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Mapping Boston's Assets to Improve Livability for Older Adults: Boston's Age Friendly Community Initiative; and Building Bonds to Last a Lifetime: Creating Community among Beverly's Aging Population

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Gerontology Institute: Preparing for an Aging Society through Research, Public Service, and Education

Mapping Boston's Assets to Improve Livability for Older Adults: Boston's Age Friendly Community Initiative

Summary

"Age-friendly" initiatives, have emerged in recent years in an effort to describe ways in which communities and cities may create environments that support their aging populations and promote quality of life, independence, wellness, and active involvement throughout the life course.

Along its path to developing an action plan for becoming an age friendly community, the City of Boston has begun to document a comprehensive and inclusive baseline assessment of needs within domains that influence health and quality of life of older adults.

In addition to needs assessments, designed to identify gaps in programs and services that are targeted to older adults in the community, asset mapping is another method that can be used to identify and graphically depict Boston's strengths and the resources it has available to address needs of older adult residents, and to improve age-friendliness of the City.

Asset Mapping

Operational Model

Recommendations

Building Bonds to Last a Lifetime: Creating Community among Beverly's Aging Population

Summary

Beginning in 2010, the City of Beverly Council on Aging and Senior Center became aware that it was not engaging new community-dwelling seniors (aged 60+) even though the population of seniors in Beverly was increasing.

Limited resources required that outreach efforts needed to more effectively target seniors who were otherwise unknown to the Senior Center and/or unaware of the services the Senior Center provided.

A database was compiled that would allow the Senior Center to locate and contact both new and long-time resident seniors in the hopes of building a better relationship with them. Once compiled, the Senior Center designed a two-part targeted outreach program.

This allowed the City of Beverly, through its Senior Center and with the help of collaborative partnerships formed with existing community organizations, to expand its presence and impact in the community of older adults.

Approach

Activities

Outcomes

Building Bonds to Last a Lifetime: Creating Community among Beverly's Aging Population

Abigail Butt, MSc, Gerontology
Jeffrey Burr, PhD, Gerontology

Approach and Methods

Part One

✓ The City's Listing Book (a census database) and the Senior Center's database were merged

✓ Duplicate cases were identified and removed

✓ Remaining cases were seniors living in Beverly who had never had any communication with the Senior Center

✓ Thus recognized, these cases became the target population for a multi-step outreach program involving mailings, phone calls, and face-to-face in-home visits
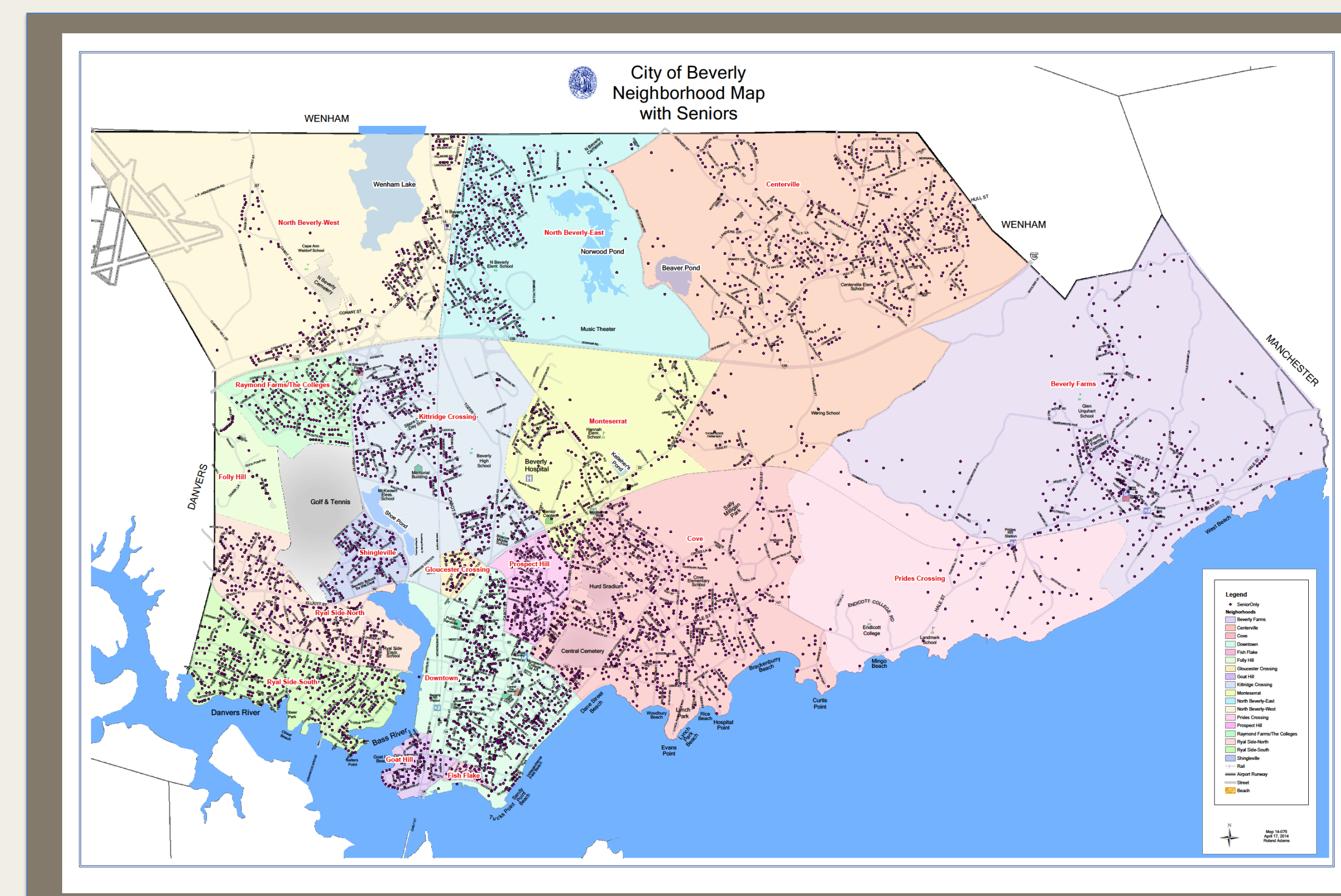
Part Two

✓ Used ArcGIS in conjunction with the Listing Book data to geo-locate the positions of households containing at least one senior

✓ Created a neighborhood map by querying individuals in the community and collaborating with the Beverly Historical Society to define neighborhood boundary lines and names

✓ Calculated the senior population density

✓ Identified location for the City's first neighborhood outreach event – a **community barbecue** – based on the senior population density

Activities

Outcomes

Home
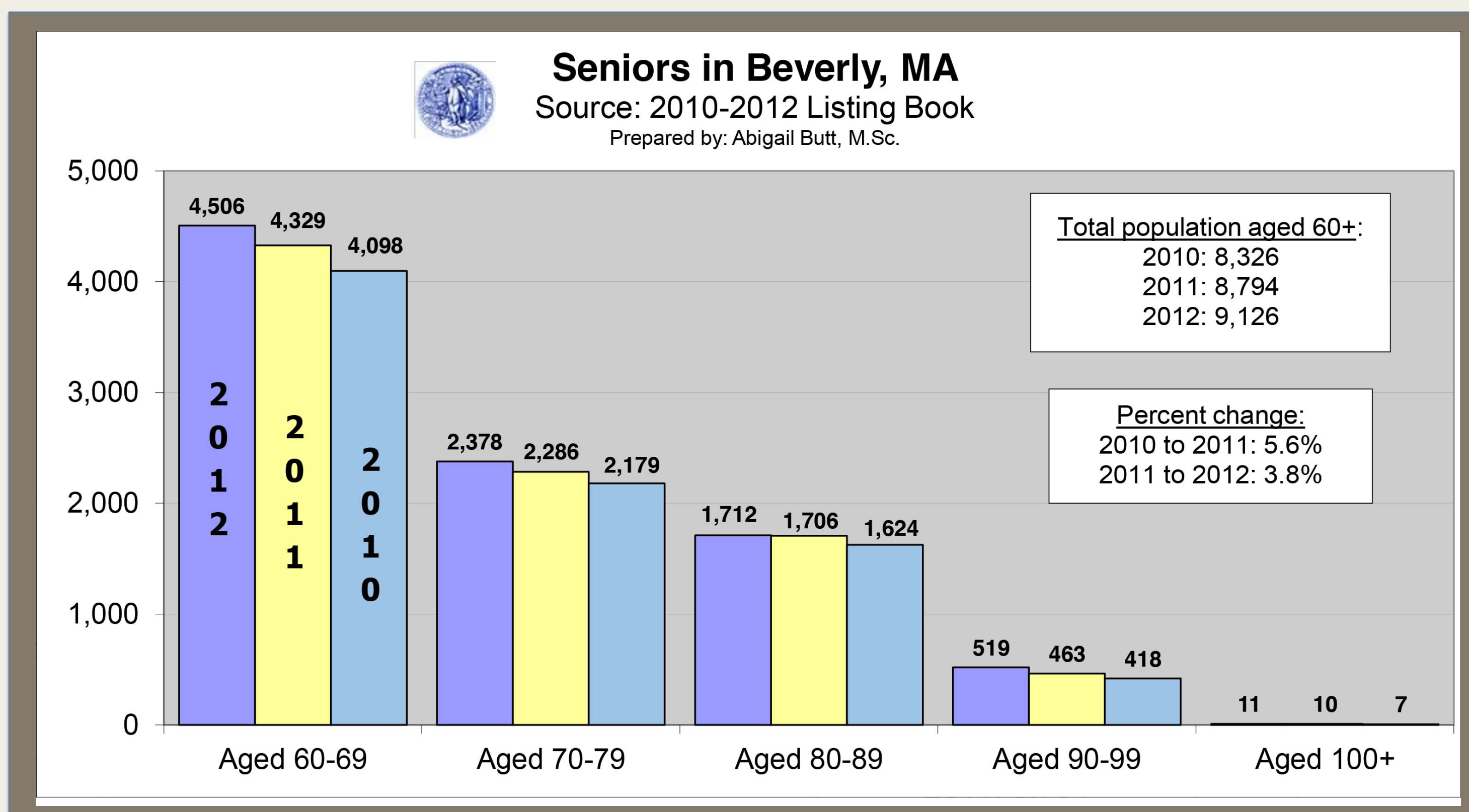
Seniors in Beverly, MA
Source: 2010-2012 Listing Book
Prepared by: Abigail Butt, M.Sc.

Total population aged 60+:
2010: 8,326
2011: 8,794
2012: 9,126

Percent change:
2010 to 2011: 5.6%
2011 to 2012: 3.8%

City of Beverly
Neighborhood Map
with Seniors

Building Bonds to Last a Lifetime: Creating Community among Beverly's Aging Population

Abigail Butt, MSc, Gerontology
Jeffrey Burr, PhD, Gerontology

Activities

Outreach Program

Part One

Beverly's targeted outreach mailing is repeated annually and focused on seniors who are most likely to be frail, isolated, or unknown the Senior Center.

These community-dwelling seniors receive a packet that includes:

- **An introduction letter**
- **Senior Center information**
- **Senior Center Newsletter**
- **Gift certificate for lunch at the Senior Center**

Approximately one week later, each recipient gets a home visit or phone call and is given the opportunity to receive the Senior Center monthly newsletter at no cost and is invited to visit the Center.

Part Two of Beverly's outreach program began in 2014. Neighborhood population density data was utilized to identify a location for what would become the first neighborhood outreach barbecue. The "Shingleville" neighborhood was chosen due to its overall small area and high senior population density.

Partners

- **GIS/Engineering Dept., City of Beverly**, Roland Adams
- **Outreach Dept. City of Beverly**, Abigail Butt, Elaine Heredeen
- **Parks Dept., City of Beverly**, Bruce Doig
- **Nutrition Dept., SeniorCare, Inc**., Linnea Hagberg
- **Education/Outreach Dept., Element Care (PACE)**, Carol Pallazolla
- **Psychology Dept., Gordon College**, Kelly Plotsker
- **Beverly Housing Authority,** Tricia Myers
- **Beverly Historic Society**
- **Day of Service**, **North Shore United Way**

The assembly of the annual mailing is made possible in part by volunteer support from both the North Shore United Way and the Gordon College Psychology Internship Class.

The planning and undertaking of this barbecue required the collaboration of several community and municipal partners to do everything from identifying an adequate location to providing and sponsoring the meal.

Approach | Outcomes | Home

Building Bonds to Last a Lifetime: Creating Community among Beverly's Aging Population
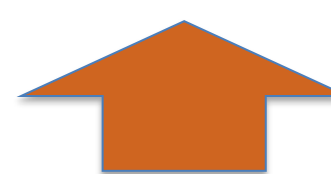
Abigail Butt, MSc, Gerontology
Jeffrey Burr, PhD, Gerontology

Outcomes

Outreach Assessment

Of those seniors reached by phone or in person, nearly **85% said they wanted to receive the Senior Center's newsletter** on a monthly basis.

One year after receiving the mailing approximately **35% of recipients have interacted with the Senior Center** either by participating in programming, contacting the Center's information and referral services, and/or utilizing Senior Center transportation.

Increased Protective Reports filed and Meals-on-Wheels/homecare referrals can be seen as evidence to the importance of timely contact with Beverly's senior population.
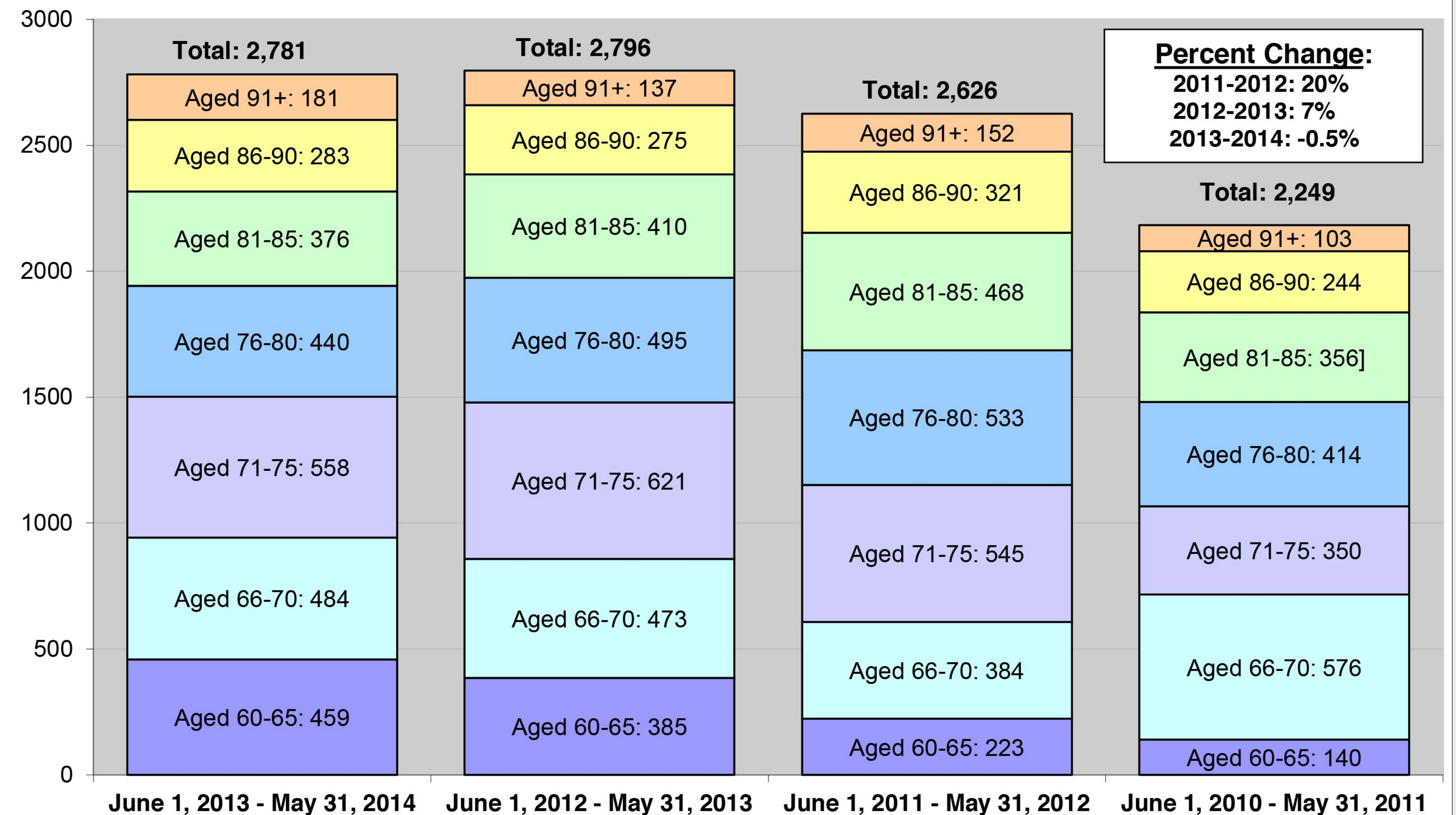
The outreach program also helped the City of Beverly **identify a number of Spanish speaking seniors** previously unknown to the Center.

The outreach barbecue was well received. **Attendees requested it become an annual event.**

Unduplicated Utilization of the Beverly CoA
Source: "My Senior Center"
Prepared by: Abigail Butt, M.Sc.

Percent Change:
2011-2012: 20%
2012-2013: 7%
2013-2014: -0.5%

Total: 2,781 (June 1, 2013 - May 31, 2014)
- Aged 91+: 181
- Aged 86-90: 283
- Aged 81-85: 376
- Aged 76-80: 440
- Aged 71-75: 558
- Aged 66-70: 484
- Aged 60-65: 459

Total: 2,796 (June 1, 2012 - May 31, 2013)
- Aged 91+: 137
- Aged 86-90: 275
- Aged 81-85: 410
- Aged 76-80: 495
- Aged 71-75: 621
- Aged 66-70: 473
- Aged 60-65: 385

Total: 2,626 (June 1, 2011 - May 31, 2012)
- Aged 91+: 152
- Aged 86-90: 321
- Aged 81-85: 468
- Aged 76-80: 533
- Aged 71-75: 545
- Aged 66-70: 384
- Aged 60-65: 223

Total: 2,249 (June 1, 2010 - May 31, 2011)
- Aged 91+: 103
- Aged 86-90: 244
- Aged 81-85: 356]
- Aged 76-80: 414
- Aged 71-75: 350
- Aged 66-70: 576
- Aged 60-65: 140

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Mapping Boston's Assets to Improve Livability for Older Adults: Boston's Age Friendly Community Initiative

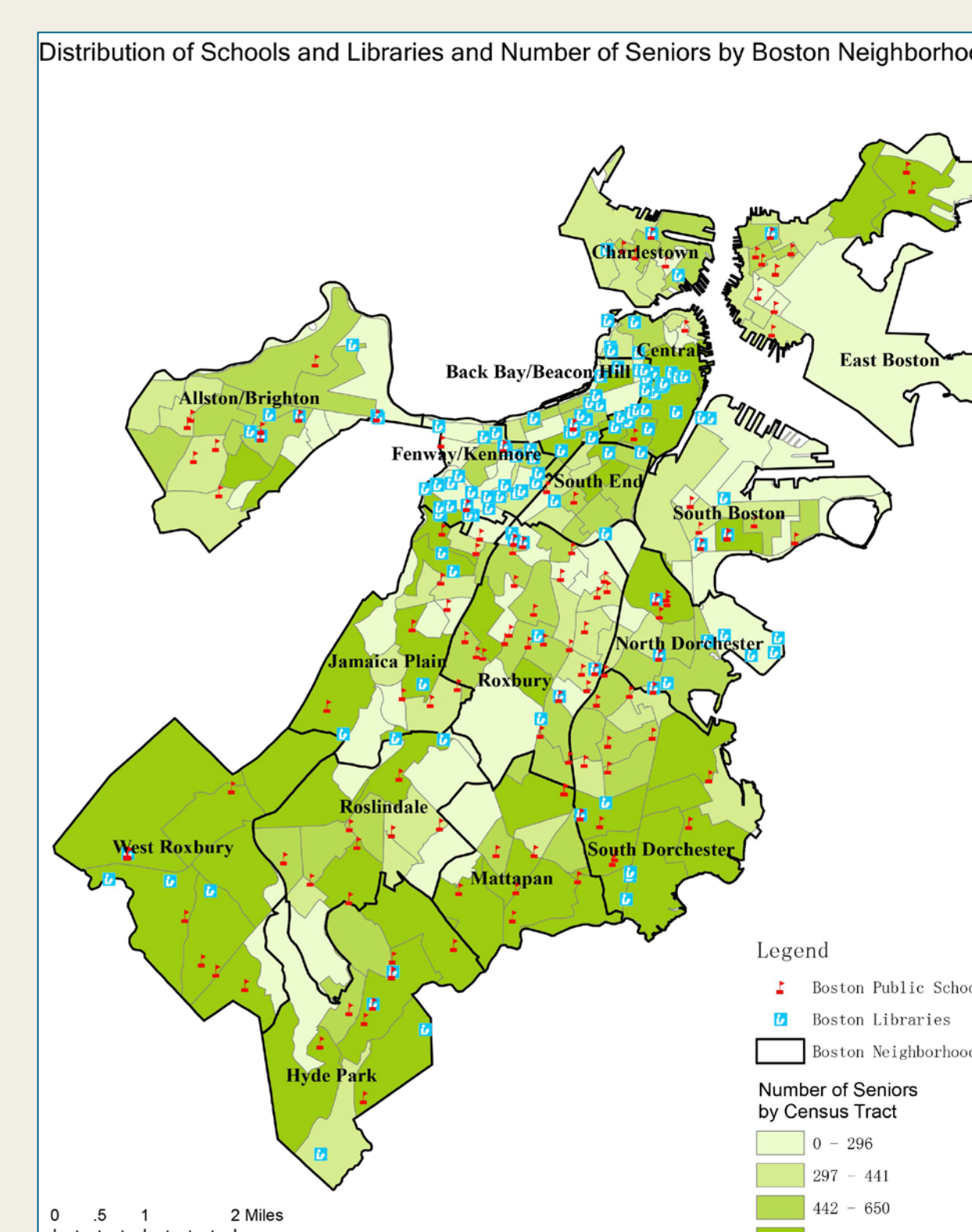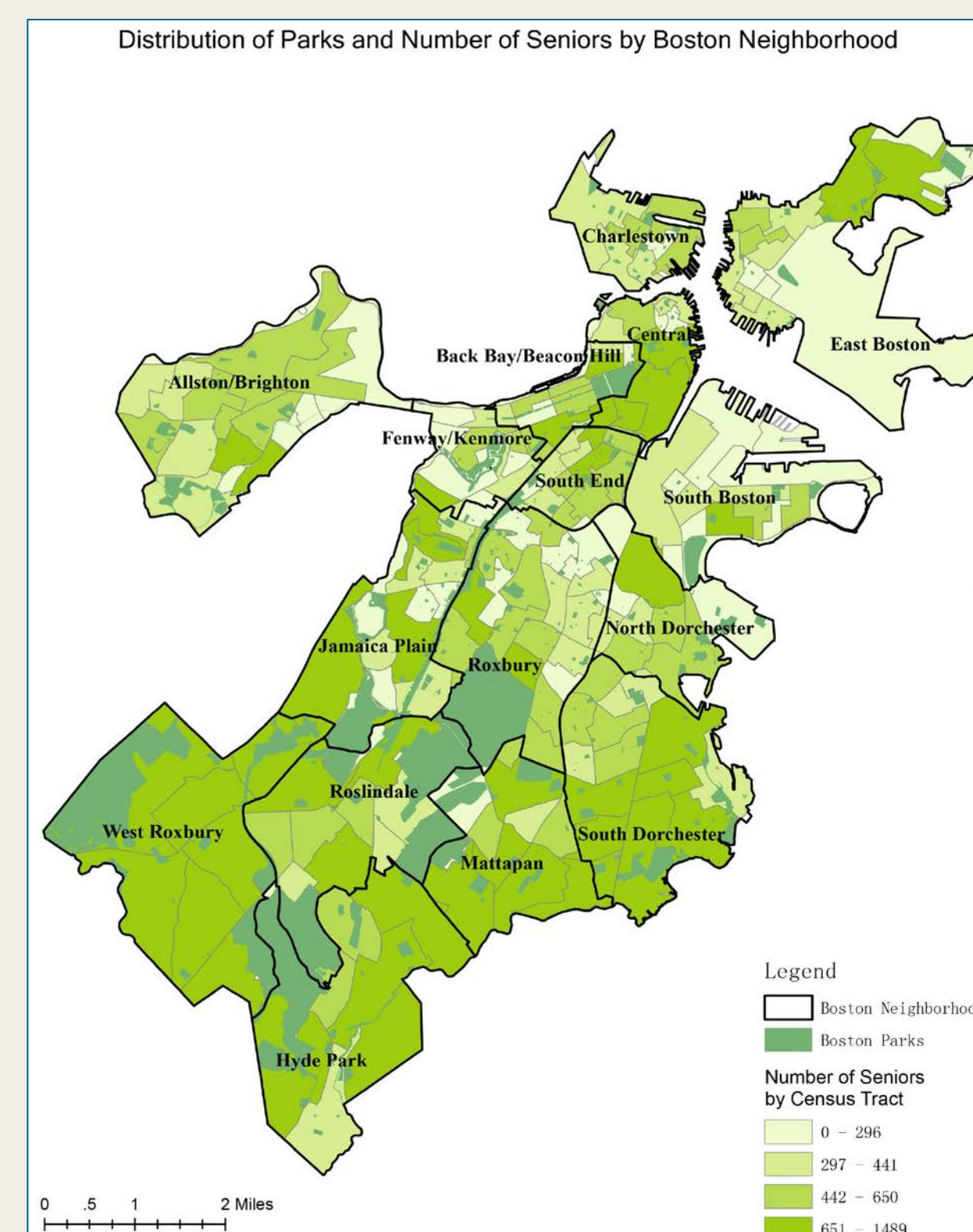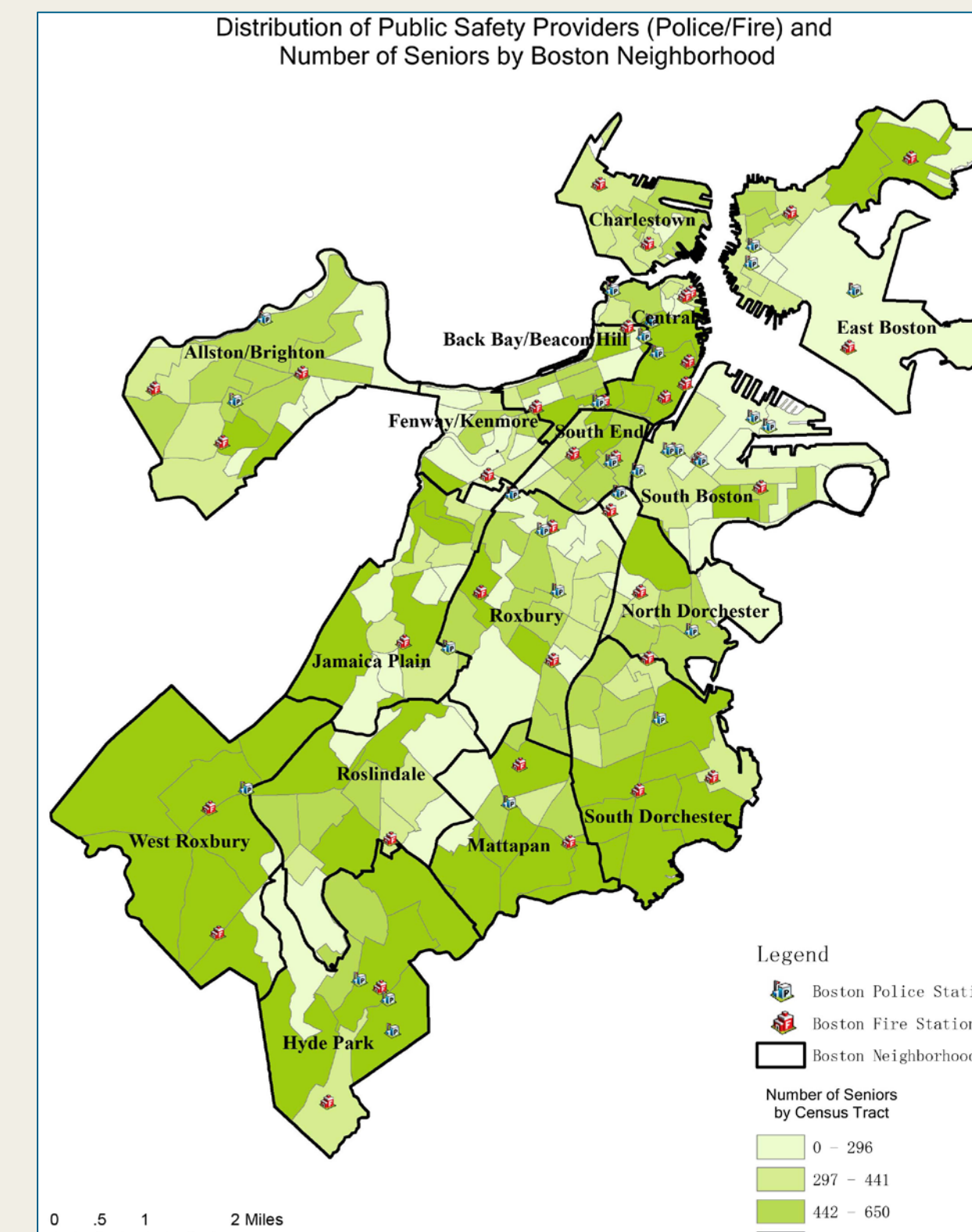Gerontology Faculty: Jan Mutchler and Bernard A. Steinman
Gerontology Graduate Students: Wendy Wang, Hayley Gleason , Maryam Khaniyan, and Ceara Somerville

Asset Mapping

Researchers conduct inventories of assets that address areas of concern often identified in needs assessments, such as those related to health and wellness, lifelong learning, volunteer or recreation opportunities, or citizen associations and local institutions.

Asset mapping represents a logical extension of needs assessment, in that maps provide information about what resources are available at the outset of planning to increase the community's age-friendliness.

Asset maps have been used in various capacities to improve livability of communities by identifying networks of resources and helping stakeholders visualize community capacities within wider contexts and in new combinations to reveal new structures of opportunity, and new possibilities for economic production and service delivery.

Distribution of Health Services and Number of Seniors by Boston Neighborhood

Distribution of Public Safety Providers (Police/Fire) and Number of Seniors by Boston Neighborhood

Distribution of Parks and Number of Seniors by Boston Neighborhood

Distribution of Schools and Libraries and Number of Seniors by Boston Neighborhood

We used publically available data from the Massachusetts Office of Geographic Information in ArcGIS to produce six examples of maps that show assets and resources currently available in the City of Boston that are directly relevant to the Age Friendly Boston initiative.

Recommendations

Operational Model

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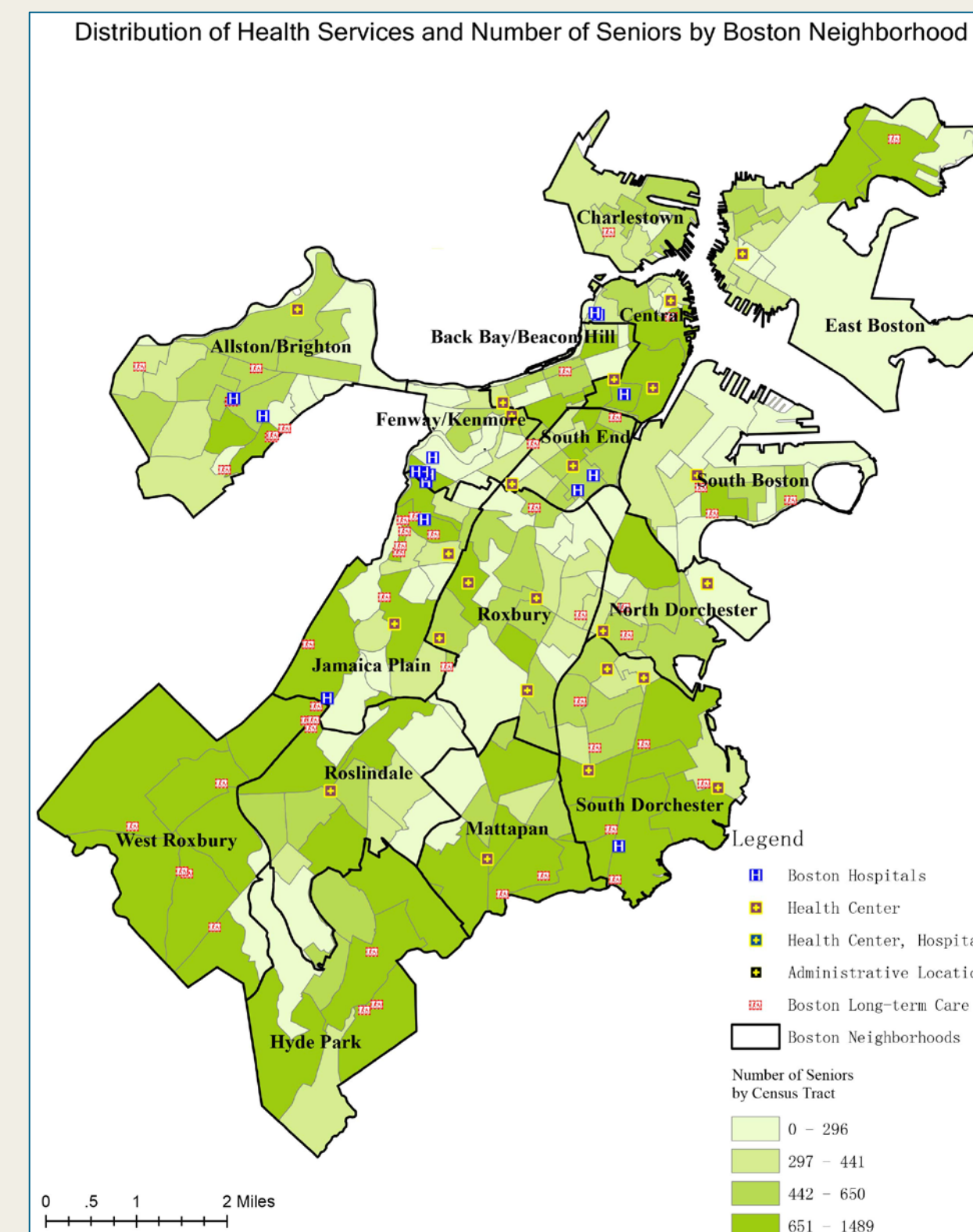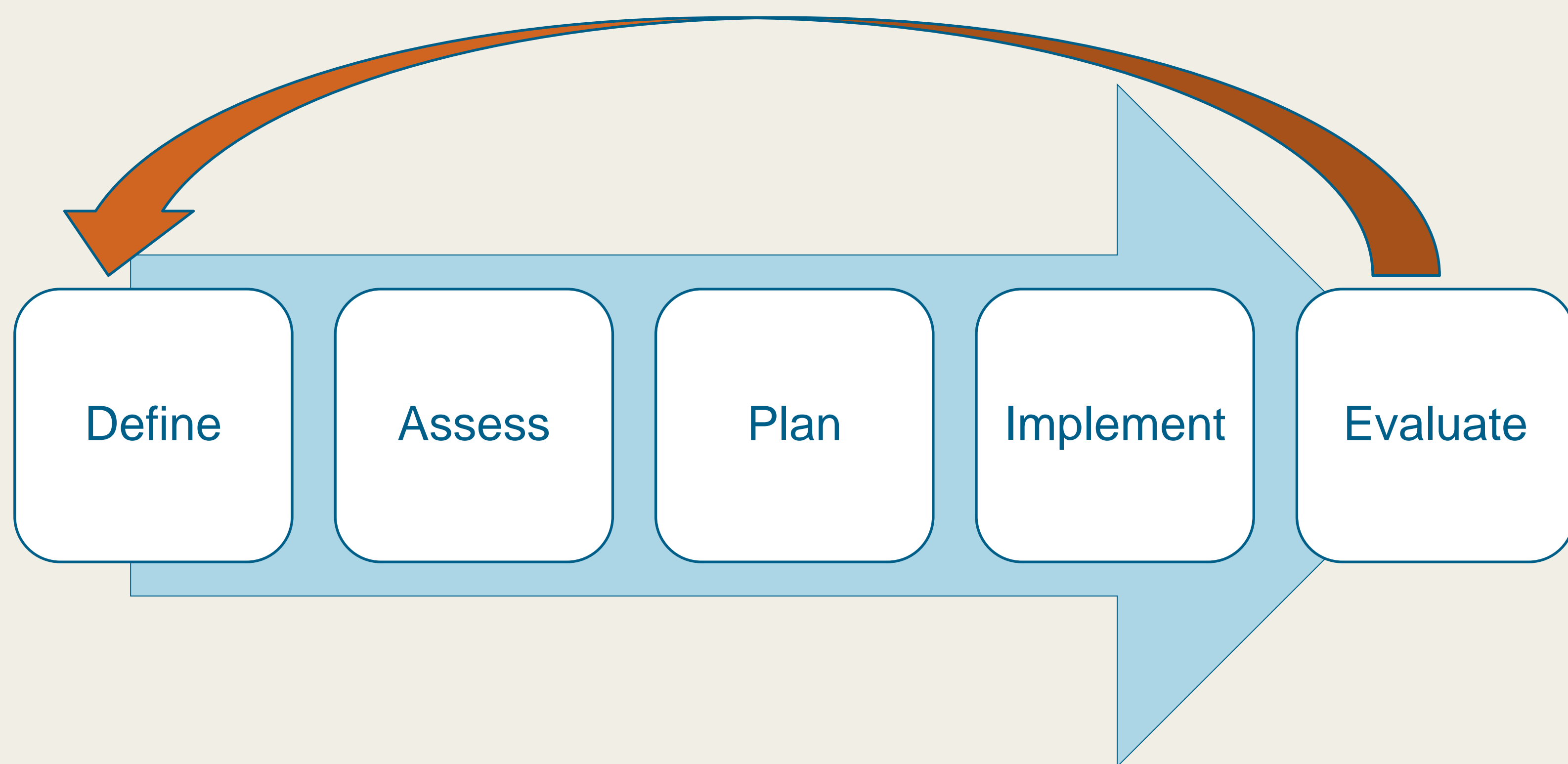
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Five-year Age-Friendly Initiative Operational Model

Define — Assess — Plan — Implement — Evaluate

The description of age-friendly features, and the experiences of communities throughout the world who are using the framework, make clear that each city will conceptualize this effort in a somewhat unique way. Local conceptualizations will shape the initiatives, programs, and partnerships put in place; they will also shape the research and measurement used in support of the effort.

Community Engagement and Inclusion

Plan
- Set clear, measurable goals for the initiative
- Provide continuous feedback throughout the process

Listen
- Focus groups
- Listening sessions
- Survey

Engage
- Offer free transportation to events, activities
- Ensure delivery in multiple languages
- Use only accessible locations
- Give incentives, free giveaways

Promote
- Use local organizations
- Use peer-to-peer networks
- Call on key leaders
- Partner with already existing initiatives
- Use key informants interviewed & their organizations

Partners

Massachusetts AARP

City of Boston Commission on Affairs of the Elderly

UMass Boston Team

Faculty
Bernard A. Steinman
Jan Mutchler

Students
Wendy Wang
Hayley Gleason
Maryam Khaniyan
Ceara Somerville

Asset Mapping

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Recommendations

Opportunities for Recreation, Social Engagement, Volunteering & Employment

- Recreation: built-in fitness stations & walking clubs at parks, space at private gyms for seniors, & health promotion programs

- Social Engagement: Design programs that match the local community, lifelong learning, volunteer opportunities

- Employment: Build private-public partnerships, support existing programs for mature workers

Community & Family Support

- Utilize local organizations with existing relationships

- Support informal networks: Help create links between neighbor

- Support informal caregivers: Provide financial support, respite, educational workshops, support groups

Neighborhood Amenities

- When needed, invest in bringing needed goods and services to seniors where they live

- Identify areas where transportation, walkability issues are limiting senior's access to needed goods/services

- Address areas where programs/services do not 'fit' the needs of local population

Appropriate and Extensive City Services

- Invest in senior services/programs throughout the city

- Require cultural competency & sensitivity training for all city programs

- Ensure all city programs are 'matched' to the local community's needs

- Incorporate a senior advocate into all city departments or commissions

Access to Medical & Behavioral Health Services

- Improve cultural competency, sensitivity, & linguistic expertise in health care facilities

- Improve access to dental care for all seniors

- Provide medical & behavioral health services where older adults live

- Increase assistance to seniors in navigating the healthcare system

Accessible & Available Transportation Services

- Greater availability of free or low-cost transportation options to a variety of locations

- Make subway system more senior friendly by addressing the accessibility of the T

- Address bus stops that do not provide shelters or benches

- Evaluate alternative transportation options available to seniors for availability & accessibility

Safe and Accessible Physical Environment

- Create a greater sense of safety through: Increase police presence on the streets, increase lighting, & encourage community watch programs

- Improve the physical environment by addressing broken sidewalks, increasing crosswalks & signals, adding benches, and decreasing speed limits

Affordable, Accessible, and Inclusive Housing

- Make programs providing property tax relief & home maintenance accessible to more older adults

- Invest in more low to moderate income housing options in the neighborhood where older adults live

- Provide greater support to organizations that offer transitional housing or shelters to homeless older adults

- Make cultural competency training a senior housing facilities & develop LGTB Welcome senior housing

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