Age Friendly Central Mass

Age Friendly Action Plan (2023)

CMRPC

January 18th, 2023

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Executive Summary

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), in coordination with the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative and the Age-Friendly Central Mass Action Team, facilitated a public engagement and outreach initiative from April 27th, 2022, through August 26th, 2022, to solicit feedback from residents and area experts on healthy aging about the existing conditions of programming and infrastructure that is supportive of older adults and to identify existing and future needs. This process included developing and distributing a Community Age-Friendly Needs Assessment Survey and initiating five public regional listening sessions across the Central Massachusetts region. The formation of this plan is the result of our rigorous community engagement process, which included a survey, listening sessions, interviews, and meetings with community members, leaders, and stakeholders.

With the region's rapid and unprecedented shifting demographics, having a healthy aging plan for the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) planning region is more important now than ever. While the United States is projected to have more older adults than children for the first time in the year 2035, Central Massachusetts is projected to see the shift much earlier – between 2025 and 2030. By 2040, at least 30% of residents of most cities and towns in the Central Massachusetts region will be older adults, with some towns reaching an older adult population of at least 35 percent. Meanwhile, cities and towns across the region have limited resources and infrastructural preparedness for this significant demographic shift. Age-Friendly Central Massachusetts aims to ensure that our region will adapt to the changing needs of our residents.

The plan reflects on the feedback CMRPC got through community engagement on topics such as transportation, housing, outdoor spaces and buildings, social participation, respect, and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community and health services. Noticeably, our survey, meetings, and listening sessions identified several key points, as summarized below.

A. Many older adults do not take advantage of public transportation opportunities due to the lack of information and communication, convenience, accessibility, and timeliness of these services.
B. Many older adults drive but do not feel comfortable driving. Alternatively, many older adults walk as an alternative means of transportation, yet poor sidewalk conditions and ADA compliance issues make walking more difficult.
C. Many older adults found that public buildings are not accessible to all people regardless of age and ability.
D. There is a lack of affordable and accessible housing options for older adults as well as a lack of safety and maintenance of housing units.
E. Many older adults would like to stay in their communities as long as possible. Still, the need for currently limited or unavailable aging in place assistance, policies, and programs makes staying difficult.
F. There needs to be a centralized location for information about healthy aging within the region.

G. There is a need for more affordable home healthcare providers, telehealth services, and mental health resources for older adults.

H. There is a need for more home care services, such as housekeeping and personal care service options for older adults.

The plan will address the above-identified issues and many other challenges in the region. CMRPC sincerely hopes Age-Friendly Massachusetts will make Central Massachusetts more prepared for the shift in demographics, more inclusive as a region, and more livable as a home for all for many years to come.

Introduction

Central Massachusetts Region

The Age-Friendly Central Mass region is represented by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission territory, encompassing 40 communities within Southern Worcester County.

Like most regions in the state and country, Central Massachusetts is experiencing a major demographic shift in population. By 2030, 72 million adults across the United States, or nearly 1 in 5 people, will be age 65 or older.[1] Setting the stage for this unprecedented shift in population, the year 2035 will mark the first time in the history of the USA that there will be more older adults than children.[2]

This change is attributed mainly to the "Baby Boomer" generation (1946-1964) coming of age, as adults born during this period began turning 50 in 1996 and began turning 65

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[1] Dugan, E., Porell, F., Silverstein, N., Lee, C. M., Wang, S.S., Kim, B., Pitheckoff, N., Wang, H. Han, S. H., Chunga, R., & Prisad, S. (2018). *Highlights of the 2018 Massachusetts Healthy Aging Data Report*. Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative. http://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/MA_Healthy_Aging_Highlights_2018.pdf.

[2] Gibson, W. E. (2018, March 14). *Age 65+ Adults Are Projected to Outnumber Children by 2030*. AARP. https://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2018/census-baby-boomers-fd.html.

in 2012. As, notably, one of the largest generational populations in U.S. history, this population has significantly propelled the trajectory of this shift since 2012.

Graphic 1: Comparison of Older Adults to Children in the Central Massachusetts Region between 2010 and 2040
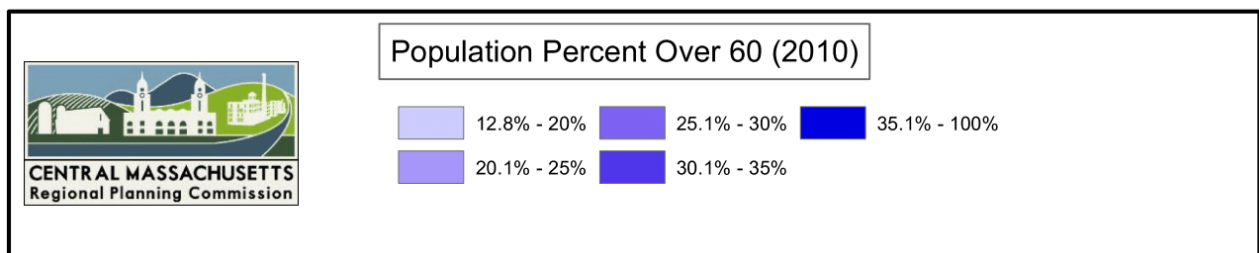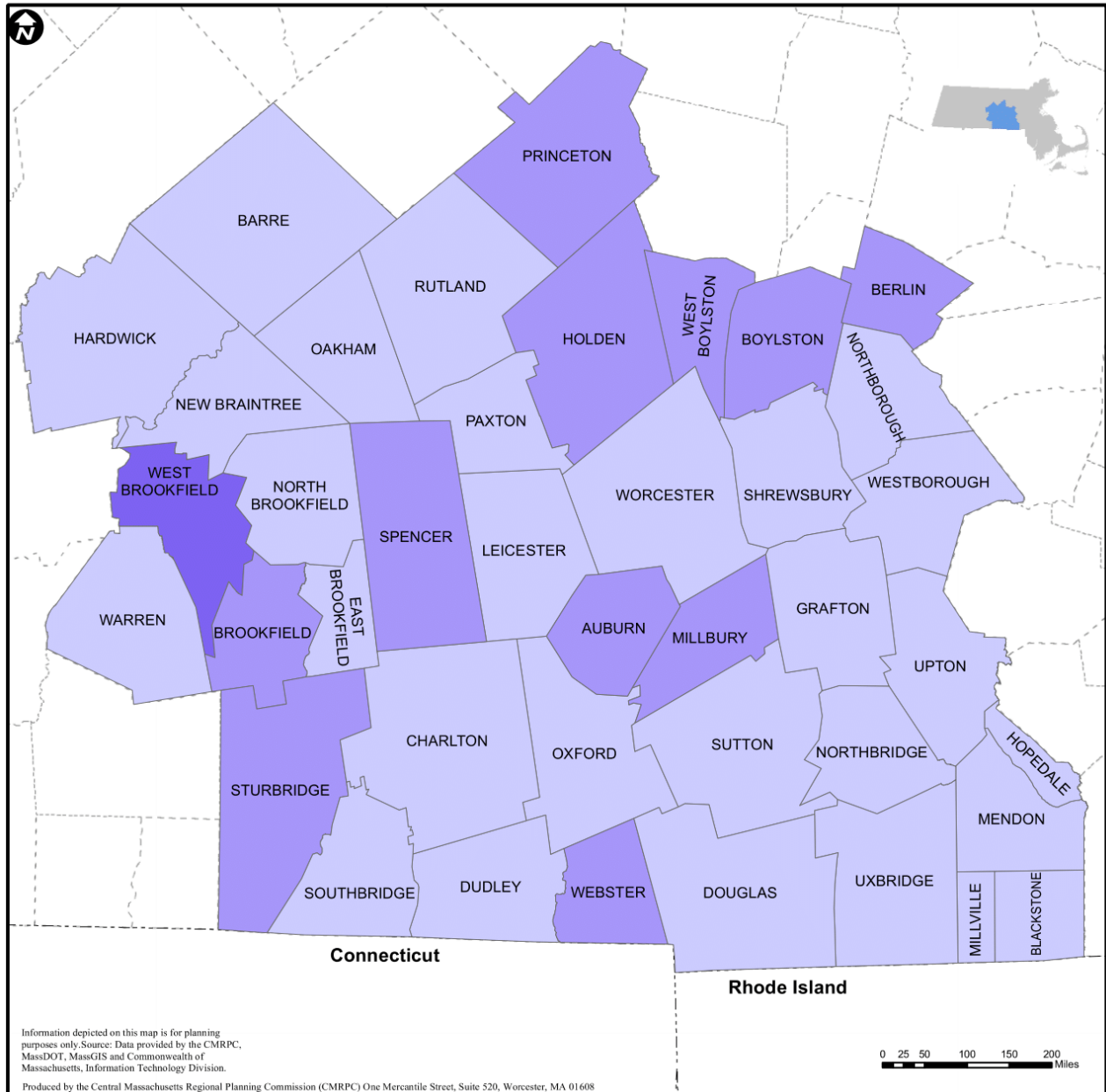

COMPARISON OF CHILDREN TO OLDER ADULTS
(CMRPC PLANNING REGION)
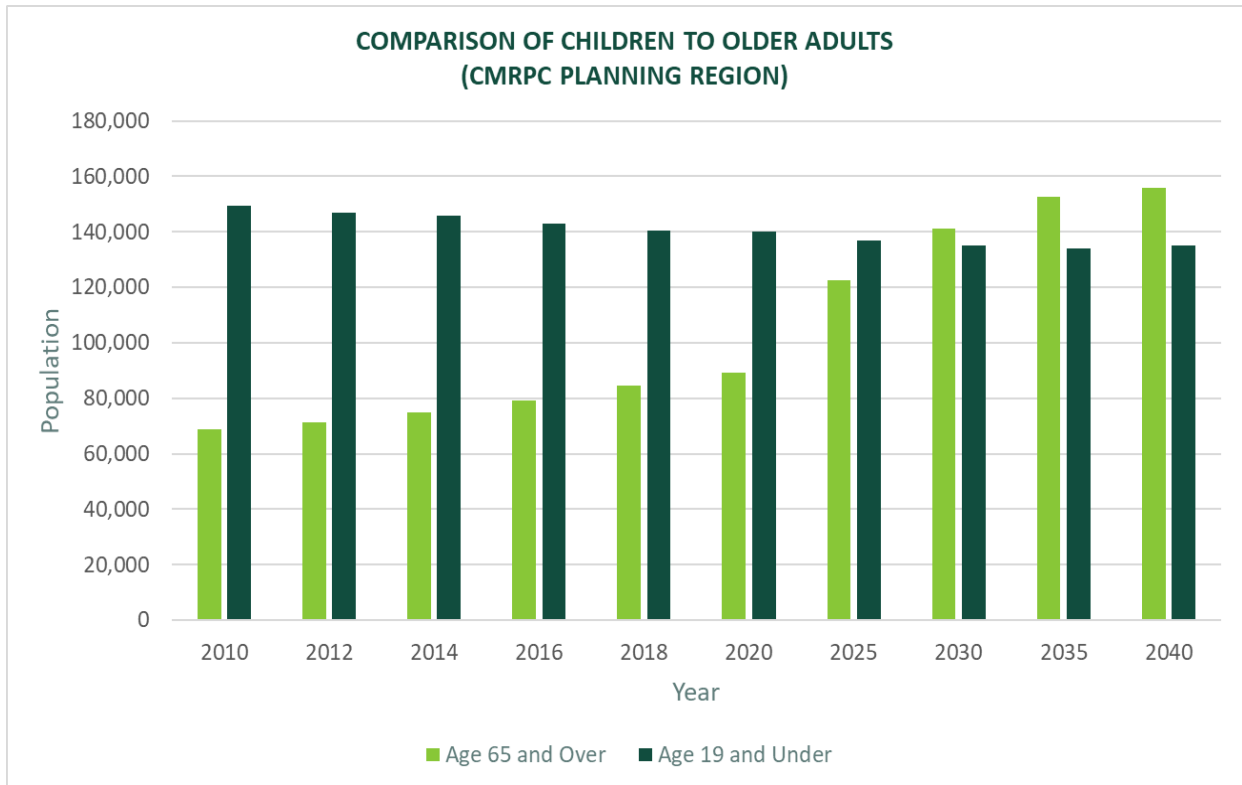
In Central Massachusetts, data closely mirrors this trajectory beginning in 2012 and shows the population of older adults slowly increasing from then through the present day. However, data also shows that Central Massachusetts may experience a "shift" in population between 2025 and 2030, sooner than projected for the country. And by 2040, the older adult population in the region will account for 30% or more of the total population. The next few graphics depict the change in the percentage of the population of adults ages 60 and older throughout the region from 2010 to 2019 and what is projected for 2040.

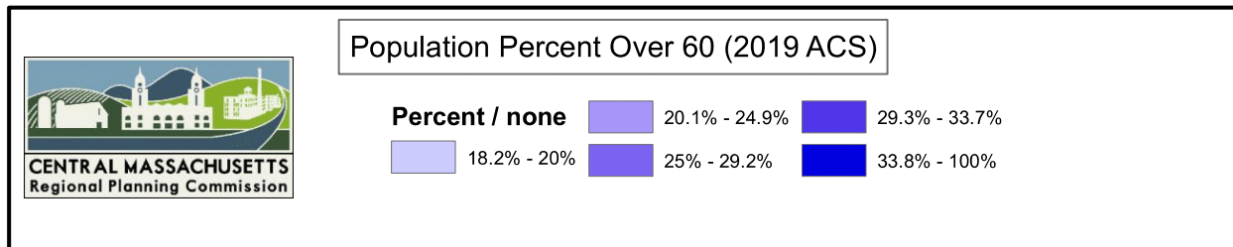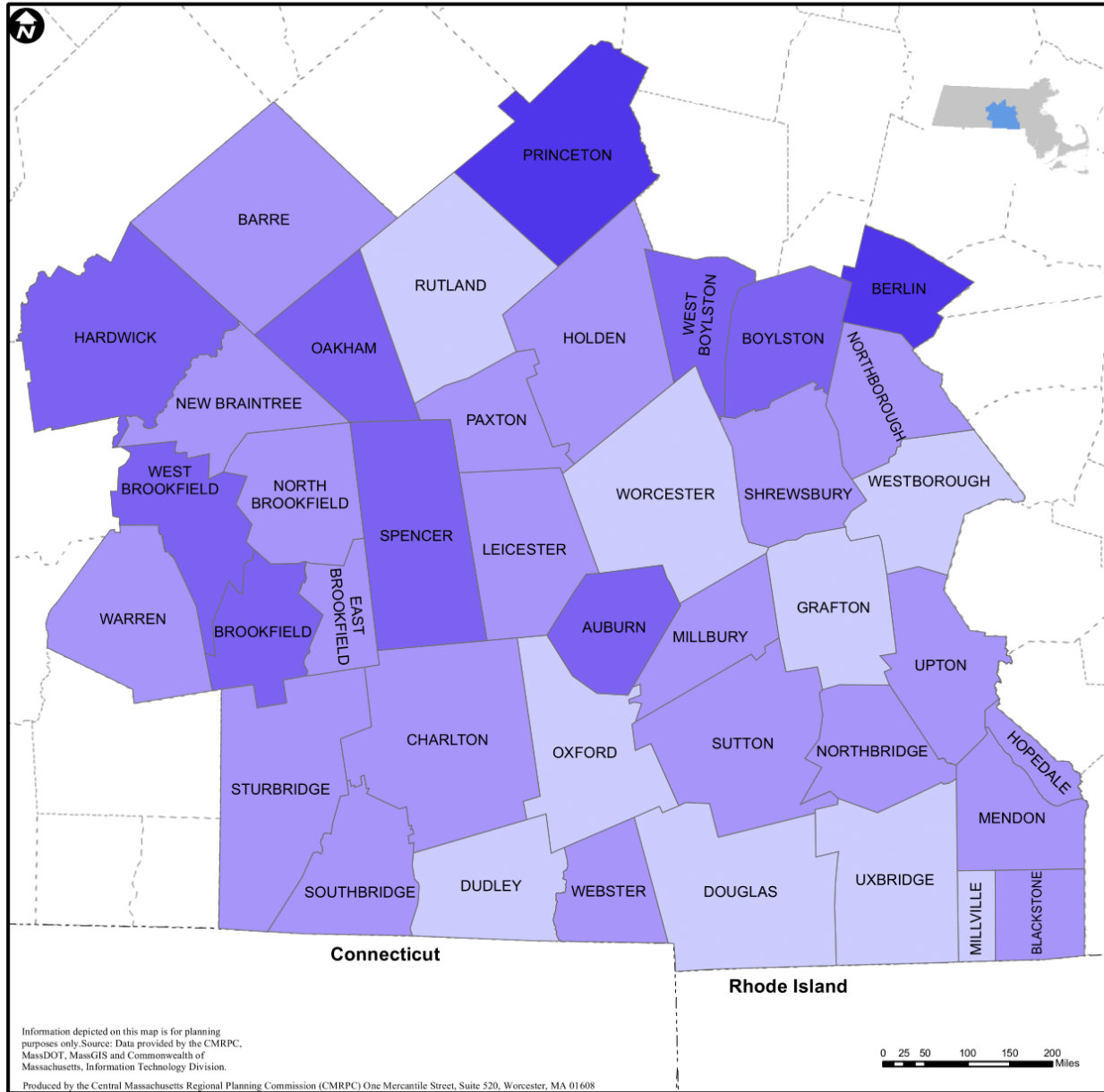*Graphic 2: Regional Percent Population of Adults Age 60 in 2010*

Population Percent Over 60

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only.Source: Data provided by the CMRPC, MassDOT, MassGIS and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

Produced by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) One Mercantile Street, Suite 520, Worcester, MA 01608

Population Percent Over 60 (2010)

12.8% - 20%	25.1% - 30%	35.1% - 100%
20.1% - 25%	30.1% - 35%	

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Regional Planning Commission

Graphic 3: Regional Percent Population of Adults Age 60 in 2019

Population Percent Over 60

Population Percent Over 60 (2019 ACS)

Percent / none

18.2% - 20%	
20.1% - 24.9%	
25% - 29.2%	
29.3% - 33.7%	
33.8% - 100%	

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Regional Planning Commission

Graphic 4: Projected Regional Percent Population of Adults Age 60 in 2040

Population Percent Over 60

Population Percent Over 60 (2040)

- 22% - 25%
- 25.1% - 30%
- 30.1% - 35%
- 35.1% - 100%

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Regional Planning Commission
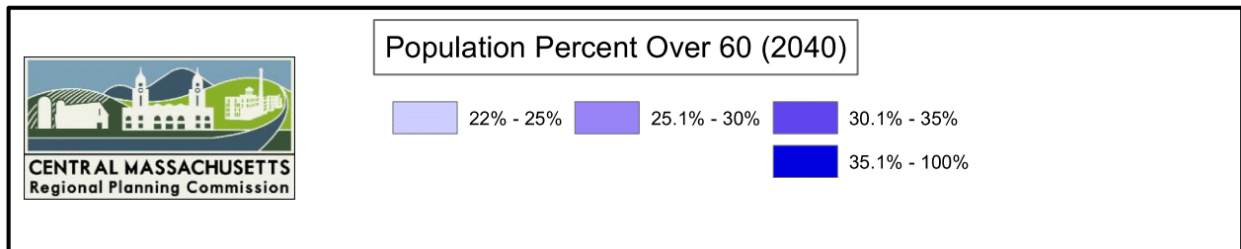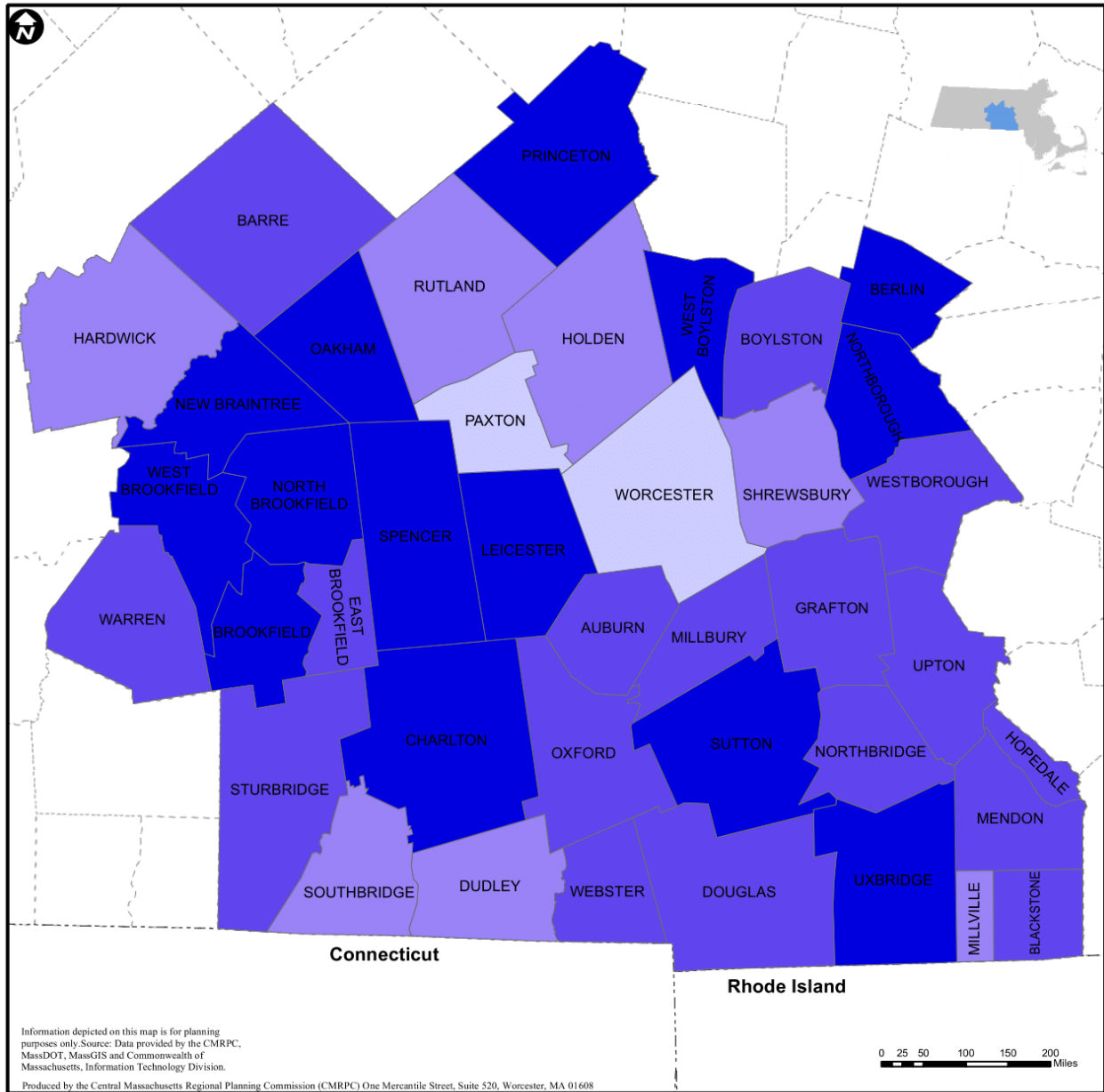
The above few graphics depict this unprecedented growth in population of adults age 60 and older. This progressive shift began to take shape in 2010 as the percentage of older adults in the communities within Central Massachusetts began to increase. Prior to and including 2010, most communities had older adult populations that accounted for 20% or less of the total population. Between 2010 and 2019, many cities and towns across the region saw rapid growth in their populations of older adults. Noticeably, by 2019, many communities in Central Massachusetts are seeing older adults accounting for more than 20% of the total population. Some communities saw this population rise to over 25 to 30%. By 2040, these same communities will have expanded populations of older adults that account for 30% or more of the total population.

What is Age-Friendly?

In 2006, The World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Age-Friendly Cities and Communities network as an international effort to promote livable communities through preemptive and adaptive planning strategies. This network is administered across the United States through AARP.[3] Age-Friendly and the communities involved enable people of all ages to actively participate in community activities, engage in outdoor and public recreation, access and utilize goods and services, and have equitable access to affordable housing, transportation, and community programs. Additionally, an age-friendly community will continue to support older adults even after they can no longer care for themselves.

In the United States, the age-friendly framework is conceptualized through AARP's [8 Domains of Livability](#)[4], which represent targeted focus areas for improvement or strengthening within an age-friendly context. The Domains of Livability illustrate a "menu of options" which, through community outreach and engagement, can be tailored to the needs of a community during the action planning and implementation processes:

Transportation

Transportation is the backbone to accessing community and health services, social gatherings and events, jobs, continued education, and outdoor spaces, among other opportunities. This means that public and active transportation modes should be accessible, affordable, connected, and convenient for older adults.

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[3] *Introducing the Age-Friendly Network.* (2019, September). AARP. https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/an-introduction.html#:~:text=The%20AARP%20Network%20of%20Age%2DFriendly%20States%20and%20Communities%20is,the%20parallel%20trend%20of%20urbanization.

[4] *The 8 Domains of Livability: An Introduction.* (2021, February). AARP. https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html.

Housing

Aging in place starts at home. For those that choose to age in their current homes, access to affordable and trustworthy home improvement options will ensure a home remains "age proof". Providing a variety of affordable and accessible housing options for those that choose or need alternative housing will also allow older adults to remain comfortably within their communities.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Regardless of a person's age or ability, everyone should have safe, convenient, and equitable access to outdoor green spaces and public buildings. For older adults, access to these types of amenities can be expanded by implementing accessible parking, ramps, directional signage, elevators, and zero-stop entrances.

Social Participation

Social participation and engagement of older adults in community groups, activities, and/or senior center activities and gatherings support continued social interaction and combats isolation.

Respect and Social Inclusion

In addition to social participation, respect, and social inclusion can be supported by access to intergenerational social platforms where older adults may engage with youth and young adults.

Civic Participation and Employment

Continued civic engagement can take many forms, including providing volunteer or paid municipal and committee positions or providing work-off programs that contribute toward property tax. These programs provide older adults opportunities to engage with local government and provide their perspective as part of future planning and development.

Communication and Information

As technology advances and resources become more accessible online, it is important to educate about and reinforce new technologies to ensure older adults continue to have access to information and resources. It is equally important to ensure that older adults have convenient and equitable access to information, whether in an online format or in print.

Community and Health Services

Local, convenient, and affordable community and health services are essential as people age. Providing varying types of services, such as in-home care, rehabilitation, and local provider, ensures that services remain accessible through different stages of life and into older adulthood.

In Massachusetts, the age-friendly movement has grown to include more than 100 communities, including more than 85 recognized as dementia friendly. Many more communities are considered "emerging," which means they are working towards an age and dementia friendly designation. The designation itself is a commitment to obtain feedback for the purpose of recognizing strengths and opportunities that promote healthy aging for all, develop an action plan, and then partner with stakeholders on implementation.

Age-Friendly Central Mass Process

Considering this progression across the state, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, in partnership with James Fuccione from the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative (MHAC), was awarded District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding in March of 2022 to pursue a regional age and dementia friendly designation, later organized as the Age-Friendly Central Mass Initiative. DLTA is funding from the State that CMRPC helps communities apply for and utilize for projects including, but not limited to, economic development, housing production, conservation, and, as in this case, age and dementia-friendly initiatives. As part of this age and dementia-friendly initiative, CMRPC convened the Age-Friendly Central Mass Action Team in April, consisting of members from:

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)
Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative (MHAC)
Blackstone Valley Partnership for Public Health (BVPPH)
Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation (QVCDC)
Tri Valley Inc.
Worcester Department of Public Health & REACH
Elder Services of Worcester Area (ESWA)
Town of Upton Council on Aging
Town of Millbury Council on Aging
Town of Barre Council on Aging
Town of Hopedale Council on Aging
Town of Shrewsbury Council on Aging
City of Worcester Senior Center

The Action Team was formed to support community outreach, engagement, and the development of a regional action plan. The team's public participation phase included developing and launching the Community Age-Friendly Needs Assessment survey, which was open from April 27th to August 26th. During the survey period, CMRPC facilitated

numerous public listening sessions and stakeholder listening sessions both in person and virtually, including:

June 17th Southwest Subregional Public Listening Session at Tri Valley Inc.
June 27th Southeast Subregional Public Listening Session at Northbridge Senior Center
June 30th Northeast Subregional Public Listening Session at Nineteen Carter, Berlin
July 12th North Subregional Public Listening Session at Rutland Public Library
July 18th West Subregional Listening Session at West Brookfield Public Library
August 17th Stakeholder Listening Session with ESWA (virtual)
August 17th Regional Public Listening Session (virtual)

The purpose of the listening sessions was to solicit feedback from residents and local healthy aging experts about the strengths and needs of older adults in the region. The public participation phase closely followed the timeline of the survey, closing on August 26th. The survey received 275 responses during this time. Upon wrapping up the public participation phase, CMRPC analyzed and summarized survey responses into a Survey Summary Report, which was released on September 26th. It is important to note that certain municipalities and demographic groups were overrepresented or underrepresented in the survey responses, so the responses should be treated as helpful information but not precise data. Information gathered from the public listening sessions and survey summary report, as well as knowledge of infrastructure serving and resources for older adults in the region, have been utilized to inform the Age-Friendly Central Mass Action Plan.

Action Plan – Domain Goals

Approach

o   Identify baseline data in the region using the 8 Domains of Livability to set a framework for action plan goals.

o   Develop evaluation metrics to measure the progress and implementation success of the action plan.

o   Gain commitment from municipalities and organizations to incorporate Age-Friendly policies and practices into their on-going work.

o   Encourage adoption of the Age-Friendly Resolution in 40 municipalities in the region.

o   Reevaluate baseline data and goals in 5 years to reanalyze and reprioritize the needs of older adults and therefore action plan goals and strategies.

o   Promote funding opportunities that are supportive of age-friendly projects and initiatives.

Transportation

Goals at a Glance

- o Expand transportation services in rural communities.
- o Expand connectivity between Councils on Aging, senior housing, and the broader community/region.
- o Invest in accessible, equitable, and connected multi-modal infrastructure.
- o Support the financial sustainability and maintenance of localized and municipal older adult transportation services.
- o Bolster community participation and recreational opportunities through transportation access.

What We Heard

Accessible, convenient, and multi-modal transportation is crucial to aging in place, as survey respondents and listening session participants indicated. Transportation provides an essential linkage to services and opportunities and allows older adults to remain independent as they age, whether while walking, biking, driving, or using transit. It is also deeply embedded within all domains of livability as a means of access.

Notable results of the survey's transportation section include that respondents over the age of 80 or who reported an annual income at or lower than $30K were less likely to own a personal vehicle; they, therefore, rely on a family member or friends for transportation. Also, survey respondents used public transit and senior center transportation services at a low rate of 14%. Nevertheless, 68% of the respondents mentioned that they are aware of transit services in their community, and 63% of respondents mentioned that they are aware of transportation for older adults provided by the local Council on Aging or senior center. Overall, survey respondents rated transportation options in local communities as poor or fair. Similarly, the condition and accessibility of sidewalks and bicycle accommodations in their communities were rated as fair or poor. Respondents also felt that there were not enough benches along sidewalks, parks, or other green spaces.

Actions

Transportation Goal 1: Expand transportation services in rural communities.		
Action Strategy	**Suggested Lead**	**Timeframe**
Support the implementation of and investment in localized on-demand transit services for communities with similar service needs: 1. Using services like the Quaboag Connector and Via Shuttle as best practices, assess the feasibility and compatibility of similar services in other rural contexts throughout the region, 2. Consider and adapt to the needs of older adults with disabilities, such as dementia and age-onset vision-loss, 3. Identify potential community partners that share similar transportation needs, 4. Promote programs like the Community Transit Grant to support the implementation of pilot services, 5. Analyze the pilot service's success level and determine the need for more permanent/long-term source(s) of funding, and 6. Consider creating hubs where older adults gather and live (COAs and Senior Housing).	CMRPC Local COAs WRTA Local Housing Authorities	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Medium-term to Long-term
Identify potential opportunities to expand existing on-demand and shuttle services to neighboring communities with similar transportation needs: 1. Support the expansion of Quaboag Connector and similar models to more rural communities, especially in the western half of the region. By 2040, the west sub-region of the CMRPC region will have a significantly higher population of people age 60 and older.	CMRPC WRTA	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Medium-term

Action Strategy	Suggested Lead	Timeframe
Encourage and promote private, subsidized transportation services to expand access: 1. Promote agencies that provide unique transportation services for older adults with disabilities, such as escorted support for the visually impaired.	CMRPC Local governments Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Ongoing

Transportation Goal 2: Invest in accessible, equitable, and connected multi-modal infrastructure.		
Action Strategy	**Suggested Lead**	**Timeframe**
Incorporate an age and dementia friendly lens into bicycle and pedestrian project planning and implementation: 1. Advertise and promote funding opportunities as they become available, 2. Incorporate needs and priorities into regional and statewide Long Range Transportation Plans as applicable, and 3. Utilize public walk audits to assess the walkability or accessibility of roadway. Consider recruiting personnel from AARP, CMRPC, or WalkBike Worcester to conduct these walk audits.	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team WalkBike Worcester AARP	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Encourage transit-oriented development and multi-modal hubs in coordination with the WRTA in areas of high transit use and compact residential development.	CMRPC Local governments	Study: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Identify priority walking routes or areas where older adults congregate with other age groups to prioritize funding for improved pedestrian facilities. Explore existing mobility management programs.	CMRPC Local governments	Study: Short-term Implementation: Medium-term to Long-term
Ensure all transit-oriented infrastructure developments adhere to dementia-friendly equitability standards: 1. Generate inclusive infrastructure designs that consider varying degrees of human ability,	Age and Dementia Friendly Infrastructure Team of the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Alzheimer's	Study: Medium-term Implementation: Long-term

2. Promote infrastructure design features that are familiar and meet people's expectations in terms of appearance, size, functionality, and 3. Adhere to the guidance, and best practices set out by the Age and Dementia Friendly Infrastructure Team of the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Disease and All Other Dementias.	Disease and All Other Dementias	

Transportation Goal 3: Support the financial sustainability and maintenance of localized and municipal older adult transportation services.		
Action Strategy	**Suggested Lead**	**Timeframe**
Create and incentivize a volunteer program that is focused specifically on transportation for senior centers: 1. Identify sustainable funding sources to transport older adults of varying age groups, 2. Provide volunteers with trainings related to accommodating the needs of older adults with disabilities such as dementia or age-onset vision loss, and 3. Conduct program workshops at COAs and Senior Centers to teach older adults best practices for using public transit services.	Local COAs and Senior Centers Age-Friendly Action Team Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Study: Short-term to Medium-term Implementation: Medium-term to Long-term
Support digital equity to minimize the need for transportation where applicable: 1. Assess digital equity and apply for funds available through ARPA and BIL, and 2. Identify and elevate training programs that help older adults with disabilities or telehealth providers achieve digital equity.	CMRPC Town Planners Town Administrators	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Promote funding opportunities for communities to support new and existing local services:	CMRPC	It depends on the community's digital infrastructure;

Action Strategy	Suggested Lead	Timeframe
1. Utilize E-mail blasts, community and organizational social media pages (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn), and digital newsletters to advertise Notice of Funding Opportunities and webinars related to local, state, and federal funding programs.	ASAP's (ESWA, Tri-Valley Inc., and CMAA)	Ongoing, but ideally Short-term to Medium-term
Build the capacity of Councils on Aging to support increased transportation services for older adults and older adults with disabilities by creating a regional assessment that addresses: 1. Funding to support these services from Councils on Aging, and 2. Education and expertise-and-capacity-building among personnel who will staff these services, including disability awareness training programs. For example, Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI) has orientation and mobility specialists who would provide training around accessing transportation services for the visually impaired.	Local COAs and Senior Centers WRTA CMRPC Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Assessment: Short-term Capacity-building: Ongoing

Transportation Goal 4: Bolster community participation and recreational opportunities through transportation access.

Action Strategy	Suggested Lead	Timeframe
Extend public transit and senior center transportation services to trail and park access points: 1. Coordinate with local hospitals, health foundations, chambers of commerce, and businesses to fund transportation for seniors to parks and trails in promotion of health and active living, and 2. Find other sources of long-term funding.	CMRPC WRTA Local Parks Departments Local Conservation Non-profits	Study: Short-term Implementation: Medium-term to Long-term
Expand public transit options to connect older adults to grocery stores, shopping plazas, senior	CMRPC WRTA	Study and Increased Outreach: Short-term

center services, local community events, and volunteer opportunities: 1. Coordinate with local businesses and grocery stores to expand elderly shopping hours to accommodate transportation needs better, and 2. Promote organizations or agencies that provide eligible seniors with at-home services, such as grocery shopping and pharmacy or mail pick-up. For example, the Quaboag Valley CDC has a Senior Outreach Program that provides free services to low-to-moderate income seniors living in a select few CMRPC communities with these in-home services.	Local Businesses and Grocery Stores Chambers of Commerce Quaboag Valley CDC Senior Outreach Program	Shopping Hours Implementation: Short-term to Medium-term Transit Implementation: Medium-term to Long-term
Encourage the use of public transit and related services for people of all abilities: 1. Consider all levels of human ability, including the needs of those who are visually impaired, blind, deaf, or have dementia, 2. Promote convenient wayfinding by positioning transit stops wherever it is safe and accessible, 3. Provide adequate and accessible signage, lighting and sheltering, and 4. Utilize accurate and convenient communication.	Age- and Dementia-Friendly Infrastructure Team of the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Disease and All Other Dementias AARP Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Study: Medium-term Implementation: Ongoing

Housing

Goals at a Glance

- Support the development of quality and affordable housing units for people of all ages, abilities, and income levels.
- Coordinate with local businesses and communities to establish affordable, equitable, and convenient home repair, modification, and maintenance as well as everyday services for older adults.

What We Heard

Having an accessible home in a stable and supportive community is foundational to many people's security as they age. Many older people prefer living independently, and they should be provided with affordable and trustworthy home improvement options to continue living in their current homes. Other older people want or need to live with more support, and affordable and accessible housing options should be available in their communities.

Notable results of the survey's housing section include that 67% of respondents, especially respondents who are younger and have higher incomes, reported living in homes that require modifications to become fully accessible. Around 65% of respondents stated that affordable housing options for older adults in their communities were fair or poor regarding abundance, maintenance, and safety, and 63% of respondents stated that they would like the home repair services that were rated highly overall to be more affordable and accessible for older and low-income residents.

Actions

Housing Goal 1: Support the development of quality and affordable housing units for people of all ages, abilities, and income levels		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Promote the use of housing production plans, as well as other plans, that map out future housing development: 1. Foster transparency between developers and towns, residents, and potential residents, 2. Utilize E-mail blasts, community, and organizational social media pages (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn), and digital newsletters to advertise Notice of	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team	Increased Outreach: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing

Funding Opportunities and webinars related to local, state, and federal funding programs, 3. Conduct targeted outreach to communities that do not meet affordable housing minimums and/or are encouraging housing development, and 4. Encourage towns to incorporate senior housing plans into town Master Plans.		
Utilize creative place-making strategies to enhance the safety, accessibility, and livability of existing low-income and senior housing developments. 1. Recognize the homeless population and utilize the services and best practices provided by programs such as Housing First, 2. Incorporate best practices from the Age and Dementia Friendly Infrastructure Team as a way of increasing accessibility, and 3. Address the needs of older adults with disabilities, such as age-onset vision-loss, by promoting local assessment tools or services like MABVI's in-home vision rehabilitation, which provides guidance regarding necessary home adaptations.	CMRPC Local COAs Local Property Owners Age- and Dementia-Friendly Infrastructure Team Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance	Study: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Identify local policies and leaders that engage in narratives for affordable housing: 1. Encourage discussions and forums between local COAs, housing authorities, residents, and local and state officials to understand housing needs better, and 2. Understand local bylaws and other policies about accessory dwelling units, Chapter 40B, and other relevant topics to establish strategies to	Age-Friendly Action Team Town Administrators Local COAs CMRPC	Short-term

encourage affordable housing development.		
Encourage the development of more genuinely affordable housing with considerations for subsidized housing, rent as a percentage of income, etc.: 1. Promote and streamline best practices for facilitating property tax deferrals, tax work-off programs, and property abatement.	CMRPC Local governments Age-Friendly Action Team	Increased Outreach: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Champion affordable housing development designs that prioritize the needs of people with dementia or other diseases or disabilities: 1. Understand that those living with dementia have unique needs that warrant familiar floor plans, memory aids, sufficient lighting, contrasts, etc., 2. Recognize and adapt to the needs of people with disabilities such as age-onset vision loss or diseases such as substance addiction, and 3. Utilize local services and resources, such as the guide created by the Age and Dementia Friendly Infrastructure Team or the AARP HomeFit Guide.	Age and Dementia Friendly Infrastructure Team of the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Disease and All Other Dementias Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired AARP	Study: Medium-term Implementation: Ongoing
Consider, promote, and plan for alternative housing types for older adults: 1. Support and promote the development of middle-housing units, which are small but well-designed homes for sale or rent that have familiar and accessible floor plans, 2. Champion and encourage programs that connect people across generations, cultures, and lived experiences which may decide to live together,	AARP Age and Dementia Friendly Infrastructure Team of the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Disease and All Other Dementias Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Study: Medium-term Implementation: Ongoing

| 3. Support and advocate for alternative housing opportunities such as co-housing, coterie housing, housing for individuals with CORI's, tiny homes, student-and-senior housing, intergenerational housing, as well as LGBTQ housing, and 4. Identify and elevate funding opportunities for the development and maintenance of alternative housing options for older adults. | Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Association | |

Housing Goal 2: Coordinate with local businesses and communities to establish affordable, equitable, and convenient home repair, modification, and maintenance, as well as everyday services for older adults		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Establish local volunteer groups or organizations that help disabled, low-income, and older adults with home repair, modification, and maintenance services: 1. Identify and prioritize local needs for an organizational or volunteer service, 2. Identify potential service groups – consider local technical schools, volunteer programs through schools, and local Lions Clubs, among others, and 3. Document process for replication across the region – summarize best practices and share success stories.	Local COAs Age-Friendly Action Team	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Collaborate with private companies to explore reduced costs for services for older adults through subsidies, grant programs, and/or other incentive programs.	Local COAs Age-Friendly Action Team Local governments	Ongoing
Emphasize the need for community partnerships with companies and organizations that specialize in home repair and remodels for those living with dementia and other disabilities.	Age and Dementia Friendly Infrastructure Team of the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Disease	Assessment: Medium-term Implementation: Ongoing

	and All Other Dementias Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	

Community & Health Services

Goals at a Glance

- o Support in-home care for older adults.
- o Expand mental health resources and services in the region.
- o Emphasize senior centers and Councils on Aging as primary community resources for older adults.
- o Support the implementation of preventative programming or infrastructure that encourages active living.

What We Heard

Affordable and locally accessible community health services are vital in supporting people as they age. Services in different contexts, including in-home care, rehabilitation care, and care from the facilities of local health providers, are all important in helping older adults in different circumstances. There is a need for more affordable and accessible healthcare services in the region.

Notable survey results relating to community and health services include that most respondents reported being in good health and being physically active at least several times a week, but respondents making less than $30K and who are over 80 years old were more likely to report having a disability or chronic illness, and respondents with incomes less than $10K reported being less physically active. Also, majorities of respondents reported that there are affordable health and fitness programs and good to excellent home and hospital-based healthcare services in their communities; However, respondents with incomes of less than $10K were more likely to report poor access to healthcare services that are respectful, have well-trained home-healthcare staff, and are offered in different languages. Moreover, 49% of respondents reported that affordable home care services in their communities were poor or fair, and 49% of respondents reported that mental healthcare services in the region were fair or poor. In addition, 56% of respondents reported going to senior centers for social events and public services, and most respondents did not report being isolated, lonely, or excluded, but 60% of respondents with household incomes at or lower than $10K reported being sometimes or often lonely, isolated, or excluded.

Beyond the community outreach for this plan, CMRPC and the Age-Friendly Action Team recognize the significance of the Worcester Division of Public Health and the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) as well as the Community Health Assessment (CHA) (2021 - 2026 Community Health Improvement Plan (arcgis.com)). CMRPC and the Age-Friendly Action Team will do their best to uphold the main four main principles of the CHIP that are as follows: invest first in the community; elevate, listen to, and respect the community's voice; eliminate gaps between services; honor trauma-informed approaches to care with equal measure to resilience approaches to care.

Actions

Community & Health Services Goal 1: Support the re-introduction of home doctor visits for older adults and people with disabilities.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Leads**	**Timeframe**
Identify the homebound population and those needing in-home care services: 1. Consider cataloging the geographic concentration of need as a percentage of the whole population for each community and for housing developments with a large concentration of older adults.	Age-Friendly Action Team CMRPC Local COAs Local Public Health Local ASAPs/AAAs (ESWA, Tri-Valley, CMAA)	Short-term
Increase access to in-home medical care: 1. Identify potential service providers; Consider a Mobile Integrated Health program that can be embedded into local EMS, 2. Foster partnerships with Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs) and home care agencies, and 3. Identify existing local programs and promote these services regionally.	Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs Local Public Health Local ASAPs VNA Care, Overlook VNA	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Address the workforce shortage for professional and family in-home caregivers:	Age-Friendly Action Team CMRPC Local COAs	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing

1. Advocate for better pay and access to state programs/services (i.e., EBT and SNAP benefits), 2. Identify and promote related programs through the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, and 3. Convene home care agencies and local organizations to create incentives and benefits for home care workers (i.e., reduced public transit fares).		
Promote telehealth services to alleviate some of the need for in-home care: 1. Encourage telehealth providers to engage in training programs that provide guidance related to supporting older adults with disabilities through telehealth, 2. Facilitate technology training programs for older adults with disabilities, such as age-onset vision loss, related to accessing and utilizing telehealth services, and 3. Promote all-inclusive health portals with disability-accommodating services, such as read-aloud features for filling out medical forms, to eliminate the need for a third-party and promote confidentiality.	Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs Local and Regional Hospitals Local Housing Authorities Senior Housing Authorities Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Ongoing

Community & Health Services Goal 2: Expand the region's mental health resources and services.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Coordinate with regional mental health providers to incorporate interpretation and multilingual services.	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs Local and Regional Hospitals	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Incorporate a list of mental health service providers in regional resource guides:	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team	Short-term

1. Catalog a list of mental health service providers, 2. Identify which organizations and agencies provide multilingual, interpretation, and disability-accommodating services, 3. Incorporate the list into the regional resource guide and encourage existing guides to add the list, and 4. Update the list as needed.	Local and Regional Hospitals	
Provide case management services to help individuals navigate available resources: 1. Hire or contract case managers or social workers, and 2. Consider allocating Opioid Settlement funds.	Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs Local and Regional Hospitals	Study: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing

Community & Health Services Goal 3: Emphasize senior centers and Councils on Aging as primary community resources for older adults.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Involve senior centers and Councils on Aging in the planning process (including regional transportation planning, housing, master plans, recreation, etc.): 1. Schedule meetings, information sessions, and group discussions at and/or with senior centers and Councils on Aging.	Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs and senior centers	Ongoing
Promote senior centers, Councils on Aging, and their respective community resources: 1. Use social media to boost their respective platforms, 2. Consider targeting specific locations such as libraries, grocery stores, and public transit stations for this promotion, 3. Consider collocating COAs and Senior Centers with other community	CMRPC Local COAs and senior centers Local hospitals, libraries, grocery stores, and transit stations	Ongoing

resources and services, such as schools, libraries, and markets, and 4. Ensure access to reliable transportation options to senior centers, Councils on Aging, and related resources.		

Community & Health Services Goal 4: Support implementation of preventative programming or infrastructure that encourages active living.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Participate in community-led racial equity training to learn about and address the causes of racial and ethnic health disparities: 1. Stay actively informed on anti-racist practices and planning principles, 2. Encourage age-friendly community work to include MHAC's "Healthy Aging for All" Guide in their efforts to promote equity and inclusion within their movement, and 3. Continue referencing the CHIP and the CHA throughout preventative programming and subsequent infrastructure planning processes.	Worcester Division of Public Health Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester Age-Friendly Action Team CMRPC	Study: Short-term to Medium-term Implementation: Ongoing
Recognize that providing reliable housing and transportation promotes rehabilitation from substance abuse: 1. Promote local and regional services, organizations, and agencies that specialize in connecting individuals with rehabilitation services, 2. Prioritize public transit options and routes that connect individuals to health services, and 3. Identify and support funding options for programs that support individuals seeking to recover from addiction.	Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Association Open Sky Community Services WRTA	Ongoing

Communication & Information

Goals at a Glance

- Expand broadband access for all residents.
- Encourage collaboration and communication between local Councils on Aging, senior centers, schools, and colleges.
- Support continued educational and interactive opportunities for older adults to engage in new and emerging technologies.
- Increase access to local and regional informational resources among older adults.
- Increase cybersecurity infrastructure and awareness in the region to help older adults use the Internet safely and securely.

What We Heard

With the increasing prevalence of technology in people's everyday lives and continued technological advancement, it is essential to help teach older adults about new information and communication technologies so they can have equitable access to information and resources. There is a need for a centralized information hub for the region and improved regional information distribution services. Accessible and equitable informational resources should be available for older adults, whether in print or online.

Notable survey results relating to communication and information include that: 75% of respondents reported that their communities do an excellent job at providing free Internet access in public places, 55% of respondents said that access to information in one central source in their communities is poor or fair, and majorities of respondents stated that they would like increased amounts of activities with younger and older people interacting, increased access to in-person information for people who may be unable to leave their homes, and increased access to community information in different languages.

Actions

Communication & Information Goal 1: Expand broadband access for all residents.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Establish internet hotspots at community centers.	Local COAs and Senior Centers Local governments Libraries	Short-term, Medium-term if local resources are currently limited
Promote the Affordable Connectivity Program ($30 off internet services):	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs and Senior Centers	Increased Outreach: Short-term

Action Strategy	Strategy Lead	Timeline
1. Utilize E-mail blasts, community and organizational social media pages (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn), and digital newsletters to advertise this and similar programs.		Implementation: Ongoing
Consider the potential for free Wi-Fi within affordable and senior housing units.	Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs and Senior Centers Local Property Owners	Study: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing

Communication & Information Goal 2: Encourage collaboration and communication between local Councils on Aging, senior centers, schools, and colleges.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeline**
Promote intergenerational opportunities between older adults and youth (K-12).	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs and Senior Centers Local Schools Local governments	Increased Outreach: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Develop incentive or volunteer programs for youth to support older adults through the schools (i.e., shoveling, raking, etc.): 1. Identify older adult needs at the community level, 2. Coordinate with honor society or other school clubs to develop programming for students to support these needs - seek funding if needed -, and 3. Document processes for replication across the region – summarize best practices and share success stories.	Local COAs and Senior Centers Local Schools and Universities Local governments Age-Friendly Action Team	Study: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing

Communication & Information Goal 3: Support continued educational and interactive opportunities for older adults to engage in new and emerging technologies.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Encourage a seniors-teaching-seniors platform for continued education in new and emerging technologies where applicable.	Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs and Senior Centers CMRPC	Study: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing

	Local governments Local colleges	

Communication & Information Goal 4: Increase access to local and regional informational resources among older adults.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Develop a regional informational guide geared toward older adult resources using AARP's 8 Domains of Livability as a framework and outline: 1. Secure funding (i.e., DLTA) for the development and launch of a regional information guide, taking inspiration from the Worcester Community Action Council Family Resource Guide,[5] 2. Catalog local and regional resources (including links, contact information, and descriptions), 3. Develop and distribute the guide in both online and in print formats to local senior centers, libraries, and Councils on Aging, and 4. Provide updates to the guide as needed.	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team	Study: Short-term Implementation: Short-term to Medium-term Updates: Ongoing
Ensure informational resources are widely available and accessible for all residents.	Local. COAs and Senior Centers	Study: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Communication & Information Goal 5: Increase cybersecurity infrastructure and awareness in the region to help older adults use the Internet safely and securely.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Promote safe practices to enhance cybersecurity for older adults at local senior centers and Councils on Aging: 1. Consider generating a list of safe practices and holding information sessions to promote the list and provide support,	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs and senior centers DA Office State Offices (AG, Treasurer, Consumer Affairs), MHAC	Study: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing

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[5] Worcester Community Connections. (2021, May). *Worcester Parent / Caregiver Guide to Community Services.* The Worcester Community Action Council. https://www.wcac.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/English-guide-050121booklet.pdf.

2. Incorporate [AARP's strategies for staying safe on the internet[6],](#) and 4. Utilize [CISA's cyber security awareness program and resources for older Americans[7].](#)		
Advocate for increased cybersecurity within municipal organizations such as senior centers and Councils on Aging: 1. Involve local senior center staff and local Council on Aging staff in the planning process for cybersecurity for older adults, 2. Include municipal staff in any information sessions, and 3. Reference and encourage the use of [MassCyberCenter's Municipal Cybersecurity Toolkit.[8]](#)	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team Local COAs and senior centers	Ongoing

Regional Services

Goals at a Glance

- Coordinate with the WRTA to expand and improve transit access.
- Encourage communication and collaboration between municipal Councils on Aging, senior centers, and municipal departments.
- Encourage municipal Emergency Management Services to engage in dementia-friendly training.
- Strengthen partnerships, collaboration, and resource sharing between regional Aging Service Access Points (ASAPs) and local governments, Councils on Aging, and senior centers.

What We Heard

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[6] AARP. (2019, May 7). *Strategies for Staying Safe and Secure Online*. AARP.org. https://www.aarp.org/home-family/personal-technology/info-2019/privacy-for-seniors.html.
[7] *CISA CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS PROGRAM OLDER AMERICAN RESOURCES*. (n.d.). Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency. https://www.cisa.gov/publication/cisa-cybersecurity-awareness-program-older-american-resources.
[8] *Municipal Cybersecurity Toolkit*. (2022). MassCyberCenter. https://masscybercenter.org/municipal-toolkit.

Older adults' problems regarding transportation, housing, community and health services, and communication and information are common across different communities in the region. Continued integrative collaboration, co-learning, and problem-solving among Councils on Aging, Senior Centers, non-profits, and other government organizations can improve people's ongoing participation and inclusion in society as they age.

Notable survey results relating to regional services include that most respondents stated that they would like increased amounts of affordable activities in their communities and that they have good volunteer opportunities. Still, that training for and transportation to volunteer opportunities in their communities must be improved. In addition, 30% of respondents stated that their opinions as older adults are not valued in their communities. Respondents were also split around 50-50 in reporting about the availability of opportunities and their interest in participating in decision–making, and most respondents stated that job opportunities for older adults in their communities are poor or fair.

Actions

Regional Services Goal 1: Coordinate with the WRTA to expand and improve transit access.		
Action Strategy	**Strategy Lead**	**Timeframe**
Encourage expansion of existing fixed routes to include Senior Centers, libraries, and other destinations frequented by older adults on those routes: 1. Inventory current fixed routes and their proximity to important destinations, 2. Prioritize routes that connect individuals with health services, and 3. Coordinate with WRTA to identify feasibility and plan the implementation's next steps/planning phases.	CMRPC WRTA	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Improve application process and access to paratransit, WRTA services, and other public transportation modes for people with mobility devices and/or disabilities.	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team WRTA	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Identify travel training opportunities to teach older adults unfamiliar with WRTA transit and other locally available transportation services:	CMRPC WRTA	Assessment: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing

Action Strategy	Strategy Lead	Timeframe
1. Utilize the WRTA Travel Training Program.		

Regional Services Goal 2: Prioritize the inclusion of older adults in all aspects of the Central Massachusetts community.

Action Strategy	Strategy Lead	Timeframe
Identify and utilize local programs and services that increase the social inclusion and communal participation of older adults. 1. Enhance access to events, resources, and services by advocating for improved reliability of local transportation services, including micro-mobility and paratransit opportunities, 2. Promote the importance of towns, businesses, organizations and other institutions attaining age-friendly credentials, such as through the Age-Friendly University (AFU) Global Network and the Age and Dementia-Friendly Massachusetts designation, and 3. Encourage employers to maintain an age-friendly workplace and to sign an age-friendly agreement for older adults seeking employment.	Age-Friendly Action Team CMRPC Central Mass Agency on Aging WRTA Quaboag Connector MART AARP CMAA Dementia Friendly Massachusetts Age-Friendly University (AFU) Global Network	Ongoing

Regional Services Goal 3: Encourage municipal Emergency Management Services to engage in dementia-friendly training.

Action Strategy	Strategy Lead	Timeframe
Create and/or adopt a regional dementia-friendly curriculum, including municipal staff, public safety, and business communities.	Age-Friendly Action Team CMRPC Dementia-Friendly Massachusetts	Study: Short-term Implementation: Medium-term
Advocate and support dementia-friendly training for public transportation staff at the local and regional levels 1. Highlight the need for dementia-friendly infrastructure features and	Age-Friendly Action Team CMRPC WRTA	Ongoing

Action Strategy	Strategy Lead	Timeframe
demonstrate how such features are used		
Regional Services Goal 4: Strengthen partnerships, collaboration, and resource sharing between regional Aging Service Access Points (ASAPs) and local governments, Councils on Aging, and senior centers.		
Enhance public awareness of aging in the region and cultivate meaningful communication related to aging. 1. Coordinate a regional forum for COAs, ASAPs, local governments, and other organizations in the region to discuss the needs of older adults, facilitate funding for and collaborate on projects or services, educate others about programs, or share general news, 2. Encourage public participation in the forum of people of all ages, and 3. Promote planning initiatives and involve COAs, ASAPs, and other related organizations in the planning process.	Elder Services of Worcester Area (ESWA) and Tri Valley Inc. Age-Friendly Action Team CMRPC Local governments, COAs, and ASAPs	Ongoing
Encourage age and dementia-friendly partners to engage through AARP, Dementia Friendly Massachusetts, and its programming: 1. Develop the Age-Friendly Central Mass AARP portal, and 2. Invite partners from Age-Friendly Central Mass and across the region to engage in Age-Friendly work through AARP.	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team	Study: Short-term Implementation: Ongoing
Support local governments and organizations by creating and sharing a list of suggested innovative service providers that local communities could easily procure funding from, for services such as home improvements and personal care:	CMRPC Age-Friendly Action Team ASAP's (ESWA, Tri-Valley Inc., and CMAA) Quaboag Valley CDC	Short-term

1. Incorporate and promote regional services that provide unique age-friendly amenities, such as the Quaboag Valley CDC Senior Outreach Program that provides "out-of-home" services, such as grocery shopping, pharmacy and mail pick-up, etc., to qualifying individuals in five CMRPC communities.		

Next Steps

Community Partnerships

Like the development of the Age-Friendly Central Mass Action Plan, community partnerships will be a crucial part of plan implementation. After adopting the Action Plan solicited by Age-Friendly Central Mass through the resolution (below), communities will be conglomerated into the Age-Friendly Central Mass network and the larger AARP Age-Friendly network. From there, communities, with the support of Age-Friendly Central Mass, can implement the goals listed in the Action Plan at the local level.

Age-Friendly Central Massachusetts Resolution

AGE FRIENDLY CENTRAL MASS RESOLUTION
ADOPTING AN AGE FRIENDLY STRATEGY IN
_____, MASSACHUSETTS

WHEREAS, The Select Board of _____, Massachusetts does hereby find as follows:

WHEREAS, the aging population in the Central Massachusetts regional planning area is rapidly increasing.

WHEREAS, an Age Friendly Community as defined by Age Friendly Central Mass, enables peoples of all ages to actively participate in community activities, engage in outdoor and public recreation, access and utilize goods and services, and have equitable access to affordable housing, transportation, and community programs;

WHEREAS, collaboration and guidance from local, state, and national partners and area experts shall, and will continue to be, essential to the development and implementation of age friendly planning and strategies to support aging communities in Central MA;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Municipality agrees to the following:

The Municipality shall support the implementation of the Central Mass Age Friendly Regional Action Plan at the municipal level by encouraging age friendly community policies and planning practices;

The Municipality shall support the development of affordable and accessible Housing in locations where connectivity to transportation, goods and services, and community activities is possible;

The Municipality shall advocate for Transportation policies and infrastructure that increase access to public transit, as well as walking and biking facilities;

The Municipality shall work to improve Communication and Information accessibility and availability, including expanding access to broadband;

The Municipality shall advocate for Health and Community Services that expand accessibility, availability, and affordability of services for all residents to promote active and healthy living;

The Municipality shall encourage regional collaboration to inspire successful age friendly strategies and programming across municipalities.

BE IT HERE PROCLAIMED by the Select Board of _____, Massachusetts, that an Age Friendly Community Strategy be established as the Municipality's standard for planning and community development.

Potential Funding Sources

Community Challenge Grant

AARP has programmed the Community Challenge Grant[9] as a part of its larger Livable Communities Initiative. The Community Challenge program is intended to support immediate improvements of infrastructure and programming that is supportive of all ages and abilities. AARP Community Challenge is accepting applications for three different grant opportunities, two of which are new this year. The flagship AARP Community Challenge grants have ranged from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands of dollars, depending on the project type. The two new grants are called the Capacity Building Microgrants and the Demonstration Grants. The Capacity Building Microgrants provide $2,500 of funding paired with additional resources such as webinars, publications and learning opportunities. This microgrant opportunity applies specifically to projects that target walkability and community gardens. Lastly, the Demonstration Grants are used to replicate promising local efforts, by advancing transportation systems and implementing accessory dwelling unit (ADU) design competitions.

Community Compact Best Practices Program

The Community Compact Best Practices Program[10] provides funding resources for communities to implement best practices unique to a municipality's distinct needs and which have been prioritized as an area for improvement. Best practices can include those within:

- Age and Dementia Friendly Programs
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Education
- Housing and Economic Development
- Information Technology, and
- Public Health, among others.

Complete Streets

A complete street is one that accommodates all road users including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and motorists regardless of age or ability. A complete street not only accommodates all users, but offers a holistic approach to safety, connectivity, equity, and climate strategies within the public right-of-way. In 2016, MassDOT developed

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[9] *AARP Community Challenge*. (2023). AARP.org. https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/.

[10] *Community Compact Best Practice Areas.* (2023). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-compact-best-practice-areas.

the Complete Streets Program[11] as a funding mechanism to support a programmatic approach to multi-modal improvements for a comprehensive and diverse transportation network.

Shared Streets and Spaces

MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces Program[12] was implemented in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic; travel was limited at this time, but people were still eager to go out and recreate. The program supports and funds quick-launch improvements that bolster safe mobility, public health, and economic vitality. Eligible projects under this program include speed management, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements, supportive transit infrastructure, and temporary or permanent main street pop-up or repurposing projects. The program also supports equipment purchases (i.e., snow removal equipment, rectangular rapid flashing beacons) that support the goals of the program.

Department of Housing and Community Development Programs

The Department of Housing and Community Development[13] (DHCD) oversees multiple funding sources including the Creative Placemaking Program, Community Development Block Grants, the Housing Development Incentive Program, and Chapter 40B, among others, to support the accessibility of quality, safe, and affordable housing in Massachusetts. Some specific programs include:

- Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program[14], Massachusetts Office on Disability: The Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) offers competitive grants to municipalities on an annual schedule. The program is divided into a Planning Grant and Project Grant components. The former component can be used for updating or creating a Self-Evaluation and/or Transition Plan, as required under the Administrative Requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. For communities with existing plans and ADA-related policies, Project Grants can be used for capital projects like improvements to sidewalks or crosswalks, recreational trails, town websites, or public buildings. Typical MOD awards are in the $30,000 to $70,000 range for planning and in the $30,000 to $200,000 range

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[11] *Complete Streets Funding Program.* (2023). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program.
[12] *Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program.* (2023). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. https://www.mass.gov/shared-streets-and-spaces-grant-program.
[13] *Housing and Community Development (DHCD).* (2023). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. https://www.mass.gov/orgs/housing-and-community-development.
[14] *Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act Grant.* (2023). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. https://www.mass.gov/municipal-americans-with-disabilities-act-grant.

for capital projects. Note that feasibility studies and architectural and engineering design activities are ineligible for this program, as are administrative costs.

- CDBG[15] - US Department of Housing and Urban Development (for entitlement communities); Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (for other communities): Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) may be used to plan, design, and implement (including construction) accessibility improvements that benefit severely disabled adults. US HUD provides these grants to designated entitlement communities – only Worcester, within the CMRPC region – on a non-competitive formula basis. Other communities can participate through the Massachusetts DHCD's HUD-funded CDBG program, either noncompetitively for certain communities through its Mini Entitlement category (Webster and Southbridge only), or through the annual Community Development Fund open to all other cities and towns on a weighted competitive basis. DHCD's program requires communities to have an ADA transition plan in place prior to applying for design or construction funds. Typical grants for accessibility projects range from $20,000 for planning in small communities to $800,000 or more for construction of improvements such as elevators. CDBG funds may also be used to support public social services that benefit disabled persons. Administrative costs are eligible.

FTA 5310 – Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

The Federal Transit Authority's (FTA) program called Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (49 U.S.C. 5310)[16] provides funding to states so that they may assist private, nonprofit organizations in meeting the specific transportation-needs of all people when the current services provided are deemed inadequate. These federal funds are apportioned to states based on their respective populations of older adults and people with disabilities. Direct recipients are determined by the context of the population; funding for rural areas is directed to the State's Department of Transportation, whereas funding for urban areas is directed to the Governor. Although recipients maintain flexibility in how they select as subrecipients, the process must be clearly communicated in a State or program management plan. Overall, this program is intended to improve the mobility of older adults and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation and directly meeting their needs. In the region, the FTA 5310 funds are currently mostly allocated to the WRTA through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to provide paratransit services and support the transportation services provided by the Councils on Aging.

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[15] *Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).* (2023). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. https://www.mass.gov/service-details/community-development-block-grant-cdbg.

[16] *Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities - Section 5310.* (n.d.). The Federal Transit Administration. https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/enhanced-mobility-seniors-individuals-disabilities-section-5310.

Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has offered these funds[17] since the department's 2017 revision of the Determination of Need (DoN) regulations in partnership with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). These funds are provided for eliminating health disparities caused by imbalances of power such as poverty and structural racism. They aim to enhance the capabilities of multiple community-centered organizations to help improve quality of life for all people. The fiscal agent responsible for helping plan and implement this funding with non-profit organizations and municipalities is Health Resources in Action.

Executive Office of Elder Affairs Programs

The EOEA[18] plans and implements programs serving older adults throughout Massachusetts, helps form and assists local Councils on Aging and other community organizations serving seniors, and oversees the Division of Medical Assistance Long Term Care Services in Massachusetts. EOEA programs include:

- Councils on Aging/Senior Center limited formula and service incentive grants as well as information and technical services for these organizations' healthcare, advocacy, and referral services,
- A Nutrition Program which provides meals at congregate sites as well as to homebound seniors,
- A Home Care Program contracted through non-profit Aging Services Access Point (ASAP) corporations which provides home services which help older adults age in place,
- Senior Community Service Employment Programs which manage special purpose employment programs for seniors to volunteer and earn stipends or work part-time for wages and provide funds for seniors who meet income criteria to gain free tuition at state public educational institutions, among other services.

American Rescue Plan Act

Under the Federal ARPA[19] act of 2021, Massachusetts authorities at the local, tribal, county, and state levels are eligible for federal aid to address the public health as well as economic repercussions of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG), in coordination with the federal government, state agencies and private

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[17] *Massachusetts Community Health & Healthy Aging Funds*. (2023). MAHealthFunds. https://mahealthfunds.org/.

[18] Galvin, W. F. (n.d.). *Senior Citizens: Administration, Programs and Services*. The Office of the Massachusetts Secretary of State. https://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/ciscig/o/o1o2.htm.

[19] *American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Resources.* (2023). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. https://www.mass.gov/guides/american-rescue-plan-act-arpa-resources.

organizations, created a list of rules and resources that can be located on the ARPA website. Some of the resources available on that list include webinar trainings, frequently asked questions and a manual for Chapter 30B of the Massachusetts General Laws, known as the Uniform Procurement Act.

Arts and Culture Grants

Arts and culture promote livable communities, social inclusion, and recreational opportunities for people of all ages. In Massachusetts the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA)[20] supports artists and connects them to the New England communities. They offer many grant programs throughout the year. The New England States Touring Grant (NEST) provides funds for non-profit organizations to present touring artists in venues across New England. The Public Art Learning Fund is another grant opportunity that provides professional development support to artists in New England. Another opportunity through NEFA is the Center Stage Program. Community organizations can partner with Center Stage to bring in one of many global performing artists as part of an international cultural exchange program initiated by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The 2022-2023 season includes groups from Argentina, Taiwan and Armenia.

CreativeGround[21] is a project of NEFA to support the creative economy and is a website/network for the creative community. The website provides access to professional artists in disciplines like performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, crafts, media, and creative businesses and organizations.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council[22] has many programs geared towards community and non-profit organizations. Some of the opportunities available range from information for and support to organizations to local grants through the MCC or directly with the Worcester Cultural Council. Among their offerings include funds for cultural facilities owned by municipalities, funds for festivals and cultural projects, initiatives to create cultural districts, resources for veterans, toolkits, specific funds for BIPOC organizations, and ADA / universal design compliance funds. Locally, the Worcester Arts Council[23] distributes two types of grant funds: fellowships and projects based on the priorities identified annually.

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[20] *Supporting a Thriving, Creative Future*. (2022). NEFA.org. https://www.nefa.org/.
[21] *Welcome to CreativeGround: Connect with Creative New England*. (n.d.). CreativeGround. https://www.creativeground.org/.
[22] *Culture elevates*. (2023). The Massachusetts Cultural Council. https://massculturalcouncil.org/.
[23] *WORCESTER ARTS COUNCIL*. (2023). The City of Worcester. https://www.worcesterma.gov/cultural-development/worcester-arts-council.

Foundations

The Greater Worcester Community Foundation (GWCF)[24] has been supporting communities in Worcester County since 1975 through non-competitive and competitive grant opportunities. The foundation has a vast offering of competitive grants for organizations and individuals. Some grants are town specific, while some are related to health and behavioral health, arts and culture grants, and racial equity, among other topics. One of the grant opportunities highly coveted by local organizations is the Community Grant Program that can fund either projects or operating support to local non-profits.

The Barr Foundation[25] has many programs available for organizations in the Commonwealth. The Barr Foundation is frequently recognized as a catalyst for change. During the pandemic, they were the first to offer grants to support quick changes to the streetscape to promote safe social distancing while walking and biking. This idea was then elevated to the state level and the MassDOT Safe Streets and Spaces became officially available for all cities and towns in the Commonwealth. The Foundation works in three major areas: arts & culture, climate, and education. Within the climate work area, they are exploring and supporting the expansion of renewable energy and efficiency, mobility changes that reduce emissions, and adaptation to climate change.

The Health Foundation of Central Mass[26] has supported people since 2000 who live and work throughout the region, especially members of vulnerable populations and those with unmet needs. The Foundation provides two main grant funding avenues, the Activation Fund, and the Synergy Initiative. The Activation Fund supports one-year projects which launch innovative community health initiatives, help build community organization capacity, form partnerships to address health issues in new ways, and research emerging problems and strategies in the field of health. The Synergy Initiative supports multi-year projects which collaboratively and comprehensively address community-defined health issues in the region and lead to systematic and/or policy changes which aim to improve health outcomes. It also, by invitation only, makes Board Designated grants to provide funds to projects complementary to its mission but not to the Activation Fund or Synergy Initiative. The Foundation uses a social determinants of health framework to guide its work, relies on local communities to identify pressing health issues to address, complements public funding streams, supports collaborative projects which use both

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[24] *Knowledge. Vision. Commitment.* (2023). The Greater Worcester Community Foundation. https://greaterworcester.org/.
[25] *Our Work: Investing in human, natural, and creative potential.* (2023). The Barr Foundation. https://www.barrfoundation.org/.
[26] *Welcome to the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts*. (n.d.). The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts. https://hfcm.org/.

preventative and implementation-oriented healthcare strategies, and facilitates project sustainability.