State: Massachusetts
Community Name: Worcester
Population Size: 206518
Percentage of Residents Above Age 60: 14
Community Structure: City
Other:
Community Type: Urban

Elected Official Signing the Letter of Commitment
Name: Joseph Petty
Title: Mayor of Worcester
Office Mailing Address:
Community Contact Name: Ethan Belding
Email: Ethan Belding has been with the Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging since 2016. He is responsible for conducting demographic research to ensure that funding is allocated in a manner that best meets the needs of seniors and caregivers in the 61 communities that the agency serves. In addition to his role at CMAA, Ethan has taught a variety of Social Science Course at Quinsigamond Community College since 2010 and currently serves as the Chairman of the Initiative to obtain the World Health Organization’s Age Friendly Status for the City of Worcester. Mr. Belding currently manages several large projects with complex reporting requirements including our Elder Meals and Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. He will develop the initial framework for data and evaluation management during the planning period and ensure the Data Manager has all that they require to gather high quality performance measure date for the project. Additionally, Ethan is a resident of the City of Worcester.

Role:

Older Adult Involvement:
Older adults are a key part of Age Friendly Worcester’s work. From the leadership committee to subcommittee members, older adults play a major role in determining the scope and breadth of the Age Friendly Worcester initiative. Additionally, community listening
sessions will offer opportunities for involvement from older adults. Ensuring that diverse voices, backgrounds, languages, and cultures are recognized and included in the process is paramount. Worcester being a refugee city will also offer opportunities to engage with and integrate older adults and families into our community. With more immigrant communities opting to age in place rather than return to their country of origin, Worcester has the unique opportunity to be enriched by different viewpoints and living situations. As an agency, CMAA's main focus is to support the needs of older adults and caregivers. Since 1974, we have developed an extensive network to engage this population in all of its diversity. We can work with our partners to ensure that the varied voices of all older adults residing in Worcester are included, along with the rest of the community, in achieving this designation through maximizing participation in Community Listening Sessions, Surveys, and Volunteer Opportunities. We have leveraged our network multiple times before to good effect. For example, in 2020 we were able to reach 40K hard-to-count elders as part of our Outreach for the 2020 Federal Decennial Census. We were able to do this despite operating under the constraints of the worst global pandemic in over a century. Our efforts helped ensure that the City of Worcester would continue to receive the Federal Funding that it deserved for the next decade. In fact, we received an award for our efforts from the U.S. Bureau of the Census recognizing hitting our target.

**Increasing Collaboration and Coordination:**

A silver lining of COVID-19 was that it brought the community in a manner that it had not been united before. Through our participation COVID response were able to forge new partnerships that have already expanded collaboration and coordination and are a position to push forward to the next level. Our efforts in COVID Response plus this agency's work on the most recent Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) from the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester is why we were recruited to be the lead agency in the Age Friendly Worcester Initiative. We were recruited by the community because the community knew that CMAA had the skills, capacity, and network to unite the city to obtain this designation. Increasing collaboration and coordination among relevant community agencies and departments isn't something that we will do. It's what we've been doing since even before the pandemic. By creating ample opportunities for key stakeholders (ex. Organizations, businesses, and community members) to come together and envision a livable Worcester for people of all ages and abilities, Age Friendly Worcester will connect the city in ways that have not been seen before. This has been done through biweekly large group meetings where the foundational elements of Age Friendly Worcester have been developed. Representatives for various industries and backgrounds join in to voice their insights and offer recommendations for the direction that Age Friendly Worcester should go towards. Rather than a top down model for implementing systemic, city-wide changes with a broad regional impact, Age Friendly Worcester is committed to recognizing lived experience as a form of expertise. Together, we aim to work and develop a sustainable framework for making our city welcoming to individuals of all ages.
AARP Team
Member Contact Info: Antron Watson AARP Massachusetts Age-Friendly Director

Most Instructive Area of Work:
Our consideration of the intersections of our issue areas is a key component of Age Friendly Worcester’s success. Certain aspects of city living impact populations differently. Keeping this notion at the heart of our efforts is an important way to ensure that folks in Worcester are not left out of the process and that their needs are addressed. Additionally, as a mid-sized city, Worcester is able to show a different model for pursuing age friendly designation than other larger communities. Due to the nature of our community and connections within Worcester, our initiative is incredibly replicable. Many aspects of this model can be implemented in smaller cities and towns in Central Massachusetts to encourage realistic solutions for livability concerns.

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Website: https://www.seniorconnection.org/resources/age-friendly-worcester/
(Note: we are working with the City of Worcester to develop a comprehensive resource site via the City’s website. This will be launched in the coming months along with social media.)

Twitter 2: Central MA Agency on Aging, Inc. @cmaaging
Facebook 1: City of Worcester Dept. of Health & Human Services
https://www.facebook.com/WorcesterHHS

Facebook 2: Central MA Agency on Aging, Inc.
https://www.facebook.com/cmaaging

Additional Social Media: Worcester Senior Center
https://www.facebook.com/worcestersoniorcenter