



## Membership Application

To join the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities** and the **World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities**:

- If you have questions while completing this form, please email [livable@aarp.org](mailto:livable@aarp.org).
- If you need additional space for answering the questions you may add an additional sheet of paper.

**APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: 8-16-17**

### Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

**NAME OF THE COMMUNITY:** Lawrence

**STATE:** MA

**POPULATION SIZE:** 80,240

**PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60:** 14.3%

**NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT:**

Daniel Rivera, Mayor

**OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER:** City Hall, 200 Common Street, 3rd floor Lawrence, MA 01840

### Section 2: COMMUNITY CONTACT FOR THE AARP NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The community contact is the local staff member or volunteer who is primarily responsible for carrying out the community-level work — it is not the responsible AARP staff member.

**Please describe the named person's role in the city or community's age-friendly initiative:**

Martha Velez is the Executive Director of the Lawrence Council on Aging and Senior Center, a multipurpose community facility designated by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the Area Agency on Aging. Martha started at the Council on Aging in 1990 as the Secretary to the Director, in 1995 became the Program Administrator, and in 2009 became the Director. She is a tireless advocate for seniors in the Greater Lawrence area and has forged partnerships with many organizations for the betterment of Lawrence elders. Under Martha's leadership, the Senior Center has highlighted its role as

a culturally inclusive, inter-generational community center where all are welcome. This is especially important in Lawrence, an immigrant community with the highest Latino population in New England (75.7% Lawrence/10.2% MA). The Lawrence Senior Center runs the first Spanish Dementia Cafe (Aroma de Café) in Massachusetts with funding from MA Council on Aging and Executive Office of Elder Affairs

Martha will co-chair Lawrence's Age-Friendly City Workgroup - a multi-stakeholder group that includes elders, who will plan, assess and develop strategies to facilitate active aging in Lawrence. This workgroup grows out of Mayor Daniel Rivera's Age-Friendly City Proclamation which designated both the City of Lawrence Council on Aging and the City of Lawrence Mayor's Health Task Force (MHTF) to lead this effort. The Mayor's Health Task Force (MHTF) is a broad-based collaborative of health care, social service providers, environmental groups, academic and research institutions, local businesses, community leaders, city planners and visionaries whose mission is to "promote health equity for all, through advocacy, education, capacity-building, and networking." Martha has been on the Executive Committee of the MHTF since its inception in 1992 and Co-Chairs the MHTF Men's and Women's Healthy Working Group. She sits on numerous boards and actively participates in many local and state organizations including: President of Merrimack Valley Community Service Corp Board, the Elder Services of Merrimack Valley Board of Directors, Patient and Family Advisory Council for Lawrence General Hospital, and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs Dementia Friendly Massachusetts Initiative/Alzheimer's Disease Supportive Services Advisory Group.

### **Section 3: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENTS and COLLABORATIONS**

**1) Please provide a brief summary of the community policies, programs and services that are targeted toward older people and how the community plans to become more age-friendly.**

The *Lawrence Senior Center* is the focal point for programs and services targeted for older adults. It provides health and social services, information, referral and counseling, nutritious meals, recreation and educational activities, transportation and special trips, legal and housing services and opportunities to participate in intergenerational activities, volunteer on committees, teach classes and perform clerical and other center related functions. Program delivery is adapted to the cultural landscape: programs are often offered in Spanish and there is also an Asian Outreach worker for elders who speak Chinese and other Asian languages.

Specific programs and services the Lawrence Senior Center provides include:

**FOOD:** 1) Farmer's Market Senior Coupons, 2) A brown bag program in collaboration with the Boston Food Bank distributing a free bag of healthy groceries to eligible seniors once a month, 3) A cooking group where elders and Veterans cook foods received from the brown bag program, 4) Congregate meal site providing culturally appropriate lunches for elders;

**HEALTH:** 1) Exercise classes for those age 18 and older integrating culturally appropriate themes, 2) Foot clinics in partnership with Home Health VNA, 3) Aroma de Café for Seniors with Alzheimers and their

caregivers, 4) Chronic Disease Self-Management classes;

**EDUCATION:** 1) Classes in English, Citizenship, Grammar, Painting, Sewing, and Computers

**LEGAL SERVICES:** In collaboration with Merrimack Valley Legal Services.

The Senior Center also assists elders with health insurance, RMV forms, medical transportation and provides notary services. They host intergenerational events such as a grandparent/grandchildren event and a community Senior Day on the Lawrence Common.

Besides the programs offered at the Senior Center, other departments in the city have adopted policies that benefit Lawrence's older population. Lawrence has passed a **Healthy Active Living Resolution** in 2014 and a **Complete Streets Policy** in 2015 aimed at promoting age-friendly health and transportation initiatives. The City has recently been awarded a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant to complete a comprehensive baseline assessment of vulnerabilities due to climate change and develop prioritized actions to create more resiliency. The voice of elders will be a key component of this assessment since elders are a vulnerable population particularly affected by high heat days and heat stress.

Lawrence is fortunate to have an exceptionally capable and committed nonprofit community that provide key services for older adults. Some of these organizations include:

**Catholic Charities:** Basic Needs, Counseling, Family Support Services, Food Pantry, Grandparents as Parents

**Greater Lawrence Family Health Center:** Primary Healthcare; Behavioral health and substance use treatment; healthcare for homeless; healthy living and community programs; pharmacy services

**Holy Family Hospital:** Full range of inpatient, outpatient and specialty healthcare services.

**Home Health VNA:** Home medical care and supportive services

**Lawrence General Hospital:** Regional health care system providing comprehensive healthcare services.

**Lawrence Housing Authority:** Public affordable housing for seniors/ disabled individuals.

**Merrimack Valley Elder Services:** Home care services; information and referral; behavioral health services; family caregiver support; healthy living programs; housing options; meals on wheels; protective services; health insurance counseling

**Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority:** Affordable public transportation, ADA accessible, lift equipped vehicles, specialty services to hospitals for access to medical appointments.

These organizations are members of the MHTF and have a strong history of collaboration to improve the quality of life for our residents. Members of these organizations and senior residents will be active on the Lawrence's Age-Friendly City Workgroup, responsible for bringing the Mayors Resolution to be an

Age Friendly City into action. The working group will conduct an “age friendly” assessment of city and then use the information to influence the improvement of existing programs as well as inform the development of additional services and policies.

**2) How will the community engage and involve older people in the process of becoming a more age-friendly?**

Lawrence’s Age-Friendly City Proclamation commits the City to assessing, planning and developing strategies so Lawrence can become more age-friendly. The multi-stakeholder Age-Friendly City Workgroup that will be formed because of this resolution will include elders so that they have a voice at the decision-making table. A comprehensive baseline assessment of Lawrence’s programs, policies and infrastructure will take place and the voices of elders will be sought out through focus groups, surveys, participation in walk audits and in other ways. Older residents will be engaged in prioritization of areas for the community to work on and action planning and will be consulted during program development to ensure services are age friendly.

**3) Briefly describe the mechanisms the community has or is planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different agencies and departments.**

The multi-stakeholder Age-Friendly City Workgroup will be the primary driver facilitating collaborative planning and implementation. The two designated lead agencies, the Lawrence Council on Aging and the Mayor’s Health Task Force, already have a history of strong collaboration and the Executive Director of the Senior Center is a member of MHTF’s Executive Committee. As a workgroup of the MHTF, the Age-Friendly City Workgroup will be able to draw upon the networking and knowledge of MHTF’s more than eighty general membership partners representing all sectors of the community.

The workgroup will be composed of elders and representatives of local organizations and City Departments whose work relates to the World Health Organization’s eight livability domains. During the Planning Phase, the workgroup will guide the implementation of a baseline assessment of Lawrence’s age-friendliness focusing on each domain. After analyzing and prioritizing the data from the initial assessment, the workgroup will develop a 3-year city-wide plan of action based on assessment findings and identify key indicators to measure progress. Throughout this process, they will present their data to other agencies and departments through the MHTF General Membership Meetings.

The MHTF also has a Research Initiative Working Group- an academic-community collaborative project aimed to assure that the research done in Lawrence has a clear benefit to the community and that the community is involved in all phases of the research. This workgroup can provide input on data analysis, indicator development and other phases of the Age-Friendly City Action Plan. The Implementation Phase of the Action Plan will again be able to tap into the many partners who already have a history of collaboration toward a common goal. Because the MHTF exists within the City structure, it is unique in its ability to engage City Departments in its initiatives.

#### Section 4: NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

Your answers to the following questions will help us complete your membership in the global age-friendly network and better enable us to understand how to support the network.

##### 4) How do you hope to contribute to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

Lawrence has a unique contribution to make to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the WHO's Global Network because it is a majority minority city and the strategies it develops can inform other cities with large minority and newly immigrant populations. Additionally, the MHTF has extensive experience working with research institutions and community based participatory research initiatives. The lessons learned from these projects can help inform other communities that want to collect assessment data on its aging community members to assure that the process has a clear benefit to the community and includes community members in all phases.

##### 5) What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

The time is right for Lawrence to join the network of age-friendly communities- Lawrence's Mayor is supportive of the effort, the collaborative partnerships developed among local organizations and City Departments are strong and the City has already taken steps that move it toward becoming an age-friendly city. The collaborative efforts of the City and its partners to integrate health in all policies have earned it the prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Culture of Health prize in 2015 but we believe we still have work to do to make our city age-friendly. We believe that joining the network will accelerate this process and we look forward to learning from other network partners and utilizing the tools developed to aide our planning and implementation phases.

*Click here to add a link to where we can find your logo. Or, send us your logo by email attachment to [livable@aarp.org](mailto:livable@aarp.org).*

***Attached to email.***

##### 6) Please provide a digital (JPG, PNG or PDF) file or link of a logo or other image that represents your community.

The image resolution should be at least 72 dpi. As an example of an image, here's ours > ***Attached to email.***

