what forms and sources our elders, (and the community at large) utilize to stay informed. How do we reach them? Infrastructure, software, and surveys all carry costs that are not a part of our limited COA or even Town budget so we look forward to AARP's guidance and help in developing and implementing dynamic needs assessment tool(s) which will provide ongoing help in gathering information and developing action plans with constant feedback from targeted groups. In the meantime, we will launch a targeted outreach campaign using avenues already available to us, including: (a) The Sunderland Public Library, a community hub well utilized by our elders. (b) A scheduled on-site COA presence at our Town Hall and the new Senior Housing Complex when complete (which because of its location in town center, will serve as another hub for outreach and informational services). (c) the development of a Sunderland Newsletter with multiple distribution avenues will provide a communication pathway from town governance to all community members. (d) Engaging and educating other established Town boards and committees about our Age-Friendly initiatives. (e) Eventually increasing our presence throughout the town by taking advantage of social media (we have been limited to date by lack of technical expertise).

**Increasing  
Collaboration and  
Coordination:**

We will build on the established partnerships noted above -- LifePath, Inc., the South County Senior Center, Valley Neighbors, and TRIAD, seeking their expertise and engaging their assistance in ensuring that Sunderland elders are well-served. We will continue to meet and collaborate with our tri-town consortium, sharing perspectives and problem-solving common issues. We have already begun interdepartmental collaboration between the Council on Aging and other Sunderland departments and committees and anticipate furthering that effort by improving COA visibility within town governance and throughout the town at large. Our Town Administrator is committed to this effort and his guidance has been, and will continue to be, critical to our success. However, becoming an age-friendly community is an all-encompassing endeavor, an endeavor that includes all town residents and which mandates not just structural changes but changes in our awareness and perception of what it means to be an older individual living in an underserved and widely dispersed area. In order to become the all-inclusive community we envision ? a community which engages all residents and promotes inter-generational understanding and appreciation ? then all of our Age-Friendly initiatives will of necessity involve not just our residents, community agencies and departments, but our businesses, our churches, our postal services, our social clubs and, of course, the myriad of informal networks which bind our neighborhoods together.

**AARP Team  
Member Contact  
Info:**

N/A

**Most Instructive  
Area of Work:**

While every community is different demographically and culturally, the simple act of sharing problems, proposed solutions, and outcomes can stimulate thoughtful discussion and enlightened approaches to shared issues and concerns. Sharing our problem-solving approaches to and solutions for some of our most pressing problems, identifying an effective communication modality among rural community elders, addressing critical transportation needs in a rural community, enhancing community through accepted and accessible intergenerational events could be helpful to other rural communities. Certainly our experiences with opening a new Senior Housing Complex and addressing the needs specific to that population might be of benefit to other communities who are undertaking such an initiative. Our anticipated efforts to more broadly engage elders in town governance might resonate with and be helpful to other rural communities. Our experiences of building up from the ground level, that is, with a new Council on Aging addressing multiple issues in a widely dispersed and resource poor community, might also encourage and prove helpful to communities in similar situations.

**Optional  
Resolution:**

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**Logo or Image:**

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**Website:**

[www.townofsunderland.us](http://www.townofsunderland.us)

**Twitter 2:**

N/A

**Facebook 1:**

N/A

**Facebook 2:**

N/A

**Additional Social  
Media:**

N/A