THE 8 DOMAINS OF LIVEABILITY: MARION’S ACTION PLAN

as Recommended for Inclusion in Town’s Master Plan

Submitted by AARP-AFCI Working Group

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INTRODUCTION

HISTORY: Marion is a town of nearly 6000 in Plymouth County. It is located on the Southcoast of MA with a large harbor that sits on the West shore of Buzzards Bay. When first settled in 1679, it was called Sippican and was part of Rochester, MA along with the settlement of Mattapoisett¹. Sippican is also the name of the river that passes through a segment of the town as well as the name of the local Indian tribe, part of the larger Wampanoag tribe. As the original settlements grew, so did tensions between the three settlements. In 1852, Sippican became a separate town and chose the name Marion in honor of General Francis Marion, a Revolutionary War hero².

In the 1800’s Marion was populated by sea captains and sailors who plied the seas in service to the whaling industry until the later 1800’s when oil was discovered in Pennsylvania and began to be “harvested” from the land and not the sea. The town endured a period of decline until Elizabeth Taber returned to Marion a wealthy widow and established the Elizabeth Taber library and the Natural History Museum as well as the Music Hall and the Marion Town Hall. In 1876 she funded Tabor Academy, a private preparatory school and thus contributed greatly to the education, culture and civic enhancement of the town.

In the 1880’s Marion, with its beautiful harbor and access to Buzzard’s Bay, became a mecca to the rich and famous who built large, beautiful summer homes along the waterfront. An era of tourism began with the building of two large hotels as well as with recreational boating and fishing.

INDUSTRY: Today Marion has a small industrial base that exists mostly in a small industrial park along Route 6. There is also a marine industry presence with two large boat yards providing moorings, dockage and boat maintenance and repair services. Recently Lockheed Martin, formerly the Sippican Corporation, and the largest employer in town announced that it would be moving the Marion unit to the Carolinas.

DEMOGRAPHICS: Marion is an aging community. The 60-plus retirement age population has increased from 22.7% in 2000 to 34.7% in 2019. At the same time, elementary school enrollment has decreased by 16%. 13% of residents are 60-69 and 13% of residents are less than 60 years of age according to the 2019 census.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/Marion%2C-Massachusetts
² https://en.wikipedia.org/Marion%2C-Massachusetts
80% of Marion housing is single-family and generally owner-occupied. Marion has few condominiums and the majority of rental units are for low-income eligible households. With another 40B project on the books, Marion will reach the state-mandated figure of 10% for low-income housing.

AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES: In the United States AARP, as an institutional affiliate of the World Health Organization’s Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, oversees the Age-Friendly initiative. AARP helps participating communities become places where one might age in place because towns and cities have made changes that enhance the eight domains of livability that contribute to making a community age-friendly. AARP provides workbooks, seminars, grants and advice to communities involved in the process.

THE EIGHT DOMAINS of LIVABILITY: Age-friendly communities aim to make improvements in the eight domains that influence the health, satisfaction, well-being and quality of life of older adults. The Eight Domains are:

1. Outside Space and Buildings – Availability of safe and accessible recreational facilities.

2. Transportation – Safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation.

3. Housing – Availability of home modification programs for aging in place as well as a range of age-friendly housing options.

4. Social Participation – Access to leisure and cultural activities, including opportunities for older residents to socialize and engage with their peers as well as younger people.

5. Respect and Social Inclusion – Programs that promote ethnic and cultural diversity as well as multigenerational interaction and dialogue.

6. Civic Participation and Employment – Paid work and volunteer activities for older residents and opportunities to engage in the formation of policies relevant to their lives.

7. Communication and Employment – Access to communications technology and other resources so older residents can connect with their community, friends and family.

8. Community Support and Health Services – Access to home-based care services, health clinics and programs that promote wellness and active aging.
Genesis: The Age-Friendly Committee came to be when Christine Sullivan, MS, from Coastline, the Area Agency on Aging, presented the concept to the Marion Council on Aging (MCOA) at one of the Board meetings in early 2019. Merry Conway, President of the Friends of the Council on Aging (FMCOA), was taken with the idea. She sought volunteers from the Boards of both the MCOA and the FMCOA. With that, this small group of volunteers began the exploration of the concept as well as the steps necessary to bring it to fruition.

The Marion Age-Friendly Committee (MAFC) submitted an application to the MA AARP to be recognized as an Age-Friendly Community in February 2019. After exploring various options, the Marion Age Friendly Committee (MAFC) decided to design a survey that would provide data as to how people age 55 and over saw their community in terms of its being age-friendly. 2200 surveys were mailed to that cohort and 564 responses were returned, a 25% return rate. Committee members were heartened by the response which told them that the seniors in town had a voice that they wanted to be heard and they were appreciative of that opportunity. The committee was expanded somewhat with the addition of a few more members and the work of developing an Action Plan with the data gleaned from the survey results began. Each member of the MAFC took on a Domain. The meetings were open and suggestions and feedback were graciously accepted and several rounds of rewrites, expansions and deletions occurred over time as the Action Plan was developed and completed in late 2021, having survived a hiatus brought on by Covid-19 and its precautions, restrictions and debilitating effects.

The following people strategized, wrote, gave feedback and suggestions and participated in the formulation of the Marion Age-Friendly Action Plan:

Harry Norweb, Chair of the Marion COA Board of Directors, Merry Conway, Chair of the Friends of the Marion COA Board of Directors, Karen Gregory, Director of the Marion COA, Edward Hoffer, MD, Chair of the Marion Board of Health and member of the FMCOA Board of Directors, Dianne Cosman, member of the MCOA Board of Directors, Joan Martin, member of the FMCOA Board of Directors, Helen Westergard, member of the MCOA and Jeanne Daly, member of the FMCOA Board of Directors.

While many actions and goals will fall under the town’s COA through volunteer sub-groups charted to accomplish them, the Domains of Buildings and Outdoor Spaces, Housing and Transportation will fall to the elected leadership, the Town Meeting voters and volunteer working groups to accomplish through by-law changes, budgetary actions and the like as needed.
Marion was first settled in 1679 and became a town in 1832. It is a comfortable, waterfront community. Outdoor spaces include walking trails, a public golf course, boat docks, sports fields, and beaches. A town hall, library, music hall and community center are among the town’s most used public buildings.

Marion is a modestly affluent community. It has a population of about 6,000 year-round residents, blossoming to about 10,000 in the summer. Other than in the central village, most residents have elbow room with their neighbors. Twenty-seven percent of the town is open space owned either by the town or non-profit organizations. 40% is under some sort of nature conservancy.

A lack of any long-term planning in the past has become an increasing problem in recent years. The Town has either failed to address or only belatedly addressed aging public buildings and infrastructure that would have been better maintained and upgraded as our community grew and needs changed.

The Town now has a Master Plan that is being implemented. After so many years of delay, however, the scope of work is enormous and the cost daunting, even when spread out over years.

Quoting from the Master Plan, “Marion’s Vision (is to) use historical information, public participation, current socioeconomic and demographic data, and anticipated future challenges to identify guiding principles that will protect Marion’s traditional, seaside character and natural resources while managing change.”

Regarding outdoor spaces, the Master Plan states, “Public workshops throughout the Master Plan process emphasized the importance of continuing to maintain open space networks...”

Concerning buildings, the Master Plan notes, “Marion’s public outreach process highlighted the needs of seniors, the facilities they use, and the need for a Senior Center as primary concerns of the Town.”

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1 In 2017, a Senior Center became a reality within a Community Center building given to the Town when the local VFW post disbanded.
Collectively, these quotes from the Master Plan capture a spirit and commitment to the principles of the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Domain. On balance, the availability of resources and implementing structural changes that impact the “character” of the Town pose challenges for creating an even more age-friendly Marion. The goals established in the next section of this action plan take these factors into consideration.

**FACTS BASED ON SURVEY CONDUCTED IN 2019 AS PART OF AARP PROJECT**
(neutral / non-responsive percentage omitted)

- Availability of maintained sidewalks: satisfied 25% dissatisfied 42%
- Lighting along sidewalks: satisfied 22% dissatisfied 32%
- Availability of benches\(^2\): satisfied 28% dissatisfied 30%
- Availability of restrooms\(^3\): satisfied 16% dissatisfied 36%

In the free response section of the survey, more bike paths was a recurring theme.

\(^2\&5\) Reasonable presumption is that this may be partly an issue of knowing location.
GOALS

Key Assumptions Used in Establishing Domain Goals

A. There will be no new construction of public buildings in the foreseeable future.

B. While in compliance with American Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations for existing structures, renovations to those buildings will not significantly change their external design or interior layout to make them more accessible.

C. There is no appetite for cutting down trees that have encroached on sidewalks and there is nowhere to move telephone poles that occupy sidewalk space.

D. Already narrow roads and 100% developed property in the village limit sidewalk and bike path options.

E. Marion’s Master Plan already includes, “Complete, publicize and implement a Marion Open space and recreation plan” (Open Space Goal 9-2), so efforts in this domain for now should focus on pushing for completion of that plan rather than advancing a competing plan.

F. While all goals and strategies should be realistic, priority should be given to those that are attainable in a reasonable timeframe and impact the most people or those most in need.
Goals at a Glance

1. Using the format in Marion’s Master Plan (e.g., Town Hall picture and bullet points on page #44), provide readily accessible, expanded information on outdoor spaces and buildings so that people can plan activities with greater awareness of what is, and is not, available at a site.

![Town Hall (2 Spring Street)](image)

- Built in 1876
- Condition: Fair; facility needs renovation and expansion
- Proposals/Plans:
  - $8 M in modernizations and repairs
  - Potential alternative of new building on VFW lot

2. Achieve general across-the-board improvement in outdoor spaces and buildings through the completion of numerous modest tasks that individually do not rise to the level of being a project and therefore often go unaddressed. Examples include:

   - signage at key outdoor locations (e.g. “You Are Here”), and building entrances (e.g. “In this building are...” with the days/hours the building is open)
   - dignity of a handicap access (e.g., not past trash containers)
   - location-specific sidewalk repairs (e.g., pothole at 27 Cottage Street)
   - miscellaneous (e.g., loose hand railing, inadequate step lighting)

3. To be better heard, make common cause with existing Town committees that have overlapping areas of responsibility and interest in things that fall within the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Domain. These might, or might not, include (in no specific order):

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<tr>
<th>Board of Health</th>
<th>Public Works Department</th>
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<td>Board of Selectmen</td>
<td>Recreation Department</td>
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<td>Building Department</td>
<td>Town Administrator</td>
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<td>Conservation Commission</td>
<td>Capital Improvement Planning Committee</td>
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<td>Affordable Housing Trust</td>
<td>Master Plan Implementation Committee</td>
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<td>Parks and Tree Committee</td>
<td>Planning Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stewards of Community Open Space</td>
<td>Transportation and Circulation Task Force</td>
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### Goal #1: Create an easily accessible, comprehensive, readily updatable source of information on features of each major outdoor space and public building in town. To minimize printing costs and maximize speed of promulgating changes, provide this information online with options for getting a printed copy of one or more pages. Prominently post information page at associated site.

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<th>Potential Leads/Partners</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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| 1) Using Cushing Community Center (which houses Council on Aging), create prototype of building information presentation and get approval from layers of Town administration. | a) Identify building’s relevant features and shortfalls  
 b) Reach agreement on how information will appear (e.g. content, design, construction, location)  
 c) Define responsibility for posting and maintaining information on Town website (e.g., hours open) | COA staff  
 Town’s website manager | 6-12 months |
| 2) Expand building information presentation to include all public buildings. [NOTE: This excludes buildings not used for public purposes (e.g., DPW equipment barn).] | a) Using agreed format (#1b), document information for other public buildings.  
 b) Using process sheet (#1b), implement posting information on website  
 c) Printout, frame, and post information sheet at that building.  
 d) Define where public can get a printout of one or more pages off website (e.g., front desk at Town House, library).  
 e) Publicize information availability  
 f) Establish regular review of content. Establish routine for replacing posted information at a building whenever it is updated on the website. | Facilities Manager  
 Librarian  
 Music Hall Committee  
 Recreation Department  
 Harbormaster | 9-18 Months |
| 3) Completion by the Master Plan Implementation Committee of the Open Space and Recreation Plan | a) Identify department, committee or board, directly responsible for plan  
 b) Obtain deadline commitment | Recreation Department  
 Open Space Committee | 1-2 Years |
**Goal #2:** Using the philosophy behind the adage, “*How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.*”, devise a system residents and town employees can use to report small, isolated problems that if addressed may individually have little impact on the community, but cumulatively over time will gradually improve outdoor spaces and buildings. By requiring a high level of specificity, most jobs will be more doable within time gaps between larger projects.

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<td>1) Get buy-in from DPW on the idea of a ‘citizen reporting’ system that could be used internally as well. Work towards a closed loop system where the citizen(s) reporting a problem can monitor the status of its resolution.</td>
<td>a) Identify and document (cellphone photo and brief write-up) three similar DPW-related problems near each other (e.g., three holes in asphalt sidewalks within a block of each other).&lt;br&gt;b) Meet with DPW head to discuss best ways to submit such reports, including whether there is currently and standardized reporting tool.&lt;br&gt;c) Incorporate DPW input into a form and resubmit original three reports.&lt;br&gt;d) Provide 8-12 additional reports&lt;br&gt;e) Watch of repairs as a measurement of DPW responsiveness. If resistance is detected, determine source, and adapt approach.&lt;br&gt;f) Develop sufficient buy-in from DPW that it promotes form as the way to submit a report.&lt;br&gt;g) Move to SeeClickFix&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt; or similar software solution for reporting and management problems.</td>
<td>Town Administrator&lt;br&gt;Town Planner&lt;br&gt;DPW Department Head&lt;br&gt;Facilities Management Department Head&lt;br&gt;Master Plan Implementation Committee</td>
<td>2-3 years&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<sup>4</sup> [https://seeclickfix.com/](https://seeclickfix.com/)

<sup>7</sup> Anticipates long lead time to fund given probable cost and annual budget cycle
2) Get buy-in from Facilities Management Department on the idea of a ‘citizen reporting’ system that could be used internally as well. Work towards a closed loop system where the citizen(s) reporting a problem can monitor the status of its resolution.

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| 1) Become the authority on which boards and committees are working on projects that fall under Outdoor Spaces & Buildings Domain (OSBD). | a) Study relevant section(s) of town’s master plan  
b) Identify town departments.  
c) Study organization chart of town departments, boards, and committees  
d) Interview department heads, board chairs and committee chairs seeking intersections with OSBD.  
e) Seek out third-party organizations (e.g., Friends of Marion Council on Aging) that are not part of the town’s organization chart but which work diligently on projects that could impact the OSBD. | Town Administrator  
Town Planner  
Selectmen’s Administrative Assistant  
Town Clerk  
Town Department Heads  
Town Board/Committee Chairs | 1-3 years |

OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS DOMAIN

**Goal #3:** Given the absence of sufficient administrative oversight for anyone to comprehensively understand and coordinate the activities of various Town, departments, boards, and committees as they pertain to the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Domain, acquire that knowledge for the purpose of (1) avoiding redundant efforts and (2) forming alliances to jointly advance common objectives.
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<td>2) Convene a meeting of OSBD stakeholders, recognizing that some may not know (or care) that they are a stakeholder.</td>
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<td>f) Graphically depict OSBD intersections with other bodies.</td>
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| a) Use 1(a-f) to recruit support from Town Administrator and Town Planner. | Town Administrator  
Town Planner |
| b) One-on-one conversation with identified stakeholders, recruiting them to participate in a group meeting. | Town Department Heads |
| c) Create persuasive agenda. | Town Board/Committee Chairs |
| d) Convene stakeholder meeting. |   |
| e) Document agreements, alliances, and action items. |   |

1-3 years
TRANSPORTATION

authored by Karen Gregory

The community of Marion does not have a viable public transportation or taxi system. That being so, people who do not own a vehicle are left with little opportunity to get themselves to their appointments, tend to their shopping needs, general errands and all-around aspects of their well-being and social engagement. With grocery stores and other services located many miles away, walking is not an option. Even for some that own vehicles, driving on Route 6 can be daunting and the distance they feel comfortable and confident driving is often diminished. There are options, including Uber, Lyft and flagging down a GATRA (Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority) bus that drives through town on Route 6 at specified times. This bus service has many drawbacks that do not make it a viable option for seniors: there are only two designated stops (Route 6 & Front Street and Route 6 & Point Road) and these stops do not have any shelter to protect waiting passengers from the elements. There are significant lags in time on return trips as well, leaving one with a long wait to return home. If you do not live close to Route 6, walking to gain access to this mode of transportation is another issue. SRPEDD (Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District) did some initial work to explore the feasibility of a fixed route, scheduled bus service in Marion, which was part of the “Transportation and Circulation” chapter of the 2017 Marion Master Plan. Logistical issues presented major challenges and it was not explored further. For access to the Greater Boston area, there is a commuter rail station in Middleborough, approximately fifteen miles away.

The best, most accommodating and easiest option for seniors and disabled citizens is transportation through the Marion Council on Aging. The COA has been awarded, mostly through grants, a fleet of four vehicles that are able to accommodate persons with any degree of mobility. In 2019 over 2,200 rides were given through the Council on Aging, seeing a 25% increase in ridership from the previous year. Based on the 2019 AARP survey that was conducted, 94% of those utilizing these services were satisfied/very satisfied. Transportation requests are arranged simply by calling the Council on Aging and are scheduled Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This service ranges as far as Boston and Providence and enables Marion’s seniors to get to medical appointments, go food shopping and maintain a social life, benefitting their physical and mental health and wellness. By filling the gap left by a lack of public transportation, the COA lessens the feeling of dependence that seniors may feel by having to rely on family, friends, and neighbors. However, there are some members of the community that are hesitant to take advantage of this offering.
Goals at a Glance:

1. To ensure as drivers age, they maintain confidence in driving.

2. To allay seniors’ fears that they will lose independence if they cease driving by presenting alternatives to residents who no longer feel safe and confident driving.

3. Reduce the stigma of riding on a Council on Aging van.
**TRANSPORTATION DOMAIN**

**Goal #1:** To ensure that as drivers age they maintain confidence in driving

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<tr>
<td>Present a refresher course offering driving strategies and an overview of new technology in today’s world.</td>
<td>Host AARP Smart Driver Course.</td>
<td>AARP Council on Aging</td>
<td>6 months</td>
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**TRANSPORTATION DOMAIN**

**Goal #2:** To allay seniors fears that they will lose independence if they cease driving and present alternatives to residents who no longer feel safe and confident driving

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</table>
| Present alternatives on transportation options that are available. | a) Host seminar on how to use Uber and Lyft safely.  
   b) Highlight Council on Aging transportation in the newsletter.  
   c) Representative from Greater Attleboro and Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) to speak of their flag-down service. | Representative/driver for Uber and Lyft + Police Department and Council on Aging GATRA | a) 6-12 months  
   b) Immediate  
   c) 6 months |
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<tr>
<td>Change perceptions of riding in a Council on Aging vehicle.</td>
<td>Rebranding/creating a design for the fleet of vehicles of the COA so that they appear a little cooler/hipper.</td>
<td>Local Vocational school Council on Aging</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
</tr>
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Housing

authored by Dr. Edward Hoffer

Demographics:

Marion is an aging community. 2019 census figures show that the median age of Marion residents is 50.2, 25% higher than the state median. Fully one third of town residents are 60 or older: 13% of residents are 60-69, 13% are 70-79 and 7% are 80 and older. Many older adults live alone: 11% of men and 26% of women are widowed or divorced. Despite this, Marion remains largely a single-family-home community, with 80% of dwellings being owner-occupied single-family homes. Marion has very few condominiums and almost no rental housing stock, resulting in very limited options for older couples or single adults. The burden of maintaining a single-family house is high and rising. The median value of houses in Marion is nearly $500,000, with a resulting high tax burden, and water/sewer rates that are among the highest in the nation and rising.

Not surprisingly, when we surveyed all Marion residents 55 and older two years ago, 90% of our 564 respondents indicated there were important unmet housing needs. Only 10% felt things were “fine as is”.

In the comment section, many residents expressed the feeling they did not want to leave Marion where they had extensive social connections. Selling their now too-large home would force a move out of Marion due to the lack of smaller homes and/or rental options.

Types of housing that the respondents wanted included: [Many indicated more than one choice]

- Smaller houses and condominiums (56%)
- Assisted living facility (52%)
- Over 55 housing complex (42%)
- Rental apartments (34%)

The housing domain is perhaps the most difficult one to address because the necessary actions needed are well beyond the capability of the Council on Aging. The town’s Planning Board, and ultimately Town Meeting, must make decisions about changes to existing zoning regulations. Developers must finance and build the types of construction needed. On the positive side, however, most of what we are proposing is completely in line with Marion’s Master Plan, adopted in 2017. We are thus optimistic that many of the suggestions we are making can and will be adopted.

Just as transportation and socialization are inexorably joined, so too the Housing Domain affects both transportation and socialization. Many older adults live alone in houses far from the central Village area, and can shop or attend events and participate in town activities only by driving. The availability of different housing choices would expand their options.
**Goals at a Glance:**

1. Encourage building smaller homes and condominiums suitable for older couples and single adults who wish to downsize while remaining in Marion.

2. Encourage use of accessory apartments for multi-generational families.

3. Raise awareness of possible home-sharing as a way to allow seniors to lower housing costs and increase socialization.

4. Explore possible development of a continuing care community in the vicinity.

5. Make it easier for older adults who wish to do so to “age in place” in their existing homes by evaluating their needs for upgrades and additions to make their homes more age-friendly and by pursuing grants to assist in this process.
### HOUSING DOMAIN

**Goal #1:** Encourage building smaller homes and condominiums suitable for older couples and single adults who wish to downsize while remaining in Marion.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage building smaller homes and condominiums in Marion</td>
<td>Support developers who wish to build such housing stock as they present their plans to the Planning board; encourage needed changes to zoning bylaws.</td>
<td>Marion Planning Board</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*This goal fits well with the Master Plan, Land use Goal 3-1: Mixed-use village-style development to be encouraged in the Marion Village, Point Road commercial area and Route 6/105 Gateway area, including market-rate housing for seniors looking to downsize.*

### HOUSING DOMAIN

**Goal #2:** Encourage accessory apartments for multi-generational families.

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<tr>
<td>Encourage more use of accessory apartments</td>
<td>a) Publicize the possibility, summarizing current bylaws affecting such construction</td>
<td>Planning Board</td>
<td>1-2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Work with Planning Board on any necessary zoning bylaw changes</td>
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*This step is included in the Master Plan as Strategy 5-1-1*
## HOUSING DOMAIN

**Goal #3:** Raise awareness of possible home-sharing as one way to allow seniors to lower housing costs and increase socialization.

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| Raise awareness of home-sharing as an option | a) Publicize options  
   b) Organize educational material, including invited speaker(s) to discuss the pros and cons of such arrangements. | Council on Aging                  | 6-12 months |

**Goal #4:** Explore possible development of a continuing care community in the vicinity.

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| Investigate possible continuing care community | a) Inventory existing communities within a 10-mile radius of Marion  
   b) Contact national corporations that develop such communities and assess their interest in building in the Tri-town area. | Council on Aging, Planning Board, Select Board | 2-4 years   |
**HOUSING DOMAIN**

**Goal #5:** Make it easier for older adults who wish to do so to “age in place” in their existing homes by evaluating their needs for upgrades and additions to make their homes more age-friendly and by pursuing grants to assist in this process.

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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Potential Leads/Partners</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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</table>
| Assist older town residents to remain in their homes if they want to do so | a) Work with AARP to develop tools for evaluating needs  
 b) Seek grant funding to permit trained staff to do such assessments and make recommendations  
 c) Seek grant funding to assist lower-income seniors in paying for such work. | Council on Aging [a-c]  
 Board of Health [a]  
 AARP [a]  
 Planning Board [b,c]  
 Select Board [b,c] | 1 year and ongoing |
Regardless of a person’s age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combated by having opportunities to socialize and by the availability of accessible, affordable, and fun social activities. Social engagement is important throughout one’s life and becomes increasingly so as we age. When families have grown and we are no longer needed in their everyday life, and in some cases when we have lost a spouse or loved one, social interaction on a regular basis allows us to continue to lead a healthy happy life.

Marion has many social opportunities offered by the Council on Aging at the Community Center such as monthly lunches and lectures, a weekly soup and sandwich lunch, memory café for those dealing with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers as well as bridge groups and crafters who take up a variety of projects. There are weekly classes in Yoga, Zumba and Meditation. There are also a host of activities offered in the community; but there is the challenge of getting that information publicized throughout the community. It is important to strive to offer a variety of fun, accessible and affordable activities; however, transportation is often challenging for late afternoon or evening events.
Goals at a Glance:

1. Develop networks for residents to promote social interactions and opportunities for those with varying interests and abilities. Create opportunities that might be of more interest to men to encourage their greater participation.

2. Create a year-round wellness program.

3. Promote local arts, music cultural and academic programs.

4. Create Intergenerational Networks.
## SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MARION RESIDENTS- Creating an intergenerational community DOMAIN

**Goal #1:** Develop networks for residents to promote social interactions and opportunities for those with varying interests and abilities. Create opportunities that might be of more interest to men to encourage their greater participation.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Enlist both men and women volunteers who can reach out to others who are more isolated to encourage participation in group activities. Enlist volunteers to serve at weekly lunches at the Community Center. Encourage seniors to attend the monthly Friendship table dinners sponsored by local churches. Consider forming a golfing group to play at the Marion Golf course.</td>
<td>Engage with local churches and organizations to learn of those who would benefit from group activities. Create programs or projects that would interest seniors. Increase direct outreach via calls, surveys, hotlines, and door-to-door check-ins—Create a friendly conversation program creating a buddy system so both can really get to know one another. Reach out to the Marion Golf Club to ask if they would be willing to host a weekly game.</td>
<td>COA staff&lt;br&gt;Volunteers&lt;br&gt;Attendees&lt;br&gt;Local churches, cultural organizations, library, social agencies&lt;br&gt;Marion Social Club&lt;br&gt;VFW&lt;br&gt;Marion Golf Club</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Action Steps</td>
<td>Potential Leads/Partners</td>
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| Provide a variety of exercise programs depending on the interest of the group. Explore different times through a survey to meet a variety of lifestyles. Offer information sessions for managing one’s health. Offer a variety of health services (information sessions as well as clinics at the COA.) Encourage and inform seniors of the benefits of exercise for their health and well-being. Make it social and fun. | Contact the local YMCA to employ a variety of instructors with expertise and the ability to teach seniors with varying abilities. Inform seniors of ongoing programs at the Y for seniors and provide transportation. Create an outdoor walking club. Partner with local organizations to provide outdoor activities. | YMCA  
Local health agencies  
Sippican Lands Trust  
Recreation Dept.  
Fitness Trainers | 6 months - two years |
### SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MARION RESIDENTS- Creating an intergenerational community DOMAIN

**Goal #3:** Promote local arts, music cultural and academic programs

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<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Potential Leads/Partners</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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</table>
| Work with the Marion Art Center, The Elizabeth Taber Library and the Sippican Historical Society to provide information about programs and volunteer opportunities for seniors. Make information available about local choral groups and musical organizations. Encourage seniors to continue to enjoy and share their talents. Offer classes and programs at the Community Center to promote the arts. Work with local schools to consider utilizing seniors as classroom or library volunteers. Create inter-generational activities at the Art Center. Have an “Invite a Senior Day” at the local school. | a) Contact the Marion Art Center, Elizabeth Taber Library and Sippican Historical Society to make presentations at the COA and include their information in COA monthly newsletter. b) Create group activities such as book groups, knitting groups or other activities that would bring people together at the Community Center. c) Start a men’s breakfast group. d) Have local choral society member share a musical program and offer to take an interested senior to a rehearsal. e) Make the summer community concert schedule available and provide transportation. f) Provide information about theatre productions, art openings and activities at the Marion Art Center. g) Make tickets and transportation available to productions in New Bedford. | Marion Art Center  
Elizabeth Taber Library  
Sippican Historical Society  
Sippican Women’s’ Club  
Marion Garden Group  
Fall River Learning Network  
Tabor Academy  
New Bedford Symphony  
Zeiterion Theatre  
Bristol Community College  
University of MA Dartmouth | 1-5 years |
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<tr>
<td><strong>h)</strong> Create a list of senior volunteers who would regularly volunteer at the school. Establish or expand virtual offerings (e.g., gatherings, classes) and support older adults in accessing and using technology.</td>
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<td><strong>i)</strong> Provide a range of options for social connection that consider individual preference, culture, and technology familiarity and access (e.g., individual phone calls, Zoom groups).</td>
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<td><strong>j)</strong> Create and maintain a presence on social platforms: Facebook, Twitter COA and FMCOA websites.</td>
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<td><strong>k)</strong> Become a member of the Fall River Learning Network.</td>
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<td>Strategy</td>
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| Work with local schools, churches and community organizations to create opportunities for seniors to mentor, or for younger people to assist with small chores. Contact schools where community service is encouraged or required. Another source might be local church youth groups or scouts. Encourage seniors to serve on community boards. Encourage community groups to sponsor events contests and activities for all ages. Collaborate with other area COA organizations to possibly partner in shared activities and resources. | a) Create a list of volunteers who would be willing to help with small household projects  
b) Hold small “one on one” help sessions for setting up computers, tablets, cell phones and other digital devices  
c) Offer drop in help for any tech questions through high schools  
d) Provide transportation to holiday gatherings often held at the local schools  
e) Host an intergenerational party at the Community Center  
f) Host informational and social gatherings for veterans, police and firefighters  
g) Meet with other COA Directors to share ideas about social activities. | Elizabeth Taber Library  
Old Rochester Regional High School  
Tabor Academy  
Local churches  
Scout troops | 1-3 years |
Respect and Social Inclusion

authored by Joan Martin

No matter who we are or where we came from, our age, race, gender, sexual orientation, education, religion or economic status, we all want and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Additionally, each and every one of us want to be valued for who we are and the contributions we make.

The need to feel included is powerful. When people experience a sense of belonging, are accepted, involved and have friends, they are more likely to be happier and healthier. Feeling excluded can clearly lead to poor health, loneliness, the feeling of worthlessness and isolation.

The Age-Friendly Needs Assessment asked the 55 and older population of Marion questions concerning respect and opportunities to participate and be included. The overall feedback was: Respect – 64% yes; 29% neutral; 7% no. Inclusion (average of a number of related questions) 48% yes; 38% neutral; 13% no. Although these responses illustrate a relatively high level of satisfaction, neutral is neither yes nor no, there is much more work to do.

Goals at a Glance
The overall goal is to move towards making Marion a premier livable and age-friendly community. A community where we all want to live and where we can thrive. An age friendly community includes education about aging, intergenerational activities and respectful and inclusive services. Additionally, it is a community that encourages and provides opportunities for all of us to learn from the experience and expertise of one another.

1. Create an environment where all people feel welcomed, valued and can fully participate and contribute
2. Create and expand innovative, collaborative programs to decrease social isolation
3. Combat ageism – challenge the stereotypes
4. Develop resource guides
**Goal #1:** Create an environment where all people feel welcomed, valued and can fully participate and contribute.

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</table>
| Develop and/or enhance intergenerational programs where all groups can share and learn from the experience and expertise of each other. Provide opportunities to learn about each other. | a) Story Telling – pairing multigenerational groups to share their stories on a wide variety of topics. 
 b) Computer classes - provide classes with volunteers to assist with technologies (smart phones, computers, iPads, texting, etc.)
 c) Food Festivals – learn about each other and our ethnicities through the food that we eat.
 d) Movie Night/Book Clubs – organize multigenerational book clubs/movie nights where participants would watch the same movie together or read the same book and get together to discuss their perspectives and take-aways. | Friends of Marion Council on Aging [a-d] 
 Council on Aging [a-d] 
 Elementary School [a] 
 Tabor Academy [a, b,d] 
 Region High School [a,b,d] 
 Computer stores [b] 
 Volunteer [b,c] 
 Local restaurants [c] 
 Libraries [d] 
 Local clubs [d] | 1-2 years |
### RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION DOMAIN

**Goal #2:** Create and expand innovative, collaborative programs to decrease social isolation.

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<thead>
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<th>Strategy</th>
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</table>
| Research, explore, enhance and develop programs design to decrease social disconnection and loneliness and increase social interactions | a) Pets – adoption/foster care; pairing volunteer dog walkers to assist seniors with care; discounts for pet services  
 b) Cyber buddies – link tech savvy individuals through volunteer programs, internship programs in schools to help the tech challenged  
 c) Expand on the current program at the police department and partner with various organizations, churches, to check in and say hello | Town of Marion [a]  
 Local Veterinarians [a]  
 Pet stores [a]  
 Volunteers [a,b]  
 Council on Aging [b,c]  
 Friend of Marion Council on Aging [b]  
 Tabor Academy [c]  
 Regional High School [b]  
 Computer Stores [b]  
 Police department [c]  
 local churches [c] | 1-3 years |
## RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION DOMAIN

### Goal #3: Combat Ageism – challenge stereotypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<th>Timeframe</th>
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</table>
| Explore and expand participatory programs that foster creativity, increase cognitive skills and physical health | a) Develop or expand speaker series on healthy aging  
b) Working with organizations explore developing arts and cultural programs led by professional artists  
c) Create a senior spotlight initiative working with area high schools  
d) Recruit seniors to share their experience and expertise to help in areas such as preparing for interviews, writing a resume, writing a college/job application | Council on Aging [a,d]  
Coastline Elderly Services [a]  
Southcoast Health [a]  
Marion Art Council [b]  
Local Theater Groups [b]  
South Coast Artist [b]  
Volunteer local artists [b]  
Tabor Academy [c],  
Regional high school [c]  
Friends of Marion Council on Aging [d]  
Mailing to local seniors [d] | 1-2 years |
## RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION DOMAIN

### Goal #4: Resource Guides

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<th>Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Resources Guides on topics promoting an Age Friendly Community</td>
<td>a) Guides on medical topics such as Healthy Aging, Mental Health, Nutrition b) Where to go if you believe you are being discriminated against c) Estate Planning d) Town Policies in large print</td>
<td>Council on Aging [a] Coastline [a] Southcoast Health [a] Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination [b] Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [b] Law firms and financial organizations specializing in Elder Care [c] Town of Marion [d]</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CIVIC PARTICIPATION

authored by Dianne Cosman

By becoming a member of the Age-Friendly Communities, the Town of Marion has recognized that the older adult population has much to offer. Older adults have acquired skills and diverse lifetime experiences enabling them to be of valuable service to the community. For many, this is also a time in their lives when they can “give back” and get involved in their community. Civic engagement helps satisfy the desire to connect older adults who want to stay active, both physically and mentally. The Town of Marion embraces volunteerism as being beneficial to both the Town and the health and well-being of the individual volunteers. Opportunities are available in social, educational, recreational, and civic arenas. In 2018, 36% of Marion residents were 60 years or older, a number projected to increase to 40% by 2030.

A great way for all generations to interact in a shared common goal and inclusive environment is through civic engagement and volunteerism. This type of interaction can only help increase respect for each other and our sense of community. In a Town where 52% of residents have a Bachelor’s Degree or higher (of which almost a third are Masters Degrees\(^1\)), there is much learning and conversation to be shared. A 2019 survey of Town residents showed that more than 87% feel encouraged to be engaged in the community and 78% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied by opportunities offered to them.

The Marion COA is focused on one positive step at this time: to connect the residents inter-generationally for the purpose of sharing of life experiences. Stronger ties between the young residents and seniors would further enhance our age-friendly ambiance.

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Goals at a Glance:

1. Institute new volunteer programs focusing on increasing interaction between generations so a mutual respect can be formed.

2. Increase the number of volunteers participating in community activities, local government, and municipal boards and committees through directed outreach.
## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT DOMAIN

**Goal #1**: Institute new volunteer programs focusing on increasing interaction between generations so a mutual respect can be formed.

<table>
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</table>
| Create Senior Spotlight initiative through Council on Aging where local high school seniors interview older residents to publish their personal story and create a positive and interesting message, giving older adults a voice while mentoring younger adults. | a) Contact local school guidance offices to enlist help to choose interviewers.  
b) Create outline criteria on what to focus on for interviewers and interviewees;  
c) Outreach in social media as well as Sippican Week/The Wanderer/Senior Scope, etc. looking for subjects;  
d) Publication in social media as well as Sippican Week/The Wanderer/Senior Scope, etc. of final story. | COA Staff and Volunteers  
ORR High School  
Tabor Academy | 3-6 months |
| Create programs led by older adults acting as docents for outdoor hikes, historical walks in the village, and historical waterway boating trips inclusive of education for water safety, etc. | a) Coordinate training of docents for local hikes.  
b) Create an educational “boat trip” excursion for the public led by an older adult as a docent working with harbormaster that can also be done privately through a QR Code instruction.  
c) Create an historical walking tour for Marion Village that can be led by a docent or can be done privately through a QR Code instruction. | Sippican Lands Trust  
Marion Historical Commission  
Harbormaster  
Marine Resources Commission  
Coast Guard Retirees  
Marion Recreation | 6 months to 1 year |
### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT DOMAIN

**Goal #2:** Increase the number of volunteers participating in community activities, local government, and municipal boards and committees through directed outreach.

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| Motivate current volunteer municipal Board members to also volunteer for related committees as well as assisting at other community events. | a) Determine a set amount of suggested volunteer hours for Board members to support related community initiatives as they become available.  
  b) Identify, publish and distribute list of boards/commissions that need volunteer services.  
  c) Offer training sessions at the beginning of each fiscal year for new volunteers to help give them support and advice. | Volunteer Municipal Boards Local Non-profits | 1 year |
| Create a positive vision that volunteering is not only personally rewarding but can be a social and fun way to meet others. | a) Create a positive recruitment campaign for volunteering.  
  b) Set up directed training sessions for people interested in civic engagement and assign mentor to new volunteers.  
  c) Host a volunteer fair to give more publicity to listings on open positions.  
  d) Partner with organizations or educational facilities that can provide training in technology to older adults to make them more attractive to local organizations. | Municipal Boards Elizabeth Taber Library | 1 – 2 years |
| Through a partnership with the library, organize and centralize a volunteer corp. and maintain a list of skilled and unskilled volunteers through outreach that desire to offer services to help on an as-needed basis and email new opportunities to them as they become available. | Create a Form of online Sign-up sheet for volunteers for specific community initiatives (see example below):

VolunteerSignup - Online volunteer signup sheets - FMCOA Spring Social signup sheet

Such a link to each individualized sign-up sheet can be emailed to your potential volunteers and posted to Facebook, Twitter, a website, blog, poster, newsletter, etc. | Municipal Boards
Elizabeth Taber Library | 1 year

| Create an online go-to comprehensive list of standing municipal Volunteer Opportunities and programs (see below) that can be supplemented | Have each Board or Committee prepare an outline/job description for opportunities. | Municipal Boards
Elizabeth Taber Library | 1 to 2 years |
The following chart is to be the basis for an ever-changing resource:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town of Marion</th>
<th>Volunteer Opportunities on local municipal boards and committees:</th>
<th><a href="https://www.marionma.gov/">https://www.marionma.gov/</a></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capital Improvements Planning Committee</td>
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<td>Cemetery Commissioners</td>
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<td>Conservation Commission</td>
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<td>Fireworks Committee</td>
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<td>Fourth of July Parade Committee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Herring Inspectors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Historical Commission</td>
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<td>Marine Resources Commission</td>
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<td>Marion Affordable Housing Trust</td>
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<td>Marion Cultural Council</td>
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<td>Marion Energy Management Committee</td>
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<td>Marion Pathways Committee</td>
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<td>Marion Scholarship Education Fund Committee</td>
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<td>Master Plan Implementation Committee</td>
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<td>Mattapoisett River Valley Water District</td>
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<td>Mattapoisett River Valley Water Supply Protection Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>Tri-Town River Committee</td>
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<td>Water Committee</td>
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<td>Wharfingers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Zoning Board of Appeal</td>
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<tr>
<th>Local 501(c)(3) Friends’ groups</th>
<th>Friends of the Council on Aging</th>
<th><a href="https://www.fmcoa.org/">https://www.fmcoa.org/</a></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends of Marion Recreation</td>
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</table>
| Other local Non-profits | Coastline Elderly Services | https://coastlineb.org/  
| Habitat for Humanity | https://hfhplymouth.org/  
| League of Women Voters | https://lwvma.org/  
| AARP Website | **Volunteer Opportunities – general summary of information**  
| | *Create the Good Program* – public forum for both volunteers and providers to seek/list local opportunities  
| | *Auto driver safety program* – volunteer teachers solicited for driver safety classes  
| | *Foundation Experience* – pairing older adults with children needing help with reading  
| | [https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/info-2020/volunteering.html](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/info-2020/volunteering.html)  
| | [https://createthegood.aarp.org/opportunity-details.113226/](https://createthegood.aarp.org/opportunity-details.113226/)  
| | [https://www.aarp.org/auto/driver-safety/](https://www.aarp.org/auto/driver-safety/)  
| | [https://www.aarp.org/experience-corps/](https://www.aarp.org/experience-corps/) |
Communications and Information

authored by Jeanne Daly

Whether needing and/or wanting information about civic events and meetings that affect our lives or cultural, social or recreational events that expand our lives, a variety of communication means is necessary to meet the needs of all ages in an age-friendly community.

A survey was conducted by the Marion Age-Friendly Committee, asking residents 55 and over how they received news and information that was important to them.

Overwhelmingly (78%) respondents depended on the two free weekly newspapers for local information about services and programs in the area. Both papers also provide coverage of local Board of Selectmen’s meetings, Planning Board meetings, Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Board of Health (BOH), and other community boards and committees and so provide information on local government. Community social events are also covered or announced as upcoming.

Coming in a distant second was Sippican Soundings that is published monthly by the Marion Council on Aging. The Soundings is a unique resource for seniors seeking information about events at the Community Center as well as about services that are available to them at the center (Town Nurse, Dental Hygienist, Podiatrist, Legal Aid, etc.) or by phone (Outreach) or at their homes (Meals on Wheels) or “on demand” (rides to medical appointments or grocery shopping). Approximately 1200 are either mailed or a number of them are left at entry areas near the mailboxes of two apartment complexes each of which houses many seniors. Only 105 are emailed, indicating the low use of technology by Marion seniors.

The town website (26%) is another source of information for all age groups as well as Face Book (FB) (20%) which has 2 FB pages related to the town. These pages have no official relationship to town government and contain any manner of posts – social, informational and personal opinions. The Marion Council on Aging (MCOA) also has a FB presence with notifications posted of upcoming events and other news and information of concern and interest to seniors. The Friends of the Marion Council on Aging (FMCOA) also has a FB page and is working to develop a stronger presence on FB.

The printed page was obviously the preferred choice for information in the 55 and older category that responded to the survey. That the town website is not used by more people in that age group raises questions about availability of the internet and/or computers to that cohort as well as whether a lack of availability might be
due to finances or to a lack of technical knowledge or to some combination of the above. To that end, the COA hopes to add several computers to the Community Center as well as provide training and support regarding computer/internet use. The library already has some computers for use by the general public, but as the number of seniors grows (and even currently) the need is anticipated to be greater than what is available. Affordable access to computers and the internet both in the community and at home is essential in strengthening communication in an age-friendly community. Computer/tech training and support by tech-savvy youngsters would also promote interaction between diverse age groups.

The town website is easy to use and explore. It provides a wealth of information including board and committee meetings and agendas, notices of events, important restrictions currently in place secondary to Covid-19 and the ability to sign up for e-alerts regarding any urgent announcements as well as notices about any of the town boards and committees. The Marion CoA has a presence on the town website and presents another avenue for seniors to obtain information. Having access to technology expands one’s ability to be aware of current town events and issues as well as to be informed beyond the horizons of the town limits. Informed and knowledgeable community members contribute more to each other and to the community at large.

Goals at a Glance:

1. Enable seniors to increase the methods by which they receive information as well as how often they receive it by making more computers available for public use.

2. Provide training and assistance in computer, cellphone and tablet use.

3. Update and add to already available information on the town’s Council on Aging web site as well as the Face Book pages of the COA as well as the Friends of Marion Council on Aging’s (FMCOA) FB page. Provide information re: COA services and hours of availability.

4. Establish a method to publicize and celebrate Age-Friendly progress and programs.
### Goal #1: Enable seniors to increase the methods by which they receive information as well as how often they receive it by making more computers available for public use as well as training and assistance.

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<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Potential Leads/Partners</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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</table>
| Maximize utilization of the internet as a source of information and of town events | More computer availability at the Community Center | Council on Aging (COA)  
Friends of Marion COA | 1-1.5 years |

### Goal #2: Provide training and assistance in computer, cellphone and tablet use.

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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<th>Timeframe</th>
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</table>
| Maximize internet utilization as a source of information. | a) Provide training/support for computer, tablet and cellphone use by volunteers including high school students.  
b) Training/exploration of Marion and Friends of Marion Council on Aging website and Facebook pages. | Council on Aging (COA)  
Friends of Marion COA  
Tabor Academy students  
Local high school (ORR) students  
Local computer businesses  
Other volunteers | 1 year |
## COMMUNICATIONS AND ACTION PLAN DOMAIN

**Goal #3:** Update and add to already available information on the town’s MCOA web site as well as the Face Book pages of the MCOA and the FMCOA. Provide information about services as well as hours of availability.

<table>
<thead>
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<td></td>
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<td>Council on Aging (COA)</td>
<td>1-1.5 years</td>
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<td>Update and add to already available information on the town’s MCOA web site as well as the Face Book pages of the MCOA and the FMCOA. Provide information about services as well as hours of availability.</td>
<td>a) Develop a comprehensive brochure of information re services/hours of COA, various resources available to members of the town, recreational opportunities, and other pertinent information</td>
<td>Friends of Marion COA</td>
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<td>b) Publish the brochure online to allow for easy updating and easy access</td>
<td>Recreation Department volunteers</td>
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## COMMUNICATIONS AND ACTION PLAN DOMAIN

**Goal #4:** Establish a method to publicize and celebrate Age-friendly progress and programs.

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<tr>
<td>Communicate and update the Age-Friendly Committee’s Action Plan so people are aware and become involved in the process</td>
<td>Hold an annual Age-Friendly event to publicize progress, new programs being added, etc.</td>
<td>Council on Aging (COA)</td>
<td>1 year</td>
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<td>Friends of Marion COA</td>
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<td>Age-friendly Committee</td>
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COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

authored by Jeanne Daly

As people age, their health care needs change: preventive care and activities that promote and maintain well-being become more important. Likewise, as people age, they may require more assistance in Incidental Activities of Daily Living (IADL’s) such as cleaning and meal prep and Activities of Daily Living (ADL’s) such as bathing and dressing, making supportive care at home a necessity. In that regard, Medicare only pays for such services for a short period of time and in conjunction with needed skilled care (e.g. nursing or physical therapy), usually after a hospitalization. While older adults may need help with chores and personal care, it may only be available through Medicaid or through private pay – each at polar ends of the financial spectrum.

Older adults, at some point in their lives, may also become caregivers, a time-consuming and energy-sapping endeavor. Caregiver support is important and necessary to people in such circumstances. Respite daycare and support groups are important ways to provide support to those giving care to loved ones. The Marion COA currently offers a free weekly Memory Café for patients inflicted with dementia and their caregivers. They also currently offer a monthly support group for caregivers. There are a few Adult Day Care programs in the greater area. Most attendees qualify for Medicaid or must have the ability to pay privately.

Access to health care is another important pillar of community health service. There are two major health care providers serving this area: Southcoast Health System and Steward Health Care. Southcoast has three hospitals that serve the area with both inpatient and outpatient services. Two of the hospitals are within 3 - 10 miles of Marion while the third provides cardiac and specialty services and is within 25 miles of Marion. There is a Cancer Treatment Center in Fairhaven which is about eight miles away. Physician offices can be found in various locations, are physically accessible and are within the same 3 - 25-mile radius. The Marion Council on Aging provides transportation to medical appointments, including to Boston for more specialized care. Marion EMTs respond to emergency calls and transport residents to area hospitals and emergency med flights from area hospitals to tertiary care hospitals in Boston or Providence are provided as medically needed.

Steward Health Care has a hospital about 25 miles west of Marion and physician offices associated with that system are mainly located also to the west, anywhere from 15-25 miles. Services offered are similar to those offered by Southcoast Health although the scope of services might be somewhat less.

Social services such as Meals on Wheels, social work and help with homemaking and personal care are provided through Coastline, the region’s Area Agency on Aging. Benefits information, referral services and social opportunities over a lunch of comfort food are provided by the Marion COA (MCOA). Coastline’s Meals on Wheels
program currently provides lunches in a communal setting at the MCOA or delivers them directly to clients’ homes if preferred.

Home health care and hospice are available to residents of Marion through various non-profit and for-profit agencies. Under Medicare rules and regulations, older adults usually qualify for home health care only following a hospitalization. To assist residents who might need short-term services not covered by insurance, Community Nurse Home Care (CNHC) has a fund created by the Friends of Marion Visiting Nurses to help defray the cost of such services. Referrals may be made to CNHC for consideration of such eligibility.

There is a Nursing Home in Marion and several in the surrounding communities. While prospective patients have a choice as to where they go, bed availability is usually the final arbiter. Surrounding communities also have Assisted Living facilities available to Marion residents.

The Marion COA has an Outreach Coordinator available to provide residents with information on available health care services and insurance options as well as eligibility information about such programs as fuel assistance and food stamps. The MCOA also provides wellness programs such as meditation, yoga and various exercise classes at little or no cost. Other health-related services offered by the MCOA at the Community Center are dental hygienist services, podiatry services and hearing aid checks.

The Town of Marion employs a Public Health Nurse who works in conjunction with the Board of Health (BOH). Among other duties she organizes flu, pneumonia and tetanus immunizations, does blood pressure and blood sugar readings, communicable disease monitoring, home visits to
homebound residents and is available for consult in her office at the Community Center on designated days and hours. The BOH is responsible for areas of health that affect the general population, handling issues related to disease prevention and control, health and environmental protection and promoting a healthy community. A particular and important task is that a local BOH is authorized to call (when asked) utility companies and certify in writing the presence of a serious illness in a residence and that the utility shall not stop or fail to restore service to that household.

Five questions appeared on the survey sent to all Marion residents 55 and over regarding issues of health care and social services. The results were as follows:

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the access to physical health services:

- 53% were either very satisfied or satisfied
- 37% were neither
- 9% were dissatisfied

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the access to mental/behavioral health services:

- 28% were very satisfied or satisfied
- 55% were neutral
- 17% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with chore/homemaking/home health aide services:

- 32% were very satisfied or satisfied
- 63% were neutral
- 5% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with caregiver support:

- 30% were very satisfied or satisfied
- 62% were neutral
- 8% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of social services available to older residents (Meals on Wheels, benefits information, referral services)

- 62% were very satisfied or satisfied
- 32% were neutral
6% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

Overall, the residents of Marion expressed general satisfaction with the healthcare in the area as well as access to it. However, a significant number of respondents skipped many of the questions relating to community health – on average, 21% of total respondents. Also, a significant number were neutral in rating either access or quality of the various services mentioned. The per cent of neutral responses ranged from 32% to a high of 63% which might suggest that a number of people 55 or over that responded to the survey have not experienced these various segments of health care. Whether they might have benefited from any of these health care options but were unaware of them or could not afford them due to lack of insurance or affordability is unknown.

**Goals at a Glance:**

1. Educate residents about the continuum of care and how and when to access the various services
2. Promote wellness and prevention opportunities
3. Promote availability of local funds for short-term needs not covered by insurance
4. Enable seniors to keep and maintain their pets
5. Establish a weekly walking program
6. Establish an Annual Wellness Walk for people of all ages and abilities
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| Make information available to residents in various formats to maximize availability of information | a) Develop a plan to educate residents about all aspects of health care services (wellness, prevention, primary care, specialist care, mental health care, rehabilitation, emergency department, urgent care, hospital care, out-patient care, home care, respite care, palliative care and hospice)  
   b) Identify providers willing/able to speak regarding various services listed above  
   c) Compile information on services and access by developing a resource list | Marion Board of Health  
Marion Public Health Nurse  
Community Health Organizations  
SouthCoast Health Care | 1-2 years |
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| Publicize existing classes that promote wellness and prevention through expanded media presence and add opportunities for adult exercise/recreation | a) Investigate initiating a Balance Class  
   b) Promote (expand?) Meditation Class as well as exercise classes held at the COA  
   c) Promote wellness clinics run by the Public Health Nurse at the Community Center  
   d) Promote walking as a healthy activity that benefits healthy bones and cardiovascular health  
   e) Educate residents about the links between wellness and prevention and medical issues  
   f) Collaborate with the Recreation Department regarding adult sports opportunities | Council on Aging (COA)  
   Friends of Marion COA  
   Recreation Dept  
   Class instructors  
   Health Organizations  
   Marion Board of Health | 1-3 years |
## COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SERVICES ACTION PLAN DOMAIN

### Goal #3: Promote knowledge of the Friends of Marion Visiting Nurses Fund for short-term needs not covered by insurance

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<td>Increase knowledge of fund availability through various media options</td>
<td>Educate COA staff and residents about the availability of the Fund. Referrals can be made to CNHC for evaluation of the appropriateness of the referral. Use public and social media outlets to publicize fund availability.</td>
<td>Council on Aging Community Nurse Home Care</td>
<td>1 year</td>
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### Goal #4: Enable seniors to more easily keep and maintain pets

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<td>Find ways to make it more feasible for seniors to keep and maintain their pets that can be vital to the health and well-being of older adults, providing companionship and comfort. Many older adults may feel the need to surrender their pets due to financial hardships or inability to provide them with all the care needed.</td>
<td>a) Develop a volunteer network to help with pet care so older adults don’t have to surrender their pets. b) Investigate the possibility of senior pricing for veterinary services, grooming, pet supplies, etc.</td>
<td>Domain leader and sub-committee Council on Aging Local veterinarians Local pet stores</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
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### COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SERVICES ACTION PLAN DOMAIN

**Goal #5:** Establish an activity/exercise that enhances cardiac health and strong bones.

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| Publicize a weekly walking program at MCOA or another designated place through local and social media outlets as well as self-monitored wellness opportunities | a) Walk with a Doc: MD to lead. Start with a short talk about wellness and prevention or a relevant health care topic  
   b) Create self-monitored challenges such as “May is walk the length of Marion Month”. | Council on Aging (COA)  
   Friends of Marion COA  
   Marion Board of Health  
   Bike Path Committee  
   Recreation Department | 1 year |

**Goal #6:** Establish and promote an annual event that combines exercise and various age groups and abilities

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| Establish an Annual Wellness Walk for people of all ages and abilities | Arrange a walk of differing lengths to accommodate different age groups and abilities. Provide seating along the way for rest breaks as needed. Provide healthy snacks and drinks at end of walk. | Council on Aging (COA)  
   Friends of Marion COA  
   Marion Board of Health  
   Recreation Department | 1-2 years |