



August 2024

AGE AND DEMENTIA FRIENDLY HUNTINGTON

Community Assessment and Action Plan

Abstract

An assessment of the social and built environment in the Town of Huntington as it supports an aging population. This report was completed for designating the Town of Huntington as an Age and Dementia Friendly Community.



Acknowledgements

This Community Assessment and Action Plan for making Huntington an Age and Dementia Friendly Community was developed through funding from the Community Compact Best Practices program 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:

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Introduction

This Community Assessment and Action Plan was developed with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission through funding from Point32Health and the Community Compact Best Practices program. The Community Compact program allows Massachusetts cities and towns to select a “Best Practice” for planning or implementation of a project over a two-year period. The Town selected Age Friendly Communities as a best practice in order to fund technical assistance from PVPC to complete a process of community engagement, research and reporting on how the social and built environments in Huntington support the needs of an aging population, people living with dementia and their care partners.

The Age and Dementia Friendly Huntington initiative builds off the work of Huntington’s Council on Aging, made up of a volunteer board and part-time staff who provide a number of programs and services for older residents in Huntington and surrounding communities. These efforts have included the creation of a memory café, cultural programming such as films and discussions, an on-demand van service and other social and health related programs for older adults in Huntington and surrounding towns.

The report is organized by the Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community, a model developed by the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative that combines the World Health Organization’s Eight Domains of Livability and Dementia Friendly America’s Ten Domains of a 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 the social and built environments and helps participants to measure progress going forward.

In this assessment and the Action Plan for the Town, we take a deeper dive into three domains: Transportation, Housing, and Health and Community Services, while touching on the other domain areas as they have come up in discussions and surveys of older residents. These priority areas were determined by responses from Huntington residents to the Age Friendly Pioneer Valley Survey and community engagement events that were held to gather feedback from older adults on the challenges that they face in the community. The report also draws from existing plans and assessments that have been completed for the Town and incorporates the results of the community engagement activities to develop recommendations for activities that the Town can take going forward to make Huntington a great place to grow up and grow old.

Background

Huntington is a small town in the southwest corner of Hampshire County and is bordered on the west and south by the Hampden County towns of Chester and Blandford. In 2022, the town had a total population of 2,328 people, and approximately 25.6% (596 people) were over the

age of 60, while 16.2% (378 people) were over the age of 65¹. The percentage of the population that was over 65 in 2012 was approximately 11.2%, indicating a 5% increase in this age group over a 10-year period. Like almost every other community in the region and country as a whole, the population is aging, and people over the age of 65 have overtaken the number of children under the age of 18.

As the population of older residents continues to grow, the likelihood of people having physical impairments in areas such as vision or mobility, leading to an increased need for services and support systems to allow people to continue living independently in their homes and to participate fully in their communities. As a rural community, the tax base is not sufficient to support a lot of direct services, so the community may have to rely on grants or creative partnerships with other communities and service providers to meet the needs of older adults.

Review of Past Plans and Assessment Reports

Part of the community assessment process includes a review of past plans and reports for language, goals or objectives that relate to the domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community. The main vehicle for community planning is the Comprehensive (or Master) Plan. The last time Huntington published a Comprehensive Plan was in 2003. As this report reflects priorities for the Town over 20 years ago, we have not included many of the goals and objectives that were published in this plan. However, more focused reports have been completed over the last few years that provide some discussion about aspects of the community that impact older residents. The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan (2022) identifies older residents as a vulnerable population; and a Walk Audit completed by Walk Boston through the Healthy Hampshire (Mass in Motion) program provides a good analysis of some of the infrastructure needs to create safer walking routes in the town center. The reports reviewed for this Assessment include the following:

- Community Development Plan (2003)
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (2022)
- Huntington Roads Report (2022)
- Walk Audit (Walk Boston, 2017)

Community Engagement

Residents of Huntington and key stakeholders, agencies and individuals who work with older adults in the community were engaged in this Community Assessment in three ways: through an Age and Dementia Friendly Huntington Working Group, the Age Friendly Pioneer Valley Community Survey, and through four listening sessions held in the Spring and Fall of 2023. The Working Group included members of the Council on Aging, part-time and volunteer staff who

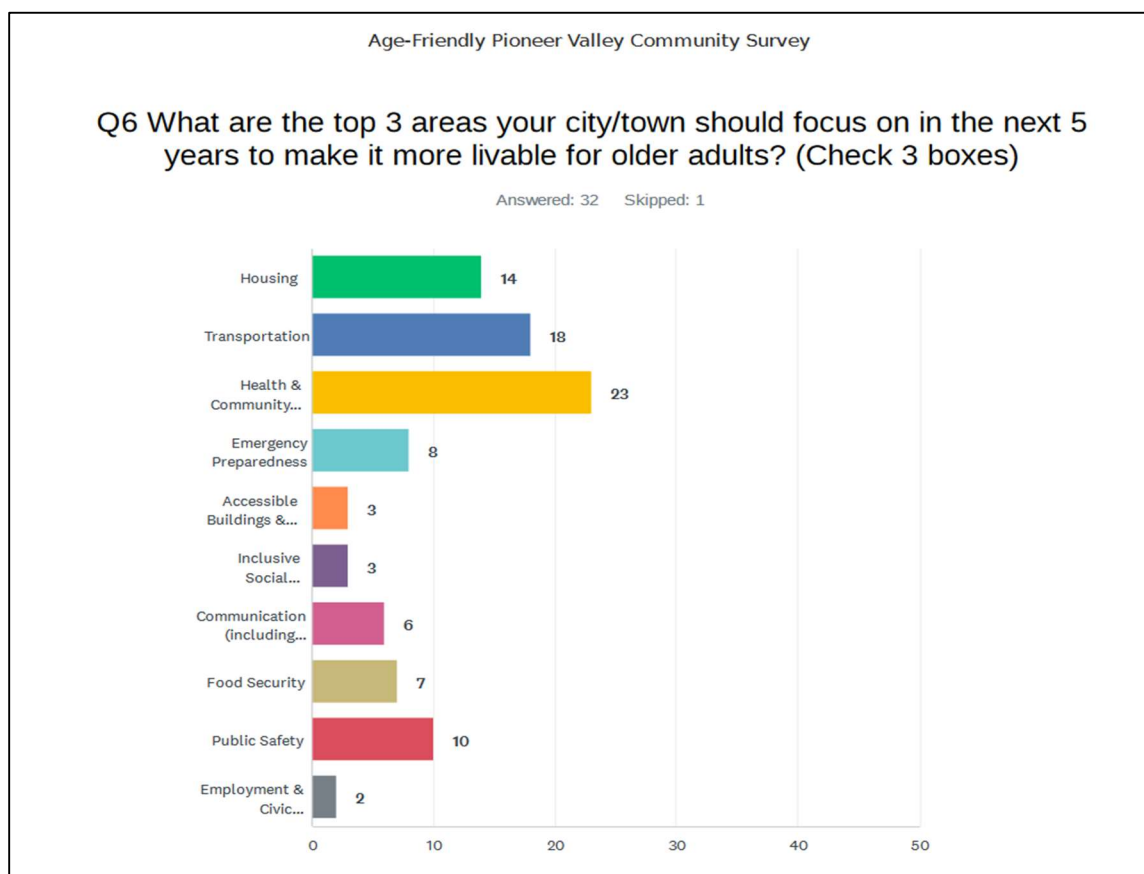
¹ 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, Table S0101.

facilitate programs and services at Stanton Hall (which serves as an unofficial Senior Center), and older residents.

Age and Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley Survey

In the Spring of 2023, 200 surveys were mailed to residents of Huntington over the age of 60. The survey was developed through the Age and Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley initiative to assess cities and towns in Hampden and Hampshire Counties, and data was filtered by community to develop local assessments and action plans. Survey results identified Health and Community Services, Transportation and Housing as the three most important issues for the Town to address in the next five years (Figure 1). Survey results are included in Appendix A of this report and highlight relevant sections of this assessment.

*Figure 1 - Top three focus areas for a more livable community
(Age & Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley Survey)*



After administering the regional survey, the Age and Dementia Friendly Huntington Task Force opted to gather more public opinion through listening sessions rather than through additional surveys due to what they perceived of “survey fatigue” of residents.

Listening Sessions

Starting with a listening session held during a Spring birthday celebration at Stanton Hall in April 2023, and continuing with topic-based listening sessions in the Fall and winter of 2023, these forums generated resident feedback on Huntington's assets and challenges for older adults living in Huntington. The topic-based forums were organized by the top three focus areas that survey respondents had identified as priorities for making the Town a more livable community: Transportation, Housing, and Health & Community Services.

Leading concerns were finding people or agencies to provide home care services to local residents. The tables below show the greatest challenges identified at each listening session as determined by the number of "votes" each received by people attending the sessions.

Transportation

- Need for a "monitor" or someone to help people in and out of the van – to the door and through the door
- Need for an online option for applying for paratransit – helpers are not notified of acceptance to the service
- Grocery delivery too expensive
- Medical rides (PT1) not always reliable – people have been stranded without a ride home
- People under 60 are not eligible for van ride even if they have had traumatic brain injury
 - Veterans are only eligible if they are more than 70% disabled
 - People who need rides to Mercy Adult Day service are not eligible to ride on the van if under 60
- Van transportation is not always reliable

Housing and Aging in Place

- Home care providers and other services don't come to Huntington (agencies generally do not pay for transportation and housing costs are too high for home health care workers who make low wages)
- Transportation services needed for most people who are living on their own
- High need for accessible affordable housing
- Upgrades and maintenance of housing
- Need more neighborhood volunteers
- PCAs: Not enough, (plus agency non-compete contracts)
- No Senior center

Possible Actions:

- Need for designated elder housing

- Join with Neighbors group (Northampton, Amherst) or expand HEN program (Hilltown CDC) to assist people with aging in place

Health & Community Services

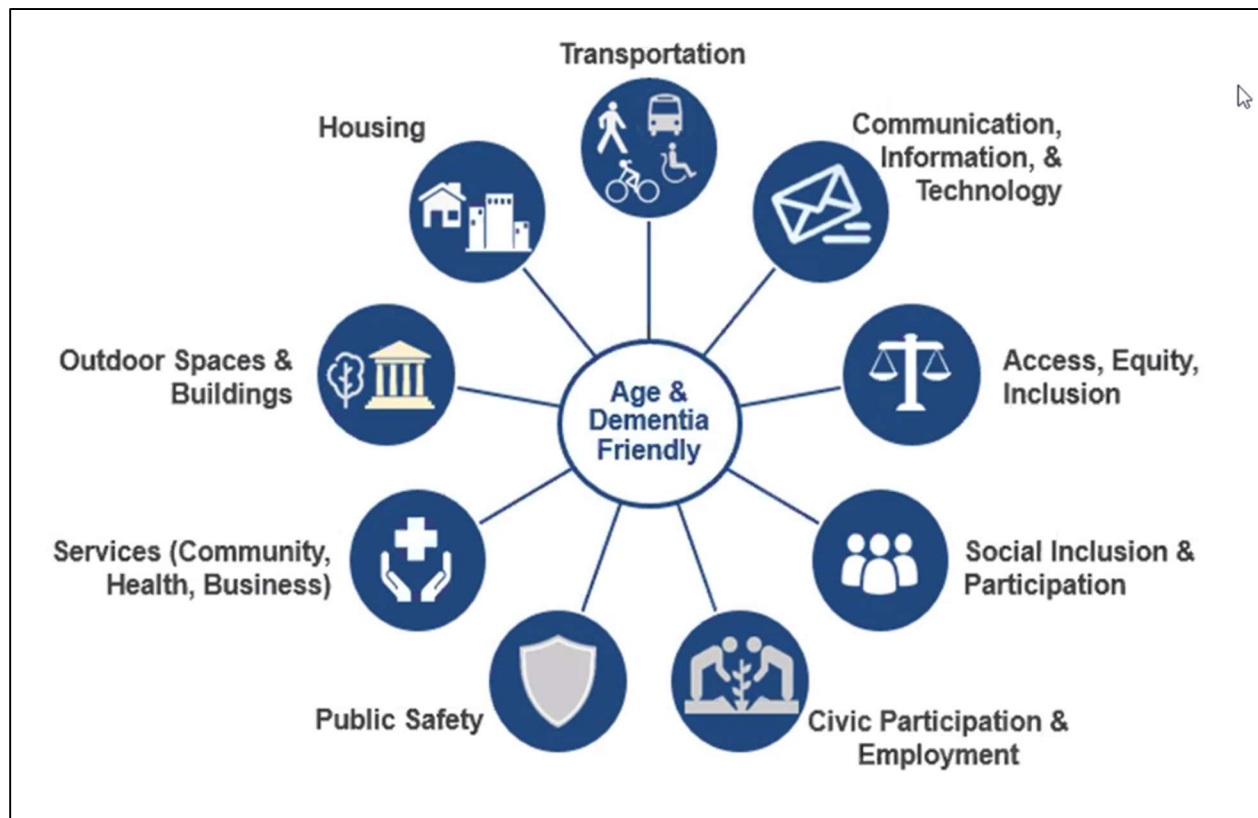
- No senior Center: Need a permanent place to offer games, food, health & social services, etc.
- Need assistance in identifying a site and funding for a Senior Center
- Finding home health aids/CNAs who will come to Huntington
- Funding for Health, Transportation, Senior Center

Domains of an Age and Dementia-Friendly Community

Models for assessing the qualities of a community that make it “Age-Friendly” or “Dementia-friendly” have evolved over the years as communities identify additional factors or domains that contribute to the quality of life for older adults. The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative developed the following Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community as a combination of the World Health Organization’s “Eight Domains of an Age Friendly City” and Dementia Friendly America’s ten sectors of a Dementia Friendly Community. The MHAC model adds Public Safety and Access, Equity, and Inclusion to the original eight domains and includes Technology in the Communication domain. This model invites communities to consider elements of the physical and social environments as key determinants that can enable residents to remain healthy, independent, and autonomous as they age. The 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. Some communities have added domains such as Food Security and Financial Stability as needed depending on the needs of the individual communities.

For this assessment, the Age and Dementia Friendly Huntington Working Group chose three main domain areas: Transportation, Housing, and Health and Community Services. These three areas were identified through responses to the Age and Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley Survey as the main areas that the Town needs prioritize in the next five years to improve the livability of the community for older residents. In this report, we will also examine the other domains in the model they pertain to residents of Huntington.

Figure 2 - Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community
(Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative)



Ten Sectors of a Dementia-Friendly Community

Although dementia is incorporated into each domain for Huntington, understanding how people with dementia and their care partners can be supported in the “Ten Sectors of a Dementia Friendly Community” helps to integrate these considerations into the domain discussions. As populations age, the number of people diagnosed with Alzheimer’s or other forms of dementia is also likely to increase. Building a community-wide understanding of how to recognize the signs of dementia, and how to work with and support people with dementia and the people who care for them can create a more welcoming community for older residents. 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 care partners can socialize or meet in support of others in similar situations.

Dementia Friendly America is a national network of communities, organizations, and individuals seeking to ensure that communities across the country are equipped to support people living with dementia and their caregivers. Dementia Friendly Communities foster the ability of people living with dementia to remain in the community and engage and thrive. The list below

provides a brief summary of how each sector can support people living with dementia.² As a small community, Huntington does not have the capacity to support all of these sectors so may have to look at a regional level for support and programming.

1. **Transportation, Housing, and Public Spaces** (local government) – Infrastructure that makes communities more livable for people with dementia and their caregivers.
2. **Businesses** – Dementia-supportive customer service, environments, and policies that support employee caregivers.
3. **Legal and Advance Planning Services** – Legal services that help vulnerable clients express their wishes early and avoid problems such as unpaid expenses.
4. **Banks and Financial services** (Regional)- Dementia-friendly practices that help maintain clients' independence while protecting them from problems.
5. **Neighbors and Community Members** – Raising awareness to help neighbors and community members understand and support people living with dementia.
6. **Independent Living** – Home-based services available to maximize independence and promote autonomy and a high quality of life.
7. **Communities of Faith** – Faith communities use dementia-friendly practices to provide a welcoming, compassionate environment and spiritual connection.
8. **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.
9. **Memory Loss Supports and Services** (Regional) – 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.
10. **Emergency Planning and First Response** – Community planning and family preparation consider the safety, security, and needs of people with dementia in disaster planning and emergency response.

Dementia Awareness and Support Programs in Huntington

For a small community, Huntington offers a few good support programs for people with dementia and their care partners. The COA (run by volunteers and part-time grant-funded staff) offers social programs that all are welcome to attend, and the Hilltown Memory Café which meets once a week at Stanton Hall offers activities for people with dementia and some reprieve for the people who care for them. Although people can live alone during the earlier stages of dementia, at some point they will lose their ability to live independently and will likely need help with meals, transportation, financial services, home maintenance and other basic tasks.

² <https://www.dfamerica.org/what-is-dfa>

Without family members nearby, the person living with dementia must rely on the support of friends and neighbors, or other community support systems.

Dementia Friendly Community Goals and Actions

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

- 1.1. Continue to engage community members in the Age and Dementia Friendly Huntington Task Force to build awareness about how to recognize signs of dementia and how to support people living with dementia and their care partners.
- 1.2. Work with partners such as the Alzheimer's Association to offer and connect people to trainings on how to recognize signs of dementia and communicate with people with dementia for Town staff, volunteer boards and committees, van drivers, businesses, banks, faith communities and other sectors that are public facing.
- 1.3. Identify and reach out to people with dementia and family care givers to connect them with support programs and opportunities for meeting with other caregivers and people with dementia.
- 1.4. Meaningfully engage people with dementia in developing programs and services such as support groups or memory cafes at locations in the community.
- 1.5. Recruit volunteers to become Dementia Friends Champions who will provide trainings for community groups and neighbors.
- 1.6. Work with emergency service providers (police, fire) to encourage people to sign up for a voluntary registry for people living with dementia or other health concerns.

The Built Environment

The Healthy Community Design Toolkit, developed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in 2014 and amended in 2017 to include considerations for healthy aging, describes the effects of the built environment on older adults:

As people age, the built environment of their immediate home and neighborhood has an increasing effect on them³. This is the result of two factors. First, a person's daily travel radius tends to shrink. Second, if an older person's physical capacity is diminished, barriers within the built environment can become more inhibiting. What was once solely an inconvenience—like a busy intersection between home and a grocery store—can become a significant deterrent to healthy living, keeping them venturing out⁴.

³ 21 Hans-Werner Wahl, Susanne Larsson, and Frank Oswald. Aging Well and the Environment: Toward and Integrative Model and Research Agenda for the future. The Gerontologist Vol 52, No. 3, 306-316.

⁴ Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. Healthy Community Design Toolkit, 2nd Edition. P. 11.

In a rural community, aspects of the built environment can present significant barriers for older adults: reliance on personal vehicles for transportation; a lack of infrastructure such as sidewalks, road crossings, or a dedicated senior center; and few services or accessible housing from which one could walk to services.

Housing

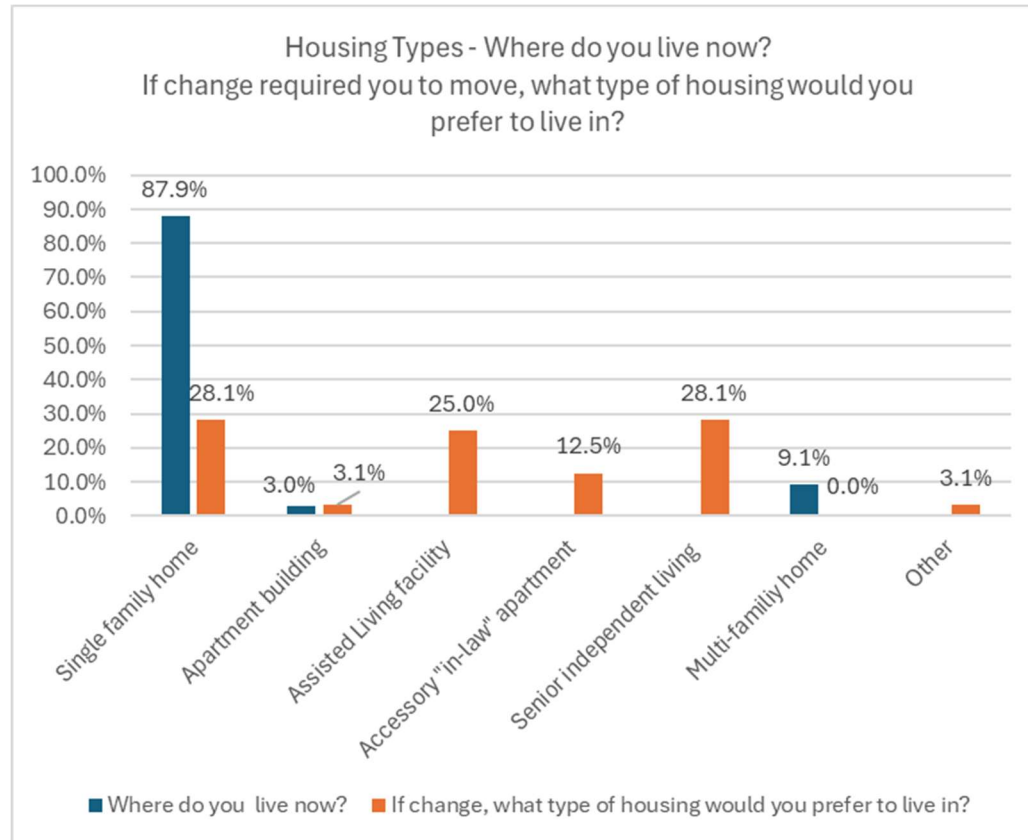
As people age, their housing needs may change in terms of the amount of living space they need or can afford, and the amount of property they want to maintain. Many older adults choose to locate closer to services and amenities that they can walk to when they lose their ability to drive, or when they lose a spouse and want to locate closer to community centers. For people who want to stay in their own homes or communities, additional services may be required to allow them to continue to live independently or to “age in place.”

Housing was identified as a priority for respondents of the Age and Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley Survey. Of respondents from Huntington, 44% said that housing was a top concern that their town should focus on to make their community more livable for older adults. Sixty-nine percent of respondents said it was extremely important that they be able to remain in their current residence, and almost 88% of respondents said that they currently live in single family homes. However, if a change required them to move, only 28.1% of respondents said that they wanted to live in a single-family home, while the same number wanted to move into Senior Independent Living, and 25% wanted to move into an Assisted Living facility (Figure 3).

The following factors are important to consider when planning for the needs of older residents' housing needs:

- **Affordability** – Smaller or shared units, accessory apartments, tiny houses, home sharing
- **Accessibility** – 1st floor, or elevator access, wheelchair ramps
- **Safety** – Removal of trip hazards, grab bars in bathrooms to prevent falls, smoke and Carbon Monoxide detectors installed
- **Assisted Living and Long-Term Care options** – Living spaces that provide a continuum of care to meet potential care needs as people age, and available home care providers for people aging in place
- **Smart Growth** – Housing is located near retail, services, amenities, and community centers and infrastructure is in place to allow for safe walking, biking and use of a wheelchair
- **Neighborhoods** – Safe, connected, well-lit and walkable

Figure 3 - Housing types - Where people live now vs. where they would prefer to live if change required a move (Age & Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley Survey)



In the listening session that was focused on housing, participants voiced the need for dedicated senior housing that is accessible to people of all abilities. Currently, there are only 30 units of subsidized housing in Huntington, 22 of which are designated for people over 60 or with disabilities (in Hamblin Court, managed by the Hampshire County Regional Housing Authority). The second-floor units in Hamblin Court are not accessible to people with mobility limitations.

Housing Supply

According to Census data (2022 ACS 5-year estimates), there were 1,030 housing units in Huntington in 2022⁵, with 949 households residing in Huntington year-round in 2022⁶ and 937 in 2023⁷. Of the 937 year-round housing units, 30 units (3.2%) are subsidized⁸. According to Massachusetts state law, if less than 10% of a town's housing units are designated as "affordable" (costing no more than 30% of income for households with 80% of median income), developers may bypass local bylaws to build affordable units. A town may avoid this possibility

⁵ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Huntington%20town,%20Hampshire%20County,%20Massachusetts&t=Housing%20Units>

⁶ <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S1101?q=Huntington%20town,%20Hampshire%20County,%20Massachusetts&t=Housing>

⁷ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/subsidized-housing-inventory>

⁸ Ibid.

by working toward a plan for building more affordable housing units by adopting a Housing Production Plan.⁹

In 2003, the town's community development plan stated that the Town wanted to maintain its wide range of housing options and the availability it brought for different income brackets, but also stated its desire to avoid "any undesirable projects that could otherwise be imposed under Massachusetts Chapter 40B". A 2001 build-out analysis for the town showed a maximum of approximately 3,014 additional dwelling units that could be built. The 2003 plan sought to guide and inform such development to be sustainable and to consider other identified community needs such as open space, wildlife habitat, and recreation. Improving housing quality in Huntington's town center was a goal in the Community Development Plan, with the focus on maintaining some of the most affordable housing in the town. Rehabilitating this housing would be a big step towards revitalizing the downtown.

Throughout the listening sessions, participants voiced the need for more affordable and accessible housing units, particularly for older residents and people with disabilities.

Hamblin Court and Family Units

Most subsidized units in Huntington are in Hamblin Court, owned by Hampshire County Regional Housing Authority, and designated for people over the age of 60 or with disabilities. Hamblin Court is a two-story housing development with 22 one-bedroom apartments. Subsidized family housing units consist of two duplexes, a two-bedroom unit, and three three-bedroom units¹⁰. This makes a total of 22 affordable units explicitly for people over 60 or with disabilities, and eight affordable units for families of varying sizes. Based on our listening sessions, there is a long wait list for the senior units in Hamblin Court.

Zoning for Smaller and Affordable Housing

Huntington has eight base zones and two overlay zones. Of these eight, four are residential zones, two are commercial zones, and one industrial and one conservation. The two overlay zones are for floodplains and aquifers. The town has not completed a housing production plan or housing needs assessment, which could better inform the Town about the specific needs of its residents while providing some control over how the Town can regulate affordable housing proposals.

Huntington does have an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) bylaw, which permits attached dwelling units by right and detached units by special permit. Two-family and multi-family houses are allowed with special permits in all residential areas of the town, allowing for a mix of residential patterns and homes.

⁹ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40B>

¹⁰ <https://www.hcrha.com/properties>

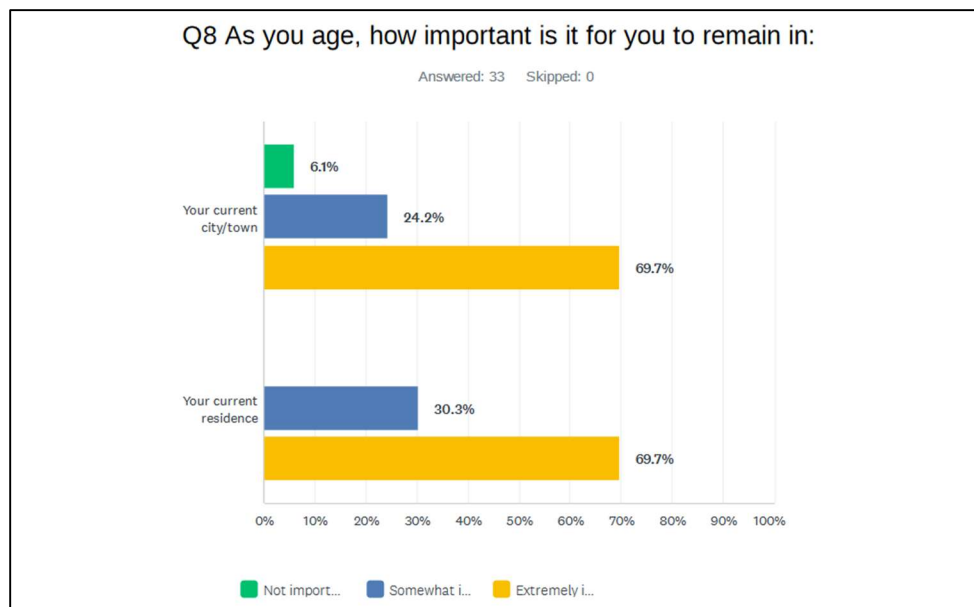
In 2022, the average family size in Huntington was 2.82, with 21.2% of the population being under the age of 18. The income level of households is overall very low, with 20% listed as extremely low, 9.6% as very low, and 19% as low. For renters, 54% are considered cost burdened.

The 2003 Community Development Plan for Huntington listed three goals for the : 1) enhancing residential neighborhoods and housing, including developing new homes that maintain Huntington's character; 2) maintaining and improving the housing stock; and 3) improving affordability while avoiding state-imposed affordable housing projects. Because this plan was written 20 years ago, the town could benefit from conducting an updated assessment of the existing housing supply and the needs of the current population of the town.

Aging in Place

As noted in the community survey, a majority of respondents said it was extremely important that they remain in their homes and in their town as they age. As people age, difficulties with balance and brittle bones make falling especially harmful. For people with dementia, difficulties with vision, balance, and other navigational abilities can also cause falls inside and outside of the home. Modifications including removing tripping hazards, adding grab bars, or adding wheelchair ramps may be needed to allow people to continue living in their homes safely. Grants are available to residents of Hampshire County through Community Action of the Pioneer Valley, and loans for home modification are available through Valley Community Development. In some communities, the fire department offers home inspections and recommends safety improvements.

Figure 4 -- Importance of staying in Huntington, and at current residence (Age and Dementia Friendly Pioneer Valley Survey)



People who are aging in place may also need support services including help with basic tasks such as cooking and grocery shopping, transportation services when they can no longer drive, and additional medical or home care services if they have dementia or other cognitive or mobility impairments. As risks become greater with age, these support services may be needed on an immediate basis, so it is important to know what is available and accessible in the immediate area. The following sections cover transportation, health and community services that are available in Huntington and where gaps in these services currently exist.

Housing Goals and Actions

Goal 2: Ensure that the Town has an adequate mix of housing for all ages, incomes and abilities so that Huntington residents can continue to live in the community in their later years.

- 2.1. Develop a Housing Needs Assessment, housing chapter of a Long-Range Comprehensive Plan, or Housing Production Plan to engage the community around locations and methods for increasing the inventory of rental housing that is affordable to low and moderate incomes and that is feasible with existing constraints around infrastructure and geography.
- 2.2. Review zoning to ensure that Accessory Apartments may be built by right on properties where there are existing single-family homes; or included in construction of new single-family homes.
- 2.3. Review the re-development potential of buildings close to the town center, including large homes, for smaller congregate living that could include shared services.
- 2.4. Consider adopting a Community Preservation Act to raise funds for building new housing or home modification grants.
- 2.5. Consider development of a Housing Trust to investigate opportunities for funding and partnerships to build more housing in town, pending interest by community members.

Goal 3: Ensure that people who are aging in place in Huntington have access to resources and support services to ensure that their homes are safe, comfortable, and well-maintained.

- 3.1. Work with the Hilltown CDC to expand the Hilltown Elder Network into Huntington. Recruit volunteers who can provide assistance to others who are aging in place.
- 3.2. Work on guidelines for developing a volunteer program through the COA and investigate considerations for liability and insurance.
- 3.3. Ensure that Huntington residents living on fixed incomes have access to loan or grant funds for home modification or maintenance in order to enable them to stay in their homes as long as possible.
- 3.4. Hold educational program on how to hire a contractor and what should be considered for basic home maintenance.

- 3.5. Ensure that the Guide to Hilltown Living is updated as a resource for people who need repairs and basic maintenance completed on their homes as well as other services to support aging in place.
- 3.6. Ensure that all older homeowners are familiar with the Property Tax Work-Off Program and eligible volunteer opportunities. Expand the program as needed to enable additional participants and higher funding limits.
- 3.7. Investigate the possibility of starting a Village or Neighbors program which would include volunteer opportunities for active elders to help people aging in place with basic tasks such as yard work, snow shoveling, etc.

Transportation

The decision to stop driving 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 may 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 transportation services available in the community. When asked about the primary ways in which people meet their transportation needs, most Huntington respondents said that they drive themselves (94%, or 33 survey respondents). When asked if they experience any difficulties regarding transportation, 80% said public transportation schedules or routes are unavailable or inconvenient, and 30% of respondents said they have difficulty getting to public transportation bus stops from residential and commercial areas that they frequent, and 30% said Senior Center transportation is unavailable or inconvenient.

When asked if driving was no longer an option, what transportation methods would they like to have in place, 73% of respondents said that senior center vans would be their preferred choice. Fifty percent preferred volunteer ride service, and 36% said fixed bus routes. When asked if walking felt safe, 65% said they felt safe, while 32% said that shoulders or sidewalks on their walking routes, and 29% said that better maintenance was needed for existing sidewalks.

Transportation Services

Transportation services are important to have in place for older adults who no longer drive or no longer have the resources to maintain a personal automobile. The only transportation services currently available in Huntington are rides for people over the age of 60 on a van supplied by the Franklin Regional Transportation Authority (FRTA) and operated by the Hilltown Community Development Corporation (Hilltown CDC). The van provides rides to residents of Huntington and a few surrounding communities (Blandford, Russell, Chester, Middlefield, and Montgomery) who are over the age of 60 or have an eligible disabling condition (a rating of over 70% disabled for veterans). The van operates Monday through Friday and provides service

for medical appointments, shopping and other errands and goes to Holyoke, Northampton, Springfield, and other areas as needed. Riders must call ahead to reserve a ride on the van.

A representative from the FRTA shared information on the FRTA Access program at the listening session on transportation held in September of 2023. This program, currently operating in a few FRTA sub-regions closer to Greenfield, opens on-demand van service to all residents as long as the majority of those served are over the age of 60. The Access program is a type of “micro transit” service that uses software to assist with dispatching and efficiency of scheduling.

Joining the Access program would potentially increase the cost to the Town for transportation services, depending on whether surrounding towns opt into the program and resulting ridership numbers. The local assessment of a town’s cost is calculated as a percentage of trips for a town’s residents versus the total trips for the region served by the vans in the Access program. If demand grows, this could add the need for another van and/or additional drivers which would increase the operating budget shared by the towns in the program. New vehicles, if needed, would be supplied by FRTA.

The Hilltown Community Development Corporation (CDC) operates van services for older adults in the northern Hilltowns and is also advocating for the towns that they serve to join the Access program for greater flexibility and efficiency. The Hilltown CDC also coordinates rides in personal vehicles by drivers who are paid for their time and gas and provide rides outside of the van service area, or to locations where the van does not go. It is possible that this service could be extended into Huntington if the Town can access funding to pay drivers and can find residents who are willing to provide rides.

Walking, Biking and Rolling

Walk Boston, now called Walk Massachusetts, conducted a walking study for Huntington through technical assistance for communities in Mass in Motion service areas. Coordinated by Healthy Hampshire, the Mass in Motion program administered through the Collaboration for Educational Services, the study area focused on an area surrounding the Town center, including both sides of the Westfield River, between the pedestrian bridge connecting Old Chester Road, and Upper Russell Road and the vehicular bridge (Route 112 – East Main Street), and extended to the Mill Street intersection with East Main Street. Due to time constraints, the walk audit itself was limited to the south side of the Westfield River and across the vehicular bridge to Mill Street. From that study came a set of recommendations that, if implemented would help Huntington become more walkable for all ages. The primary recommendations were slowing down traffic on route 20 and 112 as they pass through the center of town, increasing the number of marked crosswalks and improving visibility of existing crosswalks, identifying walking trails and walking routes that lead into town, and encouraging the Town to adopt a Complete Streets program. Specific recommendations from the Walk Audit are included in **Appendix B** of this report.

Healthy Hampshire also developed a walking map that shows walking loops with varying levels of difficulty, and details whether or not the loops have sidewalks. Members of the Task Force expressed concerns about people walking on some of the roads (Basket Street was one road mentioned) that don't have sidewalks due to traffic speeds and limited visibility of pedestrians walking on the side of the road. If the Town applies for assistance in developing a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, these routes could be evaluated for various safety concerns including traffic volume, speed, and visibility.

Huntington's 2003 community development plan included the following recommendations concerning transportation needs of older residents:

- Support regional efforts to obtain a fair share of state funding for transit services to serve elderly and low-income residents;
- Minimize road signage but improve signage that channels interest to Huntington Center
 - Install signage to improve identity of downtown, including a "Welcome to Historic Downtown Huntington" and an off-street parking directional sign;
- Request PVPC journey-to-work analysis and a downtown parking study;
- Request improvements for Route 20 and 112;
- Petition MassHighway to allow parking on Route 20 and 112 near downtown;
- Examine roads that do not get a lot of use and discontinue roads that are not appropriate for development.

Investment/Grants

- Improve downtown off-street parking lot and address drainage problems.

It is up to residents and town officials to determine whether these twenty-year-old objectives still resonate.

Transportation Goals and Actions

Goal 4: Ensure that public or private transportation services are available for residents of all ages and abilities to allow access to food, medical appointments, employment, education, and social connections.

- 4.1. Participate in a regional assessment of transportation service needs to explore the demand and feasibility of initiating the FRTA access program (on demand transportation services for all ages) in Huntington and surrounding communities that currently partner with the Town for senior van service.
- 4.2. Seek grant funding to pilot Access service in Huntington and surrounding communities if the regional assessment indicates a demand for this service.
- 4.3. Research the feasibility of expanding the personal vehicle ride service managed by Hilltown CDC to fill service gaps or to take people out of the FRTA service area.

- 4.4. Provide transportation orientation programs for people transitioning from driving to available transportation services.

Goal 5: Ensure that all residents have access to safe places to walk and roll; and that roads, sidewalks and trail networks are safe and comfortable for use by people of all ages and abilities.

- 5.1. Adopt a Complete Streets Policy and apply for assistance to develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan to obtain access to funding for roadway and sidewalk improvements.
- 5.2. Work with District 1 to make improvements to sidewalks and pedestrian crossings on State-owned roads in the Town Center as recommended in the WalkBoston Walk Audit.
- 5.3. Educate community members about safe walking on roadways and encourage use of high visibility clothing for walking on roads.
- 5.4. Maintain sidewalks and plan for new sidewalks to improve connectivity of pedestrian network as needed.
- 5.5. Evaluate safety of walking routes included in the Huntington Walks walking map developed by Healthy Hampshire.
- 5.6. Add benches where needed in the Town center and along popular walking routes.
- 5.7. Review locations of public restrooms and include them on maps of walking routes; ensure that wheelchair accessible restrooms are available in the Town center and at recreation areas.
- 5.8. Develop a plan for maintaining sidewalks that are managed by the Town (both winter and summer). Confirm responsibility for maintenance of sidewalks on state-owned roads.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

The amount of physical activity that people engage in is related, in part, to the availability of safe and convenient places to walk or ride a bike or to participate in recreational or fitness activities. Buildings that are open to the public and outdoor spaces such as parks, sidewalks and park benches, provide places for people to gather, recreate, socialize and exercise both indoors and outside. Parks or conservation land with accessible walking trails, sidewalks, bike paths and bike lanes, and accessible buildings and restrooms are all facilities that are important for inviting active transportation, recreation, and social interaction. Amenities such as benches, shaded resting spots, and lighting provide additional comfort and support for older adults, people with disabilities, and people of all ages. In New England, places for indoor exercise and socializing are also important in winter months when sidewalks are covered with snow and ice, or weather is not as welcoming.

As noted above, a walking map was created by Healthy Hampshire, Highlands Foot Path, and the Hilltown Community Health Centers. This map is available on the Town website and on the

Western Mass Hilltown Hikers website.¹¹ The existing trail system documents the Littleville Dam Loop, Norwich Bridge Cemetery Loop, Town Common Loop, Riverwalk, Village Loop, Pettis Field Loop, Norwich Hill Loop, Littleville Landing Loop, Cross Country Loop, Uptown Loop, North Hall Loop, Church Road Route, Gateway Littleville Dam Route, and the Blandford Hill Road Route, and lists routes by level of difficulty. Residents who have mobility issues could benefit from having a map of trails that also provides information on parking and accessibility.

Currently the Council on Aging sponsors programs for older adults and people with dementia or other cognitive impairments at Stanton Hall. This facility also serves as a community room and election location and is only open for use when part-time staff can be there.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

In order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), publicly owned buildings and facilities must be accessible, as do programs, services and activities. The Act includes several administrative requirements that allow cities and towns to more easily achieve accessibility. These requirements include designating ADA coordinator, having a grievance procedure in place, publishing a public notice about the Town's commitment to ADA compliance, and completing a Self-Assessment and Transition Plan. Huntington does not currently have such a plan in place but could benefit from completing one both to achieve compliance to ensure that people with disabilities have access to public spaces. Having this document in place also allows cities and towns in Massachusetts to qualify as Housing Choice communities. Funding is available through the Massachusetts Office of Disability to complete an ADA Self Assessment and Transition Plan, and to fund improvements once a plan has been completed.

Buildings and Outdoor Spaces Recommendations

Goal 6: Ensure that Huntington has public buildings and community meeting spaces that are accessible and open for daily programming or social gatherings.

- 6.1. Research the feasibility of developing a permanent location or dedicated Senior Center for older residents to gather, have congregate meals, and participate in programs and services sponsored by the Town and the Council on Aging.
 - Research possible sites and funding sources for new development or rehabilitation of an existing structure as a community center or senior center.
- 6.2. Complete an ADA Self-Assessment and Transition Plan for Town-owned buildings, services (such as the website), and outdoor spaces.
- 6.3. Update the map of trails and walking loops to include accessibility for people with mobility limitations, and availability of parking for people with wheelchairs.

¹¹ <https://westernmasshilltownhikers.com/huntington-trail-maps/>

Health and Community Services, Public Safety and Resiliency

Health and Community Services was the area that most survey respondents said the Town should focus on in the next five years in order to make it a more livable community for older residents. Forty-six percent of respondents said they had difficulty scheduling non-emergency medical appointments and 38% said they also had difficulty finding a primary care physician or support for early stages of memory loss. Twenty-three percent of respondents said that there was a poor “variety of health care professionals including specialists” and 17% said there were poor “affordable, certified home health care providers.”

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 for assistance with accessing food either due to difficulties in accessing transportation, fear of going out during the pandemic, or financial insecurity. This section discusses the health and social service resources that are currently available to older adults in Huntington, and how emergency personnel work with older residents to ensure that they are safe in their homes or know where to go in the case of an emergency.

As mentioned in the section on public buildings above, Huntington does not have a permanent senior center, but has an active Council on Aging (COA) and part time staff to support social and wellness programming for older residents.

Health and Community Services

For a rural community, Huntington is fortunate to be home to the Hilltown Community Health Center, which provides services for people who have chosen a primary care provider located at the HCHC. The center takes MassHealth and employs community health workers to conduct screenings and to assist patients with finding resources to meet their basic needs. The HCHC used to provide some nursing services for older residents at Stanton Hall, but now only serves people whose primary care providers are located at the Health Center.

Shared Services

The Town has access to shared services and educational programming as member of the Hampshire Public Health Preparedness Coalition through a shared services grant. The grant allows the Town to request services including data reports, disease surveillance and investigation, educational programs, vaccine clinics, training and supplies. The coalition also employs a regional team of inspectors who can do food service establishment inspections and will expand to health inspections on housing, septic systems, pools, and camps.

Huntington is a member of the Hilltown Community Ambulance Association in partnership with the towns of Blandford, Chester, Montgomery, Russell, and Worthington. The ambulance takes

patients to Baystate Noble in Westfield, Baystate Medical Center, or Mercy Medical Center in Springfield; Holyoke Medical Center in Holyoke; or Cooley-Dickinson Hospital in Northampton.

Council on Aging

The town has an active council on aging that is run by volunteers and part-time staff who are funded through grants. Activities are held in Stanton Hall which is open for community use and has kitchen facilities. Part-time staff host a memory café for people with dementia and their care partners, movies, birthday gatherings, yoga, line dancing, and other health and social programs for older adults at Stanton Hall. The COA tried to offer a foot clinic on occasion, but found that it was easier for people to get foot care through their primary care provider as the services could be covered by insurance.

Highland Valley Elder Services

Highland Valley Elder Services serves as the Area Agency on Aging which provides services for older adults in Huntington and other Hampshire County communities. Services provided by HVES include Meals on Wheels, in home care, options counseling, caregiver support, and a variety of other support services for older adults and their families or care partners.

Food Security

Having access to places to buy food was a concern with participants in the first listening session held in town for this community assessment. One small market (Motenbrey's) offers many healthier food choices while B&D Variety Store sells mainly snack and convenience store items. There was concern that very little would be available to residents if Moltenbrey's closes. And, without transportation services, many would be left without a way to get food if they don't drive. Some food delivery is available but is very expensive due to the distance to stores that deliver food.

The COA partners with the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts to offer "Brown Bag" food distribution for older residents, and partners with CISA to offer senior farm shares from local farms. The Huntington Food Pantry offers food that it has sourced from resident donations, and the Hilltown Community Development Corporation operates a mobile market that offers fresh produce in Huntington once a month. The mobile market accepts SNAP and HIP benefits. Representatives from the COA are active with the Hampshire County Food Policy Council and assists with the mobile market when it is in town.

Health and Community Services Goals and Actions

Goal 7: Ensure that older residents of Huntington have access to health care and community services that support their ability to live long and healthy lives.

- 7.1 Update the Hilltown Resource Guide to ensure that residents who are aging in Huntington have accurate information on local services and resources.

- 7.2 Research the feasibility of expanding the Hilltown Elders Network (HEN) program administered through the Hilltown CDC to provide services that allow people to age in place. Services may include chore services, grocery and pharmacy delivery, safety monitoring programs, daily check-ins, and transportation assistance.
- 7.3 Work with the Alzheimer's Association to educate service personnel and first responders about concerns specific to older adults, including those with dementia or other cognitive or physical challenges.
- 7.4 Continue to provide outreach and support for older adults to access vaccines including COVID and Flu vaccines.
- 7.5 Develop a Triad program which partners emergency service providers with the Council on Aging to address needs of older adults and people with specific health conditions. Engage at risk older adults in these efforts.
- 7.6 Engage health system and community stakeholders to identify gaps in services and find solutions for more complete provision of health/medical, and community services. Evaluate whether health and community services are addressing concerns specific to older adults and successful aging, including access to geriatricians, prevention, nutrition, movement and psychological well-being.
- 7.7 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. List local services and programs on the site to ensure that services are included that serve Huntington.
- 7.8 Work with Gateway Regional School to add a program to train high school students to be CNAs and introduce other health professions.

Public Safety and Resiliency

Older adults are often listed as “vulnerable populations” when planning for severe storms or flooding. Older residents were identified as vulnerable populations in the Town’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Hazard Mitigation Plan, and additional attention may be required to ensure that residents who may not drive as much due to cognitive or physical impairments that come with age, and younger residents who are living with a disabling condition are able to get out of their homes or get needed support services in case of an emergency.

The Huntington Council on Aging works with emergency service providers in town to provide programs for older adults including Sand for Seniors, inspection of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and placing house numbers at the end of driveways so that residences are easily found in the case of emergency. The Town has a reverse 911 system that calls all residents who sign up for this service when there is an emergency, or Town-sponsored event.

Critical facilities in town include the Town Highway Facility, two Fire Stations, the Police Department, Hilltown Community Ambulance, and helicopter landing sites. Stanton Hall is

designated as a cooling or warming center and has a backup generator. The Gateway Middle & High School has been designated as an emergency shelter. The Town also has a voluntary registry for people who have dementia or other health concerns so that emergency service providers know where they live.

One area of concern that has been identified for Huntington is that a large portion of the town center is prone to flooding, and many of the major roads are located next to rivers, making exit in the case of a flood emergency potentially difficult. The MVP report included recommendations around preparing people to shelter in place in emergency situations and increasing outreach about emergency preparation and resources.

Public Safety and Resiliency Goals and Actions

Goal 8: Ensure the safety of all residents, including older adults and people with dementia, through multi-sectoral partnerships and programming.

Actions

- 8.1 Encourage residents who have physical or cognitive impairments to sign up for the voluntary registry that keeps track of household locations of people who may need extra assistance. Keep files up to date and educate community members about how to add themselves or family members to this list.
- 8.2 Educate older adults about what to do in case of emergency and locations of emergency shelters.
- 8.3 Collaborate with the District Attorney's office to have trainings on internet and phone scams.

The Social Environment

Communication, Information and Technology

Getting information to older adults and their caregivers about services, programs and even the built environment is critical to ensuring that people get the support that they need and are informed about programs and services for health and well-being. Access to technology for the purposes of communication as well as access to social programming, health care, and other services became especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Communication, information, and technology span all the other domains in that people need to know where to find information on services such as transportation, social programs, or volunteer opportunities to take advantage of these opportunities.

Residents in Huntington have been proactive in raising issues and concerns about communication and technology in their town. In 2022 the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Hazard Mitigation Plan noted that residents expressed concern about improving the communication systems for natural hazards and emergency responses. According to Task Force

members, not everyone has access to reliable high-speed internet, or do not have access due to cost concerns. With the end of the federally subsidized low-cost internet service, it is more difficult for people who cannot afford the monthly fees.

Stanton Hall, which serves as the gathering place for most COA sponsored events has WiFi. During the pandemic, the COA received a grant to purchase tablets for use by residents but did not have much interest from community members. The library offers support for technology, has free WiFi and hot spots for loan; and the Southern Hilltown Adult Education provided through UMass offers some technical support and education on using technology.

The Town does have a reverse 911 system which works well for notifying community members of events as well as emergencies.

Communication, Information and Technology 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.

Actions

- 9.1 Assist older adults in acquiring equipment and training on how to use it and with accessing low cost or free broadband service.
- 9.2 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.

Social Participation and Inclusion

Although they don't have a dedicated location, the Huntington Council on Aging provides a much-needed service for older residents in Huntington as well as for people from surrounding communities. The COA offers a Memory Café for people with dementia or other cognitive impairments and their care partners through a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services. The COA also offers movies, birthday celebrations, chair yoga, and other social and wellness programming at Stanton Hall.

The Huntington Recreation Committee provides seasonal programming at Stanton Hall as well as holiday events, family-oriented programs, summer camp and movies. Gray Catbird Pottery, a privately operated craft store, offers pottery classes and a shop where local artists and crafts people can sell their products.

Social Participation and Inclusion Goals

Goal 10: Ensure that older adults and people with dementia have opportunities for social interaction through access to technology, programming and planning of events.

Actions

- 10.1. Continue to identify and reach out to socially isolated residents via personal contact from staff or volunteers.
- 10.2. Collaborate with other Senior Centers and cable access stations to offer virtual or hybrid programming, and access pre-recorded classes (on other cable access sites) at Stanton Hall.
- 10.3. Continue to expand social and wellness programs, add congregate meals, music, talks and other programming that would encourage older residents to gather on a regular basis. Conduct short surveys during popular events to determine what kinds of programs people would attend.
- 10.4. Work with schools and community members to develop intergenerational programming and services.

Employment and Civic Engagement

Engagement of business leaders on making businesses accessible for all residents and welcoming for people with dementia can ensure a welcoming environment for all older residents. Age Strong Boston developed an Age Friendly Business certification program that includes a checklist on social and environmental actions that businesses can adopt to make them more welcoming to people of all ages.

Older residents who have reached retirement age may want to or have to continue to work to support themselves or their families. While unemployment is historically low, looking to older people as part of the workforce can benefit businesses as well as the people they employ.

Older residents in Huntington are very involved in volunteering on local boards and committees. The Property Tax Workoff program allows up to eight older residents and six veterans to work off up to \$500 of their property taxes in tasks for Town departments or committees, including for the Council on Aging. Many people volunteer for It Takes a Village which provides childcare for area residents. The latter is not eligible for the property tax work-off program but offers great volunteer opportunities for older residents.

Employment and Civic Engagement Goals and Actions

Goal 11: Provide opportunities and assistance for older adults who want to work and volunteer in the community.

Actions

- 11.1. Develop intergenerational skill building/mentoring opportunities with older adults community groups and local schools, i.e. youths teach older adults about technology or other current studies, while older residents teach youths about careers, life skills etc.
- 11.2. Expand opportunities for qualified older adults to work in exchange for property tax reduction and increase total amount of reduction that participants can work off.

Action Plan

This Action Plan for an Age and Dementia Friendly Huntington details goals and strategies that the Town can consider to develop a supportive and welcoming environment for people of all ages and abilities.

The Goals and Actions included in the Action Plan include lead entities, partner organizations or entities, metrics for measuring progress, and the priority as identified through the results of community engagement and the capacity of the entities assigned.

Priority levels are as follow:

- **Short-Term (ST)** – 1-3 years
- **Medium Term (MT)** – 4-6 years
- **Long Term (LT)** – 7-10 years

Plan Implementation

The Age and Dementia Friendly Huntington Working Group was formed to oversee the development of this Community Assessment and Action Plan. Once this plan is approved for submittal to AARP and Dementia Friendly Massachusetts (MCOA), this working group will continue to meet to monitor the implementation of the strategies on the following pages. In addition, the following steps are recommended for the implementation of this report.

- 1) Continue to build the Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group to include multiple sectors of the community 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 Huntington Age and Dementia Friendly.
- 3) Select strategies for implementation each year.
- 4) Report on successes and challenges – both to the community, AARP and Dementia Friendly Massachusetts.

Age Friendly Huntington Action Plan

Dementia Friendly Community Strategies

Goal 1: Build awareness, acceptance, and a culture of support for people living with dementia and the people who care for them.				
Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority
1.1	Continue to engage community members in the Age and Dementia Friendly Huntington Task Force to build awareness about how to recognize signs of dementia and how to support people living with dementia and their care partners.	COA, Library, Alzheimer's Association; community members	Ongoing meetings of Age & Dementia Friendly Task Force	Ongoing
1.2	Work with partners such as the Alzheimer's Association to offer and connect people to trainings on how to recognize signs of dementia and communicate with people with dementia for Town staff, volunteer boards and committees, van drivers, businesses, banks, faith communities and other sectors that are public facing.	COA, Alzheimer's Association; Hampshire Health Department; Highland Valley Elder Services	# of trainings	In process
1.3	Identify and reach out to people with dementia and family care givers to connect them with support programs and opportunities for meeting with other caregivers and people with dementia.	COA, Alzheimer's Association, Dementia Friends	Caregiver support programs available; # of people contacted	In process
1.4	Meaningfully engage people with dementia in developing programs and services such as support groups or memory cafes at locations in the community.	COA, Library, Alzheimer's Association; HVES	# programs; people with dementia involved	In process
1.5	Recruit volunteers to become Dementia Friends Champions who will provide trainings for community groups and neighbors.	COA, Jewish Family & Children's Services; Gateway Schools	# Dementia Friends and DF Champions	In process

1.6	Work with emergency service providers (police, fire) to encourage people to sign up for a voluntary registry for people living with dementia or other health concerns.	COA, Police, Fire Depts	# of people on registry	In process
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Housing

Goal 2: Ensure that the Town has an adequate mix of housing for all ages, incomes and abilities so that Huntington residents can continue to live in the community in their later years.				
Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority
2.1	Develop a Housing Needs Assessment, housing chapter of a Long-Range Comprehensive Plan, or Housing Production Plan to assess the existing housing situation of long-time residents and to identify possible locations (land or existing structures) and methods for developing housing that is affordable to low and moderate incomes and that is feasible with existing constraints around infrastructure and geography.	Planning Board, Consultant (PVPC or private)	Grant funding to complete a Comprehensive Plan or Housing Production Plan; Housing plan in place	High
2.2	Review zoning to ensure that Accessory Apartments may be built by right on properties where there are existing single-family homes; or included in construction of new single-family homes.	Planning Board	Accessory Apartment bylaws in place	High
2.3	Review the re-development potential of buildings close to the town center or properties in Town ownership through unpaid taxes for potential rental housing or smaller congregate living with shared support services. Partner with nonprofit housing developers to redevelop into affordable senior housing.	Planning Board, COA, landowners	Review of vacant properties	High

2.4	Consider adopting a Community Preservation Act to raise funds for building new housing or home modification grants.	Selectboard/Town Meeting	Proposal to adopt CPA in place	Low
2.5	Consider development of a Housing Trust to investigate opportunities for funding and partnerships to build more housing in town, pending interest by community members.	Selectboard/Town Meeting	Housing Trust in place	Low (pending interest)
Goal 3: Ensure that people who are aging in place in Huntington have access to resources and support services to ensure that their homes are safe, comfortable, and well-maintained.				
3.1	Work with the Hilltown CDC to expand the Hilltown Elder Network into Huntington. Recruit volunteers who can provide assistance to others who are aging in place.	COA, Hilltown CDC	Meeting to discuss feasibility and funding needs; program expansion	High
3.2	Work on guidelines for developing a volunteer program through the COA and investigate considerations for liability and insurance.	COA; HVES	Review of liability and insurance needs for volunteer program	Medium
3.3	Ensure that Huntington residents living on fixed incomes have access to loan or grant funds for home modification or maintenance in order to enable them to stay in their homes as long as possible.	Valley Community Development	Home modification fund information available; loans in place	High
3.4	Hold educational program on how to hire a contractor and what should be considered for basic home maintenance.	COA, local contractors, real estate agents	List of contractors; information session; notice in newsletters	Medium
3.5	Ensure that the Guide to Hilltown Living is updated as a resource for people who need repairs and basic maintenance completed on their homes as well as other services to support aging in place.	Hilltown CDC	Updated Resource Guide	High

3.6	Ensure that all older homeowners are familiar with the Property Tax Work-Off Program and eligible volunteer opportunities. Expand the program as needed to enable additional participants and higher amounts of potential.	COA, Town Administrator	# of participants in the program; # of spots available; increased benefit limit	High
3.7	Investigate the possibility of starting a Village or Neighbors program which would include volunteer opportunities for active elders to help people aging in place with basic tasks such as yard work, snow shoveling, etc.	Volunteer lead	Informational program about Neighbors programs	Medium

Transportation, Buildings and Outdoor Spaces

Goal 4: Ensure that public or private transportation services are available for residents of all ages and abilities to allow access to food, medical appointments, employment, education, and social connections.				
Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority
4.1	Participate in a regional assessment of transportation service needs to explore the demand and feasibility of initiating the FRTA access program (on demand transportation services for all ages) in Huntington and surrounding communities that currently partner with the Town for senior van service.	COA, PVPC, FRTA, Hilltown CDC	Engagement with communities FRTA service area; Feasibility study; possible cost implications	High
4.2	Seek grant funding to pilot Access service in Huntington and surrounding communities if the regional assessment indicates a demand for this service.	Hilltown CDC, FRTA	Grant funds in place; public transit grants	High
4.3	Research the feasibility of expanding personal vehicle ride service managed by Hilltown CDC to fill service gaps or to take people out of the FRTA service area.	COA, Hilltown CDC	Discussion with HCDC, driver recruitment, funding for program expansion.	High

4.4	Provide transportation orientation programs for people transitioning from driving to available transportation services (assuming services are available).	COA, Hilltown CDC	Orientation sessions for new users	Medium
Goal 5: Ensure that all residents have access to safe places to walk and roll and that roads, sidewalks and trail networks are safe and comfortable for use by people of all ages and abilities.				
	Actions	Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority
5.1	Adopt a Complete Streets Policy and apply for assistance to develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan to obtain access to funding for roadway and sidewalk improvements.	Planning /DPW	Complete Streets Policy in place; funds for implementation or TA obtained through joining program	Medium
5.2	Work with District 1 to make improvements to sidewalks and pedestrian crossings on State-owned roads in the Town Center as recommended in the WalkBoston Walk Audit.	Planning Board MA DOT District 1	Timeline and funding for improvements to sidewalks and crosswalks	High
5.3	Educate community members about safe walking on roadways and encourage use of high visibility clothing for walking on roads.	COA	Educational program	High
5.4	Maintain sidewalks and plan for new sidewalks to improve connectivity of the pedestrian network as needed.	Planning/DPW	Funding for sidewalk maintenance and improvements.	High
5.5	Evaluate safety of walking routes included in the Huntington Walks walking map developed by Healthy Hampshire. Improve safety and visibility of crosswalks where needed.	COA, WalkMass or PVPC	Updated walk audit	Medium
5.6	Add benches where needed in the Town center, at public buildings, and along popular walking routes (Library, Hillgate	Planning Dept/DPW	Plan in place for more benches	High

	Park, Historical Society building, Norwich Hill Cemetery, North Hall, Upper Russell Road).			
5.7	Review locations of public restrooms and include them on maps of walking routes; ensure that wheelchair accessible restrooms or port-o-potties are available in the Town center and at recreation areas (as feasible).	Planning Dept., ADA coordinator, DPW	Map of restrooms; accessibility rating	Medium/Low
5.8	Develop a plan for maintaining sidewalks that are managed by the Town (both winter and summer). Confirm responsibility for maintenance of sidewalks on state-owned roads.	Town DPW	Sidewalk maintenance program in place; Sand for Seniors program in place	Medium
Goal 6: Ensure that Huntington has public buildings and community meeting spaces that are accessible and open for daily programming or social gatherings.				
	Actions	Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority
6.1	<p>Research the feasibility of developing a permanent location or dedicated Senior Center for older residents to gather, have congregate meals, and participate in programs and services sponsored by the Town and the Council on Aging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research possible sites and funding sources for new development or rehabilitation of an existing structure as a community center or senior center. 	Planning, Selectboard, PVPC (grant assistance); Hilltown CDC	<p>Feasibility study completed</p> <p>Building identified</p> <p>Funding sources identified</p>	High
6.2	Complete an ADA Self-Assessment and Transition Plan for Town-owned buildings, services (such as the website), and outdoor spaces.	ADA Coordinator, Planning Board	ADA Self-Assessment and transition plan in place	Medium

6.3	Update the map of trails and walking loops to include information on accessibility for people with mobility limitations, and availability of parking for people with wheelchairs.	COA, PVPC (with funding)	Updated map	Medium/ Low
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Health and Community Services

Goal 7: Ensure that older residents of Huntington have access to health care and community services that support their ability to live long and healthy lives.

Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority
7.1	Update the Hilltown Resource Guide to ensure that residents who are aging in Huntington have accurate information on local services and resources.	COA, PVPC	Updated resource guide	High
7.2	Research the feasibility of expanding the Hilltown Elder Network (HEN) program administered through the Hilltown CDC to provide services that allow people to age in place. Services may include chore services, grocery and pharmacy delivery, safety monitoring programs, daily check-ins, and transportation assistance.	COA, HCDC , community volunteers, school; Highland Valley Elder Services	Volunteers identified; funding to expand program to Huntington	High
7.3	Work with the Alzheimer's Association to educate service personnel and first responders about concerns specific to older adults, including those with dementia or other cognitive or physical challenges.	COA , Alzheimer's Association, first responders	Trainings for first responders	Ongoing
7.4	Continue to provide outreach and support for older adults to access vaccines including COVID and Flu vaccines.	COA , Hampshire public health nurse	Flu and vaccine clinics; # people vaccinated	Ongoing

7.5	Develop a Triad program which partners emergency service providers with the Council on Aging to address needs of older adults and people with specific health conditions. Engage at risk older adults in these efforts.	COA , Police, Fire Depts.	Local Triad Committee in place	Ongoing
7.6	Engage health system and community stakeholders to identify gaps in services and find solutions for more complete provision of health/medical, and community services. Evaluate whether health and community services are addressing concerns specific to older adults and successful aging, including access to geriatricians, prevention, nutrition, movement and psychological well-being.	Hilltown Community Health Center; COA; social service agencies; Highland Valley Elder Services	Survey, identified needs	Medium
7.7	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. List local services and programs on the site to ensure that services are included that serve Huntington.	COA, PVPC ; Public Health Institute of Western MA	413-Cares participation	High
7.8	Work with Gateway Regional School to add a program to train high school students to be CNAs and introduce other health professions.	COA ; Gateway Schools	CNA or other health programs in place	Medium

Public Safety and Resiliency

Goal 8: 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
8.1	Encourage residents who have physical or cognitive impairments to sign up for the voluntary registry that keeps	COA; Police and Fire Departments	Persons at Risk registry	Ongoing

	track of household locations of people who may need extra assistance. Keep files up to date and educate community members about how to add themselves or family members to this list. Add to Resource Guide for people to sign up.			
8.2	Educate older adults about what to do in case of emergency and locations of emergency shelters. Designate/publicize warming and cooling centers in case of power outages and extreme heat or cold weather events.	Police and Fire Departments, COA; management companies for subsidized housing; Hampshire Public Health nurse	Educational programs	Ongoing
8.3	Collaborate with the District Attorney's office to have trainings on internet and phone scams.	COA, Office of Consumer Protection, DA's Office; Library	Trainings with DA's office	Ongoing

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
9.1	Assist older adults in acquiring equipment and training on how to use it and with accessing low cost or free broadband service.	COA, Library, Schools; Southern Hilltown Adult Education Center (Chester – pending funding)	Assistance in place; # of people trained, laptops or tablets for loan	Medium
9.2	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	Municipal Departments	Policy or memo about lettering; implementation of	Ongoing

	sentences and simple language; and is available in multiple languages as needed.		policy	
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Social Participation and Inclusion

Goal 10: Ensure that older adults and people with dementia have opportunities for social interaction through access to technology, programming and planning of events.

Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority
10.1	Continue to identify and reach out to socially isolated residents via personal contact from staff or volunteers.	COA	# of people contacted	Ongoing
10.2	Collaborate with other Senior Centers and cable access stations to offer virtual or hybrid programming, and access pre-recorded classes (on other cable access sites) at Stanton Hall.	COA, other area senior centers, Cable TV sites	Programs available through online access	Low
10.3	Continue to expand social and wellness programs, add congregate meals, music, talks and other programming that would encourage older residents to gather on a regular basis. Conduct short surveys during popular events to determine what kinds of programs people would attend.	COA	# of programs; social and wellness programming	Medium
10.4	Work with schools and community members to develop intergenerational programming and services.	COA, Schools	Intergenerational programs	Medium

Employment and Civic Engagement

Goal 11: Provide opportunities and assistance for older adults who want to work and volunteer in the community.				
Actions		Lead Entity/ Partners	Metrics	Priority
11.1	Develop intergenerational skill building/mentoring opportunities with older adults community groups and local schools, i.e. youths teach older adults about technology or other current studies, while older residents teach youths about careers, life skills etc.	COA, Gateway Regional School	Intergenerational programming in place - Dementia Friends information session	Medium
11.2	Expand opportunities for qualified older adults to work in exchange for property tax reduction and increase total amount of reduction that participants can work off (currently \$500).	Selectboard, municipal departments	Additional positions offered; increase in potential work-off limit (from \$500 to ??)	High