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Livable Dedham: An Age-Friendly Action Plan

Commissioned by Livable Dedham, an age-friendly advocacy group in the Town of Dedham, Massachusetts

March 2018

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Most importantly, we are grateful to all of the residents and community leaders in Dedham who gave of their time to participate in these efforts to transform Dedham into a great place to grow-up and grow-old.

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Background

The Town of Dedham was first settled in 1635 and became the county seat of Norfolk County in 1793. Dedham is situated southwest of Boston and the Town shares a border with Needham, Westwood, and Canton. Dedham encompasses over 10 square miles and has a population of over 25,000 residents, about one-quarter of which are age 60 and older¹ (American Community Survey, 2016).

Despite Dedham’s urban location, the Town is rich with natural resources, including several state parks, hiking trails, and the Mother Brook. Although today the Mother Brook is known to residents for the variety of outdoor recreational activities and green spaces along its edge, this brook served as the location for the first manmade canal ever built in North America. Commissioned in 1639 by the Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor John Winthrop, the 4,000-foot ditch was created to connect the Charles and Neponset Rivers, and it helped fuel a prosperous milling industry for the Dedham area.

In addition to Dedham’s historical significance and beautiful landscapes, the Town is also filled with residents actively engaged in improving and enhancing the quality of life in Dedham. Livable Dedham, a grass-roots advocacy group established in 2015, is currently focused on transforming the Town of Dedham into an “age-friendly” community, a place where individuals of all ages and abilities can thrive. Livable Dedham recognizes that, like many cities and towns, Dedham’s population is rapidly aging, and to address this population shift, changes and adaptations are needed at the community-level to support older residents and engage residents of multiple generations.

What is Age-Friendly?

Livable Dedham’s Age-Friendly Initiative builds on concepts developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to WHO, an age-friendly community is one where people participate, are connected, remain healthy and active, and feel they belong—no matter their age. Through assessment, planning, action, and evaluating progress, communities all over the world are taking steps to improve their social and physical environments as a strategy for promoting health and well-being throughout the life course.

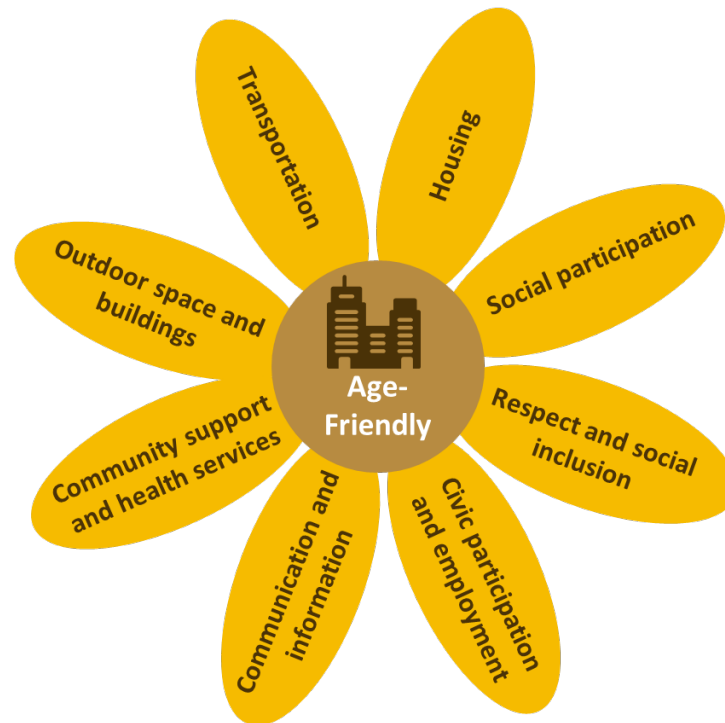
The Age-Friendly model includes a conceptual framework (domains) for describing areas for communities to focus on. It also lays out a process intended to ensure repeated consultation with the community, collective reflection, action and evaluation.

Domains. The Age-Friendly framework includes eight domains of community life that intersect with livability, accessibility, and the ability to thrive within the community. Within

¹ For purposes of this report, “older adults” and “seniors” are defined as individuals age 60 and older. This is consistent with usage in the Older Americans Act, the legislation authorizing many services meant for older adults, which also uses age 60 and over to define the population covered by its provisions. The terms “senior” and “older adults” are used interchangeably in this report.

each domain, elements are identified relevant to affordability, appropriateness, and accessibility (see **Figure 1**).

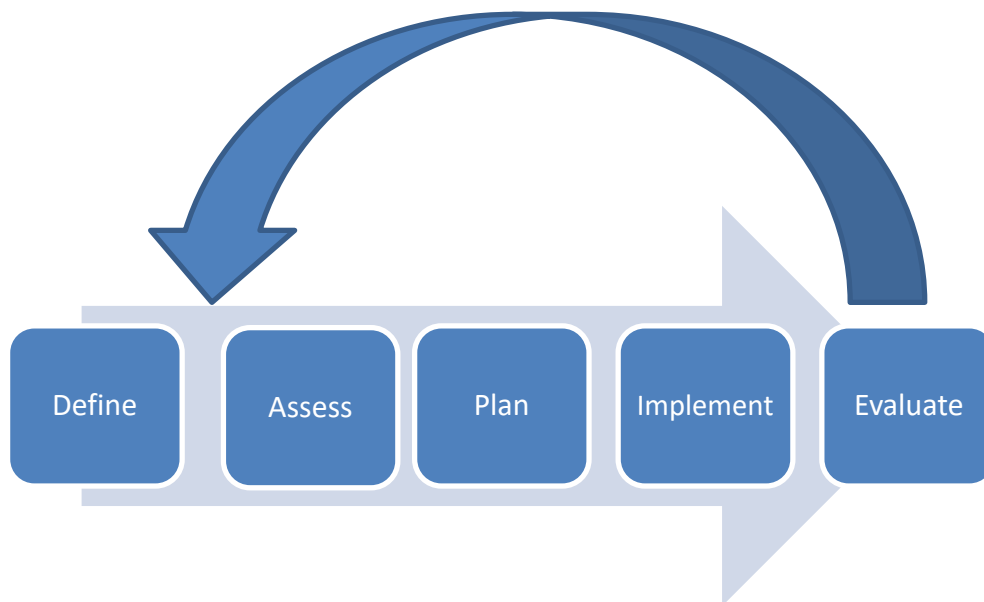
Figure 1. Eight Domains of an Age-Friendly Community



Source: Sandra Harris, Design for Aging Committee, BHA

Process. WHO describes five components of an age-friendly initiative, and indicates that these components will be pursued sequentially. At the end of each age-friendly process cycle, a new phase begins, during which new goals are set, innovations put in place, and progress evaluated (see **Figure 2** below). Briefly, in step one local principles are defined in conjunction with building partnerships, creating a vision, and recruiting community members for involvement. Through these efforts, initiative goals are prioritized. Step two involves generating a needs assessment, focusing on environmental and population-based features that reflect age-friendliness, as well as those that pose a challenge to this goal. The third step includes developing an Action Plan, which may be thought of as a “road map” to define programs and interventions that will be pursued in the process of becoming an Age-Friendly community. The final steps involve implementing promising interventions, broadly speaking; these may include programs (such as evidence-based health promotion activities) as well as environmental modifications (such as expanding traffic-calming features at key intersections). As programs and modifications are put in place, evaluations focus on assessing outcomes (e.g., were the proposed modifications implemented appropriately?) as well as impacts (that is, have well-being, health, and quality of life been improved by the improvements put in place?)

Figure 2. Process of Developing an Age-Friendly Community



The description of age-friendly features, and the experiences of communities throughout the world that are using the framework, make clear that each community 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. Ultimately, the Age-Friendly Framework requires that environmental features are defined and evaluated relative to the characteristics and resources of residents actually living in the community. An initial task of any community’s effort is therefore to identify elements that residents feel are “age-friendly.”

Livable Dedham’s Progress to Date

In 2016, Livable Dedham conducted a community-level needs assessment project that included a town-wide survey of residents and a community forum inciting awareness to the concept of age-friendly and to the Livable Dedham movement. The purpose of Livable Dedham’s needs assessment project was to gain insight from a wide range of residents as to the challenges and barriers to livability in Dedham, as well as to highlight opportunities for age-friendly modifications.

Livable Dedham’s needs assessment survey included a variety of topics such as housing, services, and transportation, and the survey was administered in both print and online formats. Nearly 600 Dedham residents responded to the survey, and the results revealed both the needs of Dedham residents and opportunities for improvement. Based on the needs assessment results, Livable Dedham established five key domains on which to focus their efforts, including 1) walkability & alternative transportation, 2) housing & community supports, 3) programs & activities for adults 55+, 4) volunteering, and 5) improving communication.

Following the needs assessment, Livable Dedham's next step was to develop an action plan aimed at targeting the barriers to livability in Dedham discovered in the needs assessment process. To support this effort, in 2017, Livable Dedham was awarded a grant from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation and invited collaboration from the Center for Social & Demographic Research on Aging in the Gerontology Institute (CSDRA) at the University of Massachusetts Boston to guide in the development of an Age-Friendly Action Plan. In addition, Livable Dedham was able to hire a part-time program coordinator to support their efforts and ensure the execution of the plan. *The contents of Livable Dedham's Age-Friendly Action Plan are described in detail in this report.*

Methods

In collaboration with the CSDRA, Livable Dedham commissioned five domain-specific work groups with various community level stakeholders (e.g., walkability & alternative transportation, housing & community supports, programs & activities for adults 55+, volunteering, and improving communication). These groups were comprised of resident advocates, local aging service providers, and Town staff. Participants were explicitly invited to participate by members of the Livable Dedham Steering Committee. Nearly 50 Dedham residents were involved in the work group process. In addition, research staff from the CSDRA reviewed Livable Dedham's needs assessment results as well as five Town reports including the Master Plan Update (2009) and other planning documents.

The work group members were tasked with developing concrete action items to serve as recommendations for Livable Dedham's Age-Friendly Action Plan. It was crucial to the success of Livable Dedham's Age-Friendly Initiative to obtain insight from these key community stakeholders for their expertise and knowledge, as well as for their engagement in the future implementation of the Age-Friendly Action Plan. Each group met for 2.5 hours and participated in a structured discussion that was facilitated by research staff from the CSDRA.

Results from each of the five domain-specific work groups were then streamlined and condensed by research staff from the CSDRA into one document containing specific recommendations and action items for each of Livable Dedham's age-friendly domains. These items were subsequently vetted and amended by Livable Dedham for purposes of feasibility and to align with the priorities of the Livable Dedham group. *The tables below outline the goals of the Livable Dedham initiative, a brief description of the action steps to be taken to achieve those goals, as well as the identification of existing examples and resources that will be helpful as implementation of these action steps begins.*

Action Plan

This next section of the report will describe in detail Livable Dedham's Age-Friendly Action Plan. The Action Plan is categorized by domain (e.g., walkability & alternative transportation, housing & community supports, programs & activities for adults 55+, volunteering, and improving communication). Based on findings from the domain-specific work groups, numerous overarching goals were established for each of the domains. In addition, action items, as well as mechanisms to achieve these action items, were formulated. These findings are presented in the tables below.

Walkability & Alternative Transportation

Walkability and access to affordable transportation options are important aspects of living for individuals of all ages and abilities. However, based on Livable Dedham’s needs assessment, many Dedham residents report being unsatisfied with Dedham’s current transportation options, the timing of traffic lights and marked crosswalks, sidewalk maintenance and lighting, as well as the availability of parking in Dedham. One of Livable Dedham’s objectives is to improve the walkability and alternative transportation options in Dedham based on the guidance and expertise from the domain’s work group. All action items related to walkability and alternative transportation are presented in the table below.

Goal #1: Support the current Complete Streets Initiative², making roads safe and convenient for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

<u>Action Items:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
<u>Action Item A:</u> Promote safe walking and wheelchair use in Dedham.	Identify potential improvements to roads, sidewalks and crosswalks by conducting regular walk audits. Utilize existing resources for the development of walk audit trainings to promote ongoing walk audits. ³ In addition, devise a mechanism to report results of these audits to the DPW.
<u>Action Item B:</u> Advocate for bike safety features in Dedham.	Convene an initial meeting with local partners to discuss bike lane and bike safety advocacy opportunities. Also consider the implementation of a “Racks with Plaques” program in Dedham which allows residents to donate a bike rack and receive recognition through a posted plaque near the bike rack. ⁴

² <https://masscompletestreets.com>

³ <http://www.markfenton.com/resources/TipsLeadingWalkAuditFenton.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=c6461b1fa03646ed85ff9129c4927855>

Goal #2: Promote initiatives that contribute to the advocacy of safer streets.

<u>Action Items:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
<u>Action Item A:</u> Promote safe driving among older adult residents.	Encourage older adult residents to participate in AARP’s Smart Driver Courses ⁵ to ensure the safety of drivers in Dedham and potential insurance incentives.
<u>Action Item B:</u> Disseminate information on local snow removal policies and options for snow removal assistance in Dedham.	Gather information related to Dedham’s snow removal policies and research options for snow removal assistance. ⁶ Host public information sessions to educate the public about snow removal policies and snow removal assistance options. Consider recognizing a business that does a good job at keeping their sidewalks clear of snow with a “Golden Shovel Award” ⁷ to promote snow removal policies.
<u>Action Item C:</u> Advocate for the enforcement of sidewalk parking regulations.	Meet with the Dedham Police Chief to discuss the importance and benefits of enforcing the existing traffic rules related to sidewalk parking. Also, develop a mini campaign to encourage residents to report vehicles parked on sidewalks and other traffic violations through the SeeClickFix website. ⁸
<u>Action Item D:</u> Initiate a traffic safety campaign.	Collaborate with Dedham Police and Public Schools to research traffic safety awareness campaigns and assist in the development of a traffic safety campaign ⁹

⁵ <https://www.aarpdriversafety.org>

⁶ <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-law-about-snow-and-ice>

⁷ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/livable-in-action/info-2018/wwl-golden-shovel-award-bucksport-maine.html>

⁸ <https://seeclickfix.com/>

⁹ <https://louisvilleky.gov/government/public-works/look-alive-louisville>

Goal #3: Improve walking and rolling options town-wide to increase recreation, enhance health, and improve access to local buildings.

<u>Action Items:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
<p><u>Action Item A:</u> Create suburban walking trail maps for the Town of Dedham.</p>	<p>Research examples and methods of developing suburban walking trail maps. For example, Fantastic Maps offers a how-to-guide in creating Town maps.¹⁰ Also, explore partnership with the Dedham Historical Society and/or local Eagle Scouts to develop printable walking route maps. These maps could include historical sites, natural landmarks, and age-friendly features for each area of Town.</p>
<p><u>Action Item B:</u> Encourage the beautification and accessibility of Dedham’s parks and off-road trails for visitors of all ages and abilities.</p>	<p>Partner with the Department of Parks & Recreation to discuss age-friendly park features and encourage modifications that address specific mobility and logistical needs. Use Wichita, Kansas’ Grandparent Park as a guide.¹¹</p>

¹⁰ <http://www.fantasticmaps.com/2013/03/how-to-design-a-town/>

¹¹ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/grandparents-park-wichita-kansas.html>

Goal #4: Examine possibilities for expanding or repurposing *Dedham on the Move* bus system.

<u>Action Items:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
<p>Action Item A: Promote utilization of the <i>Dedham on the Move</i> bus system.</p>	<p>Meet with Dedham’s Economic Development Director to request that bus-relevant information be shared on all Town communication platforms (e.g., the Town website, COA, Housing Authority). See Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority as references for effectively posting bus schedules and other information.¹²</p>
<p>Action Item B: Advocate for improvements to the accessibility of the <i>Dedham on the Move</i> fixed route bus system.</p>	<p>Identify the appropriate contact person in Town Hall to make this request. Include in the request that signage, seating, and shelter for the <i>Dedham on the Move</i> fixed route be installed. Identify grants for the Town to apply for in order to support the new signage/seating. Use New York City’s DOT as a guide for bench and bus stop shelter installation.¹³</p>
<p>Action Item C: Compile promising practices of other local bus systems in MA.</p>	<p>Present these findings to the Board of Selectmen as a way of using the existing fixed route system more effectively. See Lexington¹⁴, Burlington¹⁵, Acton¹⁶, and Houston¹⁷ for examples of effective local bus systems.</p>

¹² <https://www.wmata.com/rider-guide/new-riders/>

¹³ <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2015/domain-2-new-york-city-bus-bench-program.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.lexingtonma.gov/transportation-services>

¹⁵ http://www.burlington.org/residents/burlington_public_transit.php

¹⁶ <http://www.acton-ma.gov/Faq.aspx?QID=134>

¹⁷ <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2016/08/houston-bus-system-ridership/496313/>

Action Item D: Advocate for a feasibility study to review route and operating hours of the <i>Dedham on the Move</i> bus system.	Look to other towns, such as Salem ¹⁸ , as models for innovative changes to public transportation in Dedham. Encourage and support the Town in exploring grant opportunities for this study.
Action Item E: Increase coordination of COA vans and <i>Dedham on the Move</i>.	Continue supporting collaborative efforts between the COA Director and Town Economic Development Director who are exploring coordination of COA vans and Dedham on the Move bus system.

Goal #5: Promote ride-sharing services and volunteer transportation opportunities.

<u>Action Items:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
Action Item A: Increase awareness and advocate for the use of on-demand ride services in Dedham.	Consider implementing a transportation program for older adults in Dedham. See Tri-Town 55+ Coalition ¹⁹ or RYDE Transit ²⁰ for examples. Host information sessions and develop directory of current ride sharing services such as Lyft, Uber, GoGoGrandparent in Dedham. See the City of Fargo’s directory as a guide. ²¹
Action Item B: Develop a volunteer driver program in the Town of Dedham to assist those who are unable to drive.	Partner with the local RSVP program to identify ways of recruiting and coordinating volunteer drivers for Dedham residents. Consider a “Dedham to Dedham” volunteer driver pilot program. See the Friends in Service Helping (FISH) program in Sudbury as a model. ²²

¹⁸ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/regionals/north/2017/06/29/salem-consider-operating-city-shuttle/UAiDwfTyG2P6TAxeIODcsK/story.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.tritown55plus.org/>

²⁰ <http://communityactionmidne.com/ryde-transit-public-transportation-program-reach-your-destination-easily/>

²¹ http://download.cityoffargo.com/O/fm_ride_source_2017_final.pdf

²² <https://sudburyseniorcenter.org/transportation/fish/>

Housing & Community Supports

Multiple housing options, as well as community based supports, are vital to older adults aging in place. Evidence from Livable Dedham’s needs assessment found that over 60% of residents would like to see more accessible housing developments (e.g., one-level homes) and more affordable housing options in Dedham. Moreover, Dedham residents also indicated the desire for an increase in community support services for older adults. Livable Dedham’s vision is for the Town of Dedham to be a place where individuals of all ages and abilities have access to high-quality, affordable housing, and community based supports and services are available for those in need. All action items related to housing & community supports are presented in the table below.

Goal #1: Expand housing options in Dedham.

<u>Action Items:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
<u>Action Item A:</u> Promote awareness of various housing options across the lifespan.	Host a Spring forum with housing experts to promote models of affordable, accessible housing options and support services. Coordinate this event with new Planning Board Director.
<u>Action Item B:</u> Advocate for more flexible zoning laws to include accessory dwelling units in Dedham.	Review the list of Massachusetts towns that allow accessory dwelling units like the addition of in-law apartments and/or modular homes. ²³ See Scituate, MA for an example. ²⁴ Engage Master Plan Committee and Planning Board for future town meeting vote.
<u>Action Item C:</u> Explore shared housing arrangements for senior homeowners and those looking for rental units.	Enlist the assistance of Senior Center Director and partner with local real estate agents to connect senior homeowners in Dedham with residents who are looking for rental units in Dedham. See Nesterly ²⁵ as a resource.

²³ <http://americantinyhouseassociation.org/category/state/massachusetts/>

²⁴ <https://www.scituatema.gov/planning-board/faq/how-do-i-add-an-accessory-dwelling-in-law-to-my-house>

²⁵ <https://www.nesterly.io/>

<p><u>Action Item D:</u> Execute a land inventory of existing parcels in Dedham.</p>	<p>Work with the Town Planning Department to execute a land inventory of existing parcels in Dedham. Include information about ownership, size, zoning, and other parameters that would be relevant to developing property.</p>
<p><u>Action Item E:</u> Develop a draft request for a housing options market study in Dedham.</p>	<p>Work with the Town Planning Department to develop a draft request for proposals for a market study examining the cost-effectiveness of developing smaller, age-friendly housing options like small homes or pocket neighborhoods²⁶ in Dedham.</p>
<p><u>Action Item F:</u> Encourage developers to create downsizing options.</p>	<p>Create an Age-Friendly “Welcome to Dedham” package for developers to encourage the building of housing options for adults wishing to downsize. Include information about universal design as well as results from the market study and the land inventory to inform potential developers about existing opportunities in Dedham.</p>

²⁶ <http://www.opportunityvillageeugene.org/>

Goal #2: Explore the expansion of home and community based services to support aging in place.

<u>Action Items:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
Action Item A: Increase awareness of resources to help residents age in their home.	Connect residents with tools and resources that facilitate aging in place including AARP's HomeFit Guide ²⁷ ; Certified Aging in Place Specialists ²⁸ , as well as convening "Aging in Place Workshops" to inform older residents of financial, home improvement, health, and convenience resources available. Create a companion digital resource guide.
Action Item B: Create a volunteer call center to disseminate information about local resources and support services.	Explore opportunities to create a volunteer "call center" at the COA. Resident volunteers (including high school students) could connect older residents with web-based services (e.g., grocery delivery, ride-sharing services, etc.). Could also function as a remote friendly visiting program (e.g., friendly check-in calls, etc.). Use existing models like The Silver Line organization ²⁹ as a guide.
Action Item C: Explore the feasibility of implementing a Village Model in Dedham.	Identify local "champions" to learn more about the Village to Village network ³⁰ and connect with existing villages in Massachusetts to establish feasibility for implementation in Dedham.

²⁷ <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/documents-2015/HomeFit2015/AARP%20HomeFit%20Guide%202015.pdf>

²⁸ <https://ageinplace.com/aging-in-place-professionals/certified-aging-in-place-specialists-caps/>

²⁹ <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/>

³⁰ <http://www.vtvnetwork.org/>

<p>Action Item E: Advocate for increased tax work-off opportunities and expanded eligibility requirements.</p>	<p>Work with Town leaders to expand tax work-off eligibility requirements to include residents age 60 or older and to consider income-eligibility as opposed to asset-based eligibility. Explore the opportunity to establish additional tax work-off positions in Town. See the Town of Milton as a reference for amendments to the tax work-off program.³¹</p>
<p>Action Item F: Facilitate access to home repair and modification service providers.</p>	<p>Initiate a partnership with the Rotary Club of Dedham to start a “Rotary Home Team”³² to provide affordable handyman services to local seniors.</p>
<p>Action Item G: Explore the expansion of home-based health and wellness visits for older adult residents in Dedham.</p>	<p>Pursue partnerships between local health sciences students and the Visiting Nurses Association to increase support services for home-based older adults with chronic health issues. Use the home visit program at UMass Lowell as a guide.³³</p>
<p>Action Item H: Advocate for the hire of public housing resident service coordinators.</p>	<p>Work with the COA and Housing Authority to demonstrate support services needs among public housing residents. Assess funding opportunities for the creation of resident service coordinator positions by searching for grants³⁴ ³⁵ or coordinating existing staff across organizations.</p>

³¹ <https://www.townofmilton.org/sites/miltonma/files/uploads/write-off.pdf>

³² <http://www.rotaryhometeam.com/what.htm>

³³ <https://www.uml.edu/news/stories/2016/SummitElderCare.aspx>

³⁴ https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/mfh/scp/scphome

³⁵ <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/financing-and-development/grants>

Programs & Activities for Adults 55+

Engagement is a key element of healthy aging, and the new senior center in Dedham provides opportunity for a variety of new and exciting activities for older adult residents. Evidence from Livable Dedham’s needs assessment showed that many residents desire more programs, activities, and events targeted for younger older adults, such as fitness programs and intergenerational activities. Given these findings, one of Livable Dedham’s goals is to advocate for the development, implementation, and/or expansion of programs and activities in Dedham for residents of all ages, but with an emphasis on the younger segment of the older adult population. All action items related to this domain are presented in the table below.

Goal #1: Engage adults age 55+ in existing programs and develop new offerings to promote learning and wellness.

<u>Action Item:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
Action Item A: Build a “hub and spoke” community model.	With the COA as the hub, identify organizations in Dedham to function as “spokes”. This network identifies, documents, and shares town-wide opportunities for learning and wellness. Review the model implemented in Wellesley as an example. ³⁶
Action Item B: Increase lifelong learning opportunities.	Invite representatives from local lifelong learning institutes and organizations ^{37 38 39} to inform Dedham residents about local lifelong learning programs ^{40 41 42} and free online courses. ⁴³ Consider organizing a club for adults to communicate about coursework.

³⁶ <https://www.slideshare.net/StevePeretti/wcc-bridge-cafeconcept>

³⁷ http://www.franklinlifelonglearning.com/school_community_request_center/index.php

³⁸ <http://www.llaic.org/governance/mission-and-values>

³⁹ <http://www.willcourses.org>

⁴⁰ <https://www.umb.edu/olli>

⁴¹ <http://www.regiscollege.edu/academics/life-long-learning.cfm>

⁴² <https://www.brandeis.edu/bolli/>

⁴³ <https://harvardx.harvard.edu/>

Action Item C: Increase programming and events for caregivers.	Host/co-host events that provide information and resources about aging services and caregiver support available in Dedham, and offer opportunities for social engagement among caregivers. See Plymouth County for an example of “CaregiverNight Out”. ⁴⁴
Action Item D: Promote dementia-friendly practices in Dedham.	Host a “Dementia-Friendly Forum” to educate residents and businesses about how to make Dedham more dementia-friendly. Contact local advocates at Dementia Friendly Massachusetts to arrange for this presentation. ⁴⁵ Include resources like Purple Table ⁴⁶ and Dementia Friendly Business Training. ⁴⁷

Goal #2: Promote the accessibility of existing social programs to include and attract residents age 55+.

<u>Action Item:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
Action Item A: Increase multigenerational engagement opportunities.	Collaborate with schools to consider the development of a “gold card” program which provides older adults access to school theater, musical, and athletic events. See Commack School District in NY for an example. ⁴⁸ Also, BridgesTogether offers many resources for developing other types of intergenerational programming. ⁴⁹

⁴⁴ <http://www.prworkzone.com/old-colony-elder-services-treats-caregivers-to-a-special-%E2%80%9Ccaregiver-night-out%E2%80%9D/>

⁴⁵ <http://www.mass.gov/elders/civic-engagement/dementia-friendly-massachusetts-initiative.html>

⁴⁶ <https://www.purpletables.com/>

⁴⁷ <http://www.dfamerica.org/business-training/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.commackschools.org/seniorcitizens.aspx>

⁴⁹ <https://www.bridgestogether.org/>

Action Item B: Broaden existing programming to include the interests and preferences of this wide age group.

Encourage local organizations to offer a mix of evening programs on topics to attract residents age 55 and older. For example, the Senior Center could stay open one evening a week.⁵⁰ Consider these programs for residents age “55 & Better” to include speed-dating⁵¹, book-signings, or meditation classes.

⁵⁰ <https://www.natickma.gov/AlertCenter.aspx?AID=Trash-Delayed-One-Day-47>

⁵¹ <https://states.aarp.org/senior-speed-dating-events-connecticut-sc-ct-wp-events/>

Volunteering

In addition to participating in programs and activities, volunteering is another way for individuals to be engaged in their community. Given the relationship between engagement and healthy aging, offering ample volunteering opportunities is an effective way of helping residents live longer, happier, and healthier lives. Findings from Livable Dedham’s needs assessment found that many residents do not believe that older adults are encouraged to volunteer and remain engaged in Dedham. To address this concern, Livable Dedham is working to advocate for the expansion of volunteer opportunities in the Town of Dedham. All action items related to volunteering are presented in the table below.

Goal #1: Create an inventory of volunteer opportunities and identify a sustainable system to connect organizations seeking volunteers with residents who are seeking volunteer opportunities.

<u>Action Item:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
<u>Action Item A:</u> Centralize a digital platform for connecting residents with volunteer opportunities.	Explore Dedham Library's platform, Dedham.Life, as a town-wide information distribution network for volunteerism. Coordinate content with the “Volunteer Opportunities” section of the Town’s website. Drive outreach efforts to engage and provide support to organizations and volunteers accessing Dedham.Life.
<u>Action Item B:</u> Convene a volunteer fair.	Bring together organizations seeking volunteers and interested residents. Include a networking reception to follow as a way of promoting relationships.
<u>Action Item C:</u> Establish a “barter bank”.	Explore models of a barter bank ⁵² in Dedham to coordinate and encourage volunteers to contribute to the community in exchange for volunteer services.

⁵² <https://timebanks.org/>

Action Item D: Promote the establishment of a civic engagement coordinator position.

The position would maintain the database of volunteer opportunities, launch the barter bank, serve as a liaison with RSVP and HESSCO, and organize volunteer-oriented events. Consider the use of a property tax work-off employee or a grant application to subsidize the position.

Goal #2: Improve ways to match skills and desires of Dedham residents with the needs of the community to create new opportunities for volunteering.

Action Item A: Promote volunteer opportunities for older residents at Dedham High School.

Establish specific partnerships with the high school to promote volunteer opportunities for residents. For example, connect with the history department to educate them about ways to connect with residents who have lived experiences or personal stories to share with respect to periods of history. Sponsor an oral history program to engage students with Dedham residents and make audio available at the Dedham Public Library.

Action Item B: Explore the development of a “volunteer” summer camp.

For one week, Dedham High School students will spend time at various organizations, including the COA, as volunteers. Consider Camp United as a model.⁵³

Action Item C: Create volunteer opportunities for home-bound residents of Dedham.

Work with the COA to create volunteer opportunities like knitting for veterans⁵⁴, card making, or baking.

Action Item D: Co-host a career fair open to residents of all ages.

Include a table for Livable Dedham to connect residents interested in peer mentoring with students.⁵⁵

⁵³ <https://www.allinahealth.org/united-hospital/about-us/volunteer/camp-united/>

⁵⁴ <http://www.knotsoflove.org/>

⁵⁵ http://schools.shorelineschools.org/SLCC/Site/Power_of_One.html

Improving Communication

Effective town-wide communication channels are vital to residents staying informed and staying safe. However, findings from Livable Dedham’s needs assessment showed that nearly half of Dedham residents were unsatisfied with communication about community activities and events. Livable Dedham recognizes this concern and is dedicated to improving and streamlining the communication channels in Town, including print, online, and other media platforms. Livable Dedham seeks an age-friendly communication system in Dedham where residents of all ages and abilities can easily access town-wide information. All action items related to improving communication are presented in the table below.

Goal #1: Create and support mechanisms for town-wide information distribution.

<u>Action Items:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
<u>Action Item A:</u> Support the creation and spread of a centralized digital information platform in Dedham.	Explore Dedham Library's platform, Dedham.Life ⁵⁶ , as the town-wide information distribution network for news, events, programs, activities, and services. Collaborate with Town staff, businesses and civic groups to eliminate channel redundancy.
<u>Action Item B:</u> Coordinate sharing the digital content from Action Item A in traditional paper channels for older adults.	Explore the potential to distribute Dedham.Life content via Dedham Times and other traditional channels such as the COA newsletter, church bulletins, and the Dedham Transcript.
<u>Action Item C:</u> Create a town-wide email database for residents 55+.	Determine a mechanism to build a town email address database for residents 55+ to share information and guide them to online and traditional information channels.
<u>Action Item D:</u> Increase Livable Dedham publicity in local media outlets.	Promote courtesy photos, articles, and flyers in local media to increase communication about Livable Dedham's mission and activities. Use the Community Tool Box as a reference for promoting Livable Dedham. ⁵⁷

⁵⁶ <http://dedham.life/>

⁵⁷ <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/communication-plan/main>

Action Item E: Explore ways to expand accessibility to print based communication in Dedham.

Search for media grant opportunities, such as those offered by the Knight Foundation⁵⁸, to increase print communication and distribution of locally printed newspapers.

Goal #2: Foster creative partnerships to improve the coordination of existing communication channels.

Action Items:

Description:

Action Item A: Educate residents of all ages about the importance of Livable Community Initiatives.

Host events and exhibits that promote the value and significance of Livable Dedham's mission such as Livable Dedham's Active Aging Photography Contest or an Age Friendly Festival.⁵⁹ Capitalize on the new senior center location by featuring Livable Dedham and the COA on the local cable channel and other media outlets (e.g., monthly column in local newspaper and town website). See other communities like "Living the Good Life" in Beverly, MA.⁶⁰

Action Item B: Develop a guidance program for accessing online communication portals.

To offer opportunities for high school students, create "drop in" hours at the public library for residents to come and get one-on-one guidance on how to access online communication portals (e.g., social media, Town website or email).

⁵⁸ <https://knightfoundation.org/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.agefriendly Sarasota.org/impact/age-friendly-festival-2017.html>

⁶⁰ <https://bevcam.org/>

Action Item C: Expand utilization of *MySeniorCenter* data.

Learn more about the available data in MySeniorCenter (e.g., a management software used by senior centers) and determine ways to compare senior center utilization data with the Town Census to identify non-users and target outreach materials.

Action Item D: Encourage neighbor to neighbor communication through social media or neighborhood liaison network.

Promote Livable Dedham's Facebook page and Livable Dedham website as means for residents to share information. Support the creation of "Neighborhood Liaisons" to represent Dedham neighborhoods. These liaisons could implement local communication strategies (e.g., email or social media), help with "literature drops" to neighbors to keep them alert to local happenings and could provide a mechanism for Livable Dedham and the Town to more easily reach residents in a systematic way.

Conclusion

Livable Dedham seeks to transform the Town of Dedham into a place where residents of all ages and abilities can thrive. Members of this dedicated and passionate group of residents proactively spearheaded this age-friendly effort based on the upcoming demographic shifts for Dedham, as well as many cities and towns around the world. Livable Dedham actively collaborates with Town officials to heighten awareness of the age-friendly movement and seek positive change and age-friendly implementation for the Town of Dedham. Livable Dedham's continued efforts and commitment to the age-friendly process demonstrates their dedication to improving the quality of life for Dedham residents across the generations.