2022

Age and Dementia Friendly Ware

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN

MAY 2022

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Acknowledgements

This Community Assessment and Action Plan for making Ware 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 complete without the hard work and dedication of the Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group that included the following individuals:

- John Zienowicz, Executive Director of the Ware Council on Aging and Senior Center
- Stuart Beckley, Town Manager
- Michelle Holmgren, Public Affairs and Community Benefits Coordinator, Baystate Wing and Baystate Mary Lane
- Melissa Fales and Mary Smith, Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation
- Kelly Russell, Executive Director of Cedarbrook Village
- Jennifer Raiche, Resident Services Coordinator, Hillside Village
- Heidi Reed, Librarian, Young Men's Library Association
- Amy Langone, Quabbin Public Health Nurse
- Kathleen Cordier, Family Services Coordinator, Behavioral Health Network
- David Gravel, resident
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Executive Summary

This Community Assessment Report was developed with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission through the Age Friendly Pioneer Valley Initiative funded by the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. The report includes results of a survey and community engagement events, and a review of existing plans and reports that have been completed for the Town in recent years.

The Town of Ware has a population of 9,811, of which 1,717 or 17.5% are 65 or older and 2,433 or 24.8% are 60 or over. The number of older adults who are veterans of military service is higher (26.3%) than the state (18.8%), and 33.8% of people over 65 live alone (compared to 30.2% in the state as a whole). More than 15% of residents over 65 are diagnosed with deafness or hearing impairment and 3.7% have self-reported vision difficulty. Over 20% of people over 65 have self-reported ambulatory difficulties while 3.3% are diagnosed with mobility impairments, and 11.1% of people over the age of 65 have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or Dementia (compared to 13.6% in the state).

Community Engagement

Residents of the Ware community and key stakeholders, or people who work in municipal or nonprofit organizations that serve older adults, were engaged in this Community Assessment in three ways: through an Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group, administration of a Ware Livable Community Survey (a shorter version of the AARP Livable Community Survey), and listening sessions held during already scheduled social events attended by many older residents of the community – Bingo night at Highland Village, and Pitch Night at the Ware Senior Center.

The results of the Ware Livable Community Survey showed that Health and Caregiver Services, Housing, and Financial Security were the three areas that the Town should focus on in the next five years to improve the lives of older adults. Most respondent were also concerned about social isolation, getting access to health care (the imminent closure of Baystate Mary Lane was a concern to many), getting basic maintenance on a home or apartment, and having reliable and safe transportation.

Participants at both game night events expressed the need for lower property taxes for older adults, affordable internet and cable service, a place to swim, more affordable housing for older adults, transportation services outside the local area, help with minor home repairs, and benches at PVTA stops (especially Walmart) and in cemeteries as those are popular places to walk for older adults. The closure of Baystate Mary Lane was a concern, and participants said that an urgent care clinic and adult day care facility would benefit older residents. Some of the assets that people noted were the sense of community and welcoming environment at the Ware Senior Center and game nights hosted by Highland Village.

The Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community

The Ware Community Assessment and Action Plan is organized around nine Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community. Actions benefitting people with dementia and their care partners are interspersed throughout each Domain, and a separate section on Planning for a Dementia Friendly Community highlights specific actions for building awareness, acceptance, and support for people with dementia and their care partners.

Health and Caregiver Services

Access to health care and assistance with basic tasks and home repair were some of the greatest concerns of older adults in Ware. Several health and social service organizations are present in the community including the Senior Center which provides congregate meals, brown bag distribution, assistance with insurance needs, and health screenings.

Although Baystate Mary Lane is slated to close in 2023, Baystate Wing is in the next town over (Palmer), and the Quaboag Connector has expanded transportation services to ensure that residents of Ware have rides to Baystate Wing. The hospital also offers a new walk-in urgent care clinic called Baystate Convenient Care, and health care at home through Dispatch Health. Ware is also home to an office for the Behavioral Health Network, and nearby Brookfield Institute provides services for veterans in the area.

WestMass Elder Care and Greater Springfield Senior Services offer home care (for income eligible older adults) and support for family caregivers, options counseling, respite care, and money management services.

Home care or help with basic tasks is an area of need for many older adults in Ware. The QVCDC offers pickup of groceries and prescriptions and running basic errands for income eligible older adults. However other tasks such as shoveling, yard work, and basic home maintenance is an area of need that has not been filled. A Village or Neighbor program where people can offer help or ask for help is one way that some communities in the region have addressed this need. Working with schools to engage students in service activities may be another way that the Town could meet the needs of older adults in this area.

Food insecurity was a problem for many vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic but was especially prevalent among older adults who relied on senior center meals or transportation services to obtain food. During the pandemic, the Ware Senior Center increased delivery of Brown Bag food bags and Meals on Wheels. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts operates a mobile Food Bank bus that stops in Ware at Grenville Park once a month and draws hundreds of people from Ware and surrounding communities. The Jubilee Cupboard and Amherst Survival Center are other emergency food resources that serve residents of Ware.

Housing

Similar to many communities in the region, Ware has a shortage of affordable housing for people with lower incomes. Wait times for affordable apartments in Housing Authority properties are reportedly 18 months to two years. According to the Ware Master Plan, the town falls slightly below the state recommended low-income housing supply (10%) at 9.3 percent. According to the MHAC Community Profile, homeowners are more financially burdened with housing costs than renters in Ware, with 29.5% spending more than 35% of their income on housing.

According to the Ware Livable Community Survey, most respondents want to live in their own homes. However, if their circumstances changed, most would want to downsize or live in an independent or assisted living community or in subsidized housing. The Ware Housing Authority offers units for seniors or people with disabilities at Hillside Village, Highland Village and Church Street. Long waiting lists for these properties mean that many people who are eligible for subsidized housing must stay in their homes or move out of town in order to downsize or live more affordably. A new (private) assisted living facility, Cedarbrook Village offers assisted living and memory care near the location of Baystate Mary Lane Hospital. While this facility represents an important element of the housing supply for older adults, it is not affordable for many Ware residents.

As noted above, people who want or need to age in place may require additional services once they are no longer able to drive or maintain their homes on their own. Many older residents noted the need for help with basic home repair, and for transportation services when they can no longer drive.

Transportation and Streets

Most survey respondents said that they still drive themselves, but many also said that they get rides from family or friends. As the population becomes older, the need for assistance with transportation needs will continue to grow.

Ware residents are fortunate to have access to the services of PVTA buses and on demand vans for older adults and people with disabilities, the Quaboag Connector, and senior center van service. Challenges with these services according to survey respondents were that the services were not available or inconvenient. Orientation by PVTA and Quaboag Connector staff may help older adults to better understand how to make the best use of these services.

Ensuring walkability of downtowns and neighborhoods surrounding senior housing can allow older adults to both exercise and independently meet their own transportation needs, as long as they live within walking distance of services or transit stops. Infrastructure for walking and biking as well as using transit services is discussed in Ware's Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. Adding or improving sidewalks to make a connected pedestrian network on Church

Street, West Street, North Street, and Pleasant Streets were proposed were proposed in the plan, with sidewalks on West and Pulaski Street needing significant repairs. The Prioritization Plan also suggests projects to improve accessibility and safety, including signal replacements and retiming, bicycle rack installation, ADA compliant ramps installations where necessary, and adding speed radar signs along key municipal roadways.

Communication, Information and Technology

The pandemic illuminated the gap in use and access to technology known as the "Digital Divide" which is most prominent among older residents of Ware. The Ware Livable Community Survey 2021 brought to light just how prominent the Digital Divide is in Ware, with fifteen respondents saying they are not interested in using technology at all. Ten reported needing assistance in accessing equipment (iPad or laptop), fourteen needing training on how to use a computer or tablet and software, and twenty-one needing help accessing low-cost internet service. The Young Men's Library Association offers WiFi hotspots for loan to allow people to connect to internet without signing up for service in their homes.

In addition to those who don't have access to technology, communication challenges exist with people with visual or hearing impairments, and those whose first language is not English. Once people are connected to technology, people with physical impairments have the ability to participate in meetings that would otherwise be hard to get to in person. However, additional assistance such as closed captioning for hearing impaired people, or translation services, should be considered in order to remove the barriers that restrict participation by many community members.

It is important to use multiple modes of communication including newsletters, the Ware River News, and local cable access television to reach people who are not comfortable with technology or do not have access to internet services.

Buildings and Outdoor Spaces

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. During the pandemic, parks and open spaces were vital places for people to meet with friends or to get exercise while buildings and gyms were closed. According to the Ware Livable Community survey, parks or outdoor spaces (42 respondents) were second to restaurants or cafés (48 respondents) for places where people liked to spend their free time prior to the pandemic and remained the two most popular places to visit during the pandemic.

Community concerns that have been mentioned in the 2016 Ware Master Plan and the 2016 OSRP included the inaccessibility of many trails due to a lack of maintenance, parking facilities, signage, and trail markers. Recommendations for improving access for older adults include publicizing which trails are accessible; ensuring connections to parks and the Ware River Trail

by improving the network of ADA compliant sidewalks (including new sidewalks on Robbins Road, West Street, North Street and Church Street); and adding benches in parks, cemeteries, and along walking trails.

Indoor spaces for programming and socializing include the Senior Center and community rooms at Ware Housing Authority properties. The OSRP recommended finding additional indoor spaces for recreational programming. Exploration of a shared use agreement with the school to allow access to the gym or other facilities could add another indoor resource for social and fitness programming.

Social Participation and Inclusion

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. The pandemic increased concern of social isolation among survey respondents during the pandemic as older adults were among the many places where older adults would normally socialize were closed or were forced to limit their capacity.

The Ware Senior Center is an important resource for older adults in Ware, offering congregate meals, social and wellness activities when open, and wellness calls when forced to close due to the pandemic. Of those who said they did not go to the Senior Center, most said that they did not know what programs were available. This suggests the need for continued outreach around Senior Center programs in multiple formats.

Ware public library, the Young Men's Library Association, provides a place for people to get books as well as to use computers and offers a hot spot loan program for those who do not have internet service at home. Faith-based institutions, social clubs and community rooms at Housing Authority properties also offer places for older residents of Ware to socialize with others.

As in-person programming opens up, the Ware Senior Center plans to offer more programming for people with dementia, a growing sector of the aging population. Cedarbrook Village, a private assisted living facility also offers support and programming for people with dementia. Planning and outreach of events or programming should consider all sectors at risk of social isolation including people with dementia; veterans; people who are not fluent in English; people with vision, hearing or mobility impairments; and people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, in order to demonstrate a welcoming and inclusive social environment.

Employment and Civic Engagement

While few survey respondents said that they needed help finding employment or volunteer opportunities, it is important that those who do need these services know where to find them.

Financial security was one of the most important areas that survey respondents said that the Town should focus on to make Ware a more Age and Dementia Friendly Community, and many participants at the listening sessions at the Senior Center and Highland Village thought that there should be lower property taxes for older adults in the community.

The Ware Senior Center works with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to place people in volunteer positions where they get credit toward property tax abatements (if financially eligible). RSVP is a nationwide program coordinated by the National Senior Service Corps and provides grants to qualified agencies and organizations "for the dual purpose of engaging people 55 or older in volunteer service to meet community needs and to provide a high-quality experience that will enrich the lives of volunteers." While property tax relief is offered for income eligible older adults who volunteer through RSVP or in municipal departments, many people do not want to disclose personal financial information so do not sign up for this program.

The Massachusetts Council on Aging provides training and support to improve the job seeking process for older adults through the 50+ Job Seekers Program with funding from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). Ware's retail stores offer many part- and full-time opportunities for work in town. In times where reliable workers are hard to find, it may be mutually beneficial for stores and other local businesses to ensure a welcoming environment for older adults who wish to continue working.

Public Safety

Police, Fire, and other emergency service providers are closely involved with the safety of older adults as they are often the ones that people call when they are not feeling safe or have had a fall. The Fire Department maintains a Persons at Risk finder, a list of individuals who are at risk of wandering due to dementia, autism, or other cognitive impairments,

The Ware Livable Community Survey asked how safe people felt living in the community. Most said that they feel safe most of the time (46), and 26 respondents said that they always feel safe. For those who gave responses for times when they did not feel safe in the community, some of the reasons were poor lighting and police patrols on Main Street, concern about high drug and alcohol use of other residents, and a need for more patrols in Grenville Park.

The Ware Council on Aging participates with the Ware Police and Fire Departments in the Triad Program which is a national organization initially started by the National Sheriffs' Association, the International Chiefs of Police, and the AARP. In Hampshire County, 13 communities are actively involved in the program. Triad is a community policing initiative in which seniors, law enforcement and other service providers increase safety through education and crime prevention. Triad program members and staff at the Senior Center assist residents with filling out File of Life documents that include important medical information and are stored in a

prominent location in case of emergencies. The majority of survey respondents (56%) said that they do not have a File of Life in their home.

Older adults are considered vulnerable populations of concern during weather or other emergencies, especially if they are not able to drive or are living with dementia. Nineteen percent of survey respondents said that the did not feel informed about what to do in the event of a weather or other emergency. Orientations on automatic phone notifications and what to do in the case of an emergency would be beneficial both to older adults as well as emergency service providers. The Senior Center serves as a cooling shelter in cases of severe heat or power outages.

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. Improvements that allow people who may be living with a disability or with dementia can benefit the whole community.

Action Plan

The Action Plan that is included after the Community Assessment includes the goals and actions listed in each Domain area of the report as well as lead entities, partner organization, metrics, and timing (Short-Term, Medium- Term, and Long-Term) for each action. It is recommended that the Town appoint a committee to meet regularly to oversee the implementation of the actions listed in this report.

Introduction

This Community Assessment Report was developed with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission through the Age Friendly Pioneer Valley Initiative funded by the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. This initiative allows PVPC to provide technical assistance to municipalities in the PVPC region (Hampshire and Hampden Counties) and to bring together individuals and organizations on a quarterly basis to discuss best practices, policies and programs that support an aging population, people living with dementia and their care partners.

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.

The Domain areas are ordered by the level of importance that was determined by responses to the Ware Livable Community 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 Ware a great place to grow up and grow old.

Background

The Town of Ware has a population of 9,811, of which 1,717 or 17.5% are 65 or older and 2,433 or 24.8% are 60 or over.[1] According to data obtained from the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Community Profile, older residents of Ware do better than state averages in several healthy aging indicators including lower rates of schizophrenia/other psychotic disorders, Alzheimer's disease, asthma, breast and prostate cancer; but have higher rates of glaucoma, ischemic heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, substance use disorder, tobacco use disorder, obesity, high cholesterol and tooth loss. They are also less likely to meet CDC guidelines for physical activity

[1] American Community Survey (ACS) 2018 5-year estimates, collected from https://pioneervalleydata.org/community-profiles/

or have annual dental exams.[2] It should be noted that data for the Community Profile was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which initiated a State-mandated shutdown in March of 2020.

The majority of Ware's population is White (98.4%) with the remaining population identifying as Black or African American (1.4%) or Asian (0.2%). An increasing percentage of Ware's population also identifies as being Hispanic or Latino (7.9%), up from 6.7% in 2017.[3]

The number of older adults who are veterans of military service is higher (26.3%) than the state (18.8%), and 33.8% of people over 65 live alone (compared to 30.2% in the state as a whole). More than 15% of residents over 65 are diagnosed with deafness or hearing impairment and 3.7% have self-reported vision difficulty. Over 20% of people over 65 have self-reported ambulatory difficulties while 3.3% are diagnosed with mobility impairments, and 11.1% of people over the age of 65 have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or Dementia (compared to 13.6% in the state).[4]

The Town of Ware joined the Age Friendly Pioneer Valley initiative in December of 2020. At that time, all public buildings were closed due to a State mandated shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Town applied for Age Friendly Community designation through AARP and was awarded the designation in March of 2021. The Age Friendly Community Designation gives the Town two years to develop a Community Assessment and Action Plan. Submission of this report to the AARP will finalize the Age Friendly Designation for the Town. Submission of the Action Plan to Dementia Friendly Massachusetts and signing a pledge will also make the Town a Dementia Friendly Community.

Community Engagement

Residents of the Ware Community and key stakeholders, or people who work in municipal or nonprofit organizations that serve older adults, were engaged in this Community Assessment in three ways: through an Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group, administration of a Ware Livable Community Survey (a shorter version of the AARP Livable Community Survey), and participatory presentations held during already scheduled social events attended by many older residents – Bingo night at Highland Village, and Pitch Night at the Ware Senior Center. Due to uncertainty and increasing infection rates during the second year of the pandemic, the Ware Health Department prohibited congregate meals. Therefore, an event scheduled to be held

[2] Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative Community Profile. Data sources include the American Community Survey (2012-16), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Master Beneficiary Summary File (2014-15), and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2010-15).
[3] ACS 2018 5-year estimates collected from https://pioneervalleydata.org/community-profiles/
[4] MHAC Community Profile data (2018).

during a monthly birthday celebration at the Senior Center was canceled, and no large public forums were scheduled.

Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group

The Age and Dementia Friendly Ware Working Group was formed to oversee the process of developing a Community Assessment and Action Plan. The group was facilitated by staff from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission with support from an intern from the UMass School of Public Health. The Ware working group included the following individuals:

- John Zienowicz, Executive Director of the Ware Council on Aging and Senior Center
- Stuart Beckley, Town Manager
- Michelle Holmgren, Public Affairs and Community Benefits Coordinator, Baystate Wing and Baystate Mary Lane
- Melissa Fales and Mary Smith, Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation
- Kelly Russell, Executive Director of Cedarbrook Village
- Jennifer Raiche, Resident Services Coordinator, Hillside Village
- Heidi Reed, Young Men's Library Association
- Amy Langone, Quabbin Public Health Nurse
- Kathleen Cordier, Family Services Coordinator, Behavioral Health Network
- David Gravel, resident
- Jennifer Maggiolino, WestMass Elder Care

Once this Community Assessment and Action Plan has been approved by the Selectboard for submission to the AARP and Dementia Friendly Massachusetts, an implementation committee will meet on a regular basis to oversee the progress of implementing the strategies included in this report and report successes.

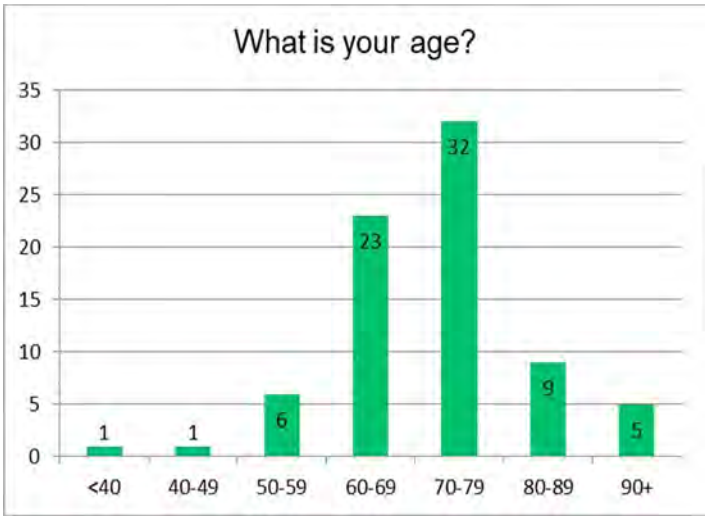
Ware Livable Community Survey

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. A survey specific to the needs of the Ware community was developed and 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 with brown bag food distribution packages, and were available at the Senior Center, library, and Ware Housing Authority properties. Most surveys were filled out in hard copy form, suggesting that few people were comfortable or had access to technology to fill them out online. An intern working for the PVPC entered hard copy survey responses into the online platform. The link to the online survey was publicized on the COA website, and on COA and Town Facebook pages, and in a press release that was published in the Ware River

News. Survey respondents were entered into a drawing for two Gift Cards from the Big Y grocery store in town.

A total of 78 surveys were completed, 70 of which were over the age of 60, representing about 3% of the population over 60 living in Ware. This response rate is somewhat lower than we had hoped to get based on extensive outreach efforts but could be due in part to lower online engagement by the target population as well as survey fatigue and fear of going out during the pandemic (to drop off surveys). Outreach for the development of the Community Assessment was primarily directed to older adults and people who care for them in order to understand the experiences of older adults living in Ware. The survey reached its intended mark as more than 90% of survey respondents were over the age of 60, and 53% were over the age of 70. The majority of survey respondents were White and non-Hispanic (92%) while 3% were Black or African American, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native and 4% other or more than one race. Most survey respondents (80%) have lived in Ware for more than five years and 38% have lived in Ware for 45 years or longer.

Figure 1– Age and longevity of residency of Survey respondents (Livable Ware Survey)



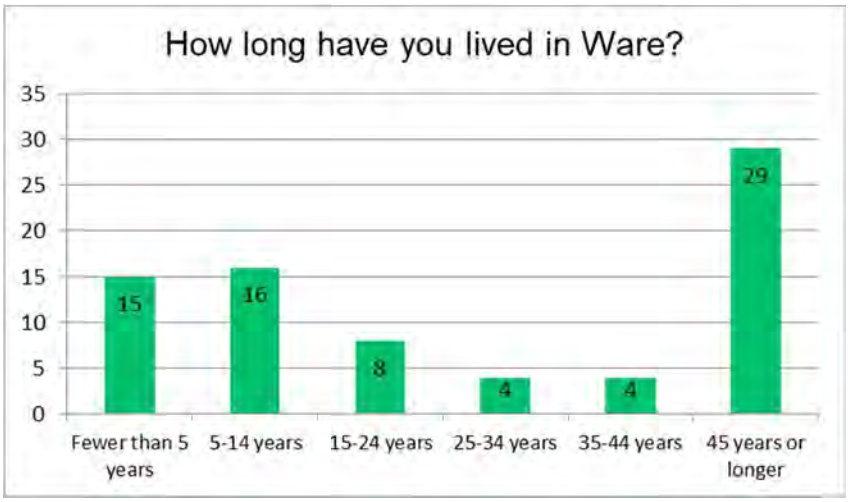
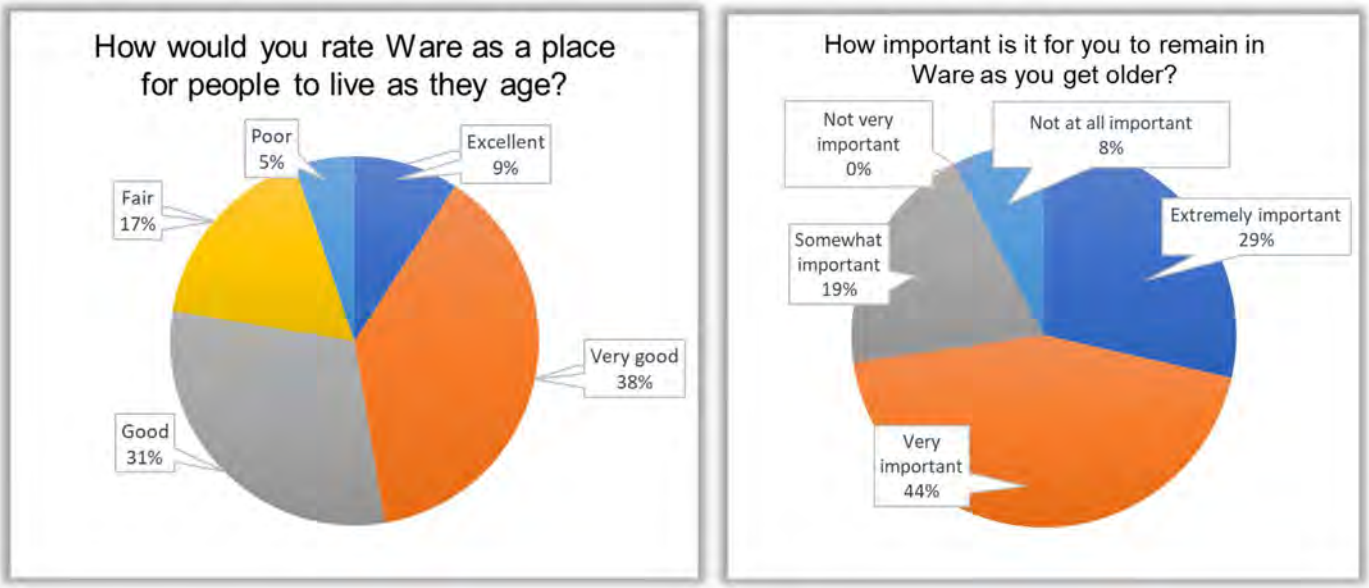


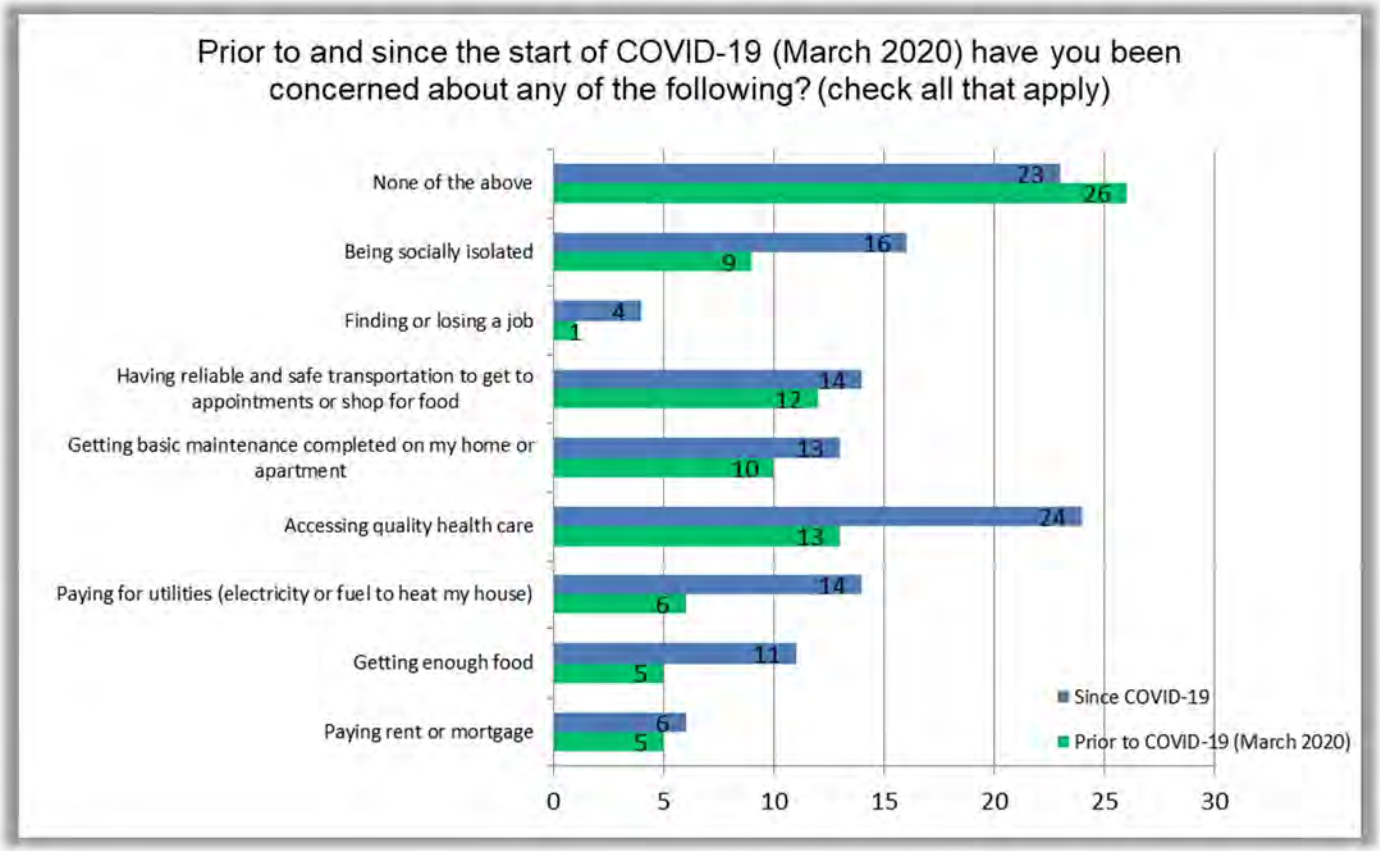
Figure 2 - Rating Ware as a place to grow old, and importance of remaining in Ware (Livable Ware Survey)



Approximately half of survey respondents (47%) said that Ware was an Excellent or Very Good place for people to live as they age, while 31% said that the Town is a Good place to live, and 22% said that the community is a Fair or Poor place to grow old. 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. Seventy-three percent of respondents said that it was either very important or extremely important for them to be able to stay in Ware as they got older.

As the Livable Ware Survey was administered during the state-mandated shutdown, social isolation was an issue of major concern, with sixteen (16) respondents saying that this was a concern since the start of the pandemic while only nine (9) respondents said that it was a concern prior to COVID. Other concerns that were greater since the start of the pandemic included accessing quality health care (24 since the pandemic, 13 prior), getting basic maintenance completed on a home or apartment (13 since the pandemic, 10 prior to the pandemic), and having reliable and safe transportation (14 since, 12 before).

Figure 3 - Livable Ware Survey results - Concerns before and after the pandemic



Public Forum #1 – Bingo Night at Highland Village

For the first public forum, the Age and Dementia Friendly Ware Working Group suggested attending Bingo Night at Highland Village, as this event (held twice weekly) is very popular among older residents of Ware and draws some participants from surrounding communities. Staff from PVPC attended Bingo Night on July 27, 2021, bringing drinks and snacks. Approximately 18 people were in attendance, most from Ware but a couple from neighboring communities. Rather than giving a presentation, PVPC staff introduced the initiative and showed the Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community, and then asked participants to list the greatest assets and challenges for older adults living in Ware. Participants were then each given three dots and asked to vote on what they considered the greatest challenges.

Some of the assets identified by participants of Bingo night included the length of time that people stay in the community, and the welcoming nature of the senior center and Highland Village for events such as Bingo, nice places to walk, and the Ware River News as a source of information. Participants in the discussion identified the greatest challenges (according to the number of votes) as **property taxes**, loss of the **medical center** (Baystate Mary Lane is closing

soon**), expensive internet**, not having a **place to swim** (Town pool or Stone's Pond), **transportation** that goes beyond the local area, and the need for **benches at Walmart** for people who are waiting for van or bus transportation. Results of the Assets and Challenges exercise were as follows (the number of votes is included after challenges):

Assets – **What do you like about living in Ware?**

- People stay in Ware for many generations
- Feel welcome at events (such as Bingo night) (from a resident of Hardwick)
- Nice parks – good places to walk
- Bingo Night
- Senior Center assistance with Food Stamps, etc.
- Ware River News is a good source of information
- Discounted internet – T-Mobile and Comcast Essentials (offered during the pandemic - many residents did not know about these services and were informed of them by agency representatives who attended the event)

Challenges – **What could be improved?**

- New Senior Housing is too expensive (1)
- Panic buttons or call boxes at Grenville Park, Quabbin – do not always feel safe walking in parks
- **Taxes go up every year – seniors can no longer afford to live in their homes (4)**
- Quality of drinking water has gotten worse (1)
- **Need a medical center in Ware (4)**
    - **Mary Lane was good source of employment and attracted people to the town (3)**
- No affordable senior housing (1)
- Need help with lawn mowing, basic tasks (get town employees to help) (1)
- **Town pool needs to be re-opened (2)**
- Stone's Pond used to be swimmable
- **Poor transportation – Quaboag Connector only local destinations (2)**
- Need a nice restaurant (1)
- Charging stations for electric vehicles
- **Internet is expensive – should be discount for seniors, need competition (5)**
    - Need assistance to sign up for internet essentials (1)
- Network with people to get rides to food bank truck, etc. (1)
- **No benches at Walmart (2)**
- Continue the bike path (1)
- Sidewalks are too high – trip hazard (1)
- Senior Center should do some excursions/trips
- Need another grocery store – Big Y is "dirty"

Forum #2 – Pitch Night at the Ware Senior Center

The game of Pitch draws a regular crowd of older adults to the Ware Senior Center every Tuesday and Friday evening, so we used this event to engage participants in a discussion of the assets and challenges in each of the domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community. Participants added to a list of challenges gathered from survey results and discussions with the Working Group and were then asked to vote on priority concerns using sticky dots.

Figure 4 - Participants at forum during Pitch night at the Senior Center vote on priority challenges

The following are the concerns that received the most votes during this event:

Transportation (Services, Streets and Sidewalks)

- Sidewalk Maintenance (2)
- Sidewalk gaps (1)
- More transportation services – Quaboag Connector, Senior Center Van – expand times and destinations (2)
- Orientation and information about public transportation (1)
- **Road Maintenance/pot holes** (8)

Housing

- **More affordable senior housing** (9)
- Small houses or apartments to allow for downsizing (2)
- Supported senior housing – Assisted Living, Memory care (1)
- Assistance with rehabilitating existing housing to be more safe and accessible (2)
- **Assistance with minor repairs** (6)

- **Lower property taxes for people over 70** (8)

Buildings and Outdoor Spaces

- Accessibility of public buildings (wheelchair ramps, automatic doors) – Which buildings? (3)
- Lighting at parks (2)
- Public restrooms (1)
- More benches in parks and on Main Street (or elsewhere?) (2)
- Make parks more accessible for wheelchairs (1)
- **Place to swim** (pool or pond) (5)
- **Benches in cemeteries** (lots of people walk there) (4) – Aspen Grove

Communication and Technology

- Access to affordable high-speed internet (2)
- Classes or assistance in how to use devices and software (1)
- More information in Ware River News (1)
- Accommodations for hearing and vision impaired for public meetings (1)

Employment & Civic Engagement

- Help with finding part-time jobs (1)

Social Participation and Inclusion

- Senior center programs on nights or weekends (2)
- Memory cafes or other programs for people with dementia (1)
- Excursions (out of town) (2)

Health and Community Services, Access to Food (2)

- **Urgent care clinic in town** (7)
- Access to home health care services (3)
- Caregiver support services (2)
- **Adult day care facility** (4)

Public Safety (no votes)

Financial Security

- Property tax assistance (3)

Review of Existing Plans and Reports

In addition to conducting community engagement activities to assess the needs of older adults in Ware, PVPC staff and interns reviewed the following plans and reports that have been

completed for the Town in order to assess existing assets and challenges that have already been identified:

- Ware Master Plan (2016)
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan (2018)
- Open Space and Recreation Plan (2016)
- Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (2020)
- Visioning, Branding, Wayfinding, & Business Development Plan
- Millyard Redevelopment Plan

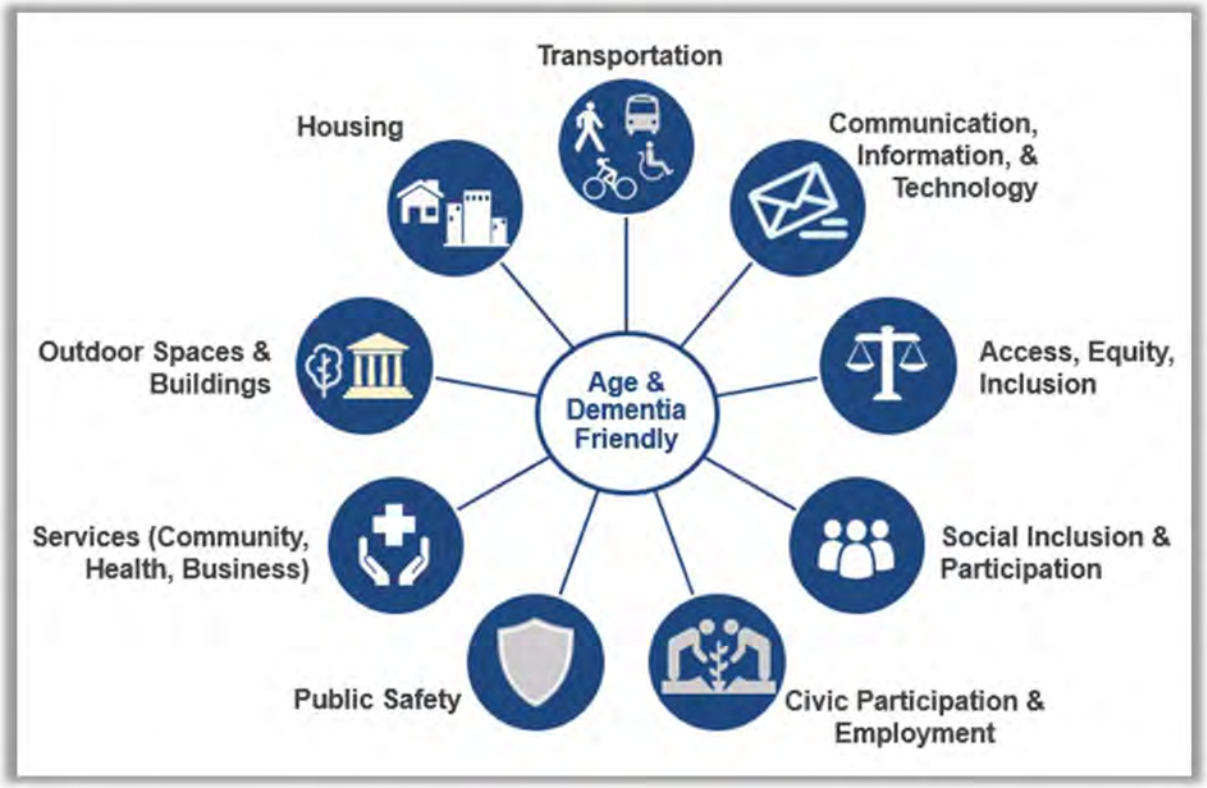
Findings from this review have been integrated into this report as they relate to planning for an aging population.

The Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community

The World Health Organization developed a model for assessing a community's ability to support an aging population through assessment of domains of livability, or elements of the physical and social environments that are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous as they age. The original model included Eight Domains of Livability for an Age Friendly Community. 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 (MHAC) modified the Eight Domains of Livability into the Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community, which includes nine domain areas. Some communities have also added domains such as Food Security or Financial Stability to the suggested domain areas.

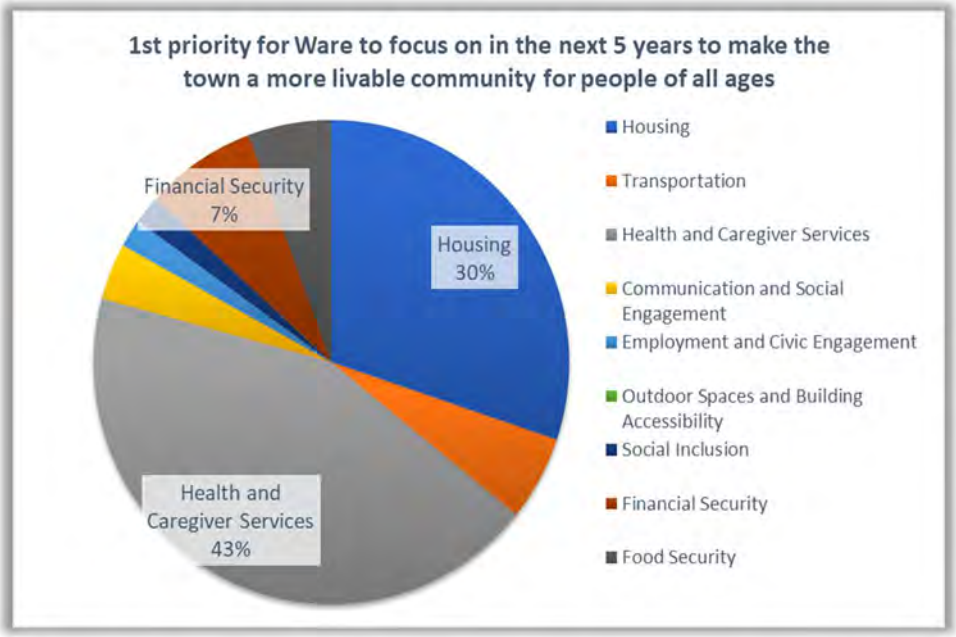
We have used the MHAC model to assess where Ware is in terms of each of the domain areas. The model is helpful in considering elements of a community that extend beyond the built environment and that are critical to the needs of older adults, but also contribute to healthy, active, more livable communities.

Figure 5 - The Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community (Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative)



The Ware Livable Community Survey revealed that the areas of greatest concern for survey respondents included Health and Caregiver Services (43% said this was the top concern), Housing (30%), and Financial Security. The survey also showed concerns related to aging in place that were accentuated by the pandemic. These included **social isolation**, **accessing health care**, and **reliable transportation**, and finding contractors or funding for **basic home repair and maintenance**.

Figure 6 - Priorities for making Ware a more livable community (Livable Ware Survey)



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[5]:

- **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 polices 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.
- **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.

[5] https://www.dfamerica.org/what-is-dfa

- **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 Ware will take once designated as a Dementia Friendly Community.

Dementia Friendly Community Goals & Strategies

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 Ware Working Group to implement trainings and a public awareness campaign about dementia in Ware.

1b. Recruit volunteers to become Dementia Friends Champions who will provide trainings for community groups and neighbors.

1c. Encourage trainings on how to recognize signs of dementia and communicate with people with dementia for all municipal staff.

1d. Work with the Triad Program partners (Police, Fire, Emergency Services) to encourage residents to register on a list of people living with dementia or other health concerns.

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. Meaningfully engage people with dementia in developing programs and services such as support groups or memory cafes at the Senior Center and other locations in the community.

Domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Ware

The following sections summarize the findings from the community engagement process, discussions with the Age and Dementia Friendly Working Group and the review of existing plans and reports. Each section includes Assets and Accomplishments as well as Recommendations that apply to the domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community as illustrated in Figure 5, above.

Health and Community Services

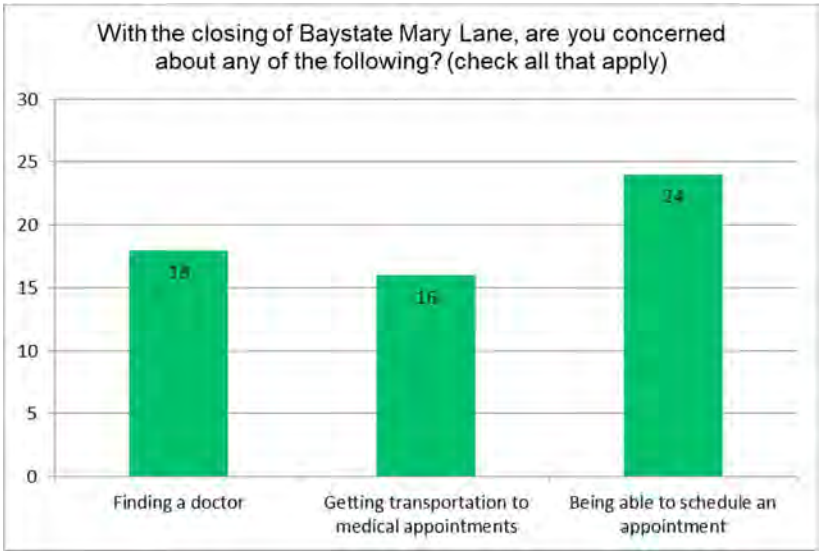
The care needs of older adults who are aging in place can vary from assistance with basic tasks such as cleaning, shopping, cooking, yard work, snow shoveling, and minor home maintenance projects; to full-time medical or home health assistance provided by professional or family caregivers. The pandemic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

In Ware, most survey respondents rated their health as Good (49%) or Excellent (16%), but 31% rated their physical health as Fair, and 4% as poor. More respondents rated their emotional well-being as Good (53%) or Excellent (25%), with 19% rating emotional well-being as Fair and 3% as poor.

The most striking need as expressed by survey responses is for help with basic tasks or errands such as changing a light bulb, shopping or shoveling snow. Thirty-five percent (35% or 24 respondents) said that they needed help in these areas. Sixteen percent of respondents said that they had a friend or neighbor nearby who they could as for help if needed.

Survey respondents and participants in community engagement events at the Senior Center and Highland Village were also concerned about the closure of Baystate Mary Lane Hospital. Survey respondents were primarily concerned with being able to schedule an appointment (24 responses), finding a doctor (18 responses), and getting transportation to medical appointments (16 responses).

Figure 7 - Concerns about Baystate Mary Lane closure (Livable Ware Survey)



Health and Social Services

The Ware Senior Center provides assistance for residents over the age of 60 in many areas including assisting with access to healthy or prepared food through congregate meals (although this service is on hold due to COVID numbers), the Brown Bag food distribution program, and Meals on Wheels; assistance with signing up for insurance through the SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) program; and providing health screenings on site. Historically the Senior Center has provided transportation services to medical appointments in Ware, but with the closure of Baystate Mary Lane may have to consider whether the one van used for transporting older adults in town can also be used to go to appointments in Palmer. The Senior Center also offers programs to help with balance, strength, and overall fitness.

The Ware Senior Center uses two designated Aging Services Access Points depending on services needed. WestMass Elder Care provides a number of critical services for older adults and their families including home care and assistance in providing home care providers; Adult Family Care (AFC) which connects people needing a supervised living environment with families who are willing to provide a living space in exchange for support and payment for caregiving; family caregiver support including counseling, support groups, training, respite, and financial assistance; options counseling services to help older adults navigate the choices and services available as care needs increase; money management; LGBTQ+ support services including a Rainbow Supper Club; and an ombudsman program.

Greater Springfield Senior Services offers home care and care coordination for seniors and adults with disabilities; money management and personal care management for recipients of Mass Health; nutrition assistance; and support services for caregivers as well as many other programs and services.

Health care becomes increasingly important as people age and being able to access care when one loses the ability to drive can be challenging. As noted in the Transportation section of this report, there are a few transportation options available for residents of Ware, including the Quaboag Connector and PVTA on demand services for seniors that can help older adults to get to medical appointments.

Once Baystate Mary Lane closes, the closest hospital will be Baystate Wing Hospital, located in Palmer. A walk-in clinic, Baystate Convenient Care, was recently opened at the Baystate Wing Hospital to serve as an urgent care clinic for the region. As most survey respondents responded that Ware needs an urgent care clinic, it will be important to educate the community about the new Convenient Care clinic at Baystate, and gauge how well people can access this clinic going forward. Baystate Health also offers Dispatch Health, a service that provides health care in people's homes between 8 am and 10 pm seven days a week. Telemedicine became a critical resource during the pandemic but also highlighted the digital divide, or households that did not

have access to computers or high-speed internet. Further investigation into the technology needs of older adults in Ware could help more individuals to access telemedicine.

Several social service organizations and coalitions are based in Ware including the Behavioral Health Network, the Substance Abuse Alliance, and the Quaboag Hills Community Coalition. The Brookfield Institute, located in Brookfield but serving several towns in the area including Ware, offers suicide prevention and other support services for veterans. Mental health conditions and substance use disorders are some of the top health concerns in the region according to the Baystate Wing Community Health Needs Assessment. The pandemic increased the frequency and severity of these concerns.

Home Care and Caregiver Support

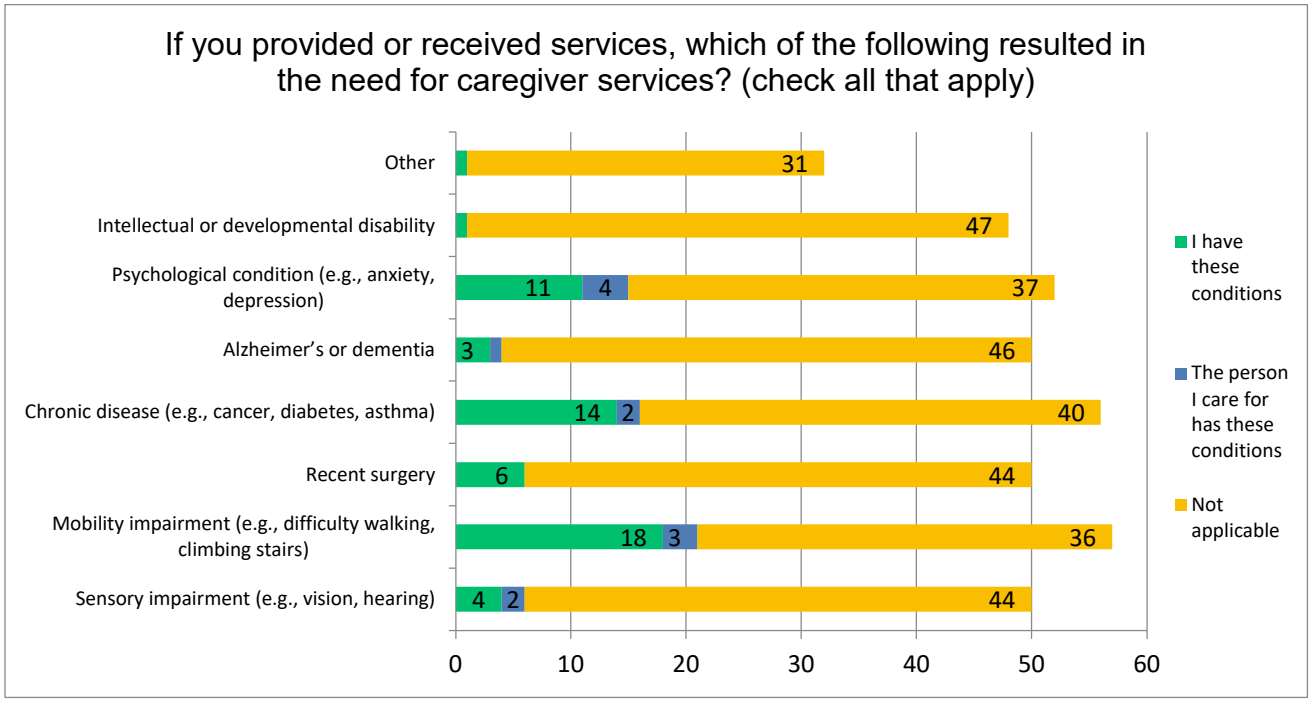
Care for people aging in place can range from assistance with basic tasks such as shoveling snow, raking leaves, cleaning and cooking, to being a full-time presence helping with bathing, feeding, toileting and other daily necessities to ensure the health and safety of the individual being cared for. Many older adults are fortunate to have family or friends who are willing and able to provide assistance. Those who do not have these resources may have to rely on home health agencies or agencies such as WestMass Elder Care that can provide some services to people who are financially eligible to receive these services through MassHealth or Medicaid.

The Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation (QVCDC) received funding to provide senior care services during the pandemic and is continuing those for income eligible older adults living in Ware, Warren and Belchertown. The services include help with picking up groceries or prescriptions, or running errands.

Some communities in the Pioneer Valley have implemented volunteer-based “Village Model” or “Neighbors” programs to provide assistance with basic tasks including some of the home maintenance activities as well as rides to medical appointments. These programs are generally started and run by volunteers and may require a fee from residents who wish to sign up for services. Working with schools to engage students in service activities may be another way that the Town could meet the needs of older adults in this area.

Providing in-home care for a family member can be stressful, particularly for people at various stages of dementia. The Alzheimer’s Association offers support groups and guidance for caregivers as well as a 24-hour hotline for people with dementia and their care partners. Greater Springfield Senior Services and WestMass Elder Care also offer programs to support and train caregivers.

Figure 8 - Conditions resulting in need for care services (Livable Ware Survey)



Access to Healthy Food

Food insecurity was a problem for many vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic but was especially prevalent among older adults who relied on senior center meals or transportation services to obtain food. During the pandemic, the Ware Senior Center increased delivery of Brown Bag food bags and Meals on Wheels. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts operates a mobile Food Bank bus that stops in Ware at Grenville Park once a month and draws hundreds of people from Ware and surrounding communities. In addition the Jubilee Cupboard is a food pantry located in Ware and supplied by the Food Bank and local donations. The Amherst survival center is funded by a federal grant to deliver food monthly to 130 households in ware including 35 to the senior center (for delivery to individual households) and the rest to Hillside, Church Street, and Valley View housing. The service tailors food for each household so they are bringing food that people want and can use.

Walmart (located in Ware) provides food delivery and can accept SNAP payments for online orders. The Big Y in Ware only offers food delivery through the DoorDash App. For those who live nearby, a shared use path starts at the Walmart parking lot and is an option for those who have the means to carry groceries, and the PVTA bus stops at the Walmart parking lot. Participants in one of the game night forums said that a bus shelter at this stop would be helpful.

A volunteer-run Farmers Market is located in Ware in the summer months. The Ware Master Plan included a recommendation for the Town to provide land for community gardens and space for an enhanced farmer's market to increase access to opportunities for healthier eating.

Assets & Accomplishments

- ✓ GSSS offers Caregiver Support Groups, home care
- ✓ WestMass Elder Care also covers area – depends on needs
- ✓ Many social service–oriented nonprofits and public-private partnerships
- ✓ QVCDC, Behavioral Health Network, etc.
- ✓ Dispatch Health (in home visits)
- ✓ Convenient Care/Walk-in clinic at Baystate Wing
- ✓ West Mass Elder Care arranges for personal care assistants
- ✓ Cedarbrook Village – independent, assisted living, memory care
- ✓ Behavioral Health Network drop-in center on Main St
- ✓ Brookfield institute
- ✓ Food distribution at Grenville Park, brown bag at senior center, Jubilee Cupboard (food pantry)
- ✓ Amherst survival center got federal grant to deliver food monthly – 130 HHs for seniors at 4 locations – 35 at Sr center (to deliver), Hillside, Church Street, Valley View. The service tailors food for each household so they are bringing food that people want and can use.
- ✓ Meals on Wheels through WestMass Elder Care (out of Ludlow)
- ✓ Behavioral Health Network's Family Resource Center support groups (grandparents raising grandchildren)

Challenges and Opportunities

- ➢ Baystate Mary Lane Closing – concern about getting to medical appointments, finding doctors
- ➢ Need for Adult Day Care facilities
- ➢ More programming on recognizing people with dementia and communicating with them
- ➢ Long-term care – Home health aids and support for people aging in place
- ➢ Spotty internet and expense makes telemedicine difficult
- ➢ Food insecurity

Recommendations/strategies from previous reports

- ➢ Create a regional volunteer emergency response team to conduct wellbeing checks based on Ware's network of social service and community organizations.

Goals and Actions

Goal 2: Ensure that older residents of Ware have access to health care and community services that support their ability to live long and healthy lives.

Actions

2a. 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 chore services, grocery and pharmacy delivery, safety monitoring programs, and transportation assistance.

2b. Work with elder care organizations, health care providers and 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.

2c. 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.

- Include information about where people can borrow or purchase medical equipment and devices to aid aging in place.

2d. Work with Baystate Wing to publicize Convenient Care walk-in clinic and to provide orientation on changes associated with closure of Baystate Mary Lane.

2e. Work with Quaboag Connector and PVTA and area hospitals to ensure all people who need rides to medical appointments can access transportation services.

2f. Partner with health care providers to ensure that all residents have access to telemedicine by ensuring access to low-cost internet, devices and training on how to use devices.

2g. Partner with service providers and coalitions addressing substance use disorders to ensure that older adults know where to access assistance and counseling services.

2h. Assist older adults with issues around access, coverage and use of prescription medications. Ask local pharmacies to use large print for the medication name and dosage on prescription bottles.

2i. Provide outreach and support for older adults to access vaccines including COVID and Flu vaccines.

2j. Continue to participate in the Triad program which partners emergency service providers with the Council on Aging to address needs of older adults and people with specific health needs. Engage at risk older adults in these efforts.

2k. 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 if 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.

2l. Gauge the need and feasibility of locating a walk-in care clinic in Ware.

2m. 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.

Housing

As people age, their housing needs may change in terms of the amount of living space they need or can afford, and 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. The following factors are important when considering housing for older adults:

- ➢ Affordability – Smaller or shared units, accessory apartments, home sharing
- ➢ Accessibility – 1st floor, or elevator access, wheelchair ramps
- ➢ Home Modification Loan or Grant Programs – For people who want to remain independent and in their own homes
- ➢ Assisted Living and Long-Term Care options – For people who need supported care in their later years.
- ➢ Smart Growth – Housing is located near retail, services, community centers.
- ➢ Neighborhoods – Are safe, well-let and walkable

Similar to many communities in the region, Ware has a shortage of affordable housing for people with lower incomes. Wait times for affordable apartments in Housing Authority properties are reportedly 18 months to two years. According to the Ware Master Plan, the town falls slightly below the state recommended low-income housing supply (10%) at 9.3 percent. According to the MHAC Community Profile, 18.3% of residents over sixty-five had an income below the poverty line in 2017 and 29.5% of homeowners over the age of sixty-five spent more than 35% of their income on housing (mortgage, taxes and insurance). Conversely, 7.6% of renters over sixty-five spent more than 35% of their income on housing.

A majority of survey respondents (89%) said it was either extremely important (64%) or very important (25%) to remain in their own homes as they age, either independently or with a caregiver. Likewise, a majority of respondents reported that it is extremely important (29%) or very important (44%) to remain in Ware as they age. However, although a majority of respondents currently live in single-family homes (27), the most preferred residence in the next five years if one's health conditions change was senior independent living community (14),

followed by single family home (10), subsidized housing (8), and assisted living (7). This speaks to the need for Ware to offer a variety of housing options, as well as services for those who choose to remain in their own homes.

Figure 9 - People want to stay in their own homes (Livable Ware Survey)

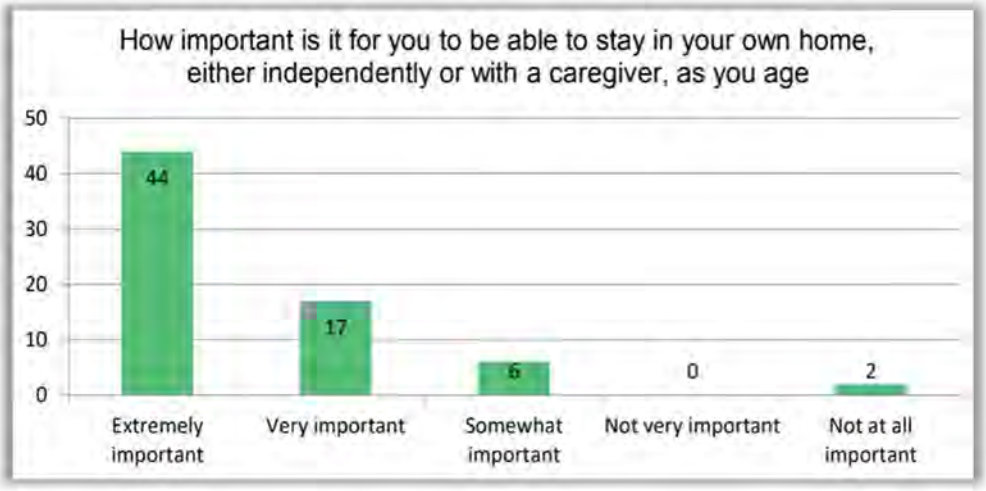
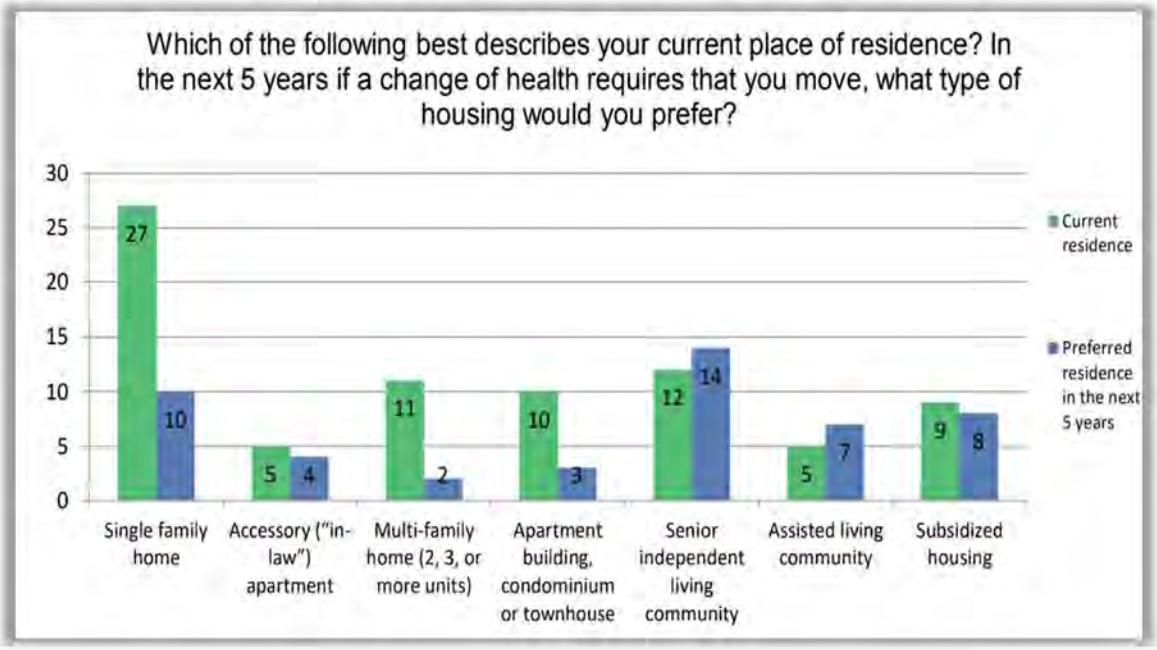


Figure 10 - Place of residence and desired housing if circumstances change (Livable Ware Survey)



Housing Supply

According to the 2016 Ware Master Plan, there were 4,503 housing units as of 2010, with 61% of those units being single family residences. For seniors and people with disabilities, Hillside Village has 80 units, Highland Village has 120 units split between two properties: 45 units for residents 50-60 years of age and 74 units for adults over 60. In 2007 the Housing Authority

renovated 1893 Church Street School into 29 units for older adults as well. Based on the 2014 American Community Survey, of the 1,048 households that rent their home in Ware, 56% were cost burden (paying more than 30% of their income on housing).

A new assisted living facility, Cedarbrook Village, is located near (soon to be closed) Baystate Mary Lane Hospital. This facility offers 119 units and includes assisted living, independent living, and memory care units. While there is currently no subsidized option available, they do have a "peace of mind" program that offers reduced rates after a couple years.

The Town completed a major re-write of the Zoning Bylaw in 2012 and has added several updates to the Bylaw in the last several years. The Town has allowed property owners to build accessory apartments since 2006 and has allowed them to be added in detached structures since 2014. Higher density residential development is allowed in the Suburban Residential, Beaver Lake and Downtown Residential districts, and mixed use development (including a mix of residential and commercial uses) is permitted in the downtown and Mill Yard districts. This enables the development of smaller housing units which are important for older adults who wish to downsize from single family homes.

Aging in Place

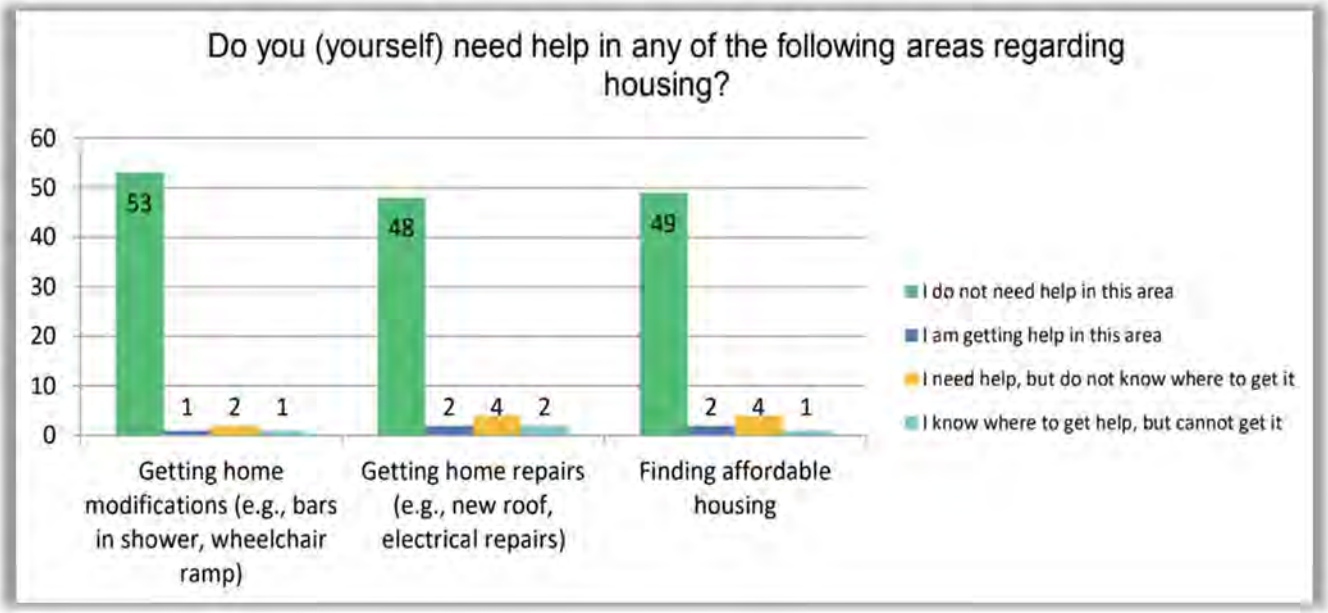
As previously noted, a majority (89%) of Ware Livable Community Survey respondents said it was either extremely important or very important to remain in their home as they grow older. Although not everyone needs assistance as they age, many may need help with basic tasks such as cleaning, preparing food, 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 and difficulty with balance. These changes may require that a wheelchair ramp be built or grab bars installed in bathrooms.

A majority of survey respondents indicated that they do not need assistance getting home modifications or home repairs. Two respondents reported that they need help getting home modifications but do not know where to get it, and four respondents said the same regarding home repairs.

For those who wish to remain in their home, Greater Springfield Senior Services provides services for people aging in place. West Mass Elder Care provides services at both Highland and Hillside Village for their older residents. 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.[6] The program provides assistance finding contractors as well as applying for loans.

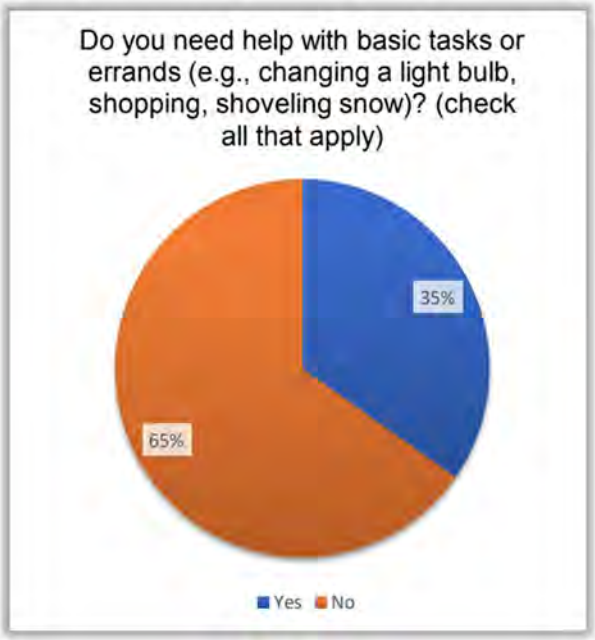
Figure 11 - Areas where people need help with housing (Livable Ware Survey)

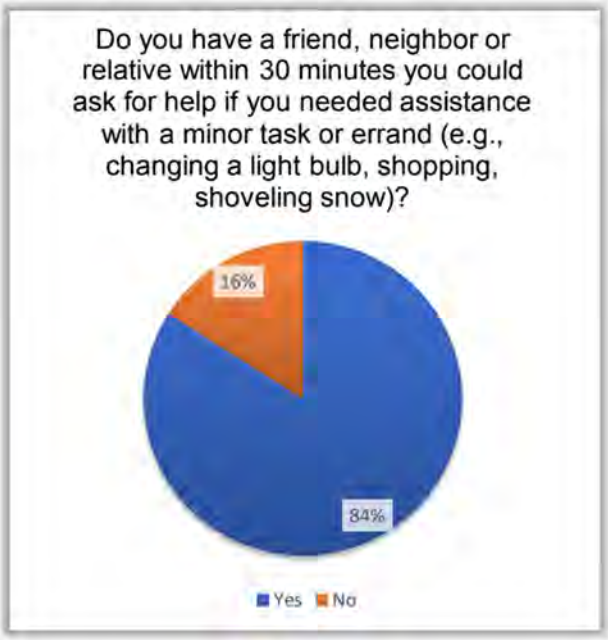


In the Livable Community Survey, 35% of respondents reported that they need help with basic tasks or errands (changing a light bulb, shopping, shoveling snow, etc.), but 16% of respondents also reported that they did not have a friend, neighbor or relative within 30 minutes of them that they could ask for help to complete minor 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, or through a Village model program. Village or Neighbors programs 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.

[6] Based on 2020 income guidelines – see http://www.pvpc.org/projects/home-modification-loan-program-hmlp

Figures 12 & 13 - Assistance needed with basic tasks, and friend or neighbors available to help
(Livable Ware Survey)





Assets & Accomplishments

- ✓ Low to moderate income housing managed by Housing Authority and private entities, many of which are for seniors or people with disabilities (Hillside Village, Valley View, Colonial Village, Highland Village)
  - Hillside – 80 units , Highland Village – 120 units; 74 residents are ages 60 and ovr between the two properties
  - 1983 Church Street School renovated into 29 units for older adults
  - Eagle Street
- ✓ 39% of housing units are in multi-family housing (2+ units)
- ✓ 9.3% SHI (close to 10% goal)
- ✓ Cedarbrook Village - 119 units – New development that includes assisted living, independent living and memory care; “piece of mind” program offers reduced rate after a couple of years but currently the facility does not have any subsidized units.
- ✓ Greater Springfield Senior Services and West Mass Elder Care provide services for people aging in place who are income eligible
- ✓ Home Modification Loans available through PVPC
- ✓ Accessory (in-law) apartments may be built upon Special Permit approval

Recommendations from Previous Reports

- ➢ Consider the potential for developing affordable housing for the elderly on Town own land

- Investigate the feasibility of partnering with non-government entities to create affordable housing to meet the 10% SHI threshold

Goals and Actions

Goal 3: Provide support for all Ware residents in locating affordable services to support aging in place.

Actions

3a. Assist homeowners in rehabilitating existing (older) housing to improve safety, accessibility, and basic upkeep and maintenance.
   - Assist homeowners in finding funding
   - Identify licensed contractors who can do home assessments

3b. Access funds to make Housing Authority property units more accessible.

3c. Provide a Housing Coordinator to assist people with finding housing, rehabilitation services, and funding assistance (for home modification).

3d. Develop and disseminate materials regarding home modification and rehabilitation funds available for low-income households; seek funding to keep these services available.

3e. Develop a volunteer-based or intergenerational community service program to assist people aging in place with home upkeep and landscaping.

3f. Develop standards for access to all new housing developments to enable people to age in place.

3g. Ensure that all older homeowners are familiar with the Property Tax Work-Off Program and eligible volunteer opportunities. Expand the program to enable additional participants (the program is currently limited by income, and veteran status and is capped at 15 people per year).

3h. Connect people to resources and counseling (such as the Tenancy Preservation Program) for people at risk of eviction; identify shelters or programs to assist people who are un-housed.

3i. Research and consider development of the Village Model at the local or regional level and identify NORCs (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities) to provide assistance to elders who wish to remain in their homes and community.

3j. Investigate the foster care program for older adults which provides a non-taxed monthly stipend for people to live with older person in their home in exchange for providing assistance with basic tasks.

Goal 4: 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 Ware.

Actions

4a. Develop a Housing Need Assessment or Housing Production Plan that includes an inventory of the existing housing stock and engages older adults in determining the types of housing desired in order for them to be able to stay in community.

4b. Create a detailed inventory of suitable property in town for the development of affordable, mixed income, mixed use, and assisted living housing. Promote development of housing for older adults that is located within walking distance of the Town center, parks and services.

4c. Explore alternative living models such as shared housing, co-housing, and intergenerational housing to expand the housing options for older adults looking for a supported living environment.

4d. Develop planning and zoning tools to prioritize and incentivize housing development models that provide for a mix of housing types.

- Expand housing choices through research and adoption of innovative housing models, zoning and financing options - Ex. Tiny houses, cottage type housing.
- Encourage housing development close to village centers, public transportation and major community services.
- Monitor development of Accessory Dwelling Units and consider allowing by right rather than by special permit.
- Adopt an inclusionary zoning bylaw to increase affordable housing opportunities.
- Amend use and dimensional requirements to expand housing options.
- Develop mixed-use districts.

4e. Investigate the possibility of building affordable senior housing on town-owned land; partner with private and/or non-governmental organizations to create additional affordable housing units to meet 10% goal for the Town.

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 (see Figure 14). 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 what are the primary ways in which one meets their

transportation needs, a majority of respondents said they drove themself (57 respondents), followed by spouse of child(ren) driving them (17 respondents) and friends and neighbors driving them (12 respondents). When asked if those who still drove modified their driving to make it easier or safer, survey respondents said that they avoid driving in bad weather (19 respondents), driving at night (18 respondents), and driving long distances (11 respondents).

Figure 14 - Ways that people modify driving to make it easier or safer (Livable Ware Survey)

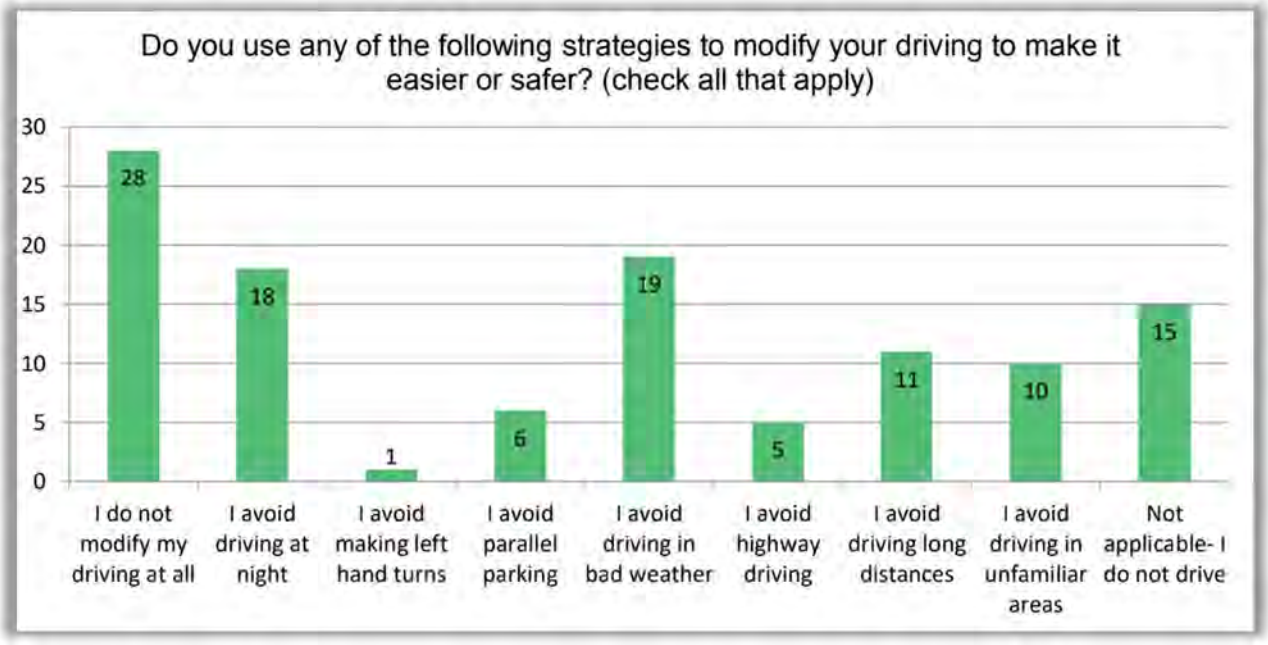
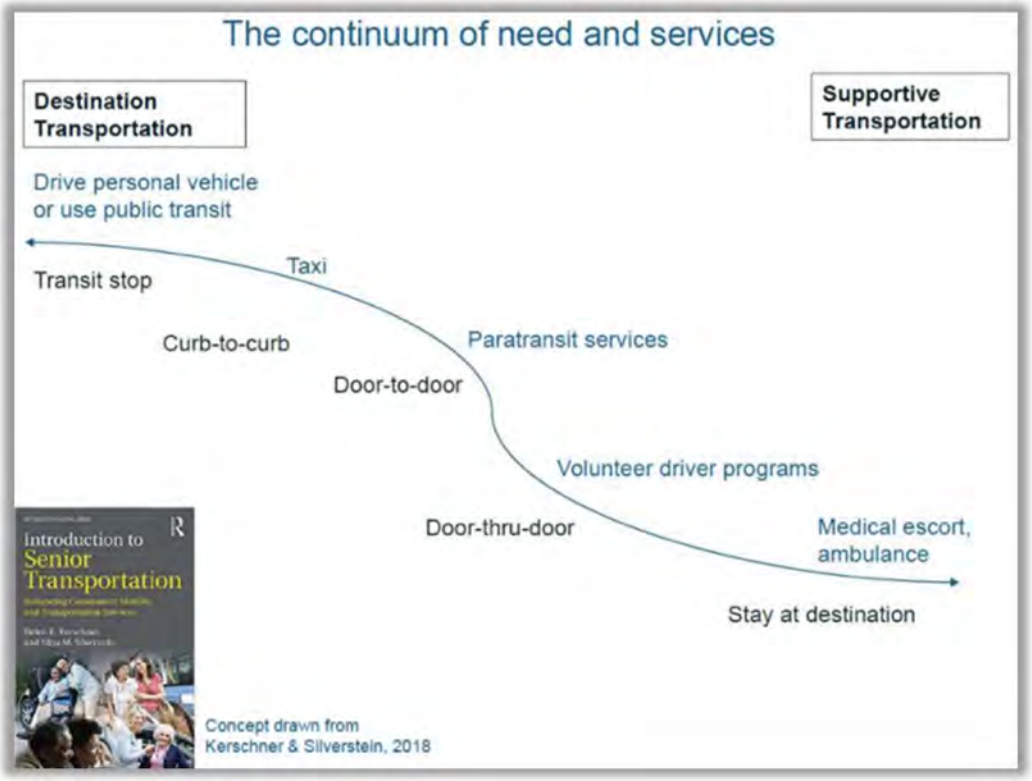


Figure15 illustrates the continuum of assistance that is needed as people transition from being independent and driving themselves, to not driving and taking public transit, to needing help getting to the door and then through the door. When people can use public transit and walk to transit stops or other destinations, 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 15 - Continuum of Transportation Assistance needed with age
(Source: Introduction to Senior Transportation)



Transportation Services

Services such as public transportation, senior center vans, and private transportation services are important to have in place when older adults in the community lose the ability to drive or the resources to maintain a personal automobile. Transportation services available in Ware include limited fixed route bus service and on-demand van rides through the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA), and van transportation offered through the Ware Senior Center and the Quaboag Connector.

The PVTA operates the Ware-Palmer Circulator, running two routes five days a week from 8 am to 5:30 pm. The PVTA offers Paratransit services on all days that the Ware-Palmer Circulator operates for people with disabilities for those who live within ¾ of a mile from a PVTA city bus line. The PVTA also offers door-to-door on demand van service for seniors (over 60) and people with disabilities on Monday-Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm on a space available basis. The service provides rides within the PVTA service area.

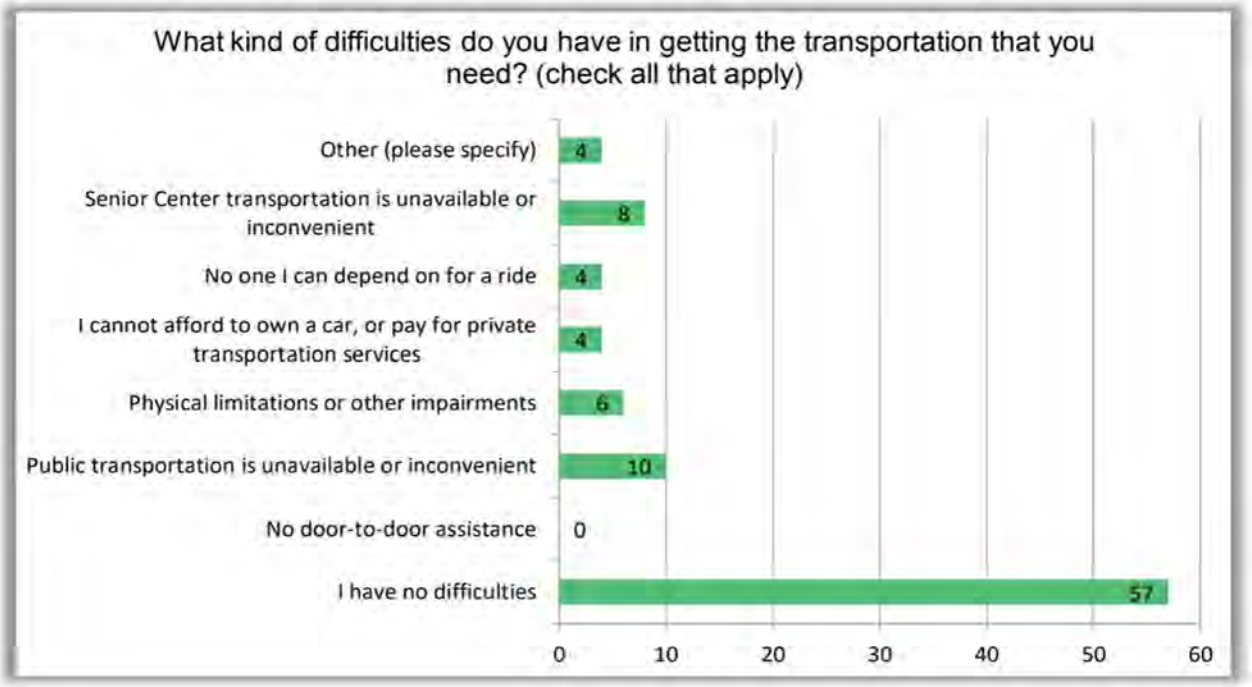
The Quaboag Connector provides curb-to-curb transportation to Ware and eight surrounding communities Monday-Thursday 6:00 am to 7:00 pm and Friday-Saturday 6:00 am to 4:00 pm. The Connector is looking into an online reservation system that will allow for same day scheduling, but currently rides through the Quaboag Connector need to be scheduled at least

two days in advance, and each ride is $4 round trip. Baystate Health recently contributed funding for the Quaboag Connector to add two vans to its fleet to meet the needs for transportation to Baystate Wing Hospital once Baystate Mary Lane closes (in 2023).

The Ware Council on Aging runs a van service program as well, available to seniors on Monday, Thursday and Friday by appointment. The COA coordinates with the Quaboag Connector to offer transportation when QC buses are at capacity. However, the COA is currently operating with only one volunteer driver so has limited capacity to provide additional rides.

One major concern identified in the Ware Master Plan in 2016 was that it may take between two to four hours riding public transportation (i.e. the PVTA bus) to reach a major service, employment or education center. When asked in the Livable Community Survey what kind of difficulties one has in getting the transportation that they need, the majority claimed no difficulties (57 respondents- likely the same 57 respondents who reported driving themselves), while the largest difficulties reported was that public transportation is unavailable or inconvenient (10 respondents) and that Senior Center transportation is unavailable or inconvenient (8 respondents). As noted above, the anticipated closure of Baystate Mary Lane raised concerns for many survey respondents about getting transportation to medical appointments in the future.

Figure 16 - Difficulties in getting transportation services (Livable Ware Survey)



Infrastructure for Walking and Biking

Many older adults choose to live within walking distance of stores and amenities when they get older in order to maintain independence without needing a car. When surveyed about the primary ways Ware residents meet their transportation needs, seven (7) respondents reported they walk and only two (2) selected biking or e-biking. The WalkScore calculation (at www.walkscore.com) at the Ware Senior Center is a 48 out of 100, indicating that Ware is a "car dependent" community. This evaluation also gives the Senior Center a score of 32 out of 100 for being "somewhat bikeable." The WalkScore calculates the number of services and amenities near the address for which the score is determined.

In 2020 Ware completed a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan that included an action plan to improve the town's infrastructure for all users, including pedestrians, people on bikes, people taking transit, and people in wheelchairs. Of the recommendations, streets that connect to Church, West, North, and Pleasant Street were proposed locations for sidewalk installations, with sidewalks on West and Pulaski Street needing significant repairs. The Prioritization Plan also suggests projects to improve accessibility and safety, including signal replacements and retiming, bicycle rack installation, ADA compliant ramps installations where necessary, and adding speed radar signs along key municipal roadways.

Bike lanes are planned for Main Street (route 32) in downtown as part of the Main Street reconstruction project. This project also includes sidewalk reconstruction, safer traffic patterns, new traffic signals at three primary intersections, and safer pedestrian crossings. A walk audit completed in 2019 with Walk Boston proposed Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons and signage as potential improvements to crosswalk safety in other mid-block or non-signaled locations.

Recommendations from Previous Reports

- Improve pedestrian experience with improved crosswalks, an attractive and functional streetscape, and the completion of the rail trail
    - Repair or reconstruct streets and sidewalks
    - Streets that connect to Church, West, North, and Pleasant St are proposed locations for sidewalk installation
- Collaborate with transit providers in the greater region to enhance availability in Ware
- Assure alternative transportation routes are available in case of emergency including the Quaboag Connector, as well as the rail-trail which assists in emergency response and connects residents to employment
- Develop plan to use school buses and Quaboag Connector to evacuate vulnerable populations to shelters/cooling centers
- Complete Streets Prioritization Plan recommendations/projects:
    - Main St reconstruction, signal replacement/retiming, and bike rack installation

- Make East St underpass accessible with ADA compliant ramps
- West St sidewalk reconstruction, road diet, and bike lane installation
- Chestnut St sidewalk improvements and intersection reconstruction
- Church St sidewalk reconstruction, extension, and crossing improvements
- Pulaski St traffic calming and sidewalk replacement
- West and Pulaski St crossing improvements
    - curb extensions, new ADA compliant curb ramps, restriped crosswalks, install RRFB
- South St at Pulaski St crossing improvements
- Pleasant St accessibility improvements and shared lane markings
- North St sidewalk reconstructions and extension
- Intersection improvements on West Ave
- Install wayfinding signage throughout King St corridor identifying Forge Pond Park, Ellis Field, and Clark Land
- Install speed radar signs along key municipal roadways
- Greenwich Rd sidewalk installation

Assets & Accomplishments

Services

- ✓ Quaboag Connector provides rides in 9-town Service Area
- ✓ Senior Center van provides rides in Ware
- ✓ Senior Housing transportation services
- ✓ PVTA Ware-Palmer Circulator, paratransit and rides for seniors

Infrastructure

- ✓ Complete Streets Prioritization Plan in place
- ✓ Main Street Redesign includes sidewalk reconstruction, safer traffic patterns and pedestrian crossings
- ✓ Ware River Trail

Goals and Actions

Goal 5: Ensure that transportation services are available to residents of all ages and abilities to allow access food, medical appointments, employment, and education.

Actions (Transportation Services)

5a. Expand van service (Quaboag Connector) for older adults to provide medical transportation as needed to Baystate Wing hospital in preparation for the closure of Baystate Mary Lane.

5b. Add bus shelters at stops near senior housing and encourage retail establishments to install shelters near bus stops on their property (i.e. possible transportation shelter in Walmart parking lot in a location where bus will not be in the way).

5c. Post information on transportation services including PVTA fixed routes and on demand services, Senior Center Van and Quaboag Connector service areas, and fares on Senior Center website and provide information in multiple locations in town. Ensure that bus stops on fixed routes are well marked.

5d. Explore the feasibility of expanding the Quaboag Connector to offer shared transportation services to a broader area and expand existing Town services as needed.

5e. Survey older adults and people with disabilities on a regular basis to monitor transportation needs.

5f. Research the feasibility of providing 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.

5g. Train Quaboag Connector, 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.

5h. Research the cost, availability and safety of ride share service options (e,g. Lyft, Uber or taxi service); provide training on how to use ride sharing services.

5i. Promote affordable home delivery services in town. Include information on stores that deliver on COA website

Goal 6: Ensure that roads, sidewalks and trail networks are safe and comfortable for use by people of all ages and abilities.

Actions (Transportation Infrastructure)

6a. Improve sidewalk connectivity and maintenance in neighborhoods within ½ mile of services.

- Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and be well maintained.
- Install ramps and detectable warning strips at all crosswalks.
- Priority locations include West Street, Church Street, North Street, Pleasant Street, and Robins Road.

6b. Maintain sidewalks in summer and winter to prevent falls.

6c. Implement projects listed in the Ware Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, particularly in areas used by older adults (i.e. traffic calming and pedestrian improvements on West Street).

6d. Add dementia friendly design elements when completing infrastructure improvements including audible cues and appropriate timing on crosswalks, and separation from traffic on sidewalks (as feasible).

6e. Ensure that the Ware River Trail is wheelchair accessible at all entries and road crossings and add amenities to make the trail more comfortable for older adults including benches and restrooms or signage pointing to nearby public restrooms (currently available at the Senior Center and Walmart).

6f. Install electric charging stations at the Senior Center and other key locations.

6g. Develop a map of safe walking and biking routes for people of all ages and abilities and make it available throughout town in print and in digital form on the Town website.

6h. 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.

Goal 7: Implement programs that promote safe driving and transition to other forms of transportation.

7a. Support and allow space for driver skill retention and setting up car for safety with community organizations, through partnerships with AARP, AAA, RMV, Auto Insurance providers.

7b. Promote use of high visibility vests for people walking on roads.

7c. Work with the PVTA and Quaboag Connector to hold transportation orientation sessions for older adults.

Communication, Information and Technology

Communication access to technology as a means for getting information is essential to the success of all of the domains of an Age and Dementia Friendly Community, as residents must know how to access information about programs, services, and places that are age and dementia friendly in order to use and appreciate these resources. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for technology to communicate with one's community, shop for groceries and other products, and participate in fitness programming and telehealth services when the Senior Center, businesses, and restaurants and cultural venues were closed.

Although Ware established a town website in 2005, the pandemic illuminated the gap in use and access to technology known as the "Digital Divide." The Ware Livable Community Survey 2021 brought to light just how prominent the Digital Divide is in Ware, with fifteen respondents saying they are not interested in using technology at all. Ten reported needing assistance in accessing equipment (iPad or laptop), fourteen needing training on how to use a computer or

tablet and software, and twenty-one needing help accessing low-cost internet service. When asked how often they use Zoom, WebEx Google Chats, or other video meeting applications on the computer, only nineteen respondents reported using these applications at least once a month, with forty respondents reporting they never use video meeting applications on the computer.

In addition to those who don't have access to technology, communication challenges exist with people with visual or hearing impairments, and those whose first language is not English. Once people are connected to technology, it can help those with physical impairments to participate in meetings that would otherwise be hard to get to in person. However, additional assistance such as closed captioning for hearing impaired people, or translation services, should be considered in order to remove the barriers that restrict participation by many community members.

When asked where Ware residents get information about services for older adults, a majority of respondents said the Local Senior Center or Council on Aging (62), followed by family or friends (38) and doctor or other health care professionals (30). Eighty-one percent of respondents reported that they felt informed about what to do in the event of a weather or other local emergency, but fifteen respondents felt uninformed.

Figure 17 - Assistance needed with accessing technology (Livable Ware Survey)

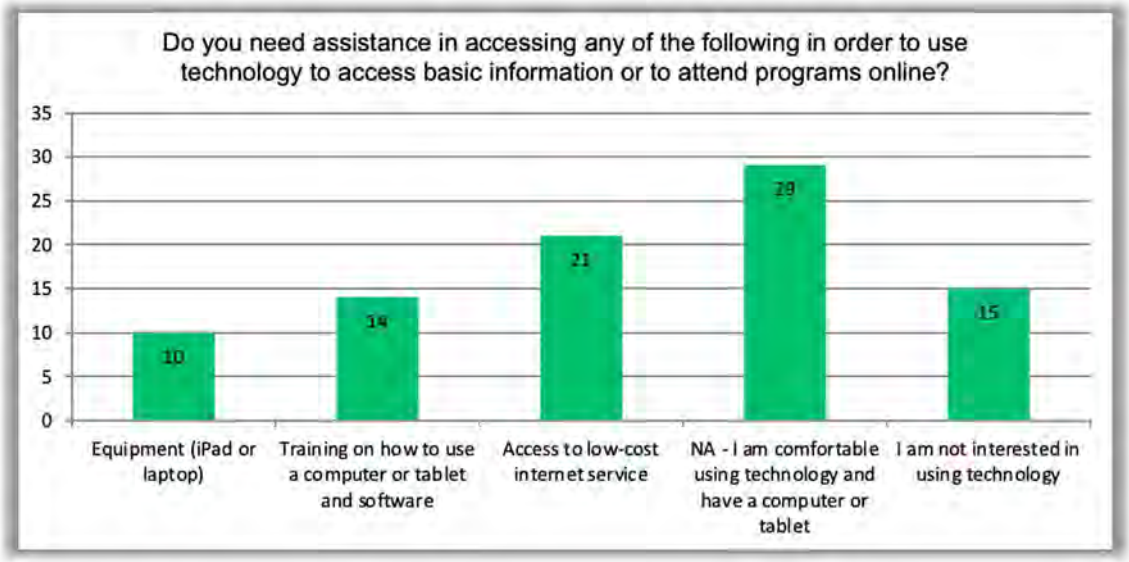


Figure 18 - Frequency of using technology or communicating with friends and relatives (Livable Ware Survey)

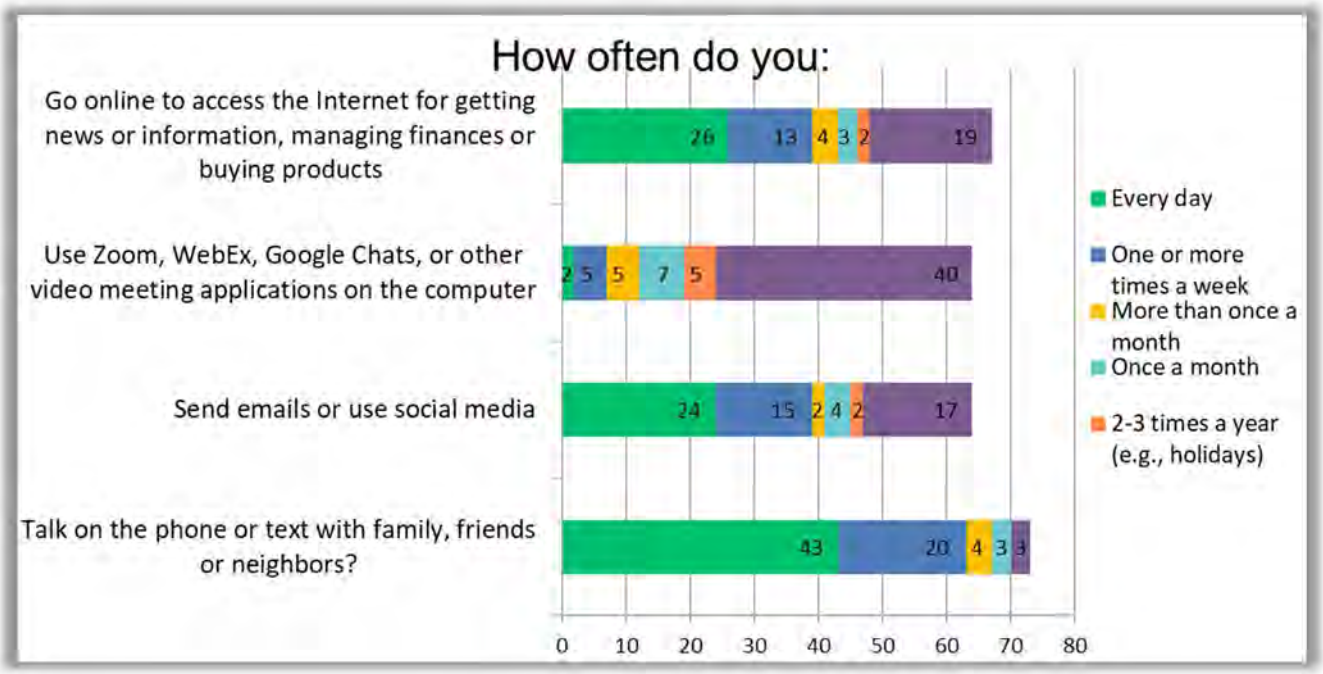
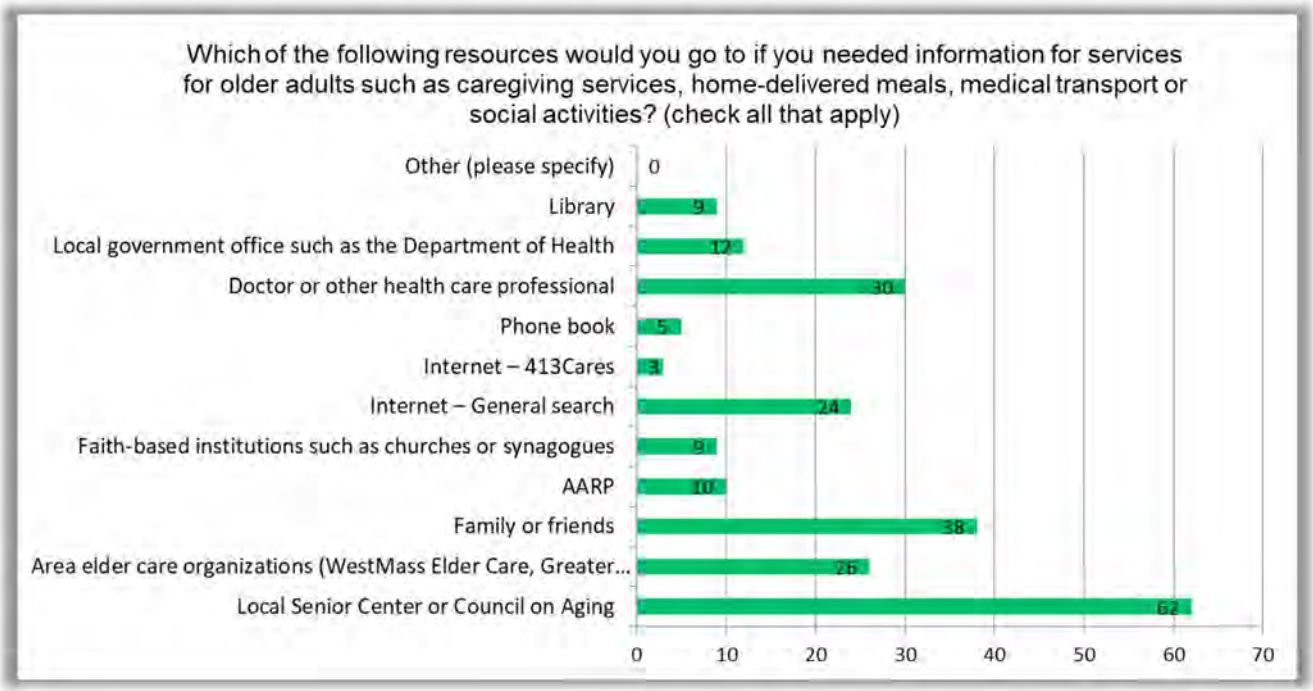


Figure 19 - Main sources of information (Livable Ware Survey)



Communication can also be in the form of signs or other information that clearly directs people to the places they want to go. The Town has recently implemented a Wayfinding system in the downtown area that directs people to parking areas and other places of interest. The 2016

Ware Master Plan included recommendations around a tourism plan and improving public outreach within the community to ensure that Ware residents are aware of local assets such as the Ware River Trail and other resources that allow residents to access the natural environment. The Visioning, Branding, Wayfinding and Business Development Plan recommended that the Town create a community newsletter to supplement information posted on the Town website, or for people who do not have access to technological communication devices.

The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan (2018) recommends that the Town develop a plan for communication to the public and among state and Town officials in the event of a public health emergency, and improved coordination with emergency officials to improve access to shelters and recovery facilities during and after emergencies.

Assets & Accomplishments

- ✓ Assistance with applications for Comcast Essentials through the COA
- ✓ WiFi access offered at the Library, Senior Center, and Town Hall
- ✓ Ware Cable Access TV broadcasts public meetings and posts recordings online
- ✓ Ware Senior Center publishes a monthly newsletter with announcements about programs and services

Challenges

- ➢ Many parts of town do not have access to high-speed internet
- ➢ Many older adults do not currently use technology for information or communication

Goals and Actions

Goal 8: Ensure that all residents have access to information about policies and programs that provide opportunities for health and community engagement.

Actions

8a. Ensure that every household and business in Ware has access to high-speed internet.

8b. Assist older adults in acquiring equipment and training on how to use it and provide assistance with accessing low cost or free broadband service.

- Work with schools and other older adults to train others how to use devices

8c. Provide accommodations for vision and hearing impaired on Town website and in spaces used for public meetings (closed captioning, interpreter).

8d. 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; adopt effective methods to fill communication gaps.

8e. 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.

8f. 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.

8g. 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.

8h. Collaborate with existing community-based networks such as faith communities, civic groups, education channels, business groups, to share information.

8i. 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.

Goal 9: Facilitate a culture of support and acceptance for older adults and people living with dementia.

Actions

9a. 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.

9b. 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.

9c. 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.

9d. Ensure that reading glasses or magnifying glasses are available at election locations for people with visual impairments.

9e. 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.

Buildings and Outdoor Spaces

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. During the pandemic, parks and open spaces were vital places for people to meet with friends or to get exercise while buildings and gyms were closed. According to the Ware Livable Community survey, parks or outdoor space (42 respondents) were second to restaurants or cafés (48 respondents) for places where people liked to spend their free time prior to the pandemic and remained the two most popular places to visit since COVID-19.

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 with accessible walking trails, sidewalks, bike paths and bike lanes, 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 all support older adults, people with disabilities, and people of all ages.

Outdoor Spaces

Ware last updated the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) in 2016. Since the initial plan was developed in 2007, the Town has participated in the buying of land for conservation purposes, upgraded facilities at Memorial Field and Grenville Park, and made improvements (including the installation of bridges) on the southern section of the Ware River Greenway rail trail. The Parks and Recreation Commission and Open Space Committee completed multiple projects at Grenville Park including renovating the bandstand and adding ramps to make the space ADA compliant, adding two wheelchair accessible fishing piers with parking, paving the roads surrounding the park and the path leading to the restrooms to support those with mobility issues, and expanding hiking trails. Grenville Park is an asset to the town, as the existing tree canopy and undeveloped area provide cooling and spaces for recreational activities and social gatherings. At several parks there are wheelchair accessible picnic benches, and the dog park is also ADA compliant.

The Town of Ware owns 529.2 acres of land (23% of the Town's land area) that is used for conservation and recreation. There are existing trails within Grenville Park and the Quabbin Reservoir Park, and the Ware River Valley Rail Trail connects Robbins Road to the Walmart/Lowes parking lot to the south providing a walking, biking or rolling route to popular stores including Walmart and Lowes. Several reports, including the recent Complete Streets Prioritization Plan include recommendations for expanding sidewalks to connect housing to stores and services.

The 2016 Ware Master Plan and the 2016 OSRP cited multiple community concerns including the inaccessibility of most trails due to a lack of maintenance, parking facilities, signage, and trail markers. The OSRP recommended publicizing which trails are accessible; creating ADA compliant sidewalks on Robbins Road, West Street, North Street and Church Street; and adding benches in parks and along walking trails. The Visioning, Branding, Wayfinding, & Business Development Plan recommended the creation of a wayfinding system, much of which was developed in 2019. This system of clear signage provides directions to a variety of town assets including Downtown, the Quabbin Reservoir, Grenville Park, Swift River Access, and the Senior Center.

Completing the rail trail in Ware would provide a connection between Hardwick and Palmer, making Ware's downtown the center of the trail. The trail is accessible for people in wheelchairs as well as on bikes, making it an important recreational resource as well as a safe place for nonmotorized transportation to Walmart and Lowes. The Visioning, Branding, Wayfinding, & Business Development Plan completed in 2015 recommended the Town consider developing a public gathering space in Ware's downtown, which could double as a space for community fitness classes increasing the amount of passive and active recreational opportunities available for older adults in Ware.

Only eight respondents of the Ware Livable Community Survey said they participated in gym or fitness classes prior to COVID-19, with only two attending classes in person since COVID-19 shutdowns began ending.

Buildings for Indoor Gathering

The Ware Senior Center is an important public building that hosts programming for older adults during their hours of operation as well as some evening game nights. Community rooms at Housing Authority properties also offer spaces for events and programming within walking distance for residents of those facilities. One of the objectives of the 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan included securing an indoor space for recreational activities. Some communities have developed shared use agreements with public schools so that community members can use gymnasiums or exercise equipment when schools are not in session. The relative proximity of the Senior Center to the Ware public schools suggests an opportunity for shared use of spaces and intergenerational programming between the Senior Center and the School.

Assets & Accomplishments

- ✓ The Library and Ware Senior Center are places where older adults can attend events and programs during the day.
- ✓ Ware River Valley Greenway Trail is open between Robbins Road and Gibb's Crossing and has been re-graded for better accessibility.

- ✓ Quabbin Reservoir Park offers many trails, some of which are handicapped accessible.
- ✓ An accessible trail on Church Street developed by the East Quabbin Land Trust
- ✓ Upgrades to Grenville Park: bandstand was renovated (connected to electric service), ramps added, playground upgraded, and roads repaired. This park offers a variety of space for recreational activities, social gatherings, access to food (through the Food Bank mobile bus), and nature close to downtown.
- ✓ Two wheelchair accessible fishing piers with parking at Grenville Park
- ✓ Upgrades to facilities at Memorial Field include a new walking path around the perimeter
- ✓ New wheelchair accessible picnic tables at parks
- ✓ Accessible dog park

Recommendations from Existing Plans

Master Plan (2016):

- ➢ Improve both passive and active recreational opportunities
- ➢ Improve facilities to increase passive outdoor recreation including hiking, bicycling, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, etc.
- ➢ Complete rail trail to connect Hardwick to Palmer
- ➢ Provide new gathering spaces (indoor and outdoor) to accommodate activities and opportunities for people to socialize.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (2016):

- ➢ Develop passive and active recreation opportunities on town owned and private land
  - o maintain existing trail networks
  - o develop signage and maps for trail network and make publicly available
  - o Support development of arts and culture
  - o Continue with existing seasonal programs for youth and adults
- ➢ Secure space for indoor recreation
- ➢ Create a centralized event space in downtown

Goals and Actions

Goal 10: Provide opportunities for use of public buildings and outdoor spaces by people of all ages and abilities.

Actions

10a. Work toward making public buildings, parks and sidewalks in Ware Dementia Friendly & ADA accessible.
- Update and expand ADA assessment and transition plan.

- Activate ADA committee to develop a system to identify needed improvements to public buildings and town-owned outdoor spaces, and to prioritize and track improvements.

10b. Assess/solicit feedback from older residents on desired outdoor recreational opportunities to inform future expenditures on parks and recreation.

10c. Encourage creation of trails, parks and bikeways close to centers of population and/or where public transportation is available.

10d. Encourage development of handicapped accessible trails in community owned conservation and recreation areas. Maintain vegetation to reduce exposure to ticks.

10e. Ensure that the Ware River Trail is wheelchair accessible at all entries and road crossings; and add amenities to make the trail more comfortable for older adults including benches and signage pointing to nearby public restrooms (Senior Center, Walmart).

10f. Develop a map of safe walking and biking routes for people of all ages and abilities and make it available throughout town in print and in digital form on the Town website. Provide information on levels of difficulty and whether or not they are ADA compliant and/or accessible to people in wheelchairs.

10g. Create a plan for locating/developing outdoor gathering spaces and seating, and advocate for public outdoor seating/areas as a priority in all 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.

10h. Complete trail and sidewalk connections and make fitness stations that are accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

- Install a sidewalk on Robbins Road to provide a safe walking route from the Senior Center to the Rail Trail.
- Improve sidewalk connectivity and accessibility on West Street and install safer pedestrian crossings.
- Improve accessibility of sidewalks on North Street and Church Street for connection to Grenville Park.

10i. Connect existing housing developments to services and activity centers within walking distance by completing gaps in sidewalks. Require new housing projects to provide access routes to connect to existing trails or activity centers.

10j. Investigate the possibility of developing a shared use agreement with the school for use of the gymnasium by community members while schools are not in session.

10k. 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.
10l. Assess/upgrade existing lighting and signage in public buildings and outdoor spaces.
10m. 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.

Goal 11: Increase programming and improve environments that encourages active living and social interaction for older adults in buildings and outdoor spaces in Ware.

Actions

11a. 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.
11b. 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.
11c. Establish regular, organized activities in parks, both age-specific and multigenerational, by partnering with local organizations.

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.[7] This research 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 concerns about social isolation among many older adults as they were advised to stay home. Transportation services and places where people had the opportunity to socialize were closed during the first year of the pandemic, leaving outdoor spaces such as

[7] 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)

in person. The livable Community Survey illustrates the concern about social isolation in Ware with nine respondents having concerns prior to the pandemic and 16 respondents saying that they were concerned about social isolation after the state-mandated stay-at-home order (Figure 20). The survey also showed that before the pandemic most respondents spent time in restaurants and cafes (48 respondents), attended church or other faith-based organizations (31 respondents), or visited parks or open spaces (42 respondents) or the library (28 respondents), while during the pandemic most of these numbers were cut in half. Although parks and outdoor spaces in many communities saw more use during the pandemic, only 23 respondents (compared to 42 prior to the pandemic) on the Ware survey said that they went to parks and open spaces during the pandemic (Figure 21).

Figure 20 - Concerns before and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Livable Ware Survey)

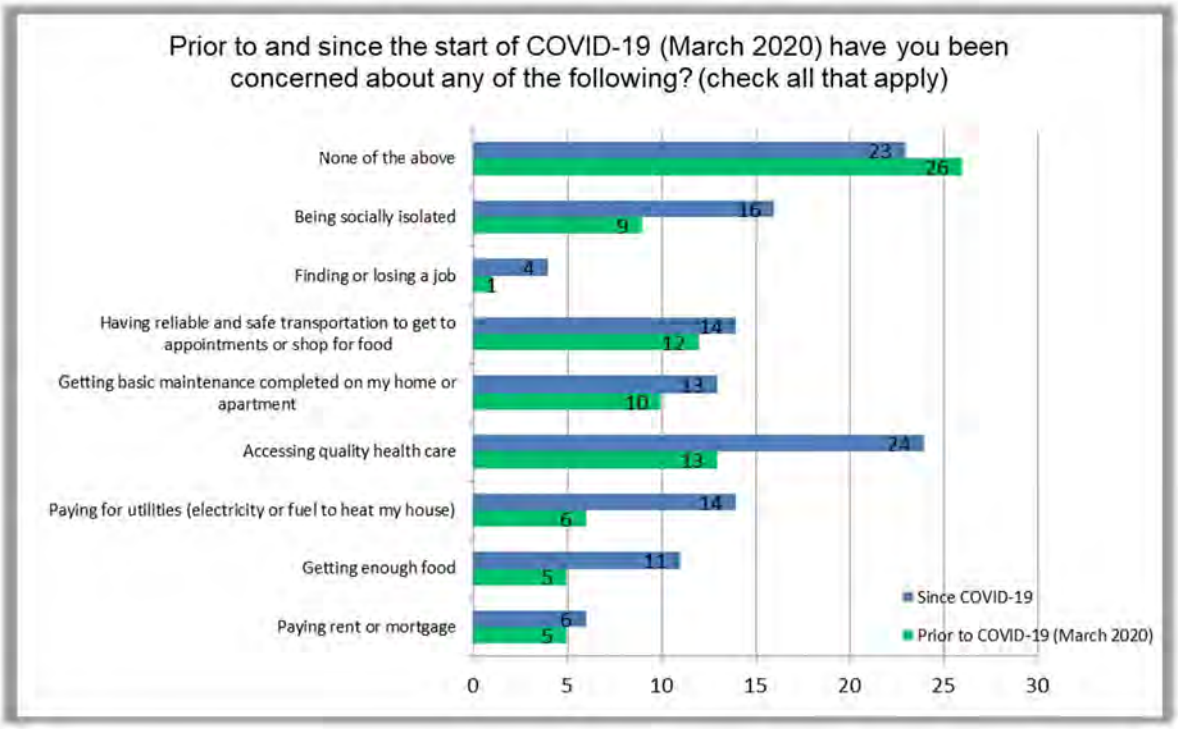
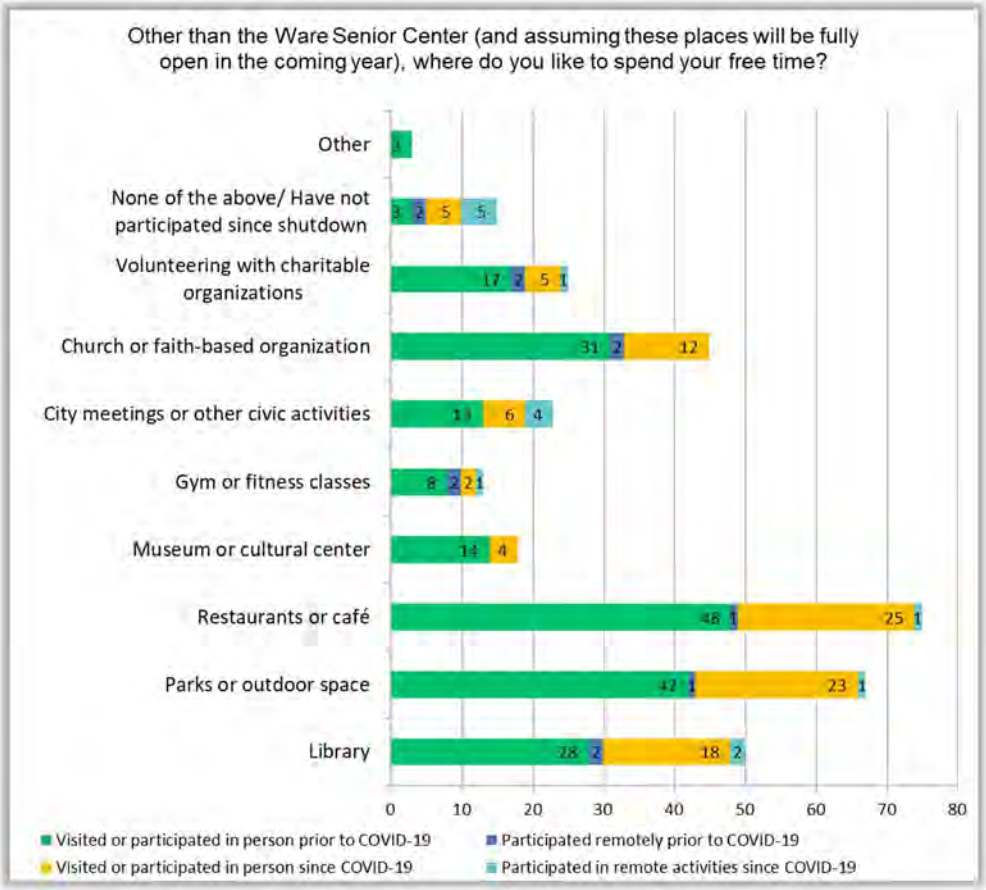


Figure 21 - Places where people spend free time - before and since the pandemic (Livable Ware Survey)



Ware Senior Center

The Ware Senior Center offers many opportunities for social interaction through programming and congregate meals. While congregate meals were suspended during the pandemic, staff conducted regular check-in calls and organized meal deliveries and brown bag pick-ups.

When asked about which Senior Center programs they had attended (when the Senior Center was open), most survey respondents said daily lunches (26), exercise programs (21), and social activities such as games and art programs (21). Of those who said they did not use the Senior Center (44 out of 78 respondents), the main reason selected was not knowing what kind of programs were available (13 respondents), and the second was lack of interest (11 respondents). Although it is not critical that older adults use the Senior Center, it is important that those who feel most socially isolated feel welcome to attend programs or services, and that they know what is available. Additional outreach to those most at risk may uncover whether additional connections or invitations should be made to this at-risk population.

Figure 22 - Programs and services used at the Ware Senior Center (Livable Ware Survey)

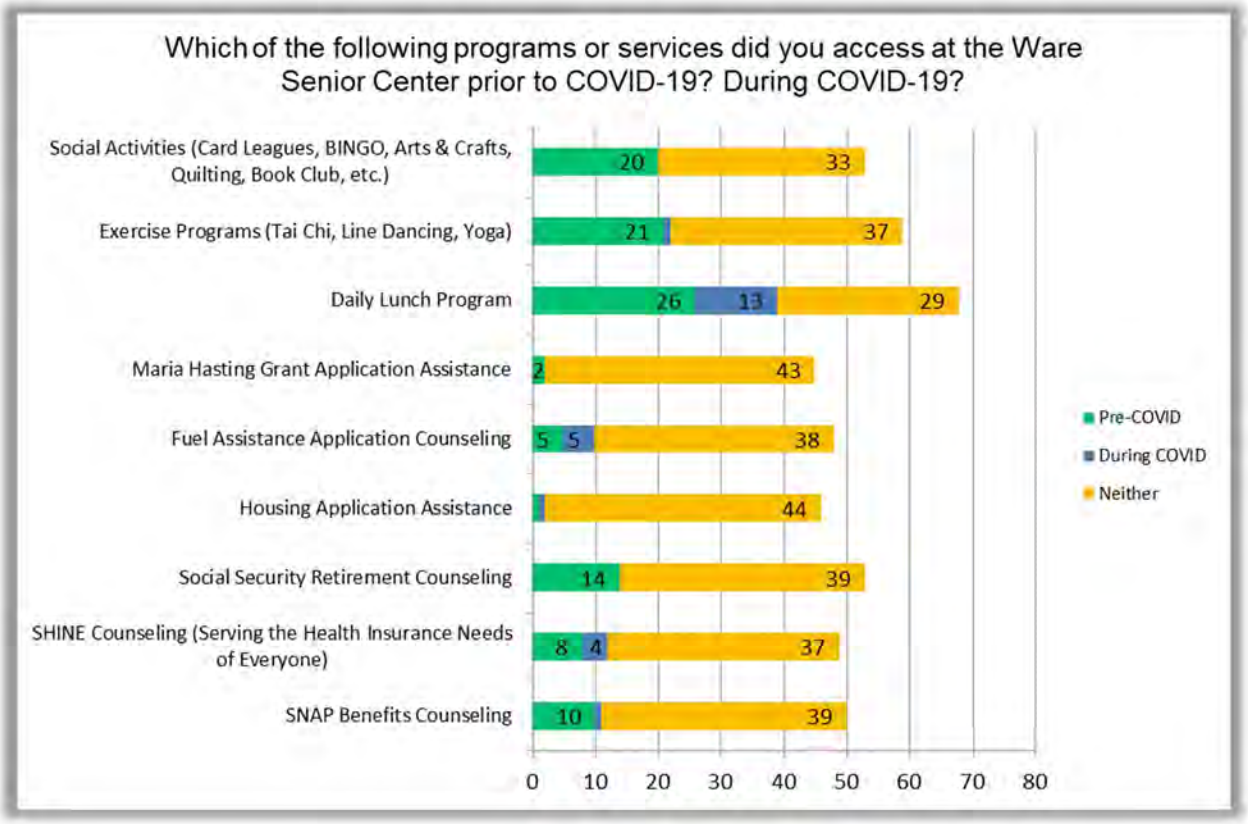
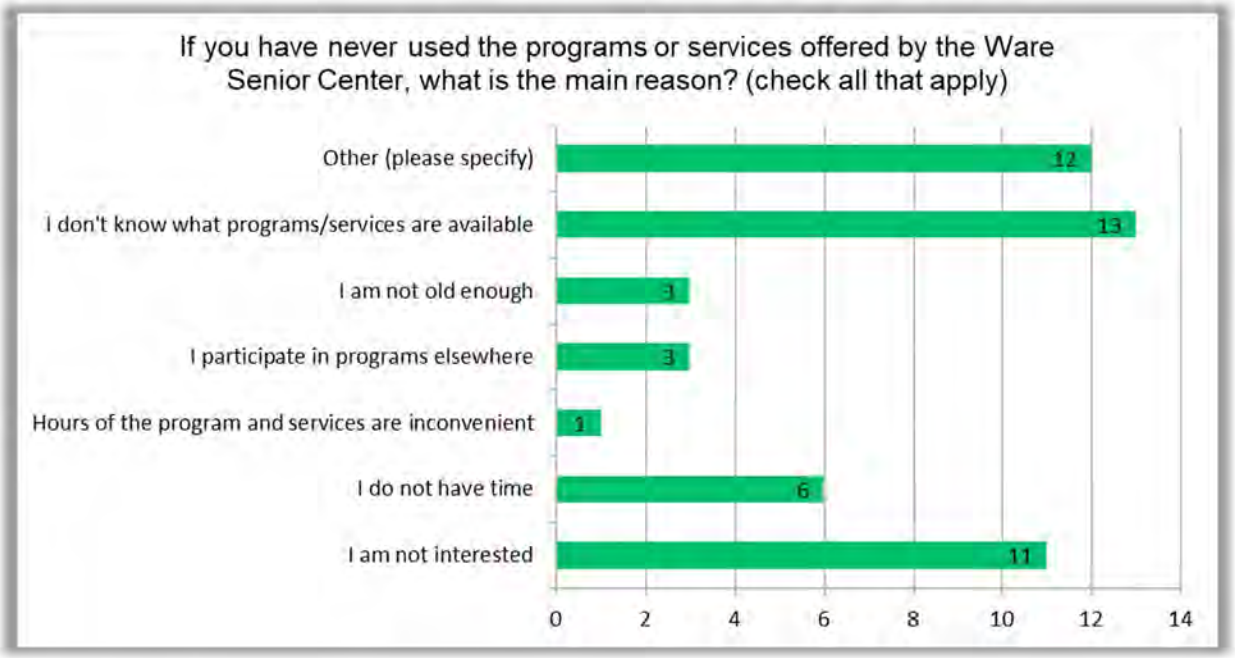


Figure 23 - Reasons people do not use the Senior Center (Livable Ware Survey)



Young Men's Library Association

The Young Men's Library Association, Ware's public library, is located on Main Street in the center of downtown Ware. The library offers contactless pickup of materials and is also open for browsing on Monday (1-8 pm), Tuesday-Thursday (10 am-5 pm), and on Saturdays (9 am-12 pm). The library offers interlibrary loans and a Wi-Fi Hotspot borrowing program which gives people access to internet without having to sign up for internet service and offers laptops and computers for use in the library. Each hot spot supports up to 10 connected devices. During the pandemic, access to technology was particularly important for social interaction as well as to connect to health care services and participate in exercise programs. A hot spot borrowing program can alleviate some of the need for internet connectivity in the community, but a long-range plan to connect all residents to internet and to provide discounted service for older adults and others with limited income should be considered.

Ware Housing Authority properties

Highland Village is a property operated by the Ware Housing Authority and staffed by an employee of WestMass Elder Care who provides services and social programming for residents of the property as well as other community residents. A forum was held at Highland Village community room during a popular Bingo night. While some participants initially voiced negative opinions about services and opportunities for engagement that are available in the community, many said that they had lived in Ware for decades and stayed because of the connections they had within the community and the welcoming atmosphere at the Bingo night event and others offered at the Senior Center.

Social Inclusion

Intergenerational programming is an opportunity for community members to 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. The Senior Center is located close to the Ware Junior & Senior High School, providing an excellent opportunity for shared learning by young people and older adults. Prior to the pandemic, the Senior Center worked with high school honors students to offer an "Ask a teenager" program in which high school students offered help with using and troubleshooting computers and tablets.

Inclusion of all sectors of the community in social programming is important in building an inclusive and Age and Dementia Friendly community. People with dementia are at high risk of social isolation as they may not be able to drive or may become confused or agitated when they are out in public spaces. Providing activities such as memory cafes or support groups for people with dementia and their care partners could ensure a welcoming space for socializing. Also, trainings for staff of the library, volunteers at town-wide events, and the broader community can ensure that people with dementia are treated with respect and supported by the community. Likewise, planning and outreach of events or programming should consider all

sectors at risk of social isolation including veterans; people who are not fluent in English; people with vision, hearing or mobility impairments; and people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Social Organizations and Faith Based Community

Social and service clubs such as the Ware Lions Club provide opportunities for volunteer service and social interaction. The Lions Club sponsors concerts in Grenville park, fireworks in the summer, and programs that support research on vision and diabetes. Other social organizations include the American Legion, Shriners, Veterans' Council, Knights of Columbus, VFW, and the Weir River Social Club,

Faith communities are another resource for social interaction and support. Next to restaurants (48 responses) and parks (42 responses), churches and other faith-based institutions (31 responses) were the third most popular places where survey respondents said that they spent their free time. Ware hosts a number of churches including the Liberty Baptist Church, the Holy Cross Polish National Catholic Church, and All Saints Catholic Church.

Since many older adults spend time at faith-based institutions and social clubs, these would be beneficial organizations to partner with when conducting outreach and education about dementia and communicating about the services and programs that support the needs of older adults in the community.

Assets & Accomplishments

- ✓ COA programs – calling seniors and doing check-ins during pandemic, congregate meals
- ✓ Events at Highland Village (HA property) such as BINGO night are welcoming to all residents
- ✓ QVCDC Senior Outreach program
- ✓ Ware Fall Festival brings a lot of people to downtown
- ✓ Improvements on Main Street will make it more pedestrian friendly (as a place to gather)
- ✓ Faith-based organizations – churches are places where people find social connections
- ✓ Lions Club (concerts in the park), Shriners, etc., Knights of Columbus, VFW, Veterans Council
- ✓ Brookfield Institute (works with veterans)
- ✓ Library provides computers for use in the library, and loans out Hot Spots for internet access at home (users must have their own equipment)

Recommendations from Other Plans

Ware Master Plan (2016)

- ➢ Work with service providers to increase broadband internet throughout town
- ➢ Collaborate with library, schools, and other organizations to provide a broad cultural base including art and music

MVP Plan (2018)

- Build relationships and communication among neighbors and neighborhoods, especially between elderly and other age groups to encourage cohesion and community preparedness

Visioning, Branding & Business Development Plan

- Town and WB&CA should seek out creative businesses (art galleries, music stores, microbrewery, etc.) to provide more spaces for community members to enjoy and socialize

Goals and Actions

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

Actions

12a. Continue to collaborate with Ware Community Television and other senior centers to offer online and hybrid social and fitness programming that can be taped and accessed online or re-broadcast on Cable Access TV.

12b. Work with cable and internet providers to ensure long-term affordability of cable and internet services for older adults.

12c. Work with partners such as Cedarbrook Village to provide staffing for a Memory Café and other activities for people with dementia and their caregivers (adult day programs, creative arts/music, intergenerational connections, outings/group activities). Meaningfully engage people with dementia in developing programs and services.

12d. Work with library to train staff and provide programming for people with dementia.

12e. Continue to work with Ware Public Schools to facilitate intergenerational conversations and engagement.

12f. Ensure that activities and events are welcoming to people with dementia who may have to attend with a companion, caregiver, or family member.

12g. Provide information about accessibility of facilities and transportation options for community meetings and events.

12h. 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.

12i. Identify public meeting places in town for conversation circles (cafes, libraries), and schedule programming in these places to engage more residents in the community.

12j. 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.

12k. Identify "naturally occurring retirement communities" (NORCs) and develop neighborhood networks or "circles" using available communication channels and volunteers to serve as leads.

12l. 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.

- Provide outreach information and events in other languages as determined by the needs of residents

12m. Organize regional activities with other Age and Dementia Friendly Communities to expand opportunities for social engagement.

Employment and Civic Engagement

Every community benefits from an active and engaged population. Many older adults who have retired from their lifetime careers 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.

Most of the respondents (84%) to the Ware Livable Community Survey are retired, while 5% said that they do not anticipate ever fully retiring. No survey respondents said that they needed help finding employment, and only two respondents said that they needed help finding volunteer opportunities.

The Massachusetts Council on Aging provides training and support to improve the job seeking process for older adults through the 50+ Job Seekers Program with funding from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). The content and delivery of the program are guided by professional Career Coaches and has collaborations with AARP, EOEA, SCSEP, and MassHire. Adults who are 50 and older may access these services at www.50plusjobseekers.org.

Quaboag Regional Development Corporation (QVCDC), based in Ware, provides trainings on how to use computers and software and coaching on business development for those who are income eligible.

Ware's retail stores offer many part- and full-time opportunities for work in town. In times where reliable workers are hard to find, it may be mutually beneficial for stores and other local businesses to ensure a welcoming environment for older adults who wish to continue working.

The Ware Senior Center works with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to place people in volunteer positions where they get credit toward property tax abatements (if

financially eligible). Many fitness classes and other programs are run by volunteers through this program. RSVP is a nationwide program coordinated by the National Senior Service Corps and provides grants to qualified agencies and organizations "for the dual purpose of engaging people 55 or older in volunteer service to meet community needs and to provide a high-quality experience that will enrich the lives of volunteers." Community Action Pioneer Valley hosts the RSVP of the Pioneer Valley program, matching volunteers with organizations that need volunteers. Opportunities include leading Healthy Bones and Balance classes, distributing Brown Bags of groceries or Meals on Wheels, offering classes at senior centers, and many others. The program provides liability insurance for volunteers who provide rides as part of their volunteer service.

Assets & Accomplishments

- ✓ QVCDC located in town and provides trainings on using computers and software, business development and planning for people who are income eligible.
- ✓ Many retail job opportunities
- ✓ Ware Senior Center offers volunteer and paid positions (a few)
- ✓ "Ask a Teenager" – National Honor Society, student council students provided assistance with technology one afternoon a week, promoted intergenerational conversation (prior to COVID)

Goals and Actions

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

13a. 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.

13b. 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.

13c. Provide flexible options for people with dementia to volunteer and provide training, recognition, guidance and compensation for personal costs.

13d. Expand programs on financial literacy to people on fixed incomes (social security).

13e. 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.

13f. 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.

13g. Increase public engagement with elected/appointed officials by increasing publicity/outreach for public meetings/calls for comment in a number of formats and venues.
13h. 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.
13i. Connect older adults with volunteer programs (such as RSVP), and expand opportunities for property tax reduction in exchange for volunteer time.
13j. Connect older adults with educational programs on how to use technology such as programs coordinated by MassHire.

Public Safety

Police, Fire, and other emergency service providers are closely involved with the safety of older adults as they are often the ones that people call when they are not feeling safe or have had a fall. The Fire Department maintains a Persons at Risk finder, a list of individuals who are at risk of wandering due to dementia, autism, or other cognitive impairments. The Ware Council on Aging participates with the Ware Police and Fire Departments in the Triad Program which is a national organization initially started by the National Sheriffs' Association, the International Chiefs of Police, and the AARP. In Hampshire County, 13 communities are actively involved in the program. Triad is a community policing initiative in which seniors, law enforcement and other service providers increase safety through education and crime prevention. Triad program members and staff at the Senior Center assist residents with filling out File of Life documents that include important medical information and are stored in a prominent location in case of emergencies. The majority of survey respondents (56%) said that they do not have a File of Life in their home.

In addition to assisting with File of Life documents, the Fire Department provides information on updating smoke and CO2 detectors. Fourteen percent of survey respondents said that they were not able to check, service and maintain these devices, and 24% said that their detectors were more than 10 years old, suggesting that assistance with these basic tasks would be helpful to many older adults.

The Ware Livable Community Survey asked how safe people felt living in the community. Most said that they feel safe most of the time (46), and 26 respondents said that they always feel safe. For those who gave responses for times when they did not feel safe in the community, some of the reasons were poor lighting and police patrols on Main Street, concern about high drug and alcohol use of other residents, and a need for more patrols in Grenville Park. Updates on Main Street in the downtown include safer pedestrian crossings and new street lights, which may alleviate some safety concerns for people out at night. Another comment was that

downtown was like a “ghost town” at night because of vacant or dark store fronts. Additional lighting or evening activities in the downtown that bring people together could help create a safer feeling environment as well as opportunities for people to gather in outdoor spaces.

Older adults are considered vulnerable populations of concern during weather or other emergencies, especially if they are not able to drive or are living with dementia. Nineteen percent of survey respondents said that the did not feel informed about what to do in the event of a weather or other emergency. Orientations on automatic phone notifications and what to do in the case of an emergency would be beneficial both to older adults as well as emergency service providers. The Senior Center serves as a cooling shelter in cases of severe heat or power outages.

Assets & Accomplishments

- ✓ Police & Fire Departments and Senior Center have File of Life program and assist people in filling out forms – tied to Critical Incident and Management Plan
- ✓ Senior Center is a Cooling Station (confirm) for heat emergencies or power outages
- ✓ Persons at Risk finder – for potential wanderers (including people with dementia, autism)
- ✓ Triad (under Seniors and Law Enforcement Together) representation from police and fire dept – include COA – Baystate representation as well
- ✓ Police will do wellness checks if needed
- ✓ Fire Dept/EMS – work with people to make sure they have smoke detectors (new person doing this) – regular safety talks at the Senior Center

Goals and Actions

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

Actions

14a. Post information on the TRIAD or SALT programs on both the Senior Center and Police Department websites to educate residents about the File of Life and Persons at Risk finder.
    - 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. Ensure that emergency personnel are aware of where people with dementia live and how to work with them. Keep “Persons at Risk” file up to date and educate community about how to add themselves or family members to this list.

14d. Educate older adults about what to do in the case of emergency and about the Town’s Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP).

14e. Investigate the feasibility of increasing police patrols or adding call boxes at Grenville Park and on Main Street.
14f. Continue to have safety talks at the Senior Center and broadcast recordings on Ware Cable TV (Fire Dept) and online.
14g. Collaborate with the District Attorney's office to have trainings on internet and phone scams.

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

Appendix A of this report provides the "Inclusive Communities Crosswalk" that can be used as a tool to think about how each Action in the Action Plan affects the different community sectors listed above. Including representatives from sectors that are present in Ware in any planning or

implementation committees can ensure that voices from these sectors are heard and incorporated into community improvement plans.

Goals and Actions

Goal 15: Ensure that all strategies included in this Action Plan include all sectors of the community and target populations most at risk of poor health outcomes when applicable.

Actions

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. Continue to 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

This Action Plan for an Age and Dementia Friendly Ware details goals and strategies for improving Ware's social and built environments to make the town a welcoming place for people of all ages and abilities. According to the Livable Community Survey, comments gathered at public forums, and discussions with members of the Age and Dementia Friendly Ware Working Group, the areas of greatest concern in Ware include

The following Action Plan is ordered by domains of the highest importance to residents of Ware based on the community engagement efforts completed for this report. However, this report and Action Plan are dynamic documents that will be amended as conditions change in the community.

The Goals and Actions included in the Action Plan are expanded from sections above to 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 follows:

- 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 Ware 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 Town will be developed to implement 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 Ware 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

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**
1a	Develop a committee of the Age and Dementia Friendly Ware Working Group to implement trainings and a public awareness campaign about dementia in Ware.	COA, Cedarbrook	Subcommittee development	ST
1b	Recruit volunteers to become Dementia Friends Champions who will provide trainings for community groups and neighbors.	COA, Dementia Friendly Subcommittee, Cedarbrook, residents	# of Dementia Friends and Dementia Friends Champions	MT
1c	Encourage trainings on how to recognize signs of dementia and communicate with people with dementia for all municipal staff.	**COA,** Alzheimer's Association	# of trainings	ST
1d	Work with the Triad Program partners (Police, Fire, Emergency Services) to encourage residents to register on a list of people living with dementia or other health concerns.	**COA**, Fire Dept, Police Dept	Outreach plan; Identification of at-risk residents	ST
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, WestMass Elder Care, GSSS	Information on support programs, # of people involved	ST
1f	Meaningfully engage people with dementia in developing programs and services such as support groups or memory cafes at the Senior Center and other locations in the community. (see 12d).	**COA,** Alzheimer's Association, Cedarbrook Village	People with dementia engaged in planning	ST/Ongoing

Health and Community Services

Goal 2: Ensure that older residents of Ware have access to health care and community services that support their ability to live long and healthy lives.				
Actions		**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
2a	Research the feasibility of developing a Village or Neighbors program which coordinates volunteers 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,** community volunteers, regional partners, school	Research on the Village Model or similar programs.	MT
2b	Work with elder care organizations, health care providers and 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, Triad,** Alzheimer's Association, Dementia Friends, first responders	Trainings for first responders	ST
2c	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. • Include information about where people can borrow or purchase medical equipment and devices to aid aging in place.	**COA,** Baystate, Behavioral Health Network, Stavros, WestMass Elder Care, GSSS; 413-Cares	Resource Guide, updated website	ST
2d	Work with Baystate Wing to publicize Convenient Care walk-in clinic and to provide orientation on changes associated with closure of Baystate Mary Lane.	**Baystate,** COA	Outreach materials and programs	ST
2e	Work with Quaboag Connector and PVTA and area hospitals to ensure all people who need rides to medical appointments can access transportation services.	**COA,** Quaboag Connector, PVTA	# rides provided for medical appointments	ST

2f	Partner with health care providers to ensure that all residents have access to telemedicine by ensuring access to low-cost internet, devices and training on how to use devices.	**COA,** Schools**,** Baystate Wing, GSSS, other areas COAs providing technology assistance programs	Tablet or laptop loan program, training, # people signed up for internet	ST
2g	Partner with service providers and coalitions addressing substance use disorders to ensure that older adults know where to access assistance and counseling services.	**COA,** BHN, Baystate; Quaboag Hills Substance Use Alliance	Information on programs, # of connections made	ST
2h	Assist older adults with issues around access, coverage and use of prescription medications. Ask local pharmacies to use large print for the medication name and dosage on prescription bottles.	**COA,** Baystate, BHN; local pharmacies	Programs around prescription medication; assistance in getting insurance coverage	ST
2i	Provide outreach and support for older adults to access vaccines including COVID and Flu vaccines.	**COA, Baystate,** local pharmacies	Flu and vaccine clinics; # people vaccinated	ST
2j	Continue to participate in the Triad program which partners emergency service providers with the Council on Aging to address needs of older adults and people with specific health needs. Engage at risk older adults in these efforts.	**COA,** Police, Fire Depts.	Triad Committee Participation by older adults	ST
2k	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.	**COA,** Health Care Providers, social service agencies	Survey, identified needs	MT

2l	Gauge the need and feasibility of locating a walk-in care clinic in Ware.	**Planning,** COA, private service providers	Survey; barriers to accessing care at Baystate Wing walk-in clinic	MT
2m	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.	**COA,** Public Health Institute of Western MA (413-Cares administrator)	413-Cares participation	ST
2n	Work with Quaboag Connector to ensure all people who need rides to medical appointments can access transportation services.	**QVCDC**	Surveys to gauge knowledge of QC; orientation programs	ST

Housing

Goal 3: Provide support for all Ware residents in locating affordable services to support aging in place.				
Actions		**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
3a	Assist homeowners in rehabilitating existing (older) housing to improve safety, accessibility, and basic upkeep and maintenance. • Assist homeowners in finding funding • Identify licensed contractors who can do home assessments for safety and fall prevention	Planning & Community Development, COA, Fire Dept., WestMass Elder Care	Funding obtained Directory of contractors (vetted or recommended); or partners who can conduct home assessments	ST
3b	Access funds to make Housing Authority units more accessible.	Housing Authority, Planning/CD	Funds for accessibility improvements	ST

3c	Provide a Housing Coordinator to assist people with finding housing, rehabilitation services, and funding assistance (for home modification).	Town Manager, Planning/CD; Selectboard; Housing Authority	Housing Coordinator in place	MT
3d	Develop and disseminate materials regarding home modification and rehabilitation funds available for low-income households; seek funding to keep these services available.	COA, PVPC	Information distributed	ST
3e	Develop a volunteer-based or intergenerational community service program to assist people aging in place with home upkeep and landscaping.	COA, Schools, Quaboag Valley CDC, RSVP	Community service program in place	MT
3f	Develop standards for access to all new housing developments to enable people to age in place.	Planning (Site Plan Review)	Standards for multi-family residential development	MT/LT
3g	Ensure that all older homeowners are familiar with the Property Tax Work-Off Program and eligible volunteer opportunities. Expand the program to enable additional participants (the program is currently limited by income, and veteran status and is capped at 15 people per year).	COA, Town Manager	# of participants in the program; # of spots available	ST
3h	Connect people to resources and counseling (such as the Tenancy Preservation Program) for people at risk of eviction; identify shelters or programs to assist people who are un-housed.	Berkshire Regional Housing Authority; COA; shelters	# clients enrolled in eviction prevention programs and counseling	MT
3i	Research and consider development of the Village Model at the local or regional level and identify NORCs (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities) to provide assistance to elders who wish to remain in their homes and community.	COA, volunteers	Research on Village model	MT

3j	Investigate the foster care program for older adults which provides a non-taxed monthly stipend for people to live with older person in their home in exchange for providing assistance with basic tasks.	WestMass ElderCare (for MassHealth participants)	Program to introduce foster home program; # of participants	ST
Goal 4: 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 Ware.				
Actions		**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
4a	Develop a Housing Needs Assessment or Housing Production Plan that includes an inventory of the existing housing stock and engages older adults in determining the types of housing desired in order for them to be able to stay in community.	Planning, with COA participation	Housing Production Plan or Housing Needs Assessment	MT
4b	Create a detailed inventory of suitable property in town for the development of affordable, mixed income, mixed use, and assisted living housing. Promote development of housing for older adults that is located within walking distance of the Town center, parks and services.	Planning, PVPC/Consultant	Housing Production Plan or inventory/needs assessment	MT
4c	Explore alternative living models such as shared housing, co-housing, and intergenerational housing to expand the housing options for older adults looking for a supported living environment.	Planning/CE, COA for engagement of older adults	Research on alternative living models	MT

4d	Develop planning and zoning tools to prioritize and incentivize housing development models that provide for a mix of housing types. ● Expand housing choices through research and adoption of innovative housing models, zoning and financing options - Ex. Tiny houses, cottage type housing, flexible open space development, etc. ● Encourage housing development close to village centers, public transportation and major community services. ● Monitor development of Accessory Dwelling Units and consider allowing by right rather than by special permit. ● Adopt an inclusionary zoning bylaw to increase affordable housing opportunities. ● Amend use and dimensional requirements to expand housing options. ● Develop mixed-use districts.	Planning with COA support and engagement	Zoning changes	MT
4e	Investigate the possibility of building affordable senior housing on town-owned land; partner with private and/or non-governmental organizations to create additional affordable housing units to meet 10% goal for the Town. Consider redevelopment of the hospital property for housing.	Planning, PVPC	Research results	MT

Transportation and Streets

Goal 5: Ensure that transportation services are available to residents of all ages and abilities to allow access food, medical appointments, employment, and education.				
	Actions	**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
5a	Expand van service (Quaboag Connector) for older adults to provide medical transportation as needed to Baystate Wing hospital in preparation for the closure of Baystate Mary Lane.	QVCDC**,** COA, Town,	Expanded transportation service; # of ride requests	ST
5b	Add bus shelters at stops near senior housing and encourage retail establishments to install shelters near bus stops on their property (i.e. possible transportation shelter in Walmart parking lot in a location where bus will not be in the way).	PVTA, private land owners (Walmart)	New bus shelters	ST
5c	Post information on transportation services including PVTA fixed routes and on demand services; Senior Center Van and Quaboag Connector service areas; and fares on Senior Center website and provide information in multiple locations in town. Ensure that bus stops on fixed routes are well marked.	PVTA, COA, QVCDC	# of places where information is posted	ST
5d	Explore the feasibility of expanding the Quaboag Connector and PVTA service to offer shared transportation services to a broader area and expand existing Town services as needed.	QVCDC, PVTA, Selectboard	Feasibility Study	ST
5e	Survey older adults and people with disabilities on a regular basis to monitor transportation needs.	COA, PVPC/CMRPC, Planning	Survey responses	MT

5f	Research the feasibility of providing 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	MT
5g	Train Quaboag Connector, 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.	PVTA, QVCDC, COA, Alzheimer's Association	# of trainings, # of drivers and staff trained	ST
5h	Research the cost, availability and safety of ride share service options (e,g. Lyft, Uber or taxi service); provide training on how to use ride sharing services.	COA, Ride Share service providers	Research on ride share services	LT
5i	Promote affordable home delivery services in town. Include information on stores that deliver on COA website.	COA. Local grocery stores	# and cost of home delivery	MT
Goal 6: Ensure 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**
6a	Improve sidewalk connectivity and maintenance in neighborhoods within ½ mile of services. • Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and be well maintained (include cutting back brush). • Install ramps and detectable warning strips at all crosswalks. • Priority locations include West Street, Church Street, North Street, Pleasant Street, and Robbins Road, Monroe Street.	DPW, Planning	Sidewalk and other pedestrian improvements	ST
6b	Maintain sidewalks in summer and winter to prevent falls.	DPW, Selectboard	Sidewalk maintenance program	ST/MT

6c	Implement projects listed in the Ware Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, particularly in areas used by older adults (i.e. traffic calming and pedestrian improvements on West Street).	DPW, Planning, Town Manager	Sidewalk and road crossing improvements, traffic calming on West Street	ST
6d	Add dementia friendly design elements when completing infrastructure improvements including audible cues and appropriate timing on crosswalks, and separation from traffic on sidewalks (as feasible).	Planning, Conservation, DPW	# of roads and trails that are safe and accessible	ST
6e	Install electric charging stations at the Senior Center and other key locations.	DPW, Planning, Town Manager	# and locations of charging stations	MT ($$)
6f	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 & lighting evaluation	ST
Goal 7: Implement programs that promote safe driving and transition to other forms of transportation.				
Actions		**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
7a	Support and allow space for driver skill retention and setting up car for safety with community organizations, through partnerships with AARP, AAA, RMV, Auto Insurance providers.	**COA**, AAA, Insurance Agents, Mass Mobility	Driver skill retention programs	ST
7b	Promote use of high visibility vests for people walking on roads.	**COA**	High visibility vest program	ST
7c	Work with the PVTA and Quaboag Connector to hold transportation orientation sessions for older adults.	**COA**, PVTA, Quaboag Connector	Transportation orientation sessions scheduled	ST

Communication, Information and Technology

Goal 8: 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**
8a	Ensure that every household and business in Ware has access to high-speed internet. (Possible through AARPA funding).	Selectboard, Planning	High-speed internet access	ST
8b	Assist older adults in acquiring equipment and training on how to use it and provide assistance with accessing low cost or free broadband service. • Partner with Ware Junior & Senior High School to re-start "Ask a Teenager" program for technology assistance.	COA, Library, Schools	# of people trained, laptops or tablets for loan	ST
8c	Provide accommodations for vision and hearing impaired on Town website and in spaces used for public meetings (closed captioning, interpreter).	Town Manager, Town boards	Equipment for vision and hearing impaired; policy about using closed captioning, etc.	MT
8d	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; adopt effective methods to fill communication gaps.	Municipal Departments	Communications Plan	ST
8e	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.	Communications Committee (if formed), COA, residents	Survey of homebound seniors	ST

8f	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	ST
8g	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. (also Robo calls)	**COA**, Town website, Ware Community TV, Baystate Health Senior Class	Website, resources	ST/Ongoing
8g	Collaborate with existing community-based networks such as faith communities, civic groups, education channels, business groups, to share information.	Faith communities, COA, civic groups, Ware Community TV, Chamber of Commerce, local FB pages, Baystate Senior Class	# of outlets # of postings Communications Plan	ST/Ongoing
8h	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.	Town Manager & Town departments	Updated Town Website	ST
Goal 9: Facilitate a culture of support and acceptance for older adults and people living with dementia.				
Actions		**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
9a	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	ST
9b	Ensure that printed information – including official forms or invoices and text on visual displays in public spaces - has large lettering with	Municipal Departments	Policy or memo about lettering;	ST

	main ideas in bold type; simple and straightforward sentences and simple language; and is available in multiple languages as needed.		implementation of policy	
9c	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.	Municipal Departments	Town Policy	ST
9d	Ensure that reading glasses or magnifying glasses are available at election locations for people with visual impairments.	Town Clerk/Elections Officials	Glasses at election locations	ST
9e	Research the cost and feasibility of offering information and other communications in Spanish, Chinese 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.	Municipal departments; Schools	Translation of materials and website	LT/as needed

Buildings and Outdoor Spaces

Goal 10: Provide opportunities for use of public buildings and outdoor spaces by people of all ages and abilities.				
Actions		**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
10a	Work toward making public buildings and parks in Ware Dementia Friendly & ADA accessible. • Update and expand ADA assessment and transition plan (current version 1992) . • Activate ADA committee to develop a system to identify needed improvements to public buildings and town-owned outdoor spaces, and to prioritize and track improvements.	Planning, Conservation, Disability Awareness Committee	ADA Assessment and Transition Plan Prioritized list of projects	ST

10b	Update the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. Assess / solicit feedback from older residents on desired outdoor recreational opportunities to inform future expenditures on parks and recreation.	Planning, Conservation, Parks Commission, Open Space Committee, OSRP Committee	# survey responses from older residents; forums located at senior center or other locations convenient to older adults.	ST
10c	Encourage creation of trails, parks and bikeways close to centers of population and/or where public transportation is available.	Planning Dept, OSRP Committee	OSRP, trail network plan	MT
10d	Encourage development of handicapped accessible trails in community owned conservation and recreation areas. Maintain vegetation to reduce exposure to ticks.	Conservation, Planning, East Quabbin Land Trust, Parks Commission	# of Accessible Trails; trail maintenance guide	MT
10e	Ensure that the Ware River Trail is wheelchair accessible at all entries and road crossings; and add amenities to make the trail more comfortable for older adults including benches and signage pointing to nearby public restrooms (Senior Center, Walmart).	DPW, Planning, Town Manager	Amenities and accessibility of Ware River Trail	MT
10f	Develop a map of safe walking and biking routes for people of all ages and abilities and make it available throughout town in print and in digital form on the Town website. Provide information on levels of difficulty and whether or not they are ADA compliant and/or accessible to people in wheelchairs.	Conservation, Open Space Committee, East Quabbin Land Trus	Map of trails - online and paper format	MT

10g	Create a plan for locating/developing outdoor gathering spaces and seating, and advocate for public outdoor seating/areas as a priority in all 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.	PB/Planning - site plan review;	Inventory and map of bench locations; Site Plan Review Shared Spaces grant applications	ST/MT
10h	Complete trail connections and make fitness stations that are accessible for people of all ages and abilities. • Install a sidewalk on Robbins Road to provide a safe walking route from the Senior Center to the Rail Trail. • Improve sidewalk connectivity and accessibility on West Street and install safer pedestrian crossings. • Improve accessibility of sidewalks on North Street and Church Street for connection to Grenville Park. • Install fitness stations on trails in Grenville Park	Conservation, Planning, DPW, Parks Commission	OSRP, Bike and Pedestrian and/or trail network plan	ST/MT
10i	Connect existing housing developments to services and activity centers within walking distance by completing gaps in sidewalks. 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	LT
10j	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.	Selectboard, Planning, Parks Commission	Plan for locating and building and/or mapping accessible restrooms	MT (Map) LT (building new ones)
10k	Assess/upgrade existing lighting and signage in public buildings and outdoor spaces, starting with streets off of Main Street.	Planning, Conservation	Assessment of lighting, Signage	MT (streets off of Main St)

10l	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 includes natural light where possible • Flooring is plain and not shiny or slippery and free of clutter	Planning, Disability Awareness Committee, PVPC	DF Checklist, process for reviewing designs and buildings	MT
Goal 11: Increase programming and improve environments that encourages active living and social interaction for older adults in buildings and outdoor spaces in Ware.				
Actions		**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
11a	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, Alzheimer's Association, Chamber of Commerce	# of trainings, DF Environments Checklist	ST
11b	Encourage the creation of walking groups or walking buddy programs through council on aging or other municipal departments, posting on community website and bulletin boards.	COA	# of Walking Groups	ST
11c	Establish regular, organized activities in parks, both age-specific and multigenerational, by partnering with local organizations.	COA, Parks Commission, Workshop 13 (arts), recreation groups, Cultural Council; schools	Programming and participation	ST/MT

Social Participation and Inclusion

Goal 12: 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
12a	Continue to collaborate with Ware Community Television and other senior centers to offer online and hybrid social and fitness programming that can be accessed online or re-broadcast on cable access TV.	**COA,** Ware Community Television	# of programs offered online and on Ware Community TV	Ongoing/ST
12b	Work with cable and internet providers to ensure long-term affordability of Cable and Internet for older adults.	**Town Manager,** Selectboard, Internet providers	Cable and internet rates for older adults	ST
12c	Seek funding to provide staffing for a Memory Café and other activities for people with dementia and their caregivers (adult day programs, creative arts/music, intergenerational connections, outings/group activities). Meaningfully engage people with dementia in developing programs and services	**Cedarbrook Village,** COA, Library, Alzheimer's Association, Schools	# Memory Cafes Grant or other funding to hold programs	ST
12d	Work with library to train staff and provide programming for people with dementia (Library does not currently have space for programming in the building).	**COA,** Library, Alzheimer's Association	# trainings # staff trained	MT/LT
12e	Continue to work with Ware Public Schools to facilitate intergenerational conversations and engagement.	**COA,** Schools	# intergenerational programs	Ongoing
12f	Ensure that activities and events are welcoming to people with dementia who may have to attend with a companion, caregiver, or family member.	COA, Cultural Council, Parks Commission	# Dementia Friendly activities and events Guide to making events Dementia Friendly	ST
12g	Provide information about accessibility of facilities and transportation options for community meetings and events.	**COA,** Municipal departments, Cultural Council	Information about accessibility	ST

12h	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.	Disabilities Awareness Committee, Selectboard and other municipal boards, Cultural Council	Town policies	ST/MT
12i	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, QVCDC (E2E program and space)	Accessible meeting locations	ST/MT
12j	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.	**COA,** Ware Community Television, Ware River News, Baystate Health Senior Class program	Outreach efforts Volunteer participation # people reached	ST
12k	Identify "naturally occurring retirement communities" (NORCs) and develop neighborhood networks or "circles" using available communication channels and volunteers to serve as leads.	**COA,** Highland Village, Hillside, Valley View; Beaver Lake	Locations of NORCs Neighborhood circles	MT/LT
12l	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. • Provide outreach information and events in other languages as determined by the needs of residents	**COA,** Selectboard	Policy on translations # of events and materials offered in other languages	MT/LT
12m	Organize regional activities with other Age and Dementia Friendly Communities to expand opportunities for social engagement. (Online programming being shared)	**COA,** other COAs/Senior Centers	Shared activities	ST/MT

Employment, Civic Engagement and Volunteer Opportunities

Goal 13: Provide opportunities and assistance for older adults who want to work and volunteer in the community.				
Actions		**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
13a	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.	**COA,** Selectboard	Reframing Aging campaign	ST/MT
13b	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, COC	Outreach campaign	MT
13c	Provide flexible options for people with dementia to volunteer and provide training, recognition, guidance and compensation for personal costs.	COA, RSVP, Alzheimer's Association	# volunteer opportunities	MT/LT
13d	Provide training and education opportunities for people with dementia.	**COA, Cedarbrook Vilage,** Alzheimer's Association, GSSS, West Mass Eldercare	# of opportunities for people with dementia	ST/MT
13e	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	Ongoing/ST
13f	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	COA board, Municipal boards	Policy for publicizing open seats and requirements	ST/MT

	for municipal positions.			
13g	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	# of places calls for comment are posted, # of formats	ST
13h	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, QVCDC financial fitness program	Resource list, programming	ST
13i	Connect with volunteer programs through RSVP and expand opportunities for property tax reduction in exchange for volunteer time.	RSVP, COA	# people signed up through RSVP, # people in property tax reduction program	ST
13j	Connect older adults with educational programs on how to use technology such as programs coordinated by MassHire.	**COA,** MassHire	Participation in MassHire training programs	ST

Public Safety

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**
14a	Post information on the Triad program on both the Senior Center and Police Department websites to educate residents about the File of Life and other important documents. • Encourage residents to keep their File of Life documents updated regularly.	**COA,** Hampshire County Sherriff's Dept., Northwestern DA, EMS, Police, Fire Departments, Baystate	# of documents/filled out Information on File of Life posted	ST
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	ST
14c	Ensure that emergency personnel are aware of where people with dementia live and how to work with them. Keep "Persons at Risk" file up to date and educate community about how to add themselves or family members to this list.	Police and Fire Departments, COA	Persons at Risk file/Are You OK program	ST
14d	Educate older adults about what to do in the case of emergency and about the Town's Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP).	Police and Fire Departments, COA	Educational programs	ST/MT
14e	Investigate the feasibility of increasing police patrols or adding call boxes at Grenville Park and on Main Street.	Police Dept., Town Manager	Police patrols	ST/MT
14f	Continue to have safety talks at the Senior Center and broadcast recordings on Ware Community TV (Fire Dept) and online.	Triad Committee, Ware Community TV	# safety talks, recorded programs	ST

14g	Collaborate with the District Attorney's office to have trainings on internet and phone scams.	COA, DA's Office	Trainings with DA's office	ST

Access, Equity and Inclusion

Goal 15: Ensure that all strategies included in this Action Plan include all sectors of the community and target populations most at risk of poor health outcomes when applicable.				
Actions		**Lead Entity/** Partners	**Metrics**	**Priority**
15a	Create an "age friendly business" recognition program in the community.	**COA,** Chamber of commerce	Business recognition program; checklist	MT
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	MT
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	ST
15d	Continue to provide outreach to people at an increased risk of social isolation to remain engaged in their community.	**COA**; WestMass Eldercare	Outreach program	ST
15e	Include Age Friendly activities as part of an inclusive Community Compact.	Planning, Town Manager	Community Compact	MT
15f	Continue to develop a set of intergenerational activities with schools and older adults.	COA, Schools	# of intergenerational programs, # of participants	ST

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, Recreation	Programming supportive of people with dementia	ST
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.	Communications Committee, COA	Outreach regarding Town issues	ST

Appendix A – Healthy Aging for All Crosswalk

Appendix A – Healthy Aging for All Crosswalk

Inclusive Communities Crosswalk

The crosswalk can serve as a discussion and planning guide for stakeholder groups about different topics that are considerate of all residents in a city, town or region.

	Transportation	Housing	Social Inclusion & Participation	Civic Participation & Employment	Communication and Information	Services (Business, Community, Health)	Outdoor Spaces & Buildings	Public Safety	Custom Theme
Age									
Behavioral Health									
Country of Origin									
Dementia									
Disability									
Economic Security									
Gender									
Location									
Language									
LGBTQIA									
Race/Ethnicity									
Religion									
Residential Setting									
Substance Use Disorder									
Veterans									
Other									

Inclusive Communities Worksheet

AGE- AND DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY DOMAIN	The space below can be used to note the strategies you plan to use to ensure Access, Equity and Inclusion while you strive to make your community age- and dementia-friendly.
Transportation	
Housing	
Social Inclusion & Participation	
Civic Participation & Employment	
Communication and Information	
Services (Business, Community, and Health)	
Outdoor Spaces & Buildings	
Public Safety	
Custom Theme	