AGE-FRIENDLY SPRINGFIELD
A PROMISE TO LIVE, WORK, GROW & AGE WELL

A COMMUNITY REPORT FROM LIVE WELL SPRINGFIELD’S AGE-FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

JUNE 2019
Over the last two years, Live Well Springfield’s Age-Friendly City Initiative has worked collaboratively with community partners to understand Springfield’s readiness to become an Age-Friendly city. This effort has been supported by a grant from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation.

To guide this assessment of the current strengths and opportunities in housing and transportation for older people, Live Well established an Age-Friendly Advisory Committee of community partners, stakeholders, and older residents to provide ongoing input. Throughout the process, the Age-Friendly Initiative engaged community residents and stakeholders to ensure community input and to begin to build community trust and partnership. As we spoke with these important partners, we also gathered information on other AARP/WHO Age-Friendly domains, including social support, outdoor spaces, and health care.

The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts led the assessment process along with two Springfield Senior Resident Facilitators, the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee, and the University of Massachusetts Civic Engagement & Service-Learning Program. Assessment and community engagement activities included walk audits, listing and ranking prioritization exercises, surveys, focus groups, workshops, and key informant interviews. Our efforts took place in 11 Springfield neighborhoods and resulted in the engagement of over 300 older people from across the City of Springfield.

Along the way, with strong involvement of our Senior Resident Facilitators, we helped to successfully advocate against cuts to the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority budget. Additionally, we partnered with the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority to secure AARP funding to support the installation of 12 new bus stop benches throughout the city.

### INTRODUCTION

The AARP/WHO framework identifies eight domains to guide us in understanding the way to improve living conditions for older people. We focused our efforts on better understanding two of those domains—housing and transportation—since these issues had already been raised as needs by the Springfield Office of Elder Affairs.

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### HISTORIC DESIGNATION OF THREE MAJOR AGE-FRIENDLY FRAMEWORKS

- **Age-Friendly City**
  - Dementia Friendly America
  - Age-Friendly Health Systems

### Key Events

- **FALL 2017**
  - Build Assessment Team’s Capacity

- **WINTER 2017**
  - Recruit Senior Resident Leaders

- **SPRING 2018**
  - Public Transportation Survey
  - Build Assessment Team

- **SUMMER 2018**
  - Senior Housing Walk Audits
  - Advancing Transportation and Housing Assets

- **FALL 2018**
  - Public Sessions on New PVT Bench
  - Advocacy against PVTA Budget Cuts

- **WINTER 2018**
  - Key Informant Interviews about Housing
  - Focus Group Discussions on Housing

- **SPRING 2019**
  - Community Workshops

- **SUMMER 2019**
  - Age-Friendly Springfield Summit
Participants in the housing assessment identified as renters and homeowners, and older people living in "senior housing" as well as other types of private and public housing.

HOUSING MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS: Homeowners expressed many unmet needs for home modifications, upkeep, and maintenance resulting in struggles with aging in place (i.e., staying in their homes as they age). Renters cite the cleanliness of buildings, outdated units, unreliable elevators, and resistance of landlords to making accommodations for older people, such as for falls prevention.

AFFORDABILITY: Homeowners noted the burden of property taxes and the difficulty of balancing living and medical expenses without sufficient income. They also commented on challenges with staying in homes that are multiple levels as stairs become difficult--buying a new home is not possible financially and moving is too much of a challenge.

Renters reported a lack of affordable units, especially units of high quality, and long wait lists for subsidized housing units. In addition, they noted the lack of availability of multi-bedroom units for older people. Men of color, in particular, shared their frustrations of spending years on waitlists for affordable housing without placement or their inability to apply for housing due to having a criminal record.

Residents expressed the need to understand the availability of social services exists in the community for housing support and to have advocates to help navigate the system. The two professional groups supporting older people in their homes noted their need for advocates who know what services are available to them.
As an Age-Friendly City, Springfield commits to implementing policies, services and structures to support and enable older people to "age actively"—that is, to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate fully in society. Age-Friendly or livable communities actively work toward making their city a great place for people of all ages. This includes walkable streets, housing and transportation options, access to key services and opportunities for residents to participate in community activities.

As a Dementia Friendly City, Springfield commits to creating environments that are supportive, inclusive, and welcoming of individuals living with dementia, their families and care partners. A Dementia Friendly Community is informed, safe, respectful and inclusive of individuals living with dementia regardless of race, gender identity, socioeconomic status, language, culture, religion or national origin.

Baystate Medical Center and its Brightwood, High Street and Mason Square Health Centers will be the first health care institutions in the country recognized as “age-friendly.” They are committed to providing safe, high-quality health care to achieve the goals which matter most to older adults. An Age-Friendly Health System is one in which every older adult gets the best care possible, experiences no health care-related harms, and is satisfied with the health care they receive.
The Go Fresh Mobile Farmer’s Market is a van that brings affordable, fresh fruits and vegetables to local neighborhoods every week in the summer and fall. Now in its 10th season, Go Fresh serves 14 stops in 11 neighborhoods in Springfield. Out of the 14 stops, eight are in senior communities. Throughout the season, residents can maximize the amount of produce purchased each week by increasing their SNAP benefits through the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) or taking advantage of BMC Healthnet or Greater Springfield Senior Services (GSSSI) Senior Vouchers.

PVTA is introducing a new program called Senior Fare Free Tuesdays! Seniors aged 60+ can ride PVTA Buses for FREE every TUESDAY!!! This is a two-year program that will start in July and run through June of 2021.

Doorway to an Accessible, Safe and Healthy Home (DASHH) helps older people by improving their housing conditions related to asthma and falls. DASHH provides home assessments and home repairs to help residents stay healthy and age in place.

Baystate Geriatrics has three teams participating in the Age-Friendly movement. The ACE (Acute Care for Elders) team cares for older patients admitted to a designated unit at Baystate Medical Center. The Geri-Pal interprofessional team provides care for frail, mostly homebound patients from the Brightwood, High Street and Mason Square Health Centers. A new Geri-Ortho Care team is working with older patients with hip fractures. These Baystate teams focus on improving care and outcomes for the “4Ms.” (what matters most, medications, mentation, and mobility) which are the cornerstones of an Age-Friendly Health System.
SPECIAL THANKS TO:

• City of Springfield residents
• Mayor Domenic Sarno and the Springfield Mayor’s Office
• Springfield Department of Elder Affairs and the Raymond A. Jordan Senior Center
• Springfield Department of Health & Human Services
• Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative
• AARP
• Institute for Healthcare Aging
• Massachusetts Council on Aging
• Tufts Health Plan Foundation

Age-Friendly Advisory Committee

• Senior Resident Facilitators
• Baystate Health Geriatrics, Palliative Care and Post-Acute Medicine
• Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc.
• Mass Senior Action
• Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
• Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
• Revitalize CDC

Support for this summit was provided by a grant from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation.

The Age-Friendly City Summit is organized by Live Well Springfield.

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