

2021



# Agawam Community Assessment and Action Plan

FOR AN AGE AND DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

MARCH 10, 2022



TOWN OF  
**Agawam**  
MASSACHUSETTS



## Acknowledgements

This Community Assessment and Action Plan for making Agawam an Age and Dementia Friendly Community was developed through funding from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation and technical assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. This project could not have been completed without the hard work and dedication of the Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group that included the following individuals:

- Michael Squindo, Director of the Agawam Council on Aging
- Marc Strange, Director of Planning and Community Development
- Pamela Kerr, (former) Assistant Planner
- Chris Sparks, Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation
- Corinne Wingard, Agawam Housing Committee
- Henry Kosloski, Conservation Commission and Community Preservation Committee
- Les Tingley, Manager of Agawam Media

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## Executive Summary

The Agawam Community Assessment and Action Plan was developed with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission through their Age and Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley Initiative with funding from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. This initiative allows PVPC to provide technical assistance to municipalities in the PVPC region (Hampshire and Hampden Counties) and brings together individuals and organizations that are working on similar projects to learn from experts and other community partners about best practices, policies and programs that support aging adults.

## Community Engagement

Residents of Agawam were engaged in this Community Assessment in three ways: through an Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group, administration of an Agawam Livable Community Survey (a shorter version of the AARP Livable Community Survey), and through two public forums that were held using Zoom Meetings and also broadcast live on Agawam Media television.

A total of 234 survey responses were collected through online promotion on social media and municipal websites, and hard copies distributed by the senior center in meal delivery bags and bundled with the monthly newsletter. More than 70% of survey respondents were over the age of 60. The majority of survey respondents were concerned about social isolation (the survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic), getting basic maintenance on their home, accessing quality health care, and paying for utilities. The primary domain areas that survey respondents thought should be addressed were housing, health and community services, and transportation.

## Review of Existing Plans and Reports

PVPC staff reviewed existing plans and reports that have been completed in Agawam for language and recommendations that support older adults. The reports that were reviewed include the Housing Needs Assessment (2016) and Housing Production Plan (2018); Open Space and Recreation Plan (2019); Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2018); Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness report (2019); and Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (2017).

## The Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community

The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative modified a model originally developed by the World Health Organization to include nine domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community. This model combines domains of the social and built environment that support an aging population, one that is increasingly at risk of having Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia. Those who responded to the Livable Agawam Survey said that Housing (30%), Health and Caregiver services (19%), Transportation (18%) and Financial Security (15%) were the most important areas to focus on in terms of making Agawam a more livable community for people of all ages.

## Housing

Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents to the Agawam Livable Community Survey said that it was either very important or extremely important to be able to stay in their own homes either independently or with a caregiver. When asked if the housing options in Agawam meet the changing needs of older adults, 34% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Like many communities in the



Pioneer Valley, Agawam has a shortage of affordable housing options and opportunities for people to downsize after they retire or after children leave home.

Although most respondents said that they want to continue living in their own homes, most also said that they wanted to move into a Senior or independent living community (24%), apartment or condominium (14%), assisted living community (10%), or an accessory apartment (11%) if circumstances changed (i.e. if they needed more care or decided to downsize). Twenty percent of survey respondents said that they currently live alone.

The Town has completed a Housing Needs Assessment (2017) and a Housing Production Plan (2018) which serves as a roadmap for increasing the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), which at the time of these assessments was at less than 5% of housing units. The SHI goal that cities and towns should meet in order to be able to deny comprehensive housing permits is 10%. Agawam has appointed a Housing Committee to oversee the implementation of the Housing Production Plan, but little has been accomplished in terms of adding to the inventory of units or amending Zoning regulations to allow for a greater diversity of housing types.

Identifying contractors who can modify homes to improve safety and accessibility and funding programs to help people with home modifications, and publicizing information about resources to help people at risk of eviction are some of the priority actions identified to help Agawam residents age in place.

### **Transportation and Streets**

Twenty-nine (29) survey respondents cited public transportation being unavailable or inconvenient to access and thirteen (13) cited physical limitations or other impairments as a difficulty in getting needed transportation. In Agawam, transportation services include fixed route Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) buses, door-to-door on demand van service for seniors (over 60) and people with disabilities, and paratransit services for people with disabilities who live within ¾ miles of a city route. The Agawam Senior Center operates van service Monday through Friday and is finalizing an expansion of van service that will include additional paratransit staff and a 14-passenger circulator bus that will provide low-cost transit service for anyone along the circulator route.

Although most respondents to the Agawam Livable Community Survey said that they drive themselves as their main means of transportation, just over 12% said that they walk to get to the places that they need to go. According to the WalkScore calculation (at [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com)), “Downtown” Agawam’s walk score is 38 out of 100, a score that indicates that the community is “car dependent.” The Town has an active Complete Streets program and has submitted a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) which outlines improvements to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to create a more comfortable environment for walking and biking.

Continuous surveying of older adults and people with disabilities to monitor transportation needs, expanding low-cost transportation services, developing a plan to interconnect networks of trails and bicycle facilities, continuing the implementation of the Complete Streets Program, and implementing programs that promote safe driving are some of the actions identified to improve transportation resources for older adults in Agawam.

## **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

The Town of Agawam developed a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment and Master Plan in 2018 which identified the northeast and southeastern areas of Agawam as census tracts with the highest populations of residents over the age of 65. Programs organized by the department serve roughly 1/3 of the population or approximately 8,000 residents. The town has developed shared use trails (Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway, Downtown Shared Use Park), and owns fourteen (14) parks and recreational facilities, along with Robinson State Park.

The Parks and Recreation Department tries not to duplicate services provided by the Agawam Senior Center in its programming. However, responses to the survey that was developed for the Needs Assessment identified a desire for more adult and senior programming and more adult leagues. The survey also expressed strong support for indoor recreation and/or a community center, walking paths and trails, landscaping and other park amenities, and the creation of community gardens in Agawam. The survey also found strong support for indoor recreation and/or a community center in addition to outdoor amenities offered in public parks. Public buildings in Agawam that currently provide spaces for people to gather indoors include the Agawam Senior Center and the Agawam Public Library.

In addition to the Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment and Master Plan, the Town has recently adopted an Open Space and Recreation Plan (2019) and an ADA assessment and transition plan to ensure that all public buildings meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for accessibility.

Making all public buildings and outdoor spaces Dementia Friendly and ADA accessible, increasing connectivity and accessibility of outdoor spaces and trails to other amenities, and developing more programming for older adults can improve utilization of outdoor spaces and buildings in Agawam.

## **Communication, Information and Technology**

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed a “Digital Divide,” particularly among older adults, rural areas without access to high-speed internet, and households living in poverty who may not be able to afford the expense of equipment or internet service. Many senior centers began programs for loaning out equipment such as tablets or laptops; connecting people to low-cost internet services; and providing training for how to use equipment and software.

Most survey respondents said that they used email or social media to communicate with family and friends, with 56% saying they used these tools every day, 29% one or more times a week. However, 8% said that they never use these tools to communicate. When looking for information for services for older adults, most (182) respondents said that they go to the Senior Center, 153 went to family or friends, and 113 said they did an internet search.

Agawam has a strong working relationship with Agawam Media to provide Senior Center programming on cable access TV and the Agawam Council on Aging publishes regular newsletter both in print and online.

To continue expanding the town’s communication system, Agawam can consider creating a Municipal Communication Plan, update the Town website regularly and participate in all communication outlets to reach a maximum audience. Agawam may also focus on facilitating a culture of support and acceptance for older adults and people living with dementia by providing staff training for local government,

community organizations and businesses, and ensure that signage and information in public buildings and outdoor spaces uses large, bold fonts and simple language.

### **Health and Community Services**

The care needs of older adults who are aging in place can vary from assistance with basic tasks such as cleaning, shopping, cooking, yard work, snow shoveling, and minor home maintenance projects; to full-time medical or home health assistance provided by professional or family caregivers. Most survey respondents (78%) said that they had good or excellent physical health, while 19% said their physical health was fair, and 3% said it was poor. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents said that their emotional health was good or excellent, while 21% said their emotional health was fair or poor.

Greater Springfield Senior Services (GSSS) is the designated Area Agency on Aging for Agawam and provides several critical services for older adults and their families. This organization also provides links to resources for caregiver support and an Elder Guide on their website. The Agawam Senior Center offers healthcare services for aging adults as well, including free hearing tests, foot care, and SHINE counseling.

Agawam's location next to Springfield offers access to several hospitals including Baystate Medical Center, Mercy Hospital, and Shriners Hospital. In Agawam there is an Urgent Care facility run through Baystate Health, a NextStep Health Care facility that offers both short-term rehabilitation and long-term care options, as well as the Atrium at Cardinal Drive and Heritage Hall for assisted living and long-term care. Amedisys provides Home Health Care providers as well as hospice and personal care.

Twenty percent (20%) of Agawam Livable Community Survey respondents said that they had an impairment or condition that limited their ability to participate in the community, and 11% said that they received caregiver services. A large proportion of respondents (41% of the 210 respondents who answered this question) said that they had provided care or assistance to someone who was disabled or frail in the last 12 months, and 25% said it was very challenging to meet caregiving responsibilities in addition to family and/or work. Most respondents (15) who said that they had received care said that they had mobility impairments, and the same was true for people who provided caregiver services, with 51 respondents saying that care was provided for people who had mobility impairments.

According to data from the Community Profile compiled by the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative, 15.3% of Agawam residents over the age of 65 have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. With a population of 5,524 people over 65, this means that approximately 845 people in Agawam are living with dementia.

Many survey respondents (44%) said that they help neighbors with minor tasks or errands, and 42% said that they would provide help if asked. Help with minor tasks can sometimes be addressed through volunteer programs such as the RSVP program or through a Village model program. Adopting a volunteer-based programs that people can join as volunteer service providers or as people in need of assistance may lower the percentage of respondents (31%) that said they did not have neighbors who they could ask for help with minor tasks.

Some goals for improving Health and Community Services include cataloguing existing community, social and health service programs in town, collaborating with local organizations to train and educate health

care and social service providers on how to access services and inform clients about town resources, and continue identifying barriers for residents who need assistance in accessing services.

### **Social Participation and Inclusion**

The pandemic increased feelings of social isolation among many populations but was especially difficult for older adults who relied on the Senior Center for social programming, meals, and transportation services. Forty-two percent (42%) of survey respondents said that they used services at the senior center prior to the pandemic, but only 20% of respondents said that they used the center more than once a month.

In addition to the Senior Center, many survey respondents said that prior to the pandemic, they spent free time at restaurants (171 respondents), parks or outdoor spaces (156), the library (73) or faith-based organizations (65). Sixty-four (64) respondents said that they did not participate remotely in any outside activities during the pandemic, highlighting the importance of access to technology to participate in remote social programming or meetings.

The Agawam Cultural Council provides a range of engaging, entertaining, and educational community events for older adults to participate in, and also organizes events at the Agawam Senior Center. Many survey respondents were satisfied (31%) or very satisfied (6%) with opportunities for continued learning and engagement in the community, while 15% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Nineteen percent (19%) of survey respondents said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the culture of the community toward aging, suggesting that there is a need to build awareness and to change the narrative about older adults and their role in the community. Providing trainings on how to recognize the signs of dementia and treat those individuals with respect and developing intergenerational programming to celebrate what older adults can offer to their community can create a more inclusive environment.

Agawam can encourage social participation and inclusiveness for people with dementia by identifying “naturally occurring retirement communities” (NORCs), establishing a Village Model program, hosting community events in easily accessible public spaces, and partnering with local government sectors and businesses to provide dementia friendly training and other related resources.

### **Employment and Civic Engagement**

Approximately 1/3 of Agawam Livable Community Survey respondents were under the age of 60 (under retirement age), while 57% of survey respondents said that they were already retired. Seven percent (7%) of respondents said that they did not anticipate ever retiring.

The Senior Center has partnered with the Massachusetts Council on Aging (MCOA) and an agency called Empower Success Corps to help develop a peer-guided process to connect recent retirees and other elders who want to give back to their community with various volunteer opportunities.

The priority actions for providing opportunities for older adults to work and volunteer in the community include creating or connecting with volunteer leadership programs for residents interested in serving on non-profit or other boards/committees and increasing the number of older adults running in local elections, volunteering, and serving on municipal boards/commissions by publicizing opportunities to serve requirements for running for municipal positions.



## **Safety and Resiliency**

The Agawam Livable Community Survey asked whether people felt safe living in Agawam, and if they felt informed about what to do in the case of a weather or other emergency. Most people responded that they always felt safe (36%) or felt safe most of the time (57%), but 7% said that they only felt safe some of the time (5%) or never (2%). Fifteen percent (15%) of survey respondents said that they did not feel informed about emergencies.

Agawam's fire department keeps a Disabled Person Address Registry that allows emergency personnel to access important medical information through a database when called for emergencies. The fire department also encourages older residents and people with disabilities to keep a regularly updated File of Life in view at their home in case of emergency.

Adopting of a TRIAD program, which is a collaboration between the Sheriff's Department, local police & fire departments and senior services, would better connect seniors with law enforcement and other service providers to bring awareness to older adults concerning safety through education and crime prevention programs, as well as, enhance access other supportive programs.

In addition to the town establishing a TRIAD program, the Town could also provide regular trainings for all emergency personnel on recognizing the signs of dementia and explore funding for cooling stations and emergency shelters to address residents' needs during hazardous events.

## **Access, Equity and Inclusion**

Access, Equity and Inclusion domain should be considered throughout all the domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community. Improvements that benefit people who may be living with a disability or with dementia can benefit the whole community.

In Agawam, sectors of particular concern include people with dementia, veterans, country of origin, LGBTQ+, immigration status, second language speakers, and people living in different types of residential environments. When implementing the Actions included in the attached Action Plan, the Town should consider how strategies can reach these sectors and how people directly affected can be included in the process of planning and implementation of priority actions.

Some prioritized actions to improve Access, Equity and Inclusion include creating an "age friendly business" recognition program in the community and adopting more community learning projects such as community gardens and multi-cultural festivals.

## **Action Plan and Plan Implementation**

The Age and Dementia Friendly Agawam Action Plan includes goals and actions improving the livability of Agawam for people of all ages and making the town a welcoming and supportive place for people living with dementia. The Action Plan identifies Lead Entities, partners, metrics for measuring progress, and project priorities.

The Age and Dementia Friendly Agawam Working Group was formed to work with the PVPC on the development of this Community Assessment and Action Plan. An implementation committee made up of members of this working group and others identified by the Working group will be developed to implement strategies found in the Action Plan section of this report.

## Introduction

This Community Assessment Report was developed with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission through their Age and Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley Initiative that provides technical assistance to municipalities in the PVPC region (Hampshire and Hampden Counties) through funding from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. This initiative also brings together individuals and organizations in the PVPC region on a quarterly basis to learn from experts and other community partners about best practices, policies and programs that support aging adults.

The report is organized by the Domains of Livability of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community. Although communities do not have to develop Action Plans for every domain in this model, assessing where communities are in each domain area can be helpful to establish a baseline understanding of where the community is and helps participants to measure progress going forward.

This Community Assessment draws from existing plans and assessments that have been completed for the Town of Agawam in the past and incorporates the results of the community engagement activities to develop recommendations for actions that the Town can take going forward to be a more livable and welcoming place for people of all ages and abilities.

## Background

The Town of Agawam is the southernmost community in Massachusetts and is located on the west bank of the Connecticut River, two miles south of the City of Springfield and 21 miles north of Hartford Connecticut. The town has a city form of government with an elected Mayor but calls itself a Town with the Town Council as the lead legislative body.

Agawam has a population of 28,701 of which 5,524, or 19.2% of the total population, are 65 or older<sup>1</sup>. According to data obtained from the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Community Profile, “older residents of Agawam have lower rates of bipolar disorders, colon cancer, prostate cancer, and traumatic brain injury. However, compared to state averages, they have higher rates of Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, congestive heart failure, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, chronic kidney disease, leukemias and lymphomas, glaucoma, cataract, and fibromyalgia, chronic pain and fatigue.”<sup>2</sup>

The majority of Agawam’s population is White (97.2%) with the remaining population identifying as Asian (1.4%) and Black or African American (1%), Hispanic (0.4%) or Other (0.4%). The number of older adults who are veterans of military service is higher (22.9%) than the state (18.8%), and a much higher percentage of people over 65 (37.2%) live alone compared to the state average (30.2%). More than 16% of residents over 65 are diagnosed with deafness or hearing impairment and 3.5% have self-reported vision difficulty. Over 20% of people over 65 have self-reported ambulatory difficulties while 4.5% are diagnosed with mobility impairments.

The Town of Agawam was initially designated as an Age Friendly Community in 2016. However, staff and administration changes delayed the Town’s development of a Community Assessment and Action Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics based on the 2018 Massachusetts Healthy Aging Community Profile – may be updated on digital version of this document once 2020 census numbers are released

<sup>2</sup> 2018 Massachusetts Healthy Aging Community Profile

Agawam signed on to join the Age Friendly Pioneer Valley initiative in the summer of 2020 to access technical assistance from PVPC to complete this work. At that time, all public buildings were closed due to a State-mandated shutdown to prevent the spread of virus during the COVID-19 pandemic. While some communities opted to postpone the Age and Dementia Friendly planning efforts until they could meet in person again, Agawam and the towns of Belchertown, Northampton, and South Hadley decided to move forward with the project through remote meetings and community engagement efforts. There was concern at the time about reaching people who are not comfortable using technology to participate in meetings, but the timing also allowed community partners to ask older people their concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic highlighted issues that were already present but less visible, such as food insecurity, social isolation and safety.

## Community Engagement

Residents of the Agawam Community were engaged in this Community Assessment in three ways: through an Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group, administration of a shorter version of the Livable Community Survey, and through two public forums that were held using Zoom Meetings and also broadcast live on Agawam Media (cable access TV). The public forums were recorded and made available on the Agawam Media website for viewing at any time.

### Working Group

The Age and Dementia Friendly Agawam Working Group was formed to review and design a survey and public forums and to meet regularly to oversee the process of developing a Community Assessment and Action Plan. The working group was made up of the following individuals:

- Michael Squindo, Director of the Agawam Council on Aging
- Marc Strange, Director of Planning and Community Development
- Pamela Kerr, Assistant Planner
- Chris Sparks, Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation
- Corinne Wingard, Agawam Housing Committee
- Henry Kosloski, Conservation Commission
- Les Tingley, Manager of Agawam Media

The working group met monthly over the course of a year to develop a shorter version of a Livable Community Survey, plan for public forums, review assets and challenges for livability in the community, and to review the Community Assessment and Action Plan.

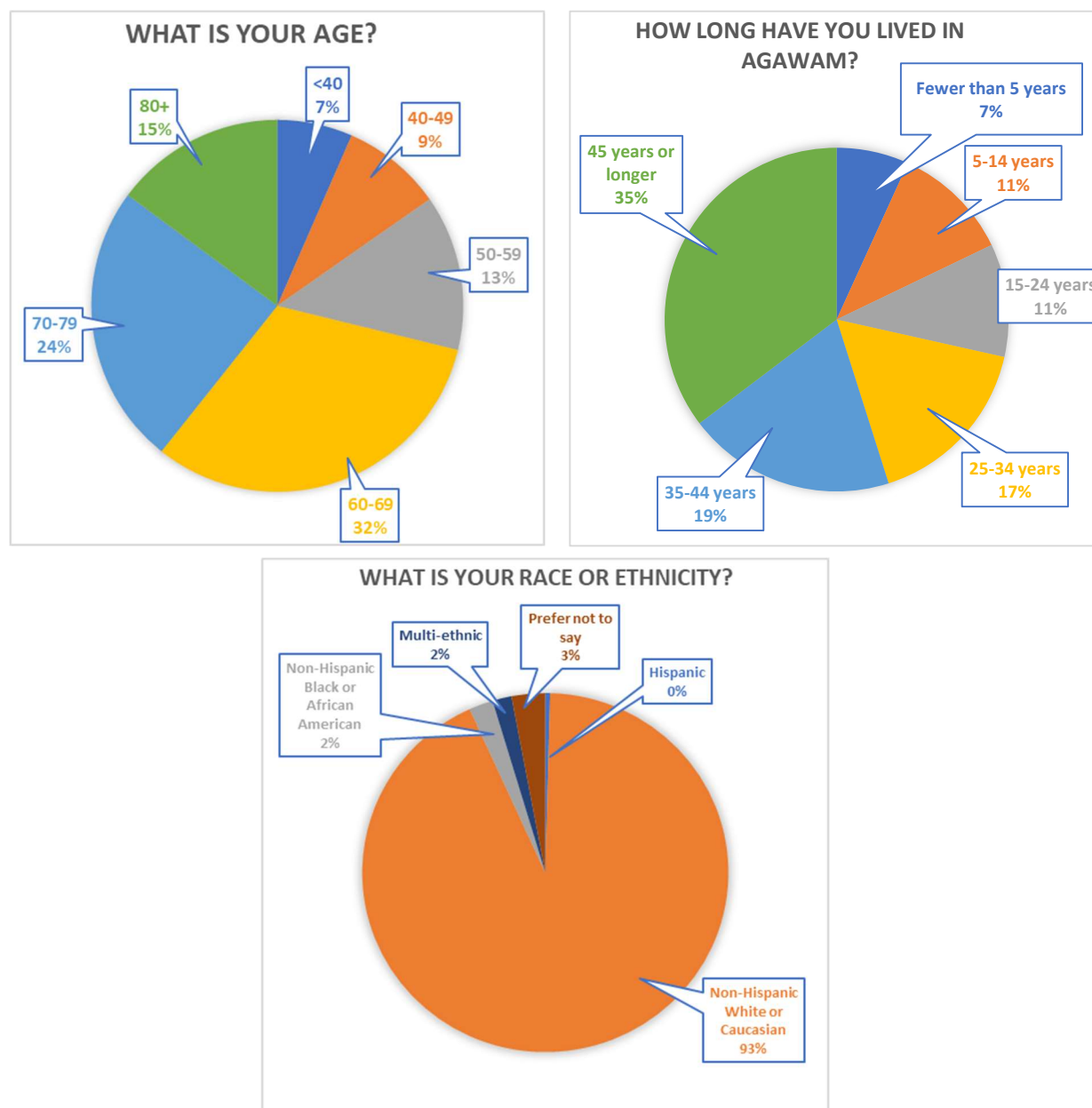
### Agawam Livable Community Survey

The Working Group reviewed the AARP's Livable Community Survey as well as shorter versions of the survey that had been developed in other communities. The final survey was formatted to fit onto seven pages with a cover letter on the first page so that it could be easily printed and distributed to people who preferred to fill out the hard copy of the survey rather than taking it online. Hard copy surveys were distributed to people who requested hard copies and also to those who receive hard copies of the Senior Center newsletter. Surveys were also inserted into newsletters that were left in locations around town for people to pick up. Surveys were also administered in an online platform and the link was advertised on the town and COA websites and was advertised on COA and Town Facebook pages. Survey respondents were entered into a drawing for two Stop and Shop Gift Cards that were donated by

the store in support of the project. The Livable Agawam survey was translated into Spanish and Russian to reflect the majority of the non-English speaking population in the community. However, no surveys were taken in these languages.

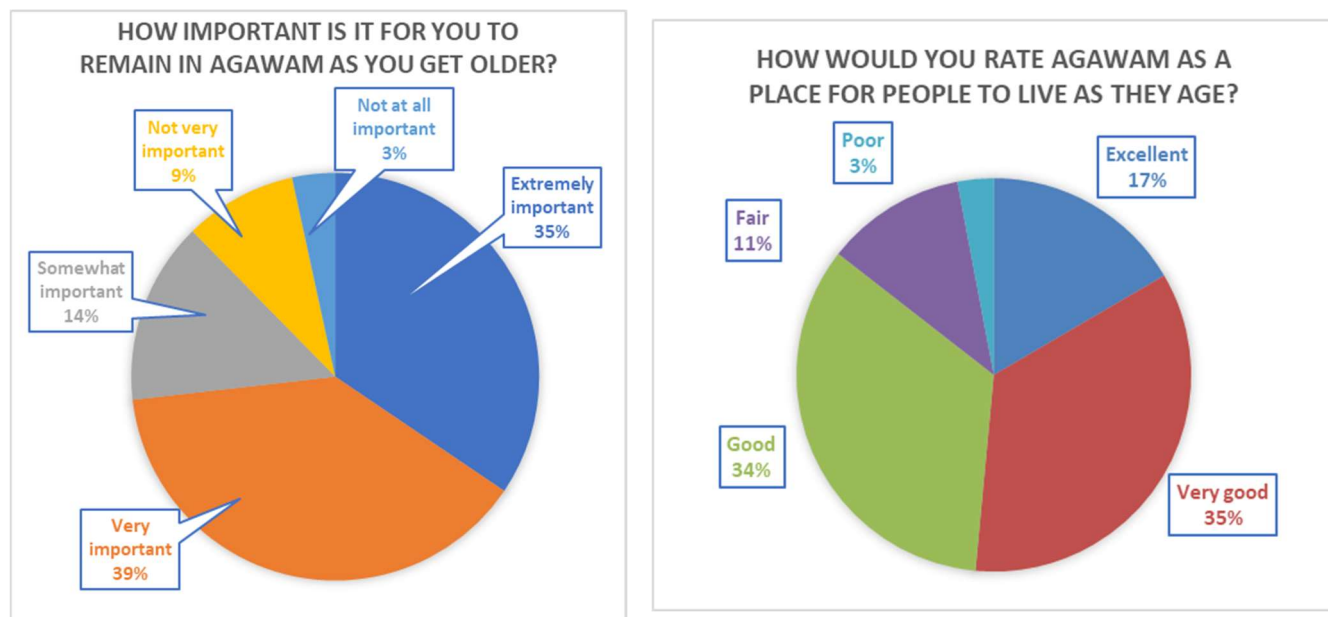
A total of 234 surveys were completed, with 54% from the 01001 zip code (Agawam) and 46% from 01030 (Feeding Hills). Community engagement for the development of the Community Assessment was directed to older adults and people who care for them in order to understand the experiences of older adults living in Agawam. More than 71% of survey respondents were over the age of 60, and 93% of respondents have lived in Agawam for more than five years.

**Figure 1 – Age, longevity, Race and Ethnicity of Livable Agawam Survey respondents**



A little more than half of survey respondents (52%) said that Agawam was an Excellent or Very Good place for people to live as they age, while 14% said that the community is a Fair or Poor place to live. While it may be impossible to please everyone, it is important to understand the aspects of a community that make some people feel that it is not the best place in which to grow old.

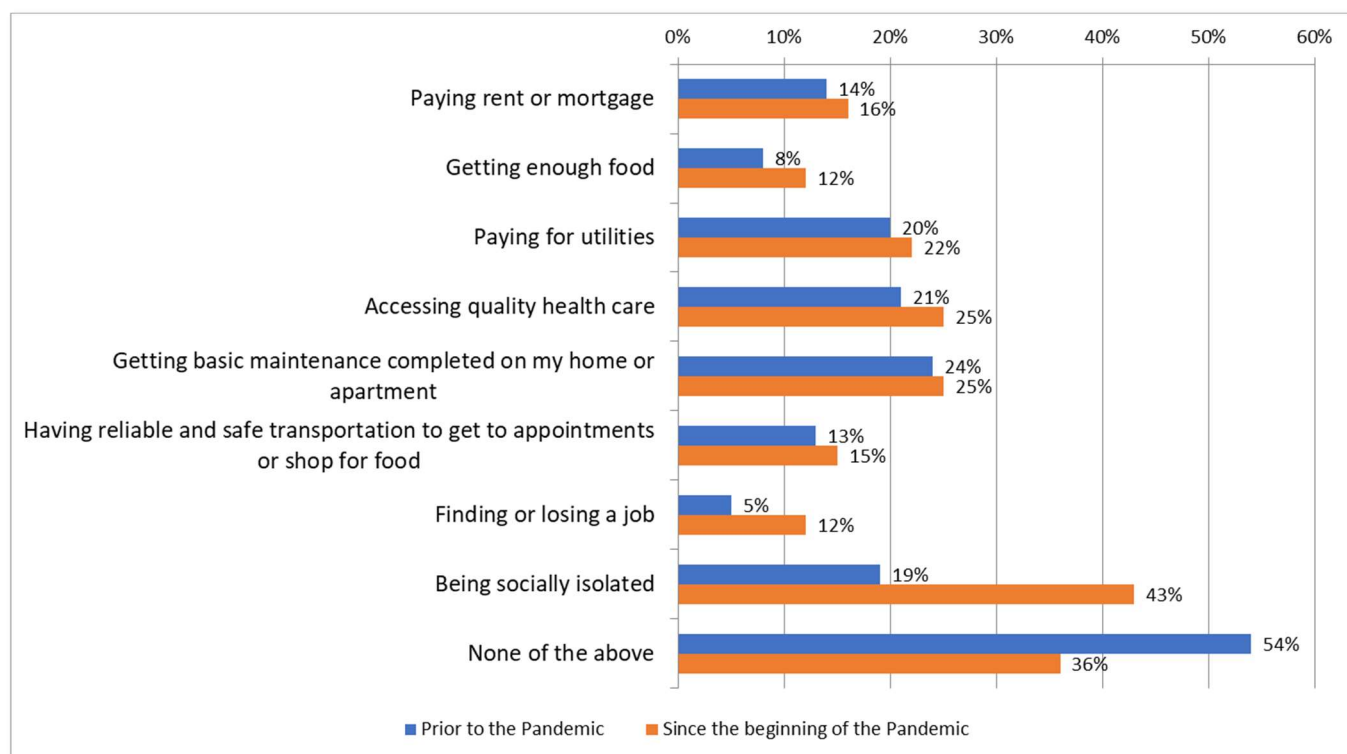
**Figure 2 – How Survey Respondents feel about Agawam as a place to grow old**



As the Agawam Livable Community Survey was conducted during the COVID pandemic, some survey questions were oriented around how the pandemic changed how people were able to cope in the community. The following question: “Prior to [or Since] the state mandated stay-at-home orders due to COVID-19, have you been concerned about any of the following...” showed that the main concern that came out of the pandemic was social isolation. Responses increased from 19% to 43% of respondents being concerned about this issue during the pandemic. Other concerns that were similar both before and after the pandemic included getting basic maintenance completed on one’s home, accessing quality health care, and paying for utilities. More people were concerned about finding or losing a job during the pandemic.



**Figure 3: Concerns prior to or since the state mandated stay-at-home orders due to COVID-19 (prior to March 2020).**



Source: Livable Agawam Survey (2020-21)

### Public Forum #1 –

The first public forum was held on Zoom and was broadcast live on Cable Access TV. Members of the Working Group were in attendance as well as a few members of the public, with others (potentially) watching on Agawam Media (local Cable Access TV). A recording of the Forum was posted on the Agawam Media website for people to view at a later date.

After a presentation on the Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community, Forum participants were asked to share what they liked about living in Agawam, and what their greatest challenges are as older adults living in the community. Participants commented that community members care about one another and appreciated connections made through churches and social organizations. The greatest challenges come for older adults on the older end of the spectrum who are not comfortable with technology and may need services but don't know how to find them or do not want to burden others with their needs. A woman in her seventies who cared for an older parent said that it was difficult to get services at home. She said that her mother had social connections through church but did not feel comfortable going to the Senior Center. As a caregiver, she was in need of support and services, but found it difficult to convince her mother to get help at home as she was used to being independent and getting to appointments on her own.

Another participant provided assistance with technology for other older adults. She said that recent retirees were generally comfortable with technology, but older adults who had retired many years ago were a lot more reticent to adapt to technology as a resource.

Several participants discussed the need for more housing options, both affordable and close to services. One participant noted that many housing developments he had been to in Florida provided services on site or were easy to get to by walking or taking a golf cart and were part of an association where property maintenance was part of the services covered by the homeowners' association. He noted that in Agawam it was a difficult to get to services without needing a car, and also difficult to find single story homes. Other participants said that Agawam needs more affordable housing options and were not in favor of "over 55" housing but instead thought that housing should allow for intergenerational communities.

Transportation was also discussed. Although participants in the Forum were all still able to drive, one woman commented many years ago her mother was able to walk to the bus to get to work in Springfield, but that bus schedules are not convenient for simple errands or work schedules.

## Public Forum #2 – Dementia Friendly Agawam

The second Public Forum for Agawam was held on April 10<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm and was also broadcast live on Zoom, Facebook Live, and Agawam Media and was recorded for later viewing. A representative from the Alzheimer's Association gave a presentation on how to recognize the signs of dementia and how to communicate with people with dementia, and PVPC staff presented on some of the actions that towns could take to be a Dementia Friendly Community. Unfortunately, only Working Group members were in attendance at this forum, so it was not useful for gathering input from the public.

The forum was a good example of a training that should be provided for all sectors of the community in order to prepare people for how to recognize the signs of dementia and how to communicate with someone who has dementia. The presenter noted that age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. So, as populations get older, the likelihood is that more people in the community will have dementia. The risk of dementia can be lowered through good nutrition, exercise, cognitive activities, and socializing, so these factors should be considered when planning for an Age and Dementia Friendly Community.

## Review of Existing Plans and Assessments

For this Community Assessment, PVPC staff reviewed a number of reports and assessments that have been developed for the Town of Agawam in the years prior to the Age and Dementia Friendly Community planning process. Reports and assessments that were reviewed for this Community Assessment include the following:

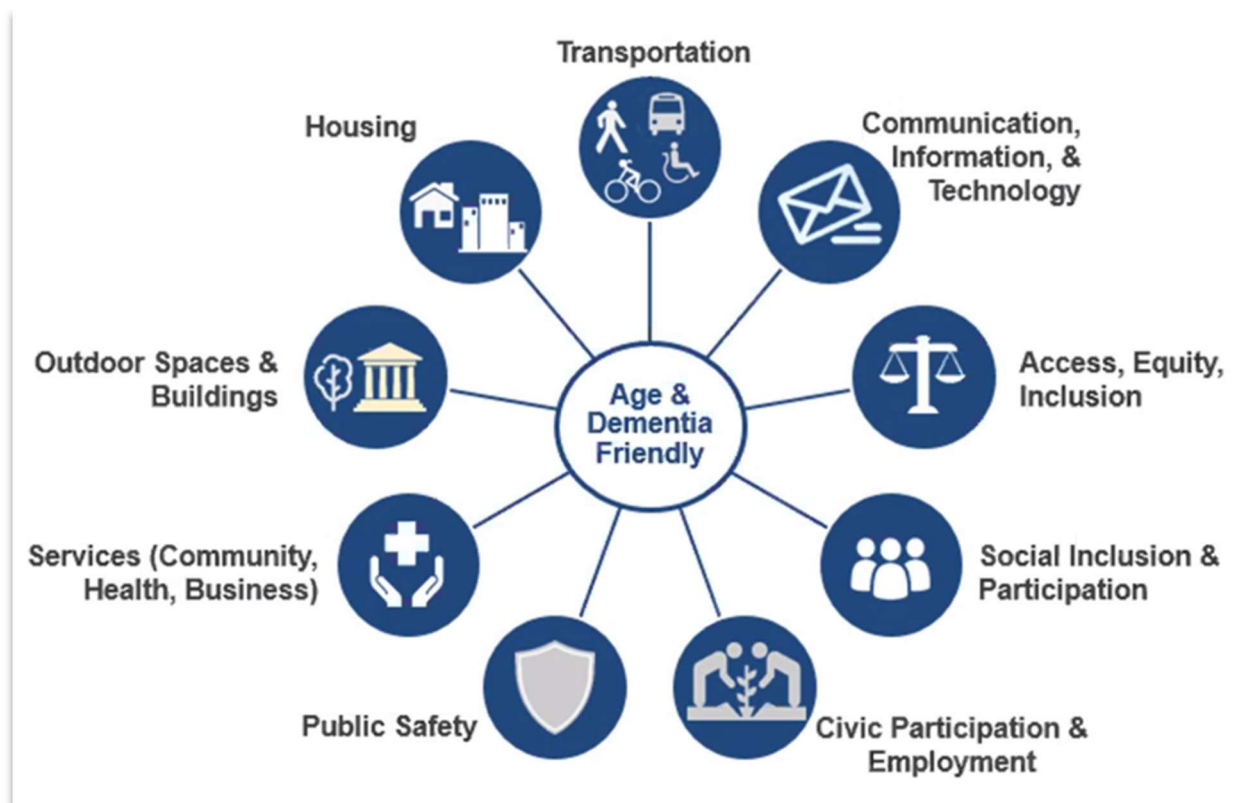
- Agawam Housing Needs Assessment (2016)
- Agawam Housing Production Plan (2018-22)
- Open Space and Recreation Plan (2019)
- Agawam Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2018)
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) report (2019)
- Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (2017)

The Town of Agawam does not have a Master Plan in place. Zoning has been amended and updated over the years, but without a Master Plan, the Zoning Ordinance does not support a land use vision for the community.

## The Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community

The World Health Organization developed a model for assessing communities' ability to support an aging population that includes eight domains of an Age Friendly Community. This model includes elements of the physical and social environments that are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous as they age. This model is helpful in considering elements of a community that extend beyond the built environment and that are critical to the needs of older adults, but also contribute to healthy, active, more livable communities. The original model included Eight Domains of Livability for an Age Friendly Community. However, over time communities found that it made more sense to plan around domains of the community that impact their abilities to be both Age and Dementia Friendly. The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative modified the Eight Domains of Livability into the Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community. Some communities have also added domains such as Food or Nutrition Security to these domain areas. We have used this model to assess where Agawam is in terms of each of the domain areas below.

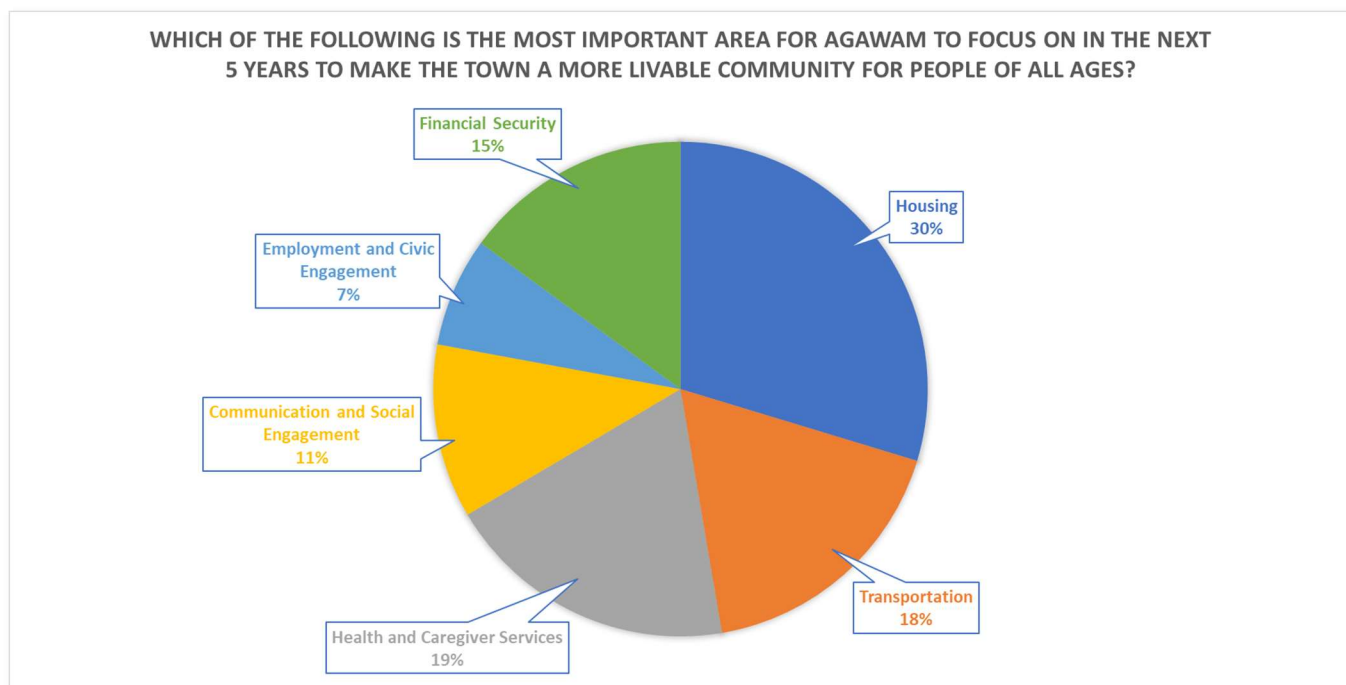
**Figure 4 - The Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community**



Source: Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative

The Livable Agawam Survey asked about a few of these domain areas, and which ones that respondents thought were the most important for the Town to focus on to make the town a more livable community for people of all ages. Most respondents (30%) said that housing was most important, with Health and Caregiver Services (19%), Transportation (18%), and Financial Security (15%) being additional areas of focus.

Figure 5: Focus Areas for Agawam to Become a more Livable Community



Source: Livable Agawam Survey (2020-21)

### Planning for a Dementia Friendly Community

As populations age, the number of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia also increases along with the need for understanding of the signs of dementia and how to work with and support people with dementia and the people who care for them. It is important for many sectors of the community to be educated about the signs of dementia and for communities to provide safe and comfortable spaces where people with dementia and their caregivers can meet or seek respite care. Dementia Friendly Communities foster the ability of people living with dementia to remain in community and engage and thrive.

Dementia Friendly America is a national network of communities, organizations and individuals seeking to ensure that communities across the US are equipped to support people living with dementia and their caregivers. Dementia Friendly America offers suggestions for how the following ten sectors of a community should be involved in planning for a dementia friendly community<sup>3</sup>:

- **Transportation, Housing and Public Spaces (local government)** – Infrastructure that makes communities more livable for people with dementia and their caregivers.
- **Businesses** – Dementia supportive customer service, environments and policies that support employee caregivers.
- **Legal and Advance Planning Services** – Legal services that help vulnerable clients express their wishes early and avoid problems such as unpaid expenses.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dfamerica.org/what-is-dfa>

- **Banks and Financial services** - Dementia friendly practices that help maintain clients' independence while protecting them from problems.
- **Neighbors and Community Members** – Raising awareness to help neighbors and community members understand and support people living with dementia.
- **Independent Living** – Home-based services available to maximize independence and promote autonomy and a high quality of life.
- **Communities of Faith** – Faith communities use dementia friendly practices to provide a welcoming, compassionate environment and spiritual connection.
- **Care throughout the Continuum** – Early diagnosis of dementia and ongoing medical care; patient education; and connecting patients and their caregivers with community resources that promote quality of life.
- **Memory Loss Supports and Services** – A spectrum of settings and services needed by people with dementia – from long-term care facilities and assisted and independent living residences, to home care, adult day services, and hospice care.
- **Emergency Planning and First Response** – Community planning and family preparation considers safety, security, and needs of people with dementia in disaster planning and emergency response.

This Community Assessment highlights areas within the Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community where supports or environments should consider people with dementia as well as older adults. However, as the main aspect of being a Dementia Friendly Community involves building awareness among the sectors listed above, the following recommendations are focused specifically on the next steps that Agawam will take once designated as a Dementia Friendly Community.

### **Goals and Actions for a Dementia Friendly Community**

**Goal 1:** Build awareness, acceptance, and a culture of support for people living with dementia and the people who care for them.

#### **Actions:**

- 1a. Develop a committee of the Age and Dementia Friendly Agawam Working Group to implement trainings and a public awareness campaign about dementia in Agawam.
- 1b. Recruit volunteers to become Dementia Friends Champions who will provide trainings for community groups and neighbors.
- 1c. Encourage Dementia Friends trainings or Alzheimer's Association trainings for all municipal staff.
- 1d. Establish a Triad program that partners emergency personnel (Police and Fire Departments) with the Council on Aging and older adults to address safety concerns of older adults in the community.
- 1e. Identify and reach out to family care givers to connect them with support programs and opportunities for meeting with other caregivers of people with dementia.
- 1f. Schedule memory cafes at the Senior Center and other locations in the community.
- 1g. Educate restaurant owners about Purple Table programs and provide trainings for interested restaurant owners and their staff.



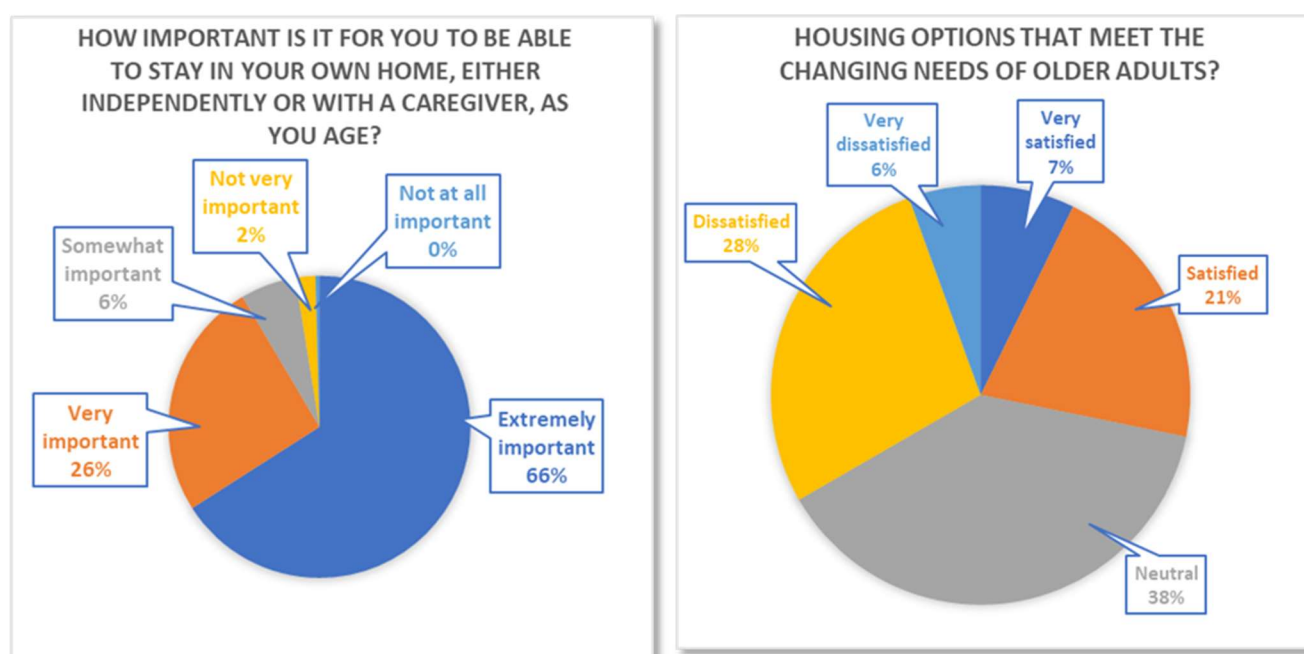
## Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Agawam

### Housing

Many older adults want to stay in their own homes when they age. Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents to the Agawam Livable Community Survey said that it was either very important or extremely important to be able to stay in their own homes either independently or with a caregiver.

When asked if the housing options in Agawam meet the changing needs of older adults, 34% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Like many communities in the Pioneer Valley, Agawam has a shortage of affordable housing options, and also a shortage of options for people who are ready to downsize after they retire or after children leave home.

**Figure 6: Survey responses regarding Agawam housing options and Aging in Place**

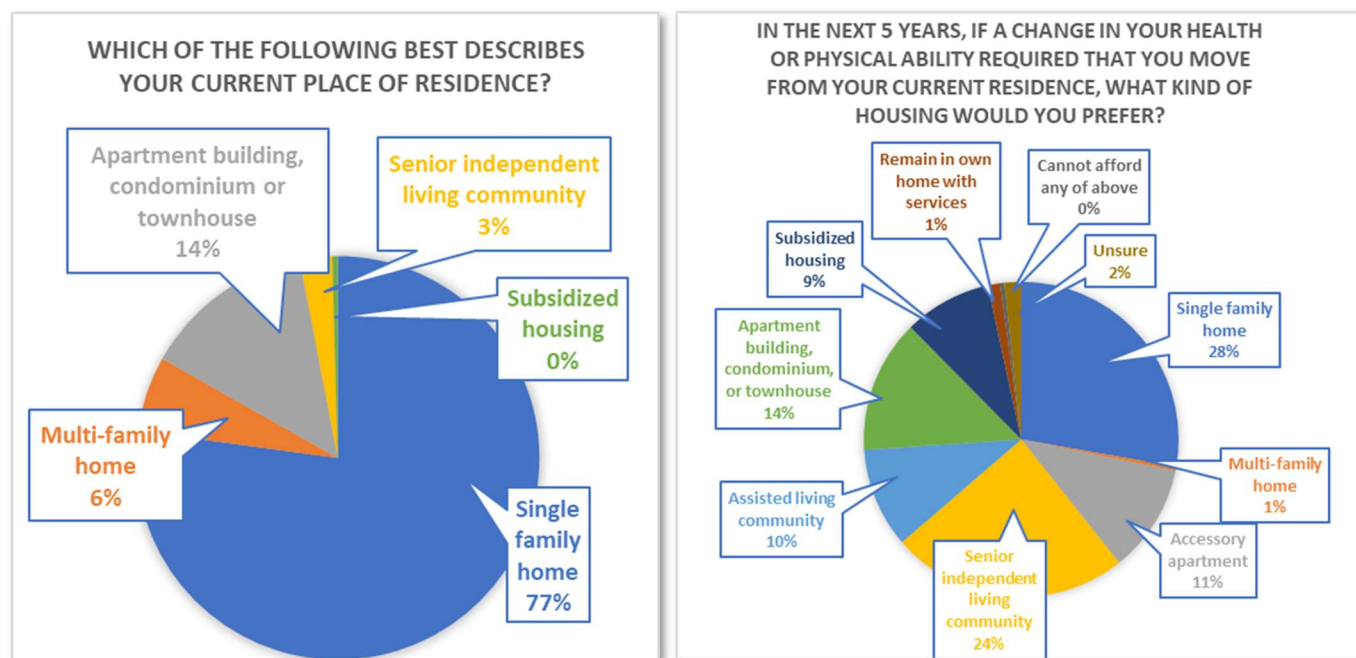


### Housing Supply

Most survey respondents (77%) said that they currently live in single-family homes and 14% live in apartment buildings, condominiums or townhouses. When asked if they had a change of circumstances that might require that they move, only 28% wanted to continue living in a single family home while many others (24%) wanted to move to a senior independent living community or a mix of other types of housing including apartments or condominiums (14%), assisted living communities (10%) or accessory apartments (11% - not currently allowed in Agawam's Zoning regulations). Fifteen percent (15%) of survey respondents said that their current housing was not affordable. When asked who they live with, most respondents (52%) said that they live with a spouse or partner, 20% live alone, 21% said they live with their children (based on our interpretation of responses, 12% were seniors who live with adult children), and 3% with grandchildren. The number of people who live with family members suggests a potential need for people to be able to build accessory apartments to offer separated living units for family members or caretakers.

The Town has engaged the community in several planning efforts to address Agawam's housing needs, both through the development of a Housing Needs Assessment in 2017 and a Housing Production Plan in 2018. The Housing Production Plan serves as a strategic plan for the production of affordable housing and, once adopted by the Town and certified by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, allows the Town to uphold a denial of an application for a comprehensive permit if the application is not consistent with local needs. At the time the Housing Needs Assessment was completed, the Town had a Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) of 4.18% (505 units) of the 2010 year-round housing base of 12,090 units. Agawam would have to add 742 SHI eligible units to achieve the state's 10% threshold.

**Figure 7: Types of housing where people live now vs. where they would like to live if change in health required a move**



The key housing needs found by the Agawam Housing Needs Assessment included the following:

1. To develop more multi-unit rental housing - especially in walkable mixed-use areas, such as the Mixed-Use Business C district and other areas.
2. Provide rehab assistance for low-income homeowners and property owners of apartments rented to low-income households. This could include assistance with septic system upgrades for low-income households where needed.
3. Provide foreclosure prevention and assistance.
4. Create affordable housing options for households including individuals with extremely low incomes (at or below 30% of the Area Median Income [AMI]) including permanent affordable housing, transitional housing and emergency shelter.
5. Create affordable housing options for large families (five or more person families) with very low income (between 30% and 50% of the Area Median Income)
6. Create affordable, accessible housing options, including service-enriched housing, for physically and mentally disabled and elderly households.

7. Create affordable housing options for middle-income (between 80% and 100% AMI), small families (2-4 person families) which indicates need due to level of housing cost burden.

In 2014, the Agawam City Council established a Housing Committee to consider the Town's housing needs, with particular attention to housing opportunities that are affordable to households of all income levels and abilities. Part of the mission of the Housing Committee is to make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on steps the Town can make to support the creation of new housing options and to maintain existing affordable housing in Agawam.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, housing that is specifically designated for people over the age of 65 or for people with disabilities includes Independent Living units at Quail Run Estates, Assisted Living at Heritage Woods; and the Atrium at Cardinal Drive which offers a continuum of care from Independent Living to Memory Care. Heritage Hall West provides long-term care as well as short-term rehabilitation services.

The Agawam Housing Authority manages properties consisting of 242 units of subsidized housing in six different developments. A total 191 units are designated for elderly or handicapped residents and 51 units are for families. There is currently a waiting list for all of these units. Applications for housing may be made on the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) website and applicants may be directed to housing that is available in other communities.

### **Aging in Place**

As noted above, most of the Agawam Livable Community Survey respondents (92%) said it was either very important or extremely important for them to be able to stay in their own homes as they age. Although not everyone needs assistance as they age, many may need help with basic tasks such as cleaning, preparing food, yard work, or transportation assistance as they start to lose physical or cognitive capacities in their later years. This is particularly true for people who live into their nineties and beyond, when the risks of cognitive or physical impairments become increasingly likely. Likewise, with age comes greater likelihood of having mobility limitations, which might require that a wheelchair ramp be built or grab bars installed in bathrooms.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) administers a Home Loan Modification Program that provides low interest loans for eligible homeowners to modify their homes to accommodate the needs of older adults and people with disabilities. Loans are available to people with gross incomes up to \$179,200 for a one-person household and \$255,800 for a 4-person household (Figure 8). The program provides assistance finding contractors as well as applying for loans. Information on this program may be found at <http://www.pvpc.org/projects/home-modification-loan-program-hmlp>.

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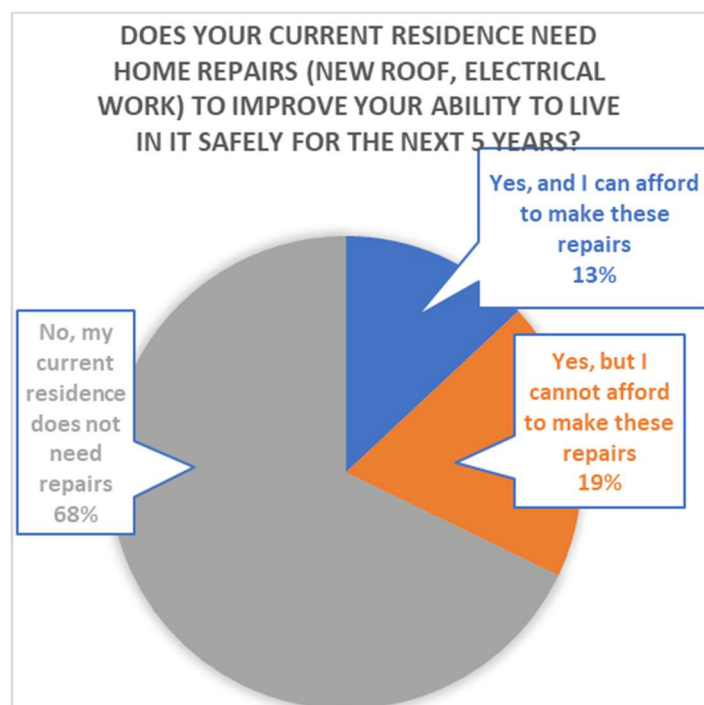
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.agawam.ma.us/164/Housing-Committee>

Figure 8: 2020 Income Guidelines for the Home Modification Loan Program (PVPC)

2020 Income Guidelines	
Household Size	Eligible with Gross Income up to:
1	\$179,200
2	\$204,800
3	\$230,400
4	\$255,800

Many survey respondents said that their current residence needs home repairs such as a new roof or electrical work in order for them to live in it safely for the next five years, but 19% (44) of respondents said that they could not afford to make those repairs.

Figure 9: Survey respondents in need of home repairs



### Housing Assets and Opportunities

This section summarizes the **Assets and Accomplishments** that Agawam has made in the Housing domain and presents opportunities in the form of **Goals and Actions** that are detailed in the Action Plan at the end of this report. These short-term strategies were selected by the Agawam Housing Committee as priorities for action in the next five years. Additional **Goals and Recommendations from the Housing Production Plan** that support the needs of older adults are also included below as strategies that the Town should consider in the longer term.

## Assets and Accomplishments

- A Housing Committee is in place to monitor the Town's efforts to increase and diversify the Town's housing stock.
- Agawam Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Production Plan have been completed and provide a plan for increasing the amount of affordable housing in the town.
- Affordable Senior Housing at Housing Authority properties.
- A variety of senior housing facilities are located in town, including Independent Living (Quail Run Estates), Assisted Living (Heritage Woods); and facilities that offer a continuum of care from Independent Living to Memory Care (The Atrium at Cardinal Drive); and mixed income housing (Pheasant Hill)
- Heritage Hall West provides long-term care as well as short-term rehabilitation services.
- Home Modification Loans available through PVPC to modify homes for people with disabilities and for aging in place.
- Adoption of a Mixed-Use Business district in 2015
- Community Preservation Act is a resource for planning for housing and open space.

## Goals and Actions

### Housing Supply

**Goal 2:** Ensure that a range of safe, affordable, and accessible single and multi-unit housing options are available to meet the needs of the aging population in Agawam.

#### Actions

- 2a. Engage older adults who wish to downsize in advocating for the types of housing that they want in order for them to be able to stay in community.
- 2b. Identify available Federal, State and Regional housing resources/funding sources to increase affordable housing supply in the community.
- 2c. Research zoning and financing tools that will encourage economical development of rental units for a range of incomes.
- 2d. Encourage housing development close to activity centers, public transportation, and major community services.
- 2e. Reconsider adopting an ordinance to allow residents to build Accessory Dwelling Units in single family homes or accessory structures.
- 2f. Expand housing choices through research and adoption of innovative housing models, zoning and financing options - Ex.C-housing, cottage type housing

### Aging in Place

**Goal 3:** Provide support for all Agawam residents in locating affordable housing options and services to support aging in place.

#### Actions

- 3a. Make information and assistance for consumers about aging-in-place available on municipal and regional websites.
- 3b. Develop and disseminate educational materials regarding home modification and rehabilitation funds available for low-income households.
- 3c. Assist homeowners in finding reliable and affordable home maintenance contractors and resources for modifying homes as needed to improve safety and accessibility.



- 3d. Identify licensed contractors who can do home assessments that will allow people to age in place.
- 3e. Provide resources and counseling for people at risk of eviction and identify shelters or programs to assist people who are un-housed.

## Goals/Strategies from the 2018 Housing Production Plan

### Goals:

1. Encourage the creation of multi-unit, mixed income rental housing in areas that could become walkable, mixed-use areas with commercial and residential development opportunities.
2. Support home rehabilitation needs of low-income homeowners and apartment owners with low-income tenants, such as for health and safety improvements, accessibility, code compliance, energy efficiency, exterior renovation, and septic system upgrades.
3. Connect residents to technical and financial resources for foreclosure prevention and assistance.
4. Encourage creation of affordable housing options for households including individuals with extremely low incomes including permanent affordable housing and transitional housing.
5. Encourage conversion of existing homes for affordable large-family housing and creation of more affordable homes for very low-income households and middle-income small families.
6. Encourage creation of affordable, accessible housing options, including service-enriched housing, for physically and mentally disabled and elderly households.
7. Strive to support the creation of 300 units that will count on the SHI over five years through conversion of existing buildings and new construction and that are affordable to a range of household incomes. This rate of low/moderate-income housing production, an average of sixty units per year, would support the town reaching 10% through incremental production (0.5% of year-round housing units) by 2031.

### Strategies

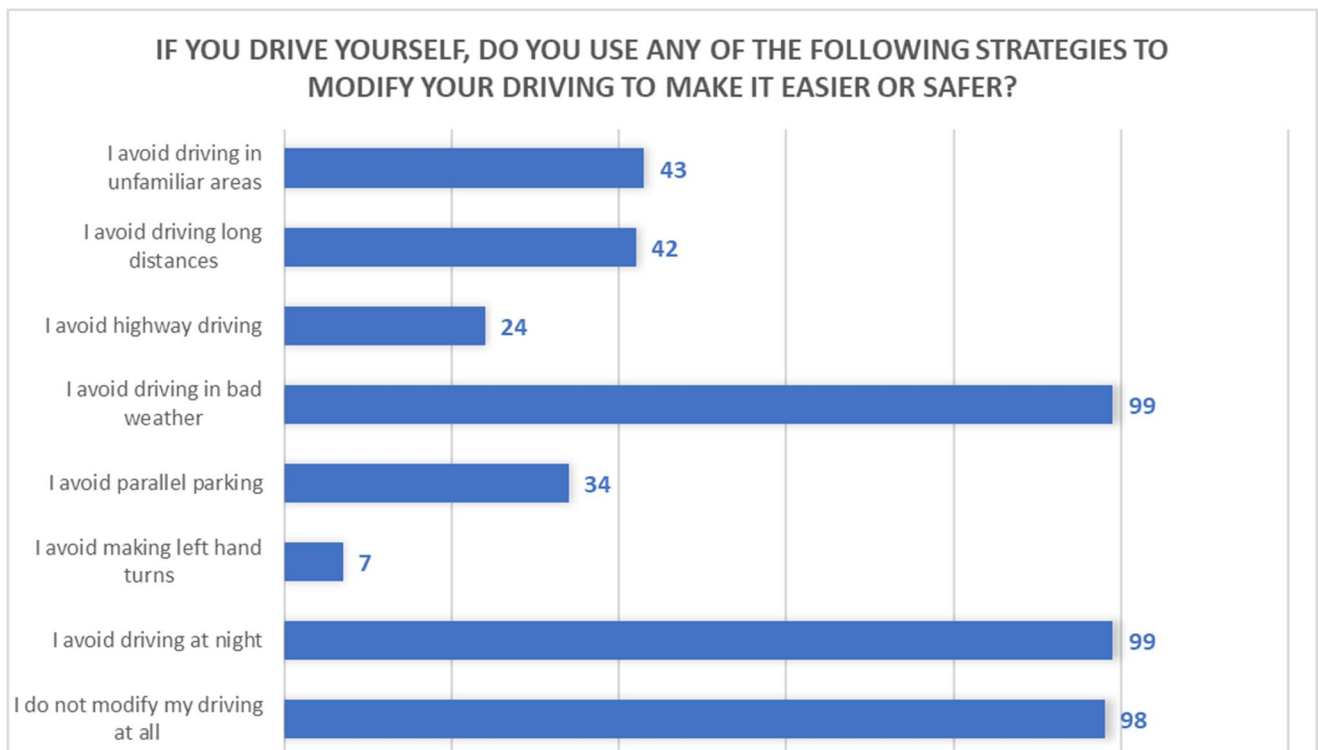
- Create a municipal housing trust or redevelopment authority to use CPA and other funding to foster the creation of locally initiated, small scale residential or mixed-use development.
- Hire or contract for a part-time housing coordinator, possibly partnering with nearby towns to share services.
- Foster affordable and/or mixed income housing on town-owned properties such as a portion of the Tuckahoe Turf Farm and the town site adjacent to Brady Village.
- Secure federal CDBG funds for a home rehab program for homeowners and apartment owners to create units that count on the SHI.
- Secure federal CDBG funds for an “Aging in Place” program to provide grants for low/moderate income seniors to complete health and safety improvements to their home.
- Adopt an infill bylaw that allows for the development of affordable homes by private individuals or organizations such as Habitat for Humanity.
- Consider adopting age-targeted housing design through zoning amendments that specifically call for “visitability” by design to help accommodate seniors and people with disabilities and others with a need for barrier-free housing.
- Adopt Planned Unit Development zoning provisions with inclusionary zoning incentives to promote increased housing options and more flexible design, including cluster developments.

- Adopt mixed-use business districts in additional areas of town that are served by water and sewer infrastructure and could present opportunities for redevelopment at places such as commercial strip plazas.
- Adopt [reconsider adoption of] an accessory apartment ordinance to expand housing options.

## Transportation and Streets

The decision to stop driving oneself can be one of the most difficult transitions that comes with aging. Slower reaction times, difficulty seeing at night, and cognitive impairments are only a few of the challenges that people face as they age, and that make driving more difficult and potentially dangerous. Features on newer automobiles such as backup cameras and distance monitors can help with some of the difficulties with aging, and often people choose their own methods of dealing with the changes such as not driving at night or avoiding left-hand turns. Eventually some people make the decision to stop driving and rely on friends or family members to drive them or use public transportation or other transportation services available in the community. When asked if they modified their driving to make it easier or safer, most survey respondents said that they avoided driving at night or in bad weather, while others said that they avoided driving in unfamiliar areas or long distances or avoided parallel parking.

**Figure 10: Strategies drivers use to make driving easier or safer**



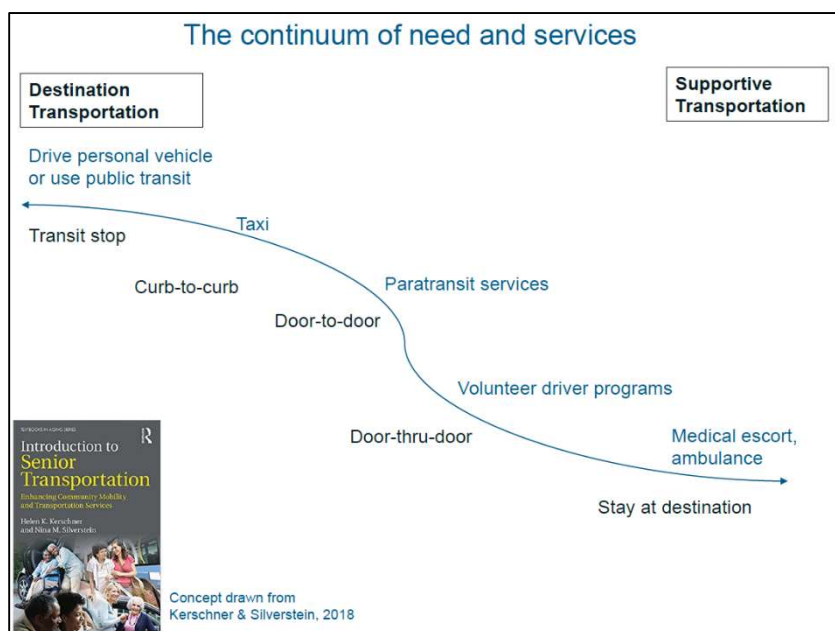
Source: Agawam Livable Community Survey

## Transportation Services

Services such as public transportation via bus or train, senior center vans, and private transportation services are important to have in place when older adults in the community lose the ability to drive. Balance issues, fragile bones and the hearing and vision impairments that come with age create

additional challenges to mobility and greater need for assistance in getting around. Figure 11 below illustrates the continuum of assistance that may be needed as people transition from driving themselves, to not driving and taking public transit, to utilizing door to door service (i.e. paratransit). When people can use public transit and walk to transit stops, it is important to have good lighting and sidewalks. When they can no longer walk, they may require paratransit or private transportation services, and in some cases caregivers to assist them into and out of vehicles.

**Figure 11: The Continuum of Transportation Needs and Services**



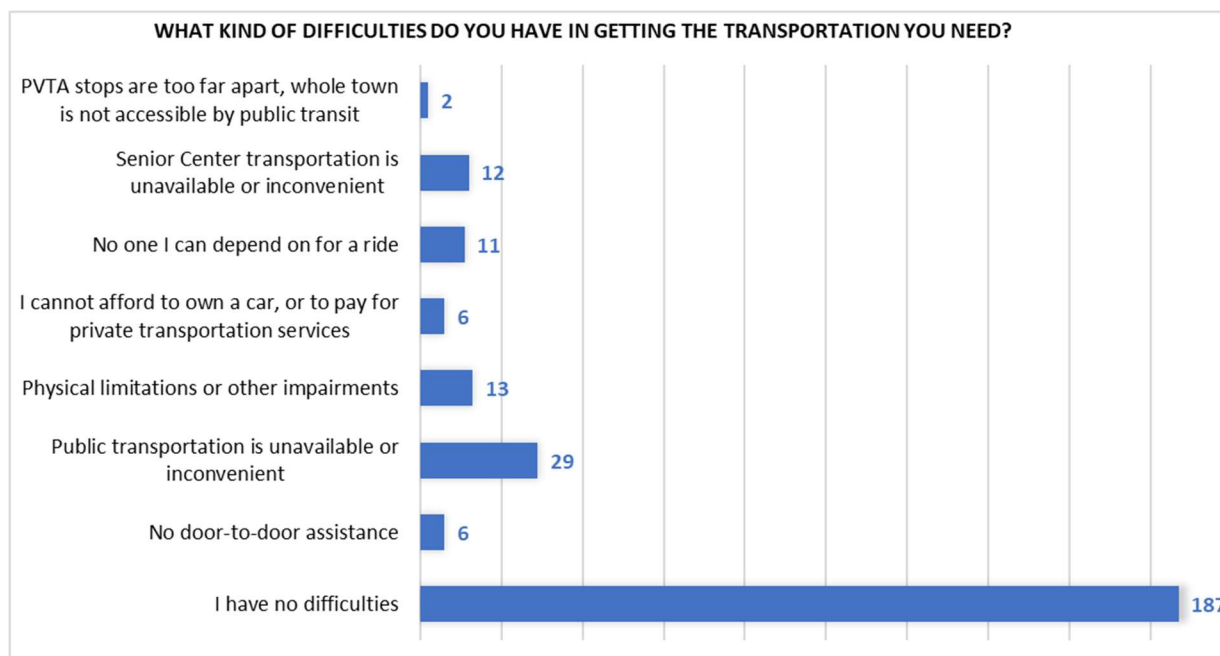
Source: Kerschner and Silverstein. Introduction to Senior Transportation (2018)

Transportation services available in Agawam include Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTa) buses which operate on fixed routes from Union Station with stops in Feeding Hill Center, Pheasant Hill Apartments, Heritage Nursing Home, the Agawam Industrial Park during the week, and on Sundays a route that includes a stop at Rocky's Agawam. The PVTa also offers door-to-door on demand van service for seniors (over 60) and people with disabilities Monday-Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm on a space available basis. The service provides rides within the PVTa service area. Paratransit services are provided for people with disabilities who live within ¾ miles of a city route.

The Agawam Senior Center operates van service Monday through Friday with a minimum of 48-hours' notice for ride requests. Priority rides include those for medical appointments, senior activities, and employment or volunteer opportunities. Non-priority rides are for any other purpose, including for shopping and to beauty salons. The Senior Center is finalizing an expansion of van service that will include additional paratransit staff and expansion of service to a 14-passenger circulator bus that will provide low cost transit service for anyone along the circulator route.

"Go Go Grandparent" is a service that is available in some areas, but not currently offered in Agawam. This service allows older adults to call a phone number to schedule a ride, rather than having to use a smart phone app.

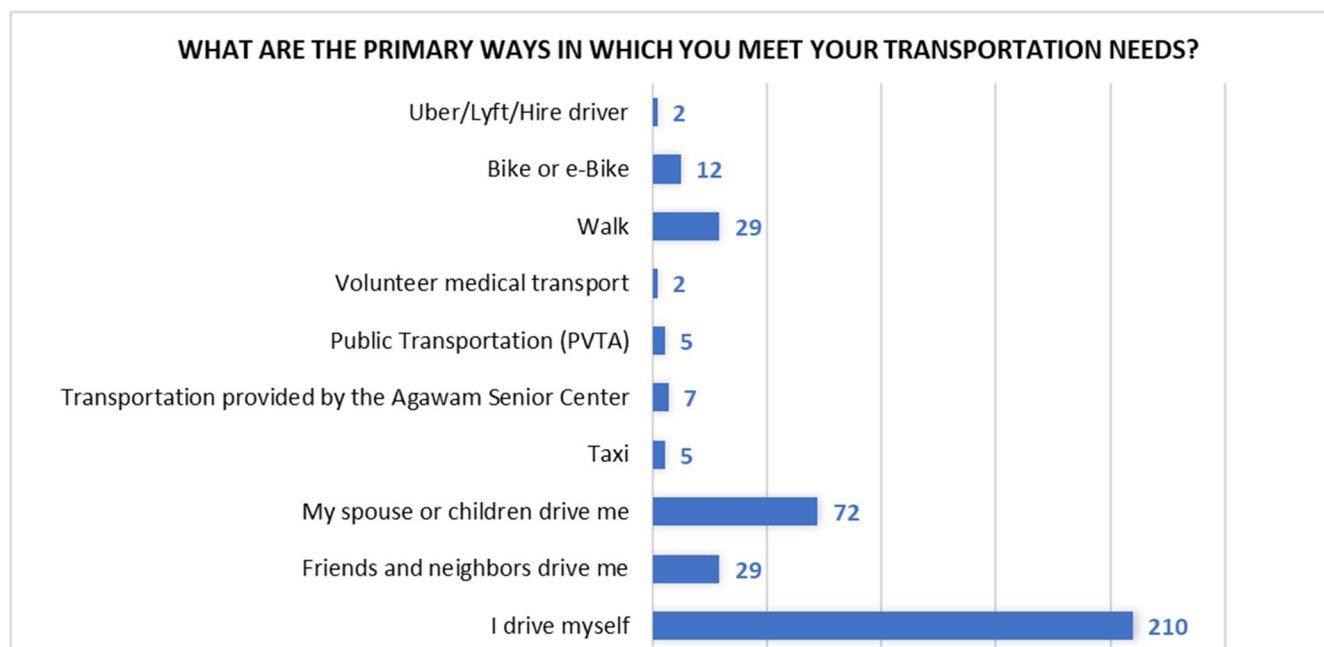
**Figure 12: Difficulties survey respondents have in accessing transportation**



### Walking and Biking

Walking and biking are other ways that older adults can get around without having to rely on automobiles or transportation services. Many choose to live within walking distance of stores and amenities when they get older in order to maintain independence without needing a vehicle to get around. Although most respondents to the Agawam Livable Community Survey said that they drive themselves as their main means of transportation, 29 or just over 12% said that they walk to get to the places that they need to go.

**Figure 13: How survey respondents meet their transportation needs**



While Agawam has a strong Complete Streets program and a growing network of sidewalks and bicycle lanes, there are not clear pedestrian oriented activity centers. According to the WalkScore calculation (at [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com)), “Downtown” Agawam’s walk score is 38 out of 100, a score that indicates that the community is “car dependent.” This evaluation also gives the downtown location a score of 38 for being “somewhat bikeable.”

The Town of Agawam submitted a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) in 2017. This plan outlines priorities for improvements to bicycle and

pedestrian infrastructure throughout the town to create a more comfortable environment for walking and biking in Agawam. Construction of sidewalks on the west side of Main Street, bike lanes and high visibility crosswalks on Maple Street, and extension of the Springfield Street Downtown Path are some of the highest priority projects included on this plan. Older adults in Agawam could benefit from having a map of safe walking routes and routes that are ADA accessible, especially in the vicinity of services, senior housing, and the Agawam Senior Center.

## Transportation Assets and Opportunities

### Assets & Accomplishments.

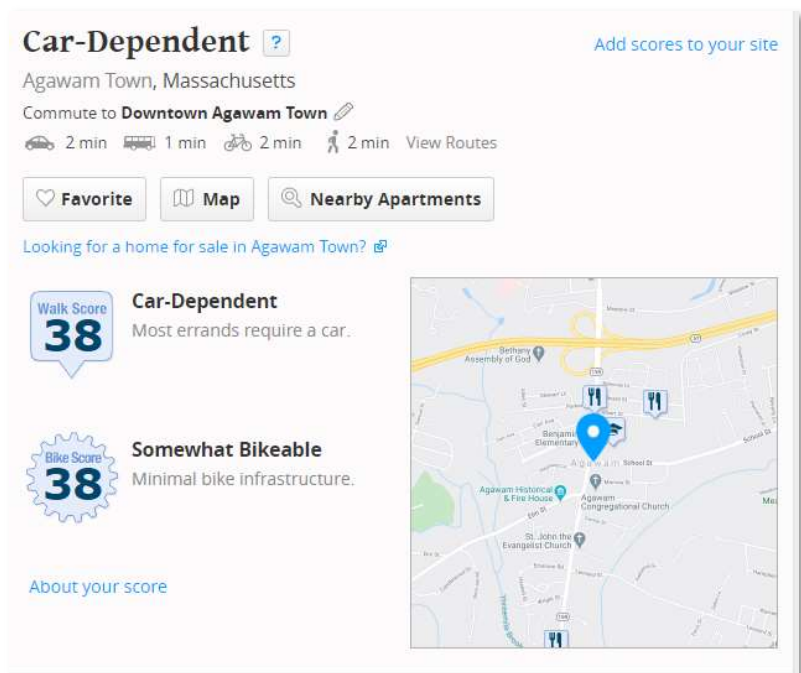
- The COA has expanded their transportation program through a partnership with PVTa to provide transportation for seniors.
- The COA van provides rides during the week when the Senior Center is open, and limited service when the center is closed (during the COVID-19 pandemic).
- The Town has an active Complete Streets program including an adopted Complete Streets Policy and a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.

## Goals and Actions

### Transportation Services

**Goal 4:** Ensure that transportation services are available to residents of all ages and abilities to allow access food, medical appointments, employment, and education.

Figure 14: WalkScore for Downtown Agawam (Source: [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com))



## **Actions**

- 4a. Survey older adults and people with disabilities in multiple formats to monitor transportation needs. Explore the feasibility of expanding existing Town services as needed.
- 4b. Implement a free van service that is available to all community members and makes regular stops within Agawam.
- 4c. Expand transportation services to provide some evening and weekend hours.
- 4d. Post information on transportation services including PVTa fixed routes and on demand services, and Senior Center Van and fares on Senior Center website and provide information in multiple locations in town.
- 4e. Continue to train transit and COA van drivers on the unique needs of older adults, including best practices for how to interact, as well as recognize/respond appropriately to cognitive impairment, etc.
- 4f. Research the feasibility of implementing a program that pays drivers to provide rides to medical appointments out of town or other in-town appointments as needed; explore participation with RSVP and confirm whether rides are offered through that program.
- 4g. Promote affordable grocery home delivery services in town. Include information on stores that deliver on COA website.

## **Transportation Infrastructure**

**Goal 5:** Ensure that roads and trail networks are safe and comfortable for use by people of all ages and abilities.

## **Actions**

- 5a. Develop a plan for an interconnected network of trails and bicycle facilities that are safe and comfortable for all ages and all abilities.
- 5b. Continue to implement the Complete Streets Program to ensure safe and comfortable routes for walking, biking and public transit for all ages and abilities:
  - Implement traffic calming techniques.
  - Add bike lanes (with buffers where traffic volumes and speeds are high).
  - Increase safety and visibility of crosswalks.
  - Consolidate curb cuts and make sidewalks continuous.
  - Improve pedestrian crossings to meet ADA standards.
  - Add benches and greenery for shade and resting points.
  - Connect sidewalks to trails.
- 5c. Engage older adults and people with disabilities in the process of designing and planning for improvements of infrastructure for bicycles and pedestrians.
- 5d. Identify routes for walking and biking that are safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities (walkers/bicyclists are protected from traffic, crosswalks have audible cues and appropriate timing). Create maps and wayfinding signs so that these routes are easily accessible; make maps it available in both print and in digital form.
- 5e. Evaluate town-wide public parking and drop-off locations for safety, lighting, convenience and accessibility for those with special needs, i.e. low vision, physical or cognitive impairments.



## Programming

**Goal 6:** Implement programs that promote safe driving and transition to other forms of transportation.

### Actions

- 6a. Support and allow space for driver skill retention with community organizations, thru partnerships with AARP, AAA, RMV, Auto Insurance providers.
- 6b. Collaborate with auto dealerships, mechanics and others town businesses to develop incentives and discounts for car maintenance for older adults; provide pickup and drop-off service for nominal fee.
- 6c. Promote high visibility vest program for people walking on roads.

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## Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Outdoor spaces and buildings provide places for people to gather, inside and outside. Parks, sidewalks, bike paths and bike lanes, accessible buildings and restrooms are all facilities that are important for inviting active transportation and social interaction. The amount of physical activity that people engage in is related, in part, to the availability of safe and convenient places to walk and ride a bike.

### Outdoor Spaces

In 2017, the Town contracted with Milone and MacBroom to develop a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment and Master Plan for the town. This document includes an inventory of the physical conditions of parks and recreation facilities in Agawam and identified immediate needs and a list of long-term improvements. The process also reviewed allocations of town funds and other funding source for improvements and compared these with allocations in similarly sized communities nationwide.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified Northeast Agawam as the census tract with the highest population of residents over the age of 65, with Southwest Agawam having the second largest population of seniors. A map illustrating land areas and facilities shows that Northeast Agawam is well service by park and recreation facilities, including Perry Lane Park, School street Park, and Meadowbrook Park. The Benjamin Phelps Elementary School and Veteran's Green are also located in this section of town. Southwestern Agawam, with the largest land area and second largest population of people over 65 offers three privately owned golf courses and the James Clark Elementary School.

**Figure 15: Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway**



The Parks and Recreation Master Plan states that the Parks and Recreation Department tries not to duplicate services provided by the Agawam Senior Center in its programming. Programs organized by the department serve roughly 1/3 of the population or approximately 8,000 residents. The Parks and Recreation Department and the Agawam Cultural Council organize town-wide events at School Street Park including a concert series and SummerFest. A review of programming in other communities showed that all of them offer programs specifically for seniors. Responses to the survey for the plan requested more adult and senior programming and more adult leagues. The survey also expressed strong support for indoor recreation and/or a community center, walking paths and trails, landscaping and other park amenities. The report notes that there are no community gardens in Agawam, but that there is resident support for having these in the community.

## **Public Buildings**

Public buildings provide spaces for people to gather indoors and engage in community events, and to participate in public meetings or other civic opportunities. The Agawam Senior Center offers facilities, programs and events for people over 50 and people with disabilities. The Agawam Public Library also offers programming and spaces for public meetings, and assistance with using technology.

Agawam has developed an ADA assessment and transition plan to ensure that all public buildings meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for accessibility.

According to survey responses for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan there was strong support for indoor recreation and/or a community center in addition to outdoor amenities offered in public parks. Until such a facility is built, the Town may want to consider a Joint Use Agreement with individual schools for public use of gymnasiums or other facilities after school hours.

## **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Assets and Opportunities**

### **Assets and Accomplishments**

- Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment and Master Plan (2018) and Open Space and Recreation Plan (2019) were recently adopted.
- Shared use trails (Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway, Downtown Shared Use Path)
- Fourteen Town-owned parks and recreational facilities and Robinson State Park.
- Recent ADA assessment of parks and recreation facilities.

## **Goals and Actions**

### **Infrastructure**

**Goal 7:** Provide opportunities for use of public buildings and outdoor spaces by people of all ages and abilities.

- 7a. Work toward making all public buildings and outdoor spaces, particularly in Northeast and Southwest Agawam, Dementia Friendly & ADA accessible.
  - Encourage development of age friendly trails in community owned conservation and recreation areas.
  - Ensure that trails/play areas are safe, age friendly and tick free (i.e. cut back and maintain vegetation on trails)..
- 7b. Assess / solicit feedback from older residents on desired outdoor recreational opportunities to

inform future expenditures on parks and recreation.

- 7c. Encourage creation of trails, parks and bikeways close to centers of population and/or where public transportation is available.
- 7d. Encourage development of age friendly trails in community owned conservation and recreation areas. Maintain vegetation to reduce exposure to ticks.
- 7e. Create a plan for locating/developing outdoor gathering spaces and seating, and advocate for public outdoor seating/areas as a priority in new business and housing projects. Develop and maintain a master map of all outdoor seating and gathering areas.
  - Encourage location of park benches where they are not isolated from other park activities.
  - Provide benches that have backs and arms at regular intervals in shady areas
- 7f. Review Dementia Friendly Environments checklist when planning for improvements to parks, public spaces and/or public buildings:
  - Entrances are clearly visible and understood,
  - Signage is clear and high contrast with background,
  - Lighting is bright and include natural light where possible;
  - Flooring is plain and not shiny or slippery and free of clutter.
- 7g. Support Town efforts to enhance connectivity, including long-range mapping to identify easements and routes for more direct walking/biking connections to schools, shopping, town/outdoor resources, and other amenities.
- 7h. Assess/upgrade existing lighting and signage in public buildings and outdoor spaces. Seek funding for more extensive infrastructure improvements.
- 7i. Identify locations to site accessible bathrooms near walking loops, or between destinations, where possible. Provide unisex restrooms to allow someone to be assisted without causing embarrassment to themselves or another user.
- 7j. Provide information on all trails in town, their levels of difficulty and whether or not they are ADA compliant and/or accessible to people in wheelchairs.
- 7k. Require new housing projects to provide access routes to connect to existing trails or activity centers.
- 7l. Include adult fitness equipment in parkscapes
- 7m. Maintain sidewalks, parking lot and other pavement around public buildings and in parks. Reduce potential trip hazards including glare, uneven surfaces, sudden transitions, etc.
- 7n. Ensure that wayfinding markers are easily recognizable, clearly visible, and at frequent intervals.

### **Programmatic Recommendations**

**Goal 8:** Increase programming for older adults that encourages active living and social interaction in buildings and outdoor in Agawam.

## Actions

- 8a. Provide training to local businesses and their employees on how to recognize and work with people with dementia, and how to create Dementia Friendly environments to better serve their customers with different abilities.
- 8b. Encourage the creation of walking groups or walking buddy programs through councils on aging or other municipal departments, posting on community website and bulletin boards
- 8c. Establish regular, organized activities in parks, both age-specific and multigenerational, by partnering with local organizations.

## Recommendations/strategies from previous reports

### Agawam Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2018):

- Adjust staffing to response to community needs.
- Improve communications about recreational programming.
- Expand hours of operation of some facilities to better serve the community. Increase access to the High School track, outdoor pool, school gymnasiums, etc.
- Invest in underutilized parks and recreational facilities, and invest in under-served areas (primarily Feeding Hills).
- Develop master plans for the Tuckahoe Turf Farm and for a Recreation Center. The report expressed a need for more available gymnasium space as well as community activity spaces for adult and senior populations.

### Park and Recreation Facilities:

- Memorial Field
  - Parking lot circulation and access including construction of an accessible walkway along the access drive and parking area.
  - Create a 6' stone dust loop trail around the football field for exercise opportunities when the field is not hosting sports events.
- Shea Field
  - Parking lot improvements to expand accessibility
- Wade Park
  - Develop trails that connect to large residential complexes.

### Future Facilities:

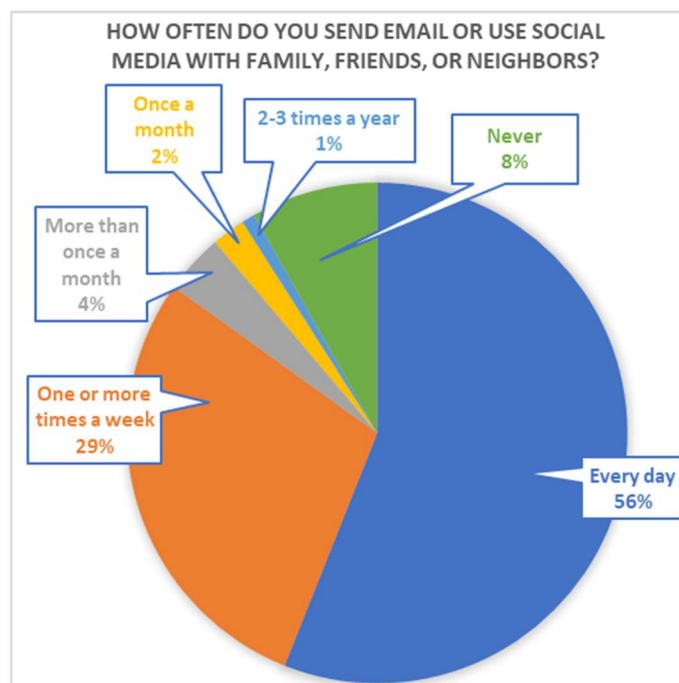
- Invest in facilities in underserved areas (Valley Brook and Meadowbrook Parks in Feeding Hills)
- Invest in walking paths and trails, park amenities, and facilities for winter recreation.
- Expand the trail network, connectivity, and on-street improvements.
- Develop an indoor recreation/community center.
- Develop community garden space [add: that is close to residential developments and includes raised beds that are accessible to people with disabilities]

## Communication, Information and Technology

The Communication, Information and Technology Domain spans all other domains in that if people don't know about the services, programs, or public spaces that are available to them, they will not use these resources. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of technology for communication, shopping, participating in fitness programming, and telehealth services, as well as for maintaining social and family connections when the Senior Center, businesses, restaurants and cultural venues had to close to prevent spread of the virus.

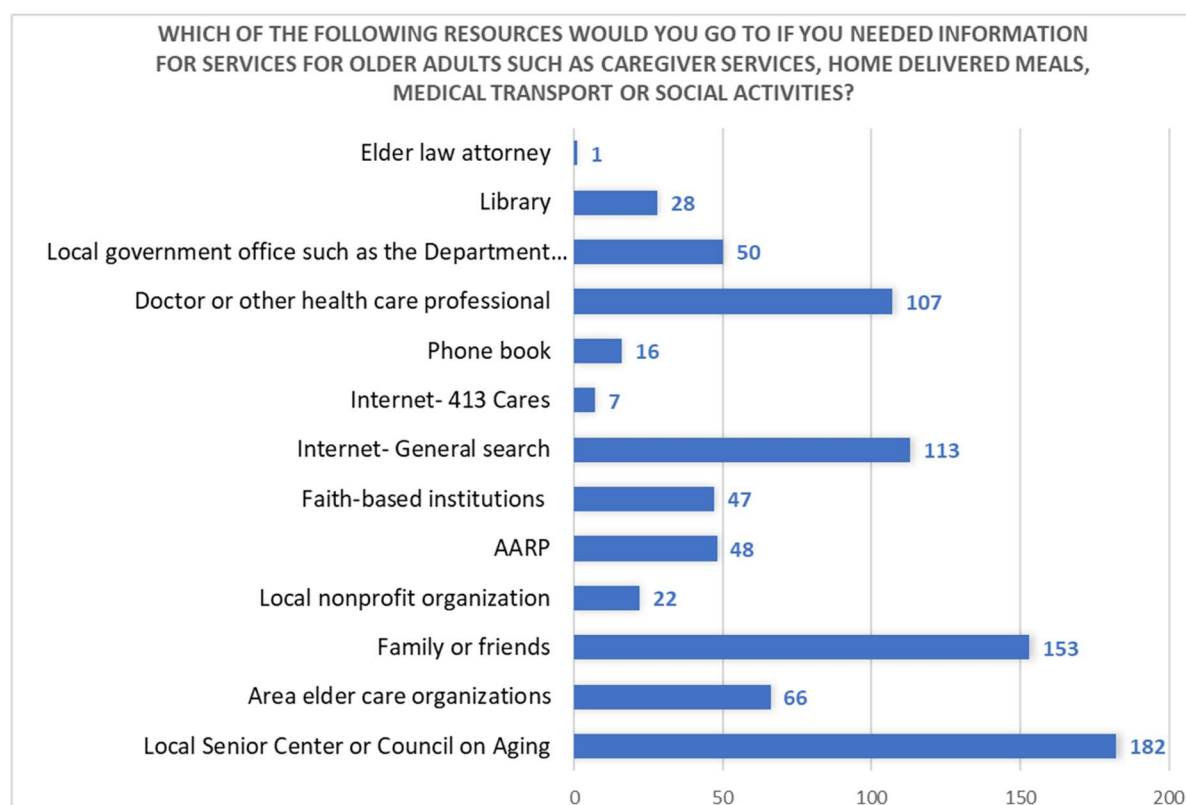
The pandemic exposed a "Digital Divide," particularly among older adults, rural areas without access to high-speed internet, and households living in poverty who may not be able to afford the expense of equipment or internet service. Census figures show that people over the age of 65 are less likely to own a computer than households with children. During the pandemic, many senior centers started programs for loaning out equipment such as tablets or laptops; connecting people to low-cost internet services; and providing training for how to use equipment and software. However, even with the knowledge, connection and equipment, understanding how to avoid online scams or malware and the cost of equipment and internet access are hurdles that are not easily overcome by all residents.

**Figure 16: Frequency of email or social media use**



Most survey respondents said that they used email or social media to communicate with family, friends, or neighbors, with 56% saying they used these tools every day, 29% one or more times a week. Eight percent (8%) said that they never used these tools to communicate with family. When asked what resources they use to get information about services for older adults, most (182) said that they go to the Senior Center, 153 went to family or friends, and 113 said they did an internet search.

**Figure 17: Information resources used by Survey Respondents for information on services for older adults**



Recognizing and knowing how to communicate with people with dementia is an important skill that municipal staff, business owners and staff of retail establishments and community members as a whole should have in an Age and Dementia Friendly Community.

## Communications and Technology Assets and Opportunities

### Assets & Accomplishments

- Strong working relationship with Agawam Media to provide Senior Center programming on cable access TV.
- Agawam COA publishes a regular newsletter both in print and online.

### Goals and Actions

**Goal 9:** Ensure that all residents have access to information about policies and programs that provide opportunities for health and community engagement.

- 9a. Create a basic, but effective Municipal Communication Plan. Inventory what municipal info is being shared by each department, including both non-emergency and emergency channels.
  - Survey residents to see how they are getting their news
  - Identify gaps and weaknesses in local communications; Research/adopt effective methods to fill communication gaps.



- 9b. Update the Town website regularly and poll users about the ease of navigation. Design for the broadest range of consumers, including those with visual or physical impairments, multiple languages, etc. Provide links to resources for seniors on Senior Center page.
- 9c. Participate in all communication outlets (Newsletters/Posting Boards/Blogs/Twitter/Facebook, All Call system) and find out the best formats for homebound seniors to broaden communications with residents of all ages.
- 9d. Collaborate with existing community-based networks e.g. faith communities, civic groups, education channels, business groups, etc. to share information.
- 9e. Maximize use of municipal public access channel to create and help distribute content to residents. Elicit cooperation/input from public mass media to fill communication gaps inexpensively but effectively, for appropriate messages. Create or link town website to timely information and broadcasts of interest to older residents; share content with neighboring towns.
- 9f. Build relationships with private sector & service providers to communicate about programs that are available through partnerships between public and private facilities.
- 9g. Continue to identify and reach out to socially isolated residents via personal contact from trusted municipal staff; develop "Buddy system" with volunteers who can reach out to socially isolated residents.
- 9h. Add links on COA page of the Town website to timely information and broadcasts of interest to older residents. Collaborate with other COAs to share links and resources.
- 9i. Continue to build relationships with private sector institutions and service providers; provide information on programs that are available through partnerships between public and private facilities.

**Goal 10:** Facilitate a culture of support and acceptance for older adults and people living with dementia.

- 10a. Provide staff training for local government, community and civic organizations, faith communities, and businesses on how to recognize and effectively communicate with customers with dementia.
- 10b. Ensure that municipal staff are trained on how to work with people with dementia and older adults, and that services provided at municipal facilities always include friendly, person-to-person assistance.
- 10c. Ensure that printed information – including official forms or invoices and text on visual displays in public spaces - has large lettering with main ideas in bold type; simple and straightforward sentences and simple language; and is available in multiple languages as needed.
- 10d. Ensure that telephone answering services give instructions slowly and clearly and tell callers how to repeat the message at any time. Offer options for people with hearing impairments.
- 10e. Ensure that voting kiosks and public-use computer terminals have large buttons/keys and big letters; and/or that reading glasses are available at voting locations.
- 10f. Ensure that municipal signage uses large, bold fonts and is well lighted.

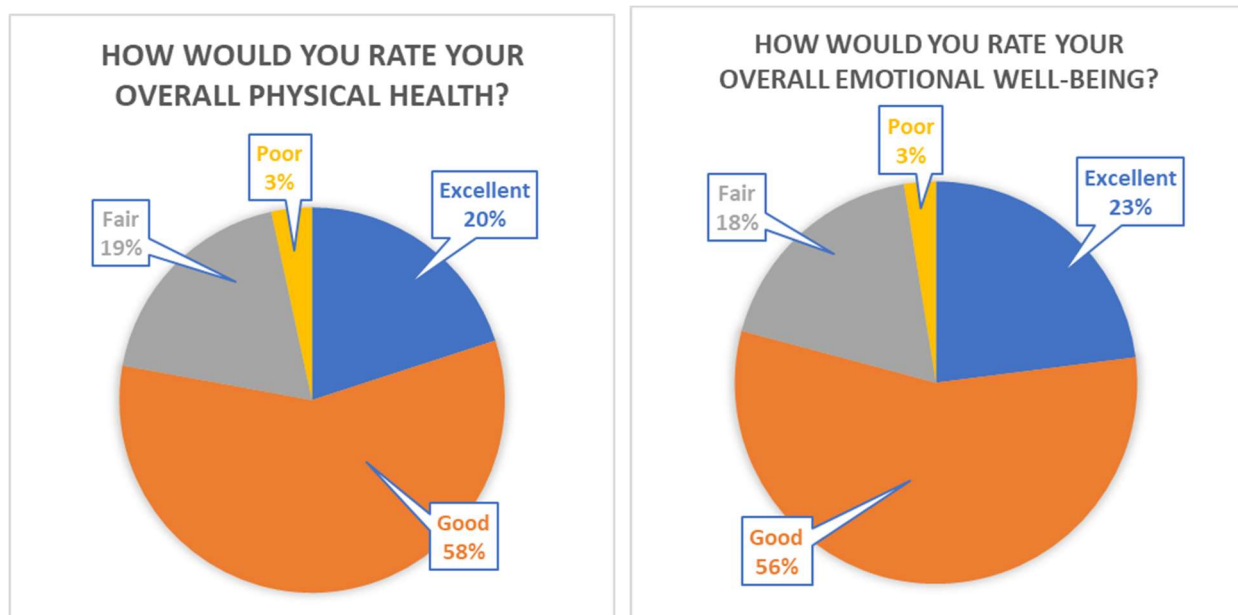
- 10g. Research the cost and feasibility of offering information and other communications in Spanish or other languages as needed (review updated Census data). Engage community members who speak languages other than English to determine whether interpreter and translation services are needed for municipal documents and public meetings.

## Health and Community Services

The care needs of older adults who are aging in place can vary from assistance with basic tasks such as cleaning, shopping, cooking, yard work, snow shoveling, and minor home maintenance projects; to full-time medical or home health assistance provided by professional or family caregivers. The pandemic highlighted the need that many older adults have for assistance with accessing food either due to difficulties in accessing transportation, fear of going out during the pandemic, or financial insecurity.

Most survey respondents (78%) said that they had good or excellent physical health, while 19% said their physical health was fair, and 3% said it was poor. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents said that their emotional health was good or excellent, while 21% said their emotional health was fair or poor. These numbers are similar to data from the Agawam Community Profile, which said that 18.4% reported poor or fair health status.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 18: Survey respondents' ratings of physical and emotional health**



**Greater Springfield Senior Services (GSSS)** is the designated Area Agency on Aging for Agawam, providing a number of critical services for older adults and their families. Services provided include Adult Protective Services, information and training for caregivers, in-home assistance with personal care and money management; meals and nutrition, and workshops on healthy living. The GSSS website also offers links to resources for caregiver support and an Elder Guide that lists thousands of topics and contact information for services in the area.

<sup>5</sup> Community Profile – Massachusetts Health Aging Collaborative.

The **Agawam Senior Center** offers free hearing tests, foot care, and SHINE (Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders) counseling as well as van transportation (mentioned in the Transportation section), meals on wheels, and congregate meals at the Senior Center (when open).

Agawam's location next to Springfield offers access to a number of hospitals including Baystate Medical Center, Mercy Hospital, and Shriners Hospital. In addition, Baystate Health operates an Urgent Care facility in Agawam. NextStep Health Care is a facility that offers short-term rehabilitation care as well as long-term care options. As noted in the Housing section, above, facilities that offer assisted living as well as long-term care include the Atrium at Cardinal Drive and Heritage Hall. Amedisys provides Home Health Care providers as well as hospice and personal care.

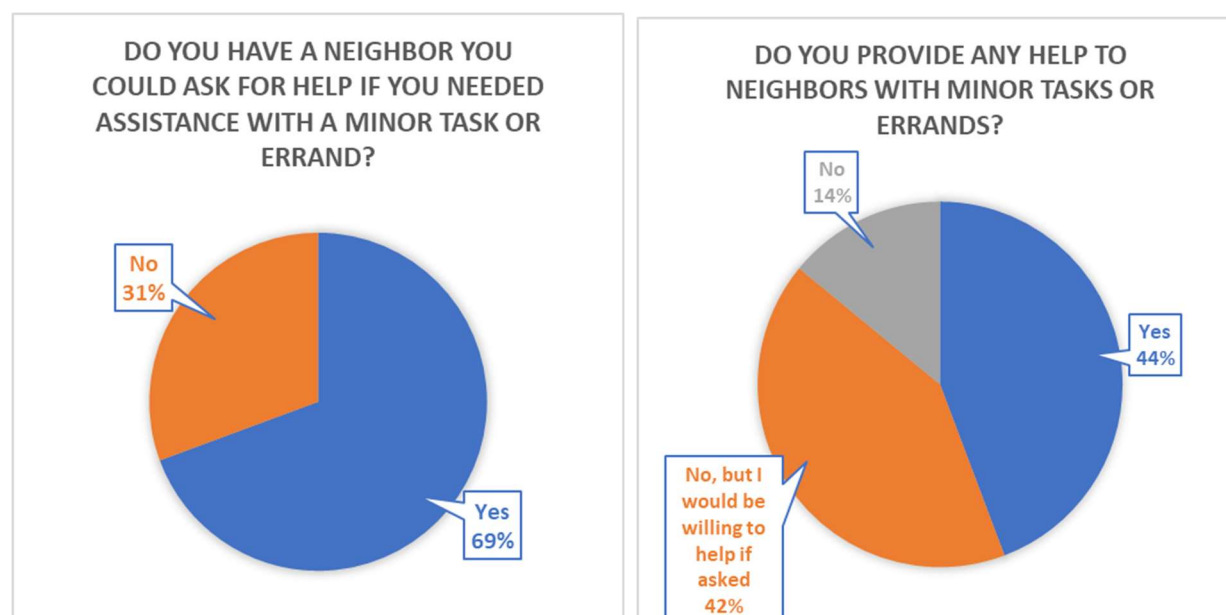
Twenty percent (20%) of Agawam Livable Community Survey respondents said that they had an impairment or condition that limited their ability to participate in the community, and 11% said that they received caregiver services. A large proportion of respondents (41% of the 210 respondents who answered this question) said that they had provided care or assistance to someone who was disabled or frail in the last 12 months, and 25% said it was very challenging to meet caregiving responsibilities in addition to family and/or work. Most respondents (15) who said that they had received care said that they had mobility impairments, and the same was true for people who provided caregiver services, with 51 respondents saying that care was provided for people who had mobility impairments. Chronic disease (29 respondents), sensory impairments (26 respondents) and psychological conditions (22 respondents) were provided as conditions that required caregiver services.

According to data from the Community Profile compiled by the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative, 15.3% of Agawam residents over the age of 65 have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. With a population of 5,524 people over 65, this means that approximately 845 people in Agawam are living with dementia. People living with dementia may need full-time caregivers on site or need to be in a facility where they receive full-time care or can move around freely without causing harm to themselves or others.

### **Assistance with Basic Tasks**

Help with minor home maintenance projects, yard work, snow shoveling, and other minor tasks is an area that can sometimes be addressed through volunteer programs such as the RSVP program (based in Northampton for western MA), or through a Village model program. Village models are mainly volunteer-based programs that people can join as volunteer service providers or as people in need of assistance. Nearby programs include Northampton Neighbors, Amherst Neighbors, and Easthampton Neighbors. Each program is structured a little differently and depends on a paid or volunteer coordinator. Developing a Neighbors or Village model program may be something that the Town could investigate on a local or regional level in the future. Many survey respondents (44%) said that they help neighbors with minor tasks or errands, and 42% said that they would provide help if asked. Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents said that they did not have neighbors who they could ask for help with minor tasks.

**Figure 19: Assistance provide for or by neighbors (according to survey respondents)**



## Health and Community Services Assets and Opportunities

### Assets and Accomplishments

- Greater Springfield Senior Services offers services for elders and for caregivers, and publishes an “Elder Guide” which is updated every few years to help people locate resources that they need as they age.
- The Agawam Senior Center provides health screening services, meals, and rides to medical appointments.
- Several hospitals and medical offices are located within a short drive from Agawam.

### Goals and Actions

**Goal 11:** Ensure that older residents of Agawam have access to health care and community services that support their ability to live long and healthy lives.

#### Actions

- 11a. Catalogue existing community, social and health service programs in town and work with key service providers to catalogue and disseminate information to residents via municipal channels, using a variety of media (see Communications Plan).
- 11b. Collaborate with 413-Cares to train local health care and social service providers on how to use the platform and inform clients about this resource. Provide link on Agawam COA and Health Department web pages.
- 11c. Identify barriers for residents who need assistance, including lack of transportation, fear, stigma, lack of access to technology, etc.
  - Create programs to engage at-risk elders, such as TRIAD or other programs.
  - Increase access to community and health services through sharing of information, increasing access and training on how to use technology to access telemedicine, and providing

- transportation services.
- 11d. Ensure that community and health service facilities are accessible by walking and/or public transportation.
  - 11e. Work with elder care organizations, health care providers and the Alzheimer's Association to offer service personnel and first responders continuing education on concerns specific to older adults, including those with dementia or other cognitive or physical challenges.
  - 11f. Provide information on counseling and support groups for caregivers of people with dementia.
  - 11g. Partner with legal service organizations to offer legal assistance regarding planning for end of life care and management of financial and medical needs.
  - 11h. Provide information and space to offer successful health and fitness programs to all age groups to increase utilization and to improve health of community members - e.g. A Matter of Balance, Get Cuffed.
  - 11i. Ensure ongoing and consistent funding for necessary community and health services.
  - 11j. Research the feasibility of developing a Village or Neighbors model which coordinates volunteers to provide services that allow people to age in place. Services may include home health care (through certified agencies), chore services, grocery & pharmacy delivery, safety monitoring programs, and transportation assistance.
- 

## Social Participation and Inclusion

Participation in social activities, either formal or informal, is important to one's mental health. Conversely, social isolation and loneliness can cause poor health outcomes. Research shows that loneliness and social isolation can increase the risk of premature death and has been associated with a 50% increased risk of dementia as well as increased risk of heart disease and stroke, depression, anxiety, and suicide.<sup>6</sup> The report also highlights increased risk of loneliness among more vulnerable populations of older adults including immigrants; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) populations; minorities; and victims of elder abuse.

The pandemic increased feelings of social isolation among many populations but was especially difficult on older adults who relied on the Senior Center for social programming, meals, and transportation services. The Agawam Senior Center (when open) offers congregate meals, a billiard hall and fitness room, a computer room with WiFi access; and programming that includes fitness classes, knitting, computer support, games, dance classes, painting, and special events such as trips, dinners, tag sales, and entertainment. Forty-two percent (42%) of survey respondents said that they used services at the senior center prior to the pandemic, but only 20% of respondents said that they used the center more than once a month. When asked why they did not use the senior center, reasons ranged from not knowing what programs or services were available (55 respondents), not being old enough (62 respondents) or not being interested (22 respondents). Eight (8) respondents wrote in the "other"

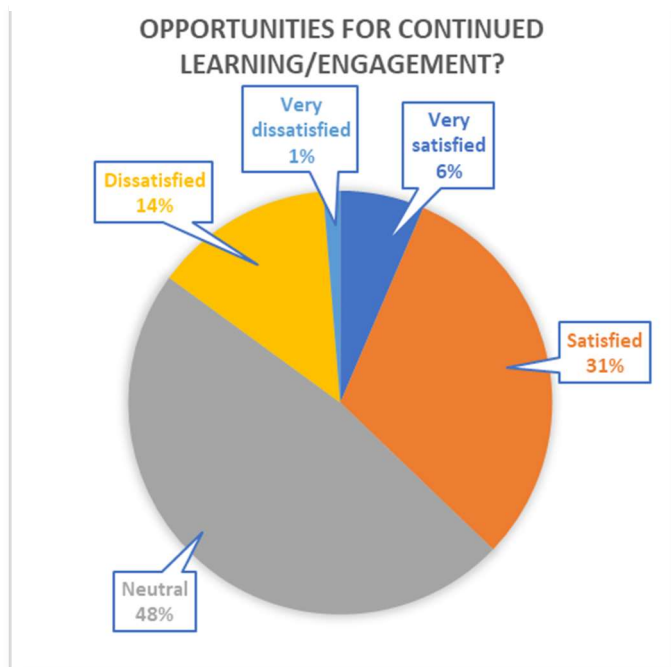
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<sup>6</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. (Citation from <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>)

category that they did not feel welcome at the senior center, suggesting that programs for first-time visitors, or “buddy” systems could help to provide a more welcoming atmosphere.

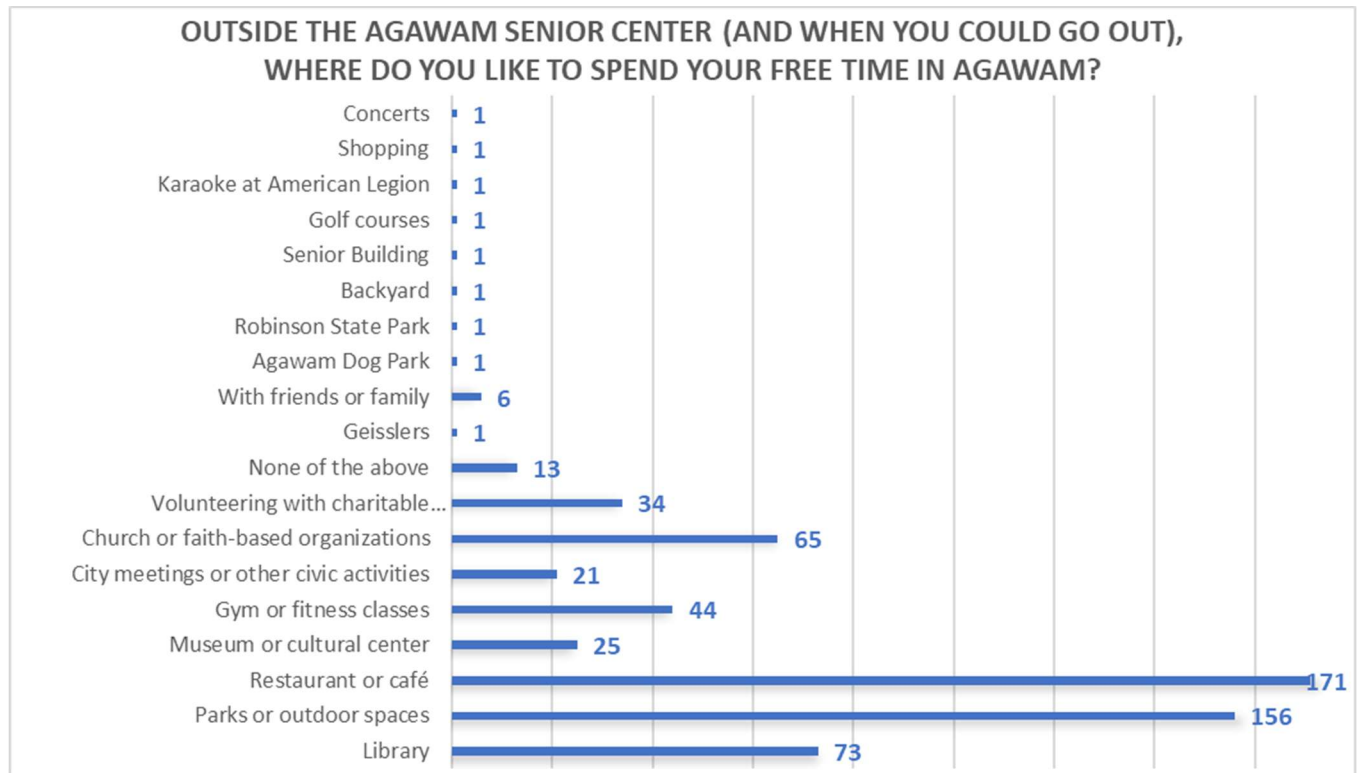
As many older adults do not use the senior center or are still working so cannot access activities during the day, it is important to ensure that all activities and events offered in the community are inclusive of older adults and people living with dementia. In addition to the Senior Center, many survey respondents said that prior to the pandemic, they spent free time at restaurants (171 respondents), parks or outdoor spaces (156), the library (73) or faith-based organizations (65). During the pandemic, many people continued to visit restaurants (74 – likely for takeout), parks (69), and faith-based organizations remotely (51), while 64 respondents said that they did not participate remotely in any outside activities during the pandemic. As noted in the Communications section, the pandemic highlighted the importance of access to technology in order to participate in remote social programming or meetings. Many survey respondents were satisfied (31%) or very satisfied (6%) with opportunities for continued learning and engagement in the community, while 15% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

**Figure 20: Feelings about opportunities for continued education or engagement**

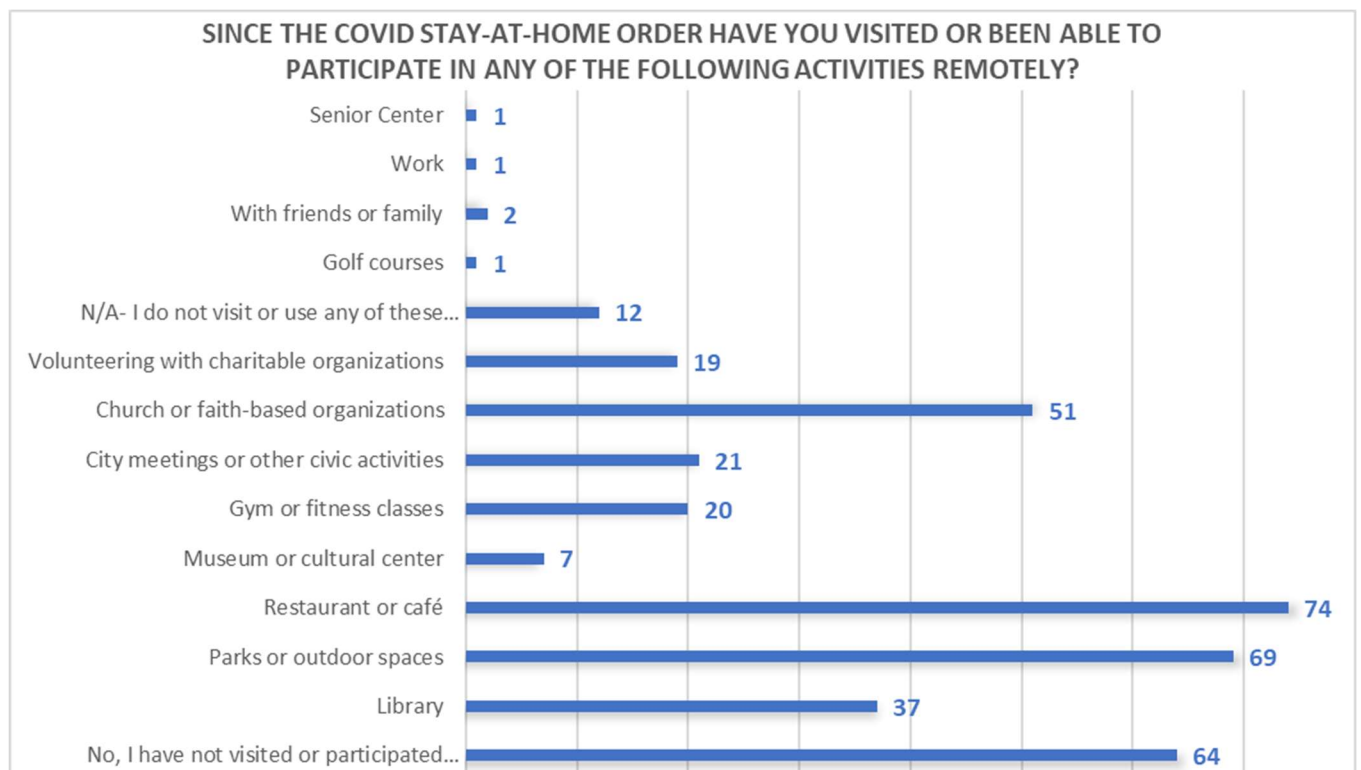




**Figure 21: Places where people spend free time (outside of the Senior Center)**



**Figure 22: Participation in events (some remote) after the COVID-19 shut-down**



The Agawam Cultural Council is an all-volunteer partner to the Massachusetts Cultural Council and is charged with advancing arts in the community as well as providing a range of engaging, entertaining and educational events in the community. The ACC organizes events at the Agawam Senior Center, sponsors film festivals at Agawam Cinemas, supports juried art and photography shows at the Agawam Public Library, and sponsors the annual Applause Series events that include speakers and musical performances, and SummerFest at School Street Park.

### Social Inclusion

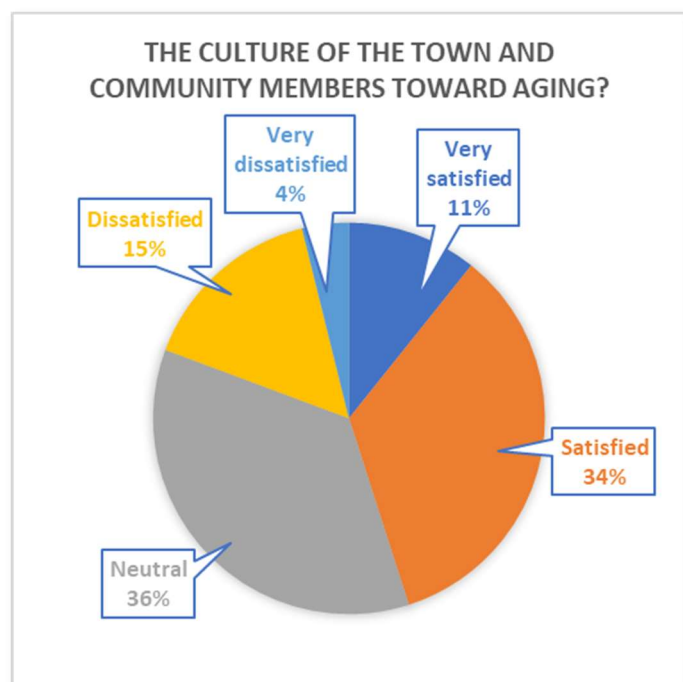
Inclusion of all sectors of the community in social programming is important in building an inclusive Age and Dementia Friendly Community. Sectors to consider in Agawam include country of origin, people whose first language is not English, people with dementia, veterans, religious affiliations, LGBTQ+, people from a variety of residential settings, and people with mental health or substance use disorders. Including people from different sectors and affiliations in the planning, outreach and implementation of event programming can ensure inclusion and participation from residents in all sectors.

Building awareness and inclusion for people with dementia is especially important for an aging population. Providing trainings on how to recognize the signs of dementia and how to communicate with people with dementia for library staff, volunteers at town-wide events, and the broader community can ensure that people with dementia are treated with respect and supported by the community.

Intergenerational programming is another way to ensure that community members build an understanding of the needs and interests of older adults, and that the skills and experience that older adults have to offer are celebrated in the community. Nineteen percent (19%) of survey respondents said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the culture of the community toward aging, suggesting that there is a need to build awareness and to change the narrative about older adults and their role in the community.

Faith communities are an important resource for social interaction and support. Agawam hosts at least 12 churches or religious organizations including the Church of Hope in Feeding Hills and the Moldovian Baptist Church which are centers for immigrants from the former Soviet republic.

Figure 23: Perception of the culture of the community toward aging



## Social Participation and Inclusion Assets and Opportunities

### Assets and Accomplishments

- Programs are offered at the Senior Center and Library
- Active Cultural Council that organizes and sponsors events and celebrates the arts and artists within the community.
- Active faith community

### Goals and Actions

**Goal 12:** Ensure that older adults and people with dementia have opportunities for social interaction through programming and planning of events.

#### Actions

- 12a. Identify "naturally occurring retirement communities" (NORCs) and develop neighborhood networks or "circles" using available communication channels and volunteers to serve as leads.
- 12b. Research the feasibility of establishing a Village Model program (possibly with surrounding communities) that engages volunteers in the community to assist older adults who are aging in place with minor tasks such as shoveling or yard work.
- 12c. Adopt policies to ensure that events are held at venues or locations that are conveniently located, accessible, well-lit, and easily reached by public transportation or at times when transportation services are available.
- 12d. Partner with faith communities and organizations representing vulnerable or underserved sectors of the community to plan for events and programming that serves all residents.
- 12e. Seek funding to provide staffing for a Memory Café and other activities for people with dementia living outside a formal care setting and their caregivers (adult day programs, creative arts/music, intergenerational connections, outings/group activities).
  - Meaningfully engage people with dementia in developing programs and services
- 12f. Work with library to train staff and provide programming for people with dementia.
- 12g. Develop activities tailored to people with dementia living outside a formal care setting (adult day programs, creative arts/music, intergenerational connections, outings/group activities).
- 12h. Provide consistent outreach in multiple formats to ensure that people at risk of social isolation get information and feel welcome to attend activities and events.
  - Enlist those who are isolated to become engaged by helping others.
- 12i. Continue to build Intergenerational programs for mutual benefit - connect with area schools and colleges to facilitate intergenerational conversations and engagement.
- 12j. Organize regional activities (with other senior centers) for group engagement.
- 12k. Identify public meeting places in town for conversation circles (cafes, libraries), and schedule programming in these places to engage more residents in the community.
- 12l. Ensure access to a variety of outdoor/physical activities that allow residents to interact with the natural world and participate in physical activities at varying intensity levels (i.e. walking, hiking, biking, birding, etc.).
- 12m. Ensure that activities and events are welcoming to people with dementia who may have to attend with a companion, caregiver, or family member.

- 12n. Ensure that activities and attractions are affordable and have no hidden additional costs.
- 12o. Provide information about accessibility of facilities and transportation options for community meetings and events.
- 12p. Provide a wide variety of activities that appeal to a diverse population, including people who may not speak English as their first language and others who don't normally participate in community events.
- 12q. Provide outreach information and events in other languages as determined by the needs of residents (Spanish, Russian, others as needed)

### **Recommendations/strategies from previous reports**

#### **Agawam Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2018):**

- Expand programming that appeals to a wider range of adults and seniors.
- Expand programming that allows access to certain facilities such as new High School Track.
- Add Educational and Cultural Programs to serve a wider range of the Agawam population.
- Address program deficiencies, including primary health and wellness education and fitness enhancement classes.

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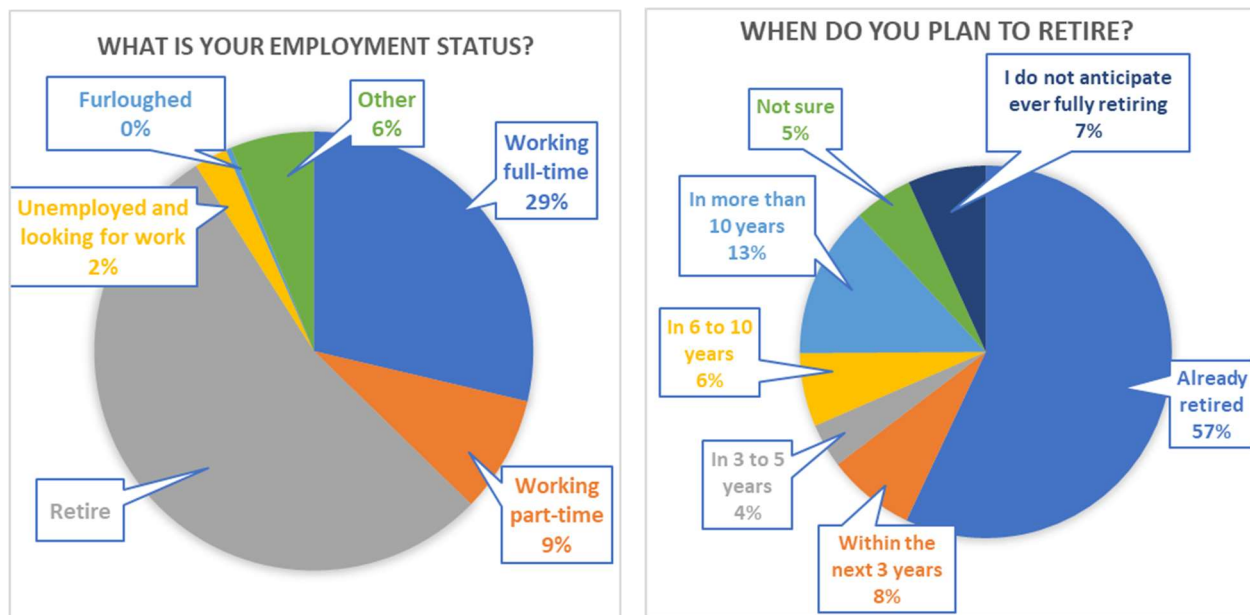
## **Employment and Civic Engagement**

Every community benefits from an active and engaged population. Many older adults who have retired from their lifetime careers and have enough in social security and retirement funds have time and interest to participate in volunteer activities, and decades of life and job experience. Some choose to work after retirement in a new area of employment, to earn additional income or to keep busy, and others choose to participate in volunteer opportunities.

Approximately 1/3 of Agawam Livable Community Survey respondents were under the age of 60, so under retirement age, while 57% of survey respondents said that they were already retired. Seven percent (7%) of respondents said that they did not anticipate ever retiring. For older adults who wish to continue working, matching their skills and availability with employers in need of a work force could be mutually beneficial.

The Senior Center has partnered with the Massachusetts Council on Aging (MCOA) and an agency called Empower Success Corps to help develop a peer-guided process to connect recent retirees and other elders who want to give back to their community with various volunteer opportunities.

**Figure 24: Employment Status (Agawam Livable Community Survey)**



## Employment and Civic Engagement Assets and Opportunities

### Assets and Accomplishments

- COA has partnered with the Massachusetts Council on Aging (MCOA) and an agency called Empower Success Corps to help develop a peer-guided process to connect recent retirees and other elders who want to give back to their community with various volunteer opportunities.

### Goals and Actions

**Goal 13:** Provide opportunities for older adults to work and volunteer in the community.

#### Actions

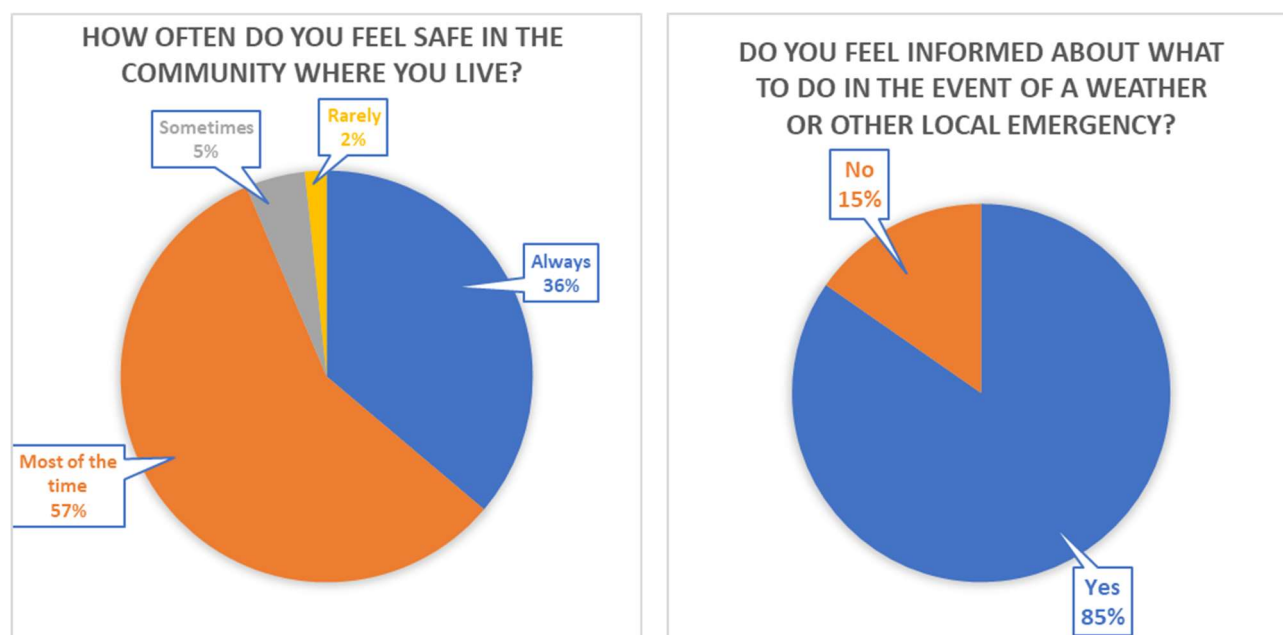
- 13a. Create or connect with volunteer leadership programs for residents interested in serving on non-profit or other boards, or on municipal committees.
- 13b. Increase the number of older adults running in local elections, volunteering, and serving on municipal boards/commissions by publicizing opportunities to serve requirements for running for municipal positions.
- 13c. Provide training for new board/commission members, encourage boards to convene for continuing education and trainings, and develop a mentoring system.
- 13d. Increase awareness among employers in town on the benefits of hiring older workers, including the use of flexible work schedules attractive to older or second-career workers, i.e. “flex time”, part-time, work at home, job sharing, etc.
- 13e. Foster an age-friendly attitude in town, through education - reinforcing the fact that “age happens” to everyone and age discrimination is illegal in hiring, retention, promotion and training of employees.
- 13f. Develop intergenerational skill building/mentoring opportunities with COA’s and community groups and local schools, i.e. youths teach elders about technology or other current studies, while elders teach youths about careers, life skills, etc.

- 13g. Increase knowledge around saving, budgets, retirement planning, managing credit/debt by developing a list of financial/estate planning resources and related services and offering programs to residents.
- 13h. Provide flexible options for people with dementia to volunteer and provide training, recognition, guidance and compensation for personal costs.
- 13i. Provide training and education opportunities for people with dementia.
- 13j. Increase involvement in government and civic affairs by residents by creating Civic Issues forum or newsletter.
- 13k. Increase public engagement with elected/appointed officials by increasing publicity/outreach for public meetings/calls for comment in a number of formats and venues.

## Safety and Resiliency

The Public Safety Domain was included in the Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community model mainly for the purposes of ensuring that public safety officials work closely with councils on aging to understand how to recognize the signs of dementia and how to work with people with dementia. However, feeling safe in one's community, both in terms of being supported by the infrastructure and services that people need as they get older, and also knowing what to do in the case of an environmental or medical emergency can contribute to a greater sense of well-being and security. The Agawam Livable Community Survey asked whether people felt safe living in Agawam, and if they felt informed about what to do in the case of a weather or other emergency. Most people responded that they always felt safe (36%) or felt safe most of the time (57%), but 7% said that they only felt safe some of the time (5%) or never (2%). Fifteen percent (15%) of survey respondents said that they did not feel informed about emergencies.

**Figure 25: Safety concerns (Agawam Livable Community Survey)**





Many communities participate in the TRIAD program which is a collaboration between the Sheriff's Department, local police & fire departments and senior services. These community policing programs are part of a national initiative to connect seniors with law enforcement and other service providers, and also helps older adults learn about safety through education and crime prevention programs.

In Agawam, the fire department keeps a Disabled Person Address Registry which allows emergency personnel to access important medical information through a database when called for emergencies. Residents must sign up to be on this list and must have the following approved designations:

- Autism
- Cognitive impairment including developmental impairment, dementia or Alzheimer's
- Deaf or severely hard of hearing
- Dependent on a life support system
- Emotional impairment
- Legally blind
- Mobility impaired (i.e. needing a walker, wheelchair or bedridden)
- Speech impaired
- Use a teletypewriter to communicate
- Uses oxygen generating equipment or oxygen cylinders

Older residents with these and other medical issues are encouraged to keep a File of Life in view at their homes in case of emergency, and to keep this information updated.

## **Safety and Resiliency Assets and Opportunities**

### **Assets and Accomplishments**

- Disabled Persons Address Registry in place

### **Goals and Actions**

**Goal 14:** Ensure the safety of all residents, including older adults and people with dementia, through multi-sectoral partnerships and programming.

- 14a. Establish a TRIAD program or partnership between the Council on Aging, Police and Fire Departments.
  - Educate residents about the File of Life and other important documents.
  - Encourage residents to keep their File of Life documents updated regularly.
- 14b. Provide regular trainings for all emergency personnel on recognizing the signs of dementia and how to communicate with people with dementia
- 14c. Explore funding and logistics for cooling stations and emergency shelters to develop expanded offerings and to address residents' needs during hazard events, including extreme temperature events, floods, or storms.

## Access, Equity and Inclusion

The Access, Equity and Inclusion domain, although placed at the end of this Community Assessment report should be considered throughout all of the domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community. The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative produced a guidebook called “Healthy Aging for All” (HAFA) which includes a “Crosswalk” to review how strategies proposed for each domain area affect different sectors of the population. Improvements that allow people who may be living with a disability or with dementia can benefit the whole community. The HAFA guide recommends considering each of the following sectors of a community as applicable when developing plan, working groups, and implementing strategies for an age and dementia friendly community:

- Race/Ethnicity
- Age
- Behavioral Health
- Country of Origin
- Dementia
- Disability
- Economic Security
- Gender
- Geographic Area
- Language
- LGBTQIA
- Religion
- Residential Setting
- Substance Use Disorder
- Veterans

In Agawam, sectors of particular concern include people with dementia, veterans, country of origin, LGBTQ+, immigration status, second language speakers, and people living in different types of residential environments. When implementing the Actions included in the attached Action Plan, the Town should consider how strategies can reach these sectors and how people directly affected can be included in the process of planning and implementation of priority actions.

## Access, Equity and Inclusion Assets and Opportunities

### Goals and Actions

**Goal 15:** Ensure that all strategies included in this Action Plan are inclusive of all sectors of the population.

- 15a. Create an “age friendly business” recognition program in the community.
- 15b. Create Community learning projects, e.g. community gardens; multi-cultural festivals or other forums/events, to encourage dialogue and understanding.
- 15c. Encourage active and healthy aging educational programs, such as book study groups, for all community members to increase awareness and understanding.
- 15d. Develop an outreach program that includes people at an increased risk of social isolation including CALD, A&TSI, LGBTI, living alone and homeless to remain engaged in their community.

- 15e. Include Age Friendly activities as part of an inclusive Community Compact.
- 15f. Develop a set of intergenerational activities with schools and older adults.
- 15g. Ensure that a range of community events and activities are available to meet the diverse population, including people living with dementia by providing dementia-specific activities as well as mainstream activities that are supportive of people with dementia.
- 15h. Ensure community outreach and planning activities with outreach components are developed to ensure broad access and ability to respond by residents of all ages and are presented in such a manner that people with dementia have the ability to participate.

## Action Plan

The following pages include an Action Plan for improving the livability of Agawam for people of all ages and making the town a welcoming and supportive place for people living with dementia. According to the Agawam Livable Community Survey, Housing, Health and Caregiver Services, and Transportation are the three areas that the Town should focus on in the next five years to make Agawam a more livable community. The Action Plan identifies Lead Entities, partners, metrics for measuring progress, and project priorities. High priority projects are prioritized for implementation in the next 1-3 years, Medium priority in 4-6 years, and Low in 7-10 years.

## Plan Implementation

The Age and Dementia Friendly Agawam Working Group was formed to work with the PVPC on the development of this Community Assessment and Action Plan. An implementation committee made up of members of this working group and others identified by the Working group will be developed to implement strategies on the following pages. In addition, the following steps are recommended for the implementation of this report.

1. Develop an Implementation Committee for an Age and Dementia Friendly Agawam. Continue to build this committee to include sectors of the community (including Faith organizations, veterans, municipal departments, people with disabilities, older adults, etc.) as well as regional and state partner organizations and agencies.
2. Distribute the Community Assessment and Action Plan to Town boards, committees, social groups, and faith organizations to solicit input and volunteers for an implementation committee, and to build awareness of ways that these groups can participate in making Belchertown Age and Dementia Friendly.
3. Submit report to AARP and Dementia Friendly Massachusetts for final certification as an Age and Dementia Friendly Community.
4. Select strategies for implementation each year.
5. Report on successes and challenges – both to the community, AARP and Dementia Friendly Massachusetts.

## Dementia Friendly Community Strategies

<b>Goal 1:</b> Build awareness, acceptance, and a culture of support for people living with dementia and the people who care for them.				
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Lead Entity/ Partners</b>	<b>Metrics</b>	<b>Priority (High, Medium, Low)</b>
1a	Develop a committee of the Age and Dementia Friendly Agawam Working Group to implement trainings and a public awareness campaign about dementia in Agawam.	COA; Working group	Subcommittee development	High
1b	Recruit volunteers to become Dementia Friends Champions who will provide Dementia Friends trainings.	COA, residents; Jewish Family Services	# of Dementia Friends and Dementia Friends Champions	High
1c	Encourage Dementia Friends trainings or Alzheimer's Association trainings for all municipal staff.	COA, Alzheimer's Association	# of trainings	High
1d	Establish a Triad program that partners emergency personnel (Police and Fire Departments) with the Council on Aging and older adults to address safety concerns of older adults in the community.	Hampden County Sheriff's Dept., COA, Fire Dept, Police Dept	Triad Committee established	High
1e	Identify and reach out to family care givers to connect them with support programs and opportunities for meeting with other caregivers of people with dementia.	COA, Alzheimer's Association, Greater SSS	Information on support programs, # of people involved	High
1f	Schedule memory cafes at the Senior Center and other locations in the community.	COA, Alzheimer's Association	Memory Café schedule	High
1g	Educate restaurant owners about Purple Table programs and provide trainings for interested restaurant owners and their staff.	COA, Alzheimer's Association, local restaurants	# of trainings, # purple table restaurants	Medium

## Housing

**Goal 2:** Ensure that a range of safe, affordable, and accessible single and multi-unit housing options are available to meet the needs of the aging population in Agawam.

Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
2a	Engage older adults who wish to downsize in advocating for the types of housing that they want in order for them to be able to stay in community.	<b>Housing Committee</b> Planning, COA	Identified housing types, Zoning changes, # of new units built, change in Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)	High
2b	Identify available Federal, State and Regional housing resources/funding sources to increase affordable housing supply in the community.	<b>Housing Committee</b> PVPC, Planning	List of funding sources	High
2c	Research zoning and financing tools that will encourage economical development of rental units for a range of incomes.	<b>Housing Committee,</b> Planning, PVPC	Research on zoning and financial tools	High
2d	Encourage housing development close to activity centers, parks, public transportation and major community services.	<b>Planning,</b> Housing Committee, COA	Master Plan, Zoning	High
2e	Reconsider adopting an ordinance to allow residents to build Accessory Dwelling Units in single family homes or accessory structures.	<b>Housing Committee,</b> Planning, COA	Public Forums to review options; Accessory Apartment ordinance (after 2022)	High
2f	Expand housing choices through research and adoption of innovative housing models, zoning and financing options - Ex.C-housing, cottage type housing	Planning, Housing Committee	Research on housing models, Zoning review; Zoning changes, incentive programs	

**Goal 3:** Provide support for all Agawam residents in locating affordable housing options and services to support aging in place.

Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
3a	Make information and assistance for consumers about aging-in-place available on municipal and regional websites.	COA, PVPC	List of contractors and funding sources	High
3b	Develop and disseminate educational materials regarding home modification and rehabilitation funds available for low-income households.	Housing Committee, COA, PVPC	Informational materials	High
3c	Assist homeowners in finding reliable and affordable home maintenance contractors and resources for modifying homes as needed to improve safety and accessibility.	COA, Regional directory?	List of contractors, funding sources	High
3d	Identify licensed contractors who can do home assessments that will allow people to age in place.	PVPC, COA, local contractors	List of vetted contractors including qualifications and rates	High
3e	Provide resources and counseling for people at risk of eviction and identify shelters or programs to assist people who are un-housed.	Housing entity, Wayfinders	Eviction prevention programs and counseling	



## Transportation and Streets

<b>Goal 4:</b> Ensure that transportation services are available to residents of all ages and abilities to allow access food, medical appointments, employment, and education.				
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Lead Entity/ Partners</b>	<b>Metrics</b>	<b>Priority (High, Medium, Low)</b>
4a	Survey older adults and people with disabilities annually in multiple formats to monitor transportation needs. Explore the feasibility of expanding existing Town services as needed.	COA, Planning	Annual survey, responses	
4b	Implement a free van service that is available to all community members and makes regular stops within Agawam.	PVTA, COA	Feasibility Study	
4c	Expand transportation services to provide some evening and weekend hours.	COA, Mayor	Expanded hours for Senior Center van	
4d	Post information on transportation services including PVTA fixed routes and on demand services and Senior Center Van on Senior Center website and provide information in multiple locations in town.	PVTA, COA	# of places where information is posted	
4e	Continue to train transit and Senior Center van drivers on the unique needs of older adults, including best practices for how to interact, as well as recognize/respond appropriately to cognitive impairment, etc.	COA, Alzheimer's Association	# of trainings, # of drivers and staff trained	
4f	Research the feasibility of implementing a program that pays drivers to provide rides to medical appointments out of town or other in-town appointments as needed; explore participation with RSVP and confirm whether rides are offered through that program.	COA, RSVP	# rides, # ride requests	
4g	Promote affordable home delivery services in town. Include information on stores that deliver on COA website.	COA. Local grocery stores	# stores offering delivery, cost of home delivery	

**Goal 5:** Ensure that roads and trail networks are safe and comfortable for use by people of all ages and abilities.

Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
5a	Develop a plan for an interconnected network of trails and bicycle facilities that are safe and comfortable for all ages and all abilities.	Planning, Conservation, DPW, PVPC or consultant	Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Plan	High
5b	<p>Continue to implement the Complete Streets Program to ensure safe and comfortable routes for walking, biking and public transit for all ages and abilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement traffic calming technique</li> <li>• add bike lanes (with buffers where traffic volumes and speeds are high)</li> <li>• increase safety and visibility of crosswalks</li> <li>• consolidate curb cuts and make sidewalks continuous,</li> <li>• Improve pedestrian crossings to meet ADA standards</li> <li>• Add benches and greenery for shade and resting points</li> </ul>	Planning, Conservation, DPW	# of roads and trails that are safe and accessible	High
5c	Engage older adults and people with disabilities in the process of designing and planning for improvements of infrastructure for bicycles and pedestrians.	Planning, DPW	Outreach efforts during design phase of projects	
5d	Identify routes for walking and biking that are safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities (walkers/bicyclists are protected from traffic, crosswalks have audible cues and appropriate timing). Create maps and wayfinding signs so that these routes are easily accessible; make maps it available in both print and in digital form.	Planning, Conservation, DPW	Map of bicycle and pedestrian routes and levels of comfort and accessibility	high
5e	Evaluate town-wide public parking and drop-off locations for safety, lighting, convenience and accessibility for those with special needs, i.e. low vision, physical or cognitive impairments.	Planning, DPW	Parking and lighting study	

Goal 6: Implement programs that promote safe driving and transition to other forms of transportation.				
Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
6a	Support and allow space for driver skill retention with community organizations, through partnerships with AARP, AAA, RMV, Auto Insurance providers.	COA	Driver skill retention programs	
6b	Collaborate with auto dealerships, mechanics and others town businesses to develop incentives and discounts for car maintenance for older adults; provide pickup and drop-off service for nominal fee.	COA, local businesses	Incentive programs for car maintenance	
6c	Promote high visibility vest program for people walking on roads.	Police Dept/TRIAD program, COA	Vests available for walkers; # of people committing to wearing vests	

## Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Goal 7: Provide opportunities for use of public buildings and outdoor spaces by people of all ages and abilities.				
Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
7a	Work toward making public buildings and outdoor spaces in town Dementia Friendly & ADA accessible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update and expand ADA assessment and transition plan.</li> <li>• Ensure that the Commission on Disabilities has a system for identifying needed improvements to public buildings and town-owned outdoor spaces, develop prioritization plans and track action</li> </ul>	Planning, Conservation, Commission on Disabilities	Prioritized list of projects	
7b	Solicit feedback from older residents on desired outdoor recreational opportunities to inform future expenditures on parks and recreation.	Planning, Conservation, OSRP Committee	# survey responses from older residents; forums located at	

			senior center or other locations convenient to older adults.	
7c	Encourage creation of trails, parks and bikeways close to centers of population and/or where public transportation is available.	Planning Dept, OSRP	OSRP, Bike and Pedestrian and/or trail network plan	
7d	Encourage development of age friendly trails in community owned conservation and recreation areas. Maintain vegetation to reduce exposure to ticks.	Conservation, Planning, Parks & Recreation Dept.	# of Accessible Trails; trail maintenance guide	
7e	<p>Create a plan for locating/developing outdoor gathering spaces and seating, and advocate for public outdoor seating/areas as a priority in new business and housing projects. Develop and maintain a master map of all outdoor seating and gathering areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage location of park benches where they are not isolated from other park activities.</li> <li>• Provide benches that have backs and arms at regular intervals in shady areas</li> </ul>	Planning , Parks & Recreation	Inventory and map of bench locations; Site Plan Review	
7f	<p>Review Dementia Friendly Environments checklist when planning for improvements to parks, public spaces and/or public buildings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrances are clearly visible and understood</li> <li>• Signage is clear and high contrast with background</li> <li>• Lighting is bright and include natural light where possible</li> <li>• Flooring is plain and not shiny or slippery and free of clutter</li> </ul>	Commission on Disabilities, Planning (site plan review)	DF Checklist, process for reviewing designs and buildings	
7g	Support Town efforts to enhance connectivity, including long-range mapping to identify easements and routes for more direct walking/biking connections to schools, shopping, town/outdoor resources, and other amenities.	Conservation, Planning	OSRP, Bike and Pedestrian and/or trail network plan	

7h	Assess/upgrade existing lighting and signage in public buildings and outdoor spaces. Seek funding for more extensive infrastructure improvements.	Planning, Conservation	Assessment of lighting, Signage	
7i	Site accessible bathrooms near walking loops, or between destinations, where possible. Provide unisex restrooms to allow someone to be assisted without causing embarrassment to themselves or another user.	Recreation Dept.	Plan for locating and building and/or mapping accessible restrooms	
7j	Provide information on all trails in town, their levels of difficulty and whether or not they are ADA compliant and/or accessible to people in wheelchairs.	Conservation	Map of trails - online and paper format	
7k	Require new housing projects to provide access routes to connect to existing trails or activity centers.	Planning Dept, Planning Board	Site Plan Review, Special Permit, Subdivision Regs	
7l	Include adult fitness equipment in parkscapes	Parks & Recreation Dept, Planning	Identified location and plan for developing fitness stations	
7m	Maintain sidewalks, parking lot and other pavement around public buildings and in parks to reduce potential trip hazards including glare, uneven surfaces, sudden transitions, etc.	DPW	Sidewalk Maintenance Inventory and plan for improvements	Medium (expensive)
7n	Make sure wayfinding markers are easily recognizable, clearly visible, and at frequent intervals.	Conservation, Planning Dept.	Assessment of need for wayfinding system; funding and implementation of wayfinding system.	Medium

**Goal 8:** Increase programming for older adults that encourages active living and social interaction in buildings and outdoor in Agawam.

Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
8a	Provide training to local businesses and their employees on how to recognize and work with people with dementia, and how to create Dementia Friendly environments to better serve their customers with different abilities.	COA, Chamber of Commerce, Disabilities Commission, Alzheimer's Association, Dementia Friend volunteers	# of trainings, # businesses participating, DF Environments Checklist	High
8b	Encourage the creation of walking groups or walking buddy programs through councils on aging or other municipal departments, posting on community website and bulletin boards.	Planning Dept, OSRP	OSRP, Bike and Pedestrian and/or trail network plan	Medium
8c	Establish regular, organized activities in parks, both age-specific and multigenerational, by partnering with local organizations.	Rec Dept, COA, Cultural Council	Programming and participation	Medium

**Communication, Information and Technology**

**Goal 9:** Ensure that all residents have access to information about policies and programs that provide opportunities for health and community engagement.

Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
9a	Create a basic, but effective <b>Municipal Communication Plan</b> . Inventory what municipal info is being shared by each department, including both non-emergency and emergency channels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey residents to see how they are getting their news</li> </ul>	Agawam Media, COA, Town Departments, News outlets	Communications Plan	High



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify gaps and weaknesses in local communications; adopt effective methods to fill communication gaps.</li> </ul>			
9b	Update the Town website regularly and poll users about the ease of navigation. Design for the broadest range of consumers, including those with visual or physical impairments, multiple languages, etc.	Municipal IT staff, Town Departments	Updated Town Website	
9c	Participate in all communication outlets (Newsletters/Posting Boards/Blogs/Twitter/ Facebook, All Call system, local cable access television); identify the best formats for homebound seniors to broaden communications with residents of all ages.	Municipal Departments, COA, residents	Survey of homebound seniors	
9d	Collaborate with existing community-based networks such as faith communities, civic groups, education channels, business groups, to share information.	Faith communities, COA, Agawam Media, civic groups, Chamber of Commerce, local FB pages	# of outlets # of postings Communications Plan	
9e	Maximize use of municipal public access channel to create and help distribute content to residents; Elicit cooperation/input from public mass media to fill communication gaps inexpensively but effectively, for appropriate messages. Create or link town website to timely information and broadcasts of interest to older residents; share content with neighboring towns.	Town website, Agawam Media, PVPC	Website, resources	
9f	Build relationships with private sector & service providers to communicate about programs that are available through partnerships between public and private facilities	413-cares, Baystate, GSSS, COA	Partnerships with senior housing, gyms, etc.	
9g	Continue to identify and reach out to socially isolated residents via personal contact from trusted municipal staff; develop "Buddy system" with volunteers who can reach out to socially isolated residents.	COA, volunteers	Formalized program; # volunteers, # of calls each month	

9h	Add links on COA page of the Town website to timely information and broadcasts of interest to older residents. Collaborate with other COAs to share links and resources.	COA, Town website, BCTV, PVPC	Website, resources	
9i	Continue to build relationships with private sector institutions and service providers; provide information on programs that are available through partnerships between public and private facilities.	COA, Private senior housing entities, GSSS, Housing Authority properties	Notice of programs offered by private facilities and service providers	
<b>Goal 10: Facilitate a culture of support and acceptance for older adults and people living with dementia.</b>				
Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
10a	Provide staff training for local government, community and civic organizations, faith communities, and businesses on how to recognize and effectively communicate with customers with dementia.	COA, Police and Fire, Municipal Departments, businesses, banks, Alzheimer's Association, Dementia Friends	# of trainings # of Departments, organizations, individuals trained	
10b	Ensure that municipal staff are trained on how to work with people with dementia and older adults, and that services provided at municipal facilities always include friendly, person-to-person assistance.	All Municipal Depts., COA	Customer satisfaction surveys	
10c	Ensure that printed information – including official forms or invoices and text on visual displays in public spaces - has large lettering with main ideas in bold type; simple and straightforward sentences and simple language; and is available in multiple languages as needed.	COA and other Municipal Departments	Policy or memo about lettering; implementation of policy	
10d	Ensure that telephone answering services give instructions slowly and clearly and tell callers how to repeat the message at any time. Offer	Municipal Departments	Town Policy	

	options for people with hearing impairments.			
10e	Ensure that voting kiosks and public-use computer terminals have large buttons/keys and big letters; and/or that reading glasses are available at voting locations.	Town Clerk/Elections Officials	Voting systems; Glasses at election locations	
10f	Ensure that municipal signage uses large, bold fonts and is well-lighted.	Planning, Conservation, DPC	Wayfinding system and standards for signs	
10g	Research the cost and feasibility of offering information and other communications in Spanish or other languages as needed (review updated Census data). Engage community members who speak languages other than English to determine whether interpreter and translation services are needed for municipal documents and public meetings.	Communications Committee; Schools	Translation of materials and website	

## Health and Community Services

<b>Goal 11:</b> Ensure that older residents of Agawam have access to health care and community services that support their ability to live long and healthy lives.				
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Lead Entity/ Partners</b>	<b>Metrics</b>	<b>Priority (High, Medium, Low)</b>
11a	Catalogue existing community, social and health service programs in town and work with key service providers to disseminate information to residents via municipal channels, using a variety of media (see Communications Plan).	COA, Health Dept., area hospitals and health service providers	List of programs and services; outreach plan	
11b	Collaborate with 413-Cares to train local health care and social service providers on how to use the platform and inform clients about this	COA, Health Dept., PHIWM	Meetings with 413-Cares, number of local	

	resource. Provide link on Agawam COA and Health Department web pages.		providers listed	
11c	Identify barriers for residents who need assistance, including lack of transportation, fear, stigma, lack of access to technology, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create programs to engage at-risk elders, such as TRIAD or other programs.</li> <li>• Increase access to community and health services through sharing of information, increasing access and training on how to use technology to access telemedicine, and providing transportation services.</li> </ul>	COA, hospitals and other health care providers	Survey to understand barriers; technology devices and training; transportation service use	
11d	Ensure that community and health service facilities are accessible by walking and/or public transportation.	Planning, DPW	Zoning - Site Plan Review; biking and walking network plan	
11e	Work with elder care organizations, health care providers and the Alzheimer's Association to offer service personnel and first responders continuing education on concerns specific to older adults, including those with dementia or other cognitive or physical challenges.	COA, Greater Springfield Senior Services, Alzheimer's Association, first responders	Trainings for first responders # of participants	
11f	Provide information on counseling and support groups for caregivers of people with dementia.	COA, GSSS, Alzheimer's Association	Information on support groups for caregivers	
11g	Partner with legal service organizations to offer legal assistance regarding planning for end of life care and management of financial and medical needs.	COA, Law firms; volunteers	Legal services offered	
11h	Provide information and space to offer successful health and fitness programs to all age groups to increase utilization and to improve health of community members - e.g. A Matter of Balance, Get Cuffed.	COA, Parks & Recreation Dept.	Fitness programs; information and participation	
11i	Ensure ongoing and consistent funding for necessary community and health services.	State & local budgets	Funding for health and community services	

11j	Research the feasibility of developing a Village or Neighbors model which coordinates volunteers to provide services that allow people to age in place. Services may include home health care (through certified agencies), chore services, grocery & pharmacy delivery, safety monitoring programs, and transportation assistance.	COA, community volunteers	Research on the Village Model or similar programs.	
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### Social Participation and Inclusion

<b>Goal 12:</b> Ensure that older adults and people with dementia have opportunities for social interaction through programming and planning of events.				
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Lead Entity/ Partners</b>	<b>Metrics</b>	<b>Priority (High, Medium, Low)</b>
12a	Identify "naturally occurring retirement communities" (NORCs) and develop neighborhood networks or "circles" using available communication channels and volunteers to serve as leads.	COA	Locations of NORCs Neighborhood circles	
12b	Research the feasibility of establishing a Village Model program (possibly with surrounding communities) that engages volunteers in the community to assist older adults who are aging in place with minor tasks such as shoveling or yard work.	Volunteer initiative with COA support	Research on Village model; interested volunteers	
12c	Adopt policies to ensure that events are held at venues or locations that are conveniently located, accessible, well-lit, and easily reached by public transportation or at times when transportation services are available.	Selectboard, Cultural Council	Town policies	
12d	Partner with faith communities and organizations representing vulnerable or underserved sectors of the community to plan for events and programming that serves all residents of the community.	COA, Faith Communities	# Faith partners; shared programming	

12e	Seek funding to provide staffing for a Memory Café and other activities for people with dementia living <u>outside</u> a formal care setting and their caregivers (adult day programs, creative arts/music, intergenerational connections, outings/group activities). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meaningfully engage people with dementia in developing programs and services</li> </ul>	COA	# Memory Cafes Grant or other funding to hold programs	
12f	Work with library to train staff and provide programming for people with dementia	COA, Library	# trainings # staff trained	
12g	Meaningfully engage people with dementia in developing programs and services	COA, Library	People with dementia represented on committees	
12h	Develop activities tailored to people with dementia living <u>outside</u> a formal care setting (adult day programs, creative arts/music, intergenerational connections, outings/group activities).	COA, Cultural Council	# of Programs for people with dementia	
12i	Provide consistent outreach in multiple formats to ensure that people at risk of social isolation get information and feel welcome to attend activities and events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enlist those who are isolated to become engaged by helping others.</li> </ul>	COA	Outreach efforts Volunteer participation # people reached	
12j	Continue to build Intergenerational programs for mutual benefit - connect with area schools and colleges to facilitate intergenerational conversations and engagement.	COA, Schools, area colleges	# intergenerational programs	
12k	Organize regional activities (with other senior centers) for group engagement.	COA, other COAs/Senior Centers	Shared activities	
12l	Identify public meeting places in town for conversation circles (cafes, libraries), and schedule programming in these places to engage more residents in the community.	COA, Chamber of Commerce, Library	Accessible meeting locations	



12m	Ensure access to a variety of outdoor/physical activities that allow residents to interact with the natural world and participate in physical activities at varying intensity levels (i.e., walking, hiking, biking, birding, etc.)	Conservation, Recreation groups; COA	# outdoor activities or programs accessible for older adults	
12n	Ensure that activities and events are welcoming to people with dementia who may have to attend with a companion, caregiver, or family member.	Parks and Recreation COA Cultural Council	# Dementia Friendly activities and events Guide to making events Dementia Friendly	
12o	Ensure that activities and attractions are affordable and have no hidden additional costs.	COA; Local businesses	Cost of activities	12
12p	Provide information about accessibility of facilities and transportation options for community meetings and events.	<b>COA</b>	Information about accessibility	
12q	Provide a wide variety of activities that appeal to a diverse population, including people who may not speak English as their first language or others who don't normally participate in community events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide outreach information and events in other languages as determined by the needs of residents</li> </ul>	<b>COA, Selectboard</b>	Policy on translations # of events and materials offered in other languages	
12r	Provide outreach information and events in other languages as determined by the needs of residents (Spanish, Russian, others as needed)	Cultural Council, Parks & Recreation	Translations available	

## Employment, Civic Engagement and Volunteer Opportunities

<b>Goal 13:</b> Provide opportunities for older adults to work and volunteer in the community.				
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Lead Entity/ Partners</b>	<b>Metrics</b>	<b>Priority (High, Medium, Low)</b>
13a	Create or connect with volunteer leadership programs for residents interested in serving on non-profit or other boards, or on municipal committees.	RSVP, COA	Volunteer leadership programs	
13b	Increase the number of older adults running in local elections, volunteering, and serving on municipal boards/commissions by publicizing opportunities to serve and requirements for running for municipal positions.	COA board - majority are retired Municipal boards	Policy for publicizing open seats and requirements	
13c	Provide training for new board/commission members, encourage boards to convene for continuing education and trainings, and develop a mentoring system	Municipal boards	Board trainings	
13d	Increase awareness among employers in town on the benefits of hiring older workers, including the use of flexible work schedules attractive to older or second-career workers, i.e. “flex time”, part-time, work at home, job sharing, etc.	COA , Chamber of Commerce, local businesses	Outreach campaign	
13e	Foster an age-friendly attitude in town, through education - reinforcing the fact that “age happens” to everyone and age discrimination is illegal in hiring, retention, promotion and training of employees.	<b>COA</b> , Town leadership	Reframing Aging campaign	
13f	Develop intergenerational skill building/mentoring opportunities with COA’s and community groups and local schools, i.e. youths teach elders about technology or other current studies, while elders teach youths about careers, life skills etc.	COA, Schools	Intergenerational programming	

13g	Increase knowledge around saving, budgets, retirement planning, managing credit/debt by developing a list of financial/estate planning resources and related services and offering programs to residents.	COA	Resource list, programming	
13h	Provide flexible options for people with dementia to volunteer and provide training, recognition, guidance and compensation for personal costs.	COA, RSVP	# volunteer opportunities	
13i	Provide training and education opportunities for people with dementia.	COA Alzheimer's Association, West Mass Eldercare	# of opportunities for people with dementia	
13j	Increase involvement in government and civic affairs by residents by creating Civic Issues forum or newsletter	COA, Municipal boards	Civic issues forum or newsletter	
13k	Increase public engagement with elected/appointed officials by increasing publicity/outreach for public meetings/calls for comment in a number of formats and venues.	Municipal boards and departments, Town leaders	# of places calls for comment are posted, # of formats	

## Safety and Resiliency

Goal 14: Ensure the safety of all residents, including older adults and people with dementia, through multi-sectoral partnerships and programming.				
Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
14a	Establish a TRIAD program or partnership between the Council on Aging, Police and Fire Departments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate residents about the File of Life and other important documents.</li> <li>Encourage residents to keep their File of Life documents updated regularly.</li> </ul>	COA, Police, Fire Departments; Hampden County Sherriff's Dept.	Triad program	

14b	Provide regular trainings for all emergency personnel on recognizing the signs of dementia and how to communicate with people with dementia	COA, Alzheimer's Association, Dementia Friends	# of trainings # of people trained	
14c	Explore funding and logistics for cooling stations and emergency shelters to develop expanded offerings and to address residents' needs during hazard events, including extreme temperature events, floods, or storms.	Emergency Management Committee (Police, Fire Depts.), COA	Emergency shelters and cooling station identified; funding for coordinator	

### Access, Equity and Inclusion

Goal 15: Ensure that all strategies included in this Action Plan are inclusive of all sectors of the population.				
Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority (High, Medium, Low)
15a	Create an "age friendly business" recognition program in the community.	COA, Chamber of commerce	Business recognition program; checklist	
15b	Create Community learning projects, e.g. community gardens; multi-cultural festivals or other forums/events, to encourage dialogue and understanding.	COA; Conservation; Cultural Council	Community learning projects	
15c	Encourage active and healthy aging educational programs, such as book study groups, for all community members to increase awareness and understanding.	COA; library, schools	Study groups, programming	
15d	Develop an outreach program that includes people at an increased risk of social isolation including those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQ+, those who are living in poverty or are homeless to remain engaged in their community.	COA, Greater Springfield Senior Services	Outreach program	

15e	Include Age Friendly activities as part of an inclusive Community Compact.	Planning, COA	Community Compact	
15f	Develop a set of intergenerational activities with schools and older adults.	COA, Schools	Intergenerational programming	
15g	Ensure that a range of community events and activities are available to meet the diverse population, including people living with dementia by providing dementia-specific activities as well as mainstream activities that are supportive of people with dementia.	COA, Cultural Council, Parks and Recreation	Programming supportive of people with dementia	
15h	Ensure community outreach and planning activities with outreach components are developed to ensure broad access and ability to respond by residents of all ages and are presented in such a manner that people with dementia have the ability to participate.	COA, Planning, Parks & Recreation	Outreach regarding Town issues	