

## 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.

### Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

**NAME OF THE COMMUNITY:** Acton is a member of the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC), the group that is leading the regional Age Friendly Planning efforts. The Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) is a group of 13 communities northwest of Boston working collaboratively on issues of regional concern. It is comprised of Acton, Bedford, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow and Sudbury. Its membership includes planning and select board representatives from participating communities. It is convened by the regional planning agency, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Westford is a neighboring town to MAGIC, and is an integral participant in regional Age Friendly discussions and activities.

**STATE:** Massachusetts

**POPULATION SIZE:** Acton: 21,924, MAGIC and Westford: 177,081

**PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60:** Acton: 2010, 16.7%. MAGIC and Westford: 2010: 14 %; 2030 projections: 17% (MAPC Stronger Region Scenario)

**NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT:** Joan Gardner, Clerk of the Board of Selectmen

**OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER:** 472 Main Street, Acton MA 01720

### 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:**



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Project Manager

### 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.

During the Age Friendly Forum, convened in July 2017 by MAGIC, participants discussed Age Friendly programs, services and policies in place in the broader MAGIC region, and as well as ideas for addressing unmet needs of a growing older population. Following is a summary of the programs, services and policies in place, highlighting select examples and ideas the region is interested in exploring and promoting more.

#### Regional Focus

While the Age Friendly Forum evaluated all domains, the collaborative of municipalities will focus their Age Friendly Planning efforts on Housing and Transportation. As there is interest in and capacity for expanding efforts to evaluate and plan for other domains, the collaborative will do so in the future. The focus on Housing and Transportation will focus the regional Age Friendly planning efforts, but we acknowledge other domains such as Respect and Social Inclusion; Social Participation; and Communication and Information, are inherent in these topics, and as such, discussions and solutions of Housing and Transportation are likely to cover additional domains.

#### Individual Municipality Focus (optional)

Where individual towns are pursuing work related to domains in addition to Housing and Transportation, they may include their goals and a report of their individual efforts into the regional Age-Friendly planning documents.

#### Summary of Regional Programs, Services and Policies in Place:

##### Housing

- Municipalities are advancing planning and policies to meet the needs for senior housing; that encourage transit-oriented development; that apply universal design principles; and that connect older adults to important services. Littleton recently established zoning bylaws for Senior Residential Housing.
- There is interest in supporting a variety of housing options to meet the needs of older adults and support aging in the community. There is also interest in ensuring that housing is proximal to local amenities; has shuttle services; and fosters social and intergenerational cohesion, both within



housing developments and through community programming. Towns are interested in municipal policy that supports age-friendly and affordable housing options for older adults.

### Transportation

- CrossTown Connect is a Transportation Management Association (TMA) that facilitates regional mobility by connecting and providing area transportation services and programs. These include services and programs particularly for older adults, such as accessible transportation services to medical facilities and shopping centers, and specialized and fixed-route services within and between municipalities. CrossTown Connect serves Acton, Boxborough, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, Westford and Concord. Most of the Councils on Aging in the region also provide shuttle services for older residents.
- The region values affordable transportation services for older adults that are reliable and easy to use. Affordability and ease. The region is interested in models that meet a variety of transportation needs, including at-home pick up and drop off; and service to 'quality of life' locations, in addition to medical and shopping centers. The region also promotes complete streets to ensure safe walking, biking, and active movement. The region is interested in exploring how ride share apps; and short-term, on-demand rentals can fill service gaps.

### Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- The region has significant open space assets for public use, including hiking and biking trails. Municipalities also promote universal design principles of buildings to ensure ease of use and access, and many have complete streets policies in place to support pedestrians and cyclists in safely moving around shared street networks, facilitating access to both open space amenities and buildings.
- Buildings and open space can facilitate healthy and active living, by ensuring the design and amenities of both promote safety and encourage use. The region values open spaces being accessible (easy to navigate, easy to understand conditions of trails or paths, painted curbs, promote "equity at intersections" where traffic is multimodal, longer times at crosswalks, public bathrooms, water fountains); that these include age-friendly amenities (raised community garden beds, shade, places to sit, adult playgrounds/workout stations); and that they facilitate interaction and socializing, and provide opportunity for open space stewardship by older adults. The region also values buildings being physically accessible, and that public buildings take the hearing and sight needs of older adults into consideration.

### Civic Participation and Employment

- Municipalities offer programs and services to encourage adult learning, computer skills, and civic engagement. Lexington offers Citizen's Academy, a 10-week course that introduces residents to municipal government.



- Municipalities provide engagement opportunities for older adults in town planning and political processes, and through volunteer and employment opportunities. Lincoln and Acton have volunteer positions for older adults in municipal offices.
- Municipalities encourage civic participation via approaches that deliberately include older adults. Carlisle and Concord set aside parking for older adults at town meeting to provide greater access and encourage participation.
- There is interest in identifying and streamlining information about municipal and other volunteer opportunities for older adults; increasing such volunteer opportunities; coordinating with transit services so that older adults can have greater access to municipal meetings and events.

#### Communication and Information

- Municipalities use a variety of communication media and approaches to reach older adults. These include in-person outreach, phone calls and texting, social media, print newsletters, and other methods. Littleton offers Tiger Tech, a program that supports older adults in trouble-shooting and using their computers, smart phones, and other devices. Technical support is provided for free by Littleton high school students.
- In addition to the current practices of disseminating information via a variety of avenues and media, there is interest in ensuring information distributed is appropriately multi-lingual and that services accommodate hearing or visual impairments.

#### Community and Health Services

- Municipalities' Councils on Aging and Elder Care Services provide preventative health care and wellness services and programs, including those such as Tai Chi, blood pressure checks, falls prevention programming, and cooking demonstrations.
- There is interest in increasing the capacity of health services related to hoarding, mental health, podiatry, and addiction. There is also interest in increasing the capacity of health professionals in understanding geriatric needs and providing services.

#### Respect and Social Inclusion

- Efforts by municipalities in the region increase their capacity to responsibly and respectfully address the needs of older adults, and particularly those with memory issues. Among others, Concord and Littleton have provided dementia-friendly sensitivity training to first responders and the community. Acton is engaging restaurants in "Purple Table" training that provides diners with quieter and more predictable dining environments.
- There is interest in additional considerations for promoting respect and social inclusion of older adults, including programming that is LGBT friendly and avoiding marketing programming as 'senior' programming, and instead use language that describes the activity event. There is also interest in advertising to older adults about programs like "Purple Table" to increase awareness about them.



## Social Participation

- Councils on Aging are active in the region in providing a range of opportunities for activities for older adults to socialize with peers and within the community.
- The region values and provides programming and events that promote educational, cultural and other opportunities including memory cafés, cable television exercise classes, low-cost lunch programs, transportation services to facilitate participation.

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

MAGIC has already begun to engage older people in its Age Friendly discussions, and in July 2017 convened an Age Friendly Forum to discuss regional initiatives and issues regarding the needs of older adults. Participants included MAGIC members, Councils on Aging, Boards of Health, Transportation Coordinators and interested residents. Presenters included AARP's Valerie Spain, Massachusetts Health Aging Collaborative's James Fuccione, Jewish Family and Children's Services', Emily Kearns, and MAPC's Barry Keppard. During the forum, participants provided input and information on ongoing regional efforts and new ideas related to the eight Age-Friendly Domains.

Building on this forum conversation, MAGIC and MAPC, with the help of its Community Engagement Division will coordinate to ensure that the interests of older adults continue to inform the MAGIC Age Friendly initiatives:

- Future input will be sought through targeted avenues, such as focus groups, and surveys.
- Outreach efforts will especially seek to engage vulnerable older adults, particularly those who live alone, are socially isolated, on fixed incomes, and do not speak English as their first language.
- Further, we will also engage 'emerging retirees', those between 50-70 years old, so that their future needs and priorities are considered in planning efforts.
- Municipal department (COAs, BOHs) and community organization and health care service providers will support outreach and engagement of older adults, and also provide insights on experiences and needs of older adults, informed by their work with older adult populations.

## **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.**

Age Friendly Planning initiatives will be coordinated via the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC), with the support of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Since 1984, MAGIC has served as the coordinating body for its member towns. In its history, MAGIC has facilitated discussions and projects addressing regional issues, including recent discussions and projects related to housing, transportation, agriculture, climate change, and stormwater management. MAGIC has regular meetings every other month to discuss progress on regional projects, exchange information on



initiatives taking place in member towns, and to hear presentations from experts on topics of interest. On alternate months, MAGIC hosts special events – forums, trainings, and tours – to facilitate information exchange and educational opportunities. The Age Friendly Forum (referenced earlier) was one such special event. MAGIC pursues regional projects in coordination with MAPC; regional projects are made possible through leveraging local, state, and other resources, and are implemented with MAPC planning technical assistance services and the MAGIC coordinator’s support. MAGIC Age Friendly Planning initiatives will utilize the MAGIC structure to facilitate collaboration across its 13 towns and neighboring Westford. With the support of participating town staff and elected officials, the project will engage municipal departments (Councils on Aging, Boards of Health, Departments of Public Works, Planning Departments etc.), community organizations (transportation management associations, health care, businesses, etc.) of each town in the project. Through departmental and organizational networks, the project will reach and engage resident stakeholders in defining solutions for improving housing and transportation across the region.

#### **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?**

We hope that our regional approach to Age Friendly Planning will serve as a model for multi-municipality collaborations, and anticipate that our experiences will be useful in informing similar collaborative efforts. We are a 14-town group, convened by the regional planning agency, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. As one of the few examples of a group of communities that are coordinating on Age Friendly planning efforts, our structure and approach may be informative to others. Additionally, we have chosen to focus our efforts on housing and transportation, two areas that the participating towns agree are high priorities. Our decision to conduct an in-depth analysis of two Age Friendly domains will allow us to more thoroughly investigate and identify regional solutions on these topics. Where the need to expand or shift focus is identified, future iterations of regional age friendly planning can pivot to address these. Our experience with this focused approach may be useful for others, where, like us, they are engaging multiple towns or cities in Age Friendly planning and seek to address priority local needs thoughtfully, thoroughly, and within the time and resource constraints of a project.

#### **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?**

We are interested in joining the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities for the opportunity to thoughtfully consider and address the current and future needs of an increasingly older population in the region. Following are the top reasons we believe it is important to join the Network and engage in Age Friendly Community planning.



Projections show the region’s population becoming increasingly older. Where in all communities currently 9-20% of residents are 65 years and older, in 2030 this range will jump to 14-36% (Census 2010 and MAPC MetroFuture Projections). The unique needs of a growing older adult population will influence housing, transportation, and health care, among other services and systems. Population projections show a clear need to think proactively to ensure that current efforts and planning address these issues.

The region is already actively addressing issues and implementing solutions that fall within the eight Age Friendly domains, evident in the regional examples of programming and policies highlighted during the group’s Age Friendly Forum. While municipal departments and allied organizations are doing significant work that aligns with and promotes Age Friendly Communities, these activities are not always identified as such and could be better coordinated. Joint membership in the Network will support this coordination, and contribute to a better understanding of the entities and initiatives that support older adults.

Housing and transportation are important regional issues. The region has limited public transit and is largely car-dependent. Housing is primarily single-family, and may not meet the needs of adults as they age and as households get smaller. Our Age Friendly planning gives us the unique opportunity to take a nuanced look at these issues, and explore solutions specific to older adults’ interests and needs.

We have engaged AARP in our initial conversations about regional Age Friendly planning opportunities, and have already received valuable input and guidance from them and partner organizations. Membership in the Network will allow us to build on our relationship with AARP and others and take advantage of the resources and support available.

