

**Report on 2017 Focus Groups of Older Adults in Waltham**

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**Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging**

Study team

Walter Leutz

Elizabeth Leutz

Gerry Mimno

Wilma Ronco

Sue Adams

Sarita Bhalotra

Stephen Remillard

Ann Ross

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## Origin, goals and support for the study

The goal this research was to better understand the experiences and needs regarding healthy aging of Waltham seniors who are immigrants, low-income, isolated, and/or minorities. The origin of this goal was our 2105-16 study, which found that seniors in these groups may be less likely to access age-friendly activities and services in Waltham.<sup>1</sup> The earlier Study was based on 17 interviews with Waltham organizations and 8 focus groups of Waltham seniors. Of the eight focus groups, two were with subsidized housing residents and one was with Latinos. The other five were largely middle and working class Whites.

In late 2016 the research team that conducted the earlier study, in partnerships with most of the agencies that were interviewed, decided to form Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging. Connections links older adults to one another in efforts to enrich lives through community activities and services. Our aim is to create an ever more age-friendly Waltham.

In January 2017 we were awarded a one-year grant from the Tufts Health Foundation to promote healthy aging in Waltham. The grant included funds to conduct additional focus groups with less represented senior populations. The Heller School at Brandeis University also supported holding these focus groups with funds for snacks, translations, and \$25 gifts for participants. This paper reports on the new focus groups.

## Methods

With the help of community partners we held six more focus groups in 2017. These included Chinese-Americans residing at The Francis Cabot Mill apartments (Mill Apartments), Haitian-Americans who receive their healthcare through the Charles River Community Health Center, Latinos associated with WATCH-CDC, Ugandan members of St. Peters congregation at Christ Episcopal Church (with the help of African Cultural Services), and clients of Neighbors Who Care (NWC), which serves seniors who are lonely and/or isolated. The sixth focus group was composed of veterans associated with Waltham VFW post 10334.

The focus groups were organized, led and transcribed by members of the 2015-16 team of senior co-researchers. The focus group leaders began groups by describing the study purposes, focus group procedures, confidentiality, and gaining verbal consent. We posed the same questions to the groups that we used in 2015:

- How old are you and how long have you lived in Waltham?

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<sup>1</sup> [www.mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/older-residents-of-waltham-and-greenfield-complete-healthy-aging-community-research-study](http://www.mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/older-residents-of-waltham-and-greenfield-complete-healthy-aging-community-research-study)

- How does Waltham support healthy aging?
- How could Waltham do better?
- What do older adults do to be healthy?
- How do older adults promote a healthier community?

We asked participants to think about a broad idea of health – not just physical health but also being connected, safe, respected, etc. After the introductions sharing age and years in Waltham, as each study question was posed, participants were given a few minutes to write down thoughts, and then the leader went around the group asking each participant for answers. The leader wrote words or phrases on newsprint pads, and a recorder took detailed notes.<sup>2</sup> After all questions were discussed, we thanked participants and handed out the gifts.

We coded the notes by looking for passages that referred to the World Health Organization age-friendly communities categories (1-8 below)<sup>3</sup>, and also 6 additional healthy aging categories (9-14)<sup>4</sup>:

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social participation
5. Respect and social inclusion
6. Civic participation and employment
7. Communication and information
8. Community and health services
9. Physical exercise
10. Diet
11. Finding meaning and purpose in life
12. Being pro-active about health
13. Physical safety
14. Financial security

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<sup>2</sup> The Haitian focus group was conducted in Haitian Creole. Notes were taken in Creole and translated later. The Latino group was conducted in English and Spanish with ongoing translation. Notes were taken in English.

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Found in from W. Leutz, 2009, *Healthy Aging in the Commonwealth: Pathways to Lifelong Wellness*. Issue Brief for MA Health Policy Forum funded by Tufts Health Plan Foundation, December, 2009.  
[http://masshealthpolicyforum.brandeis.edu/publications/pdfs/Fall.Winter.2009/HealthyAging\\_IssueBrief\\_Web.pdf](http://masshealthpolicyforum.brandeis.edu/publications/pdfs/Fall.Winter.2009/HealthyAging_IssueBrief_Web.pdf)

Our process included: reading all the focus group notes, finding responses from the participants that fit into the various categories and finally, analyzing the sets of responses in each category to find themes, illustrated by participant quotations.

### Limitations

Before presenting findings we want to be clear about both the value and the limits of these data. The value of a good focus group is that it allows a group of people who share a common experience or condition to speak in their own words in response to broad questions about that experience. It has what researchers call “face validity”; that is, it measures what it purports to measure – in this case the experiences people share in a guided group conversation of about 90 minutes.

But it is also important to be clear about limits:

- First, the people in our focus groups came from particular populations, but they were only a small and not necessarily representative sample of those populations. Community organizations or contacts helped us organize the groups, which already makes the participants different from other members of that population who do not have that relationship.
- Second, what one person says can be influenced by what others say. Initial speakers in the group can lead a conversation in particular directions. The short time for the group may not leave time for experiences to surface that might have been shared in a longer conversation.
- Third, it may be natural for focus group participants, particularly vulnerable immigrants, to emphasize the positive and hold back on the negative. Thus we may have heard a rosier picture than actually exists.
- Fourth, we were not as well resourced as some focus groups. We did not have the funds to record and transcribe conversations, and – in the two groups not conducted in English - we utilized bi-lingual community members to translate rather than professional translators. The passages we present are not all verbatim comments, and not all note takers attributed passages to specific individuals.
- Finally, we did not ask participants in the immigrant groups about their immigration status, and they did not volunteer that information. We therefore have omitted a dimension of their lives that may further distinguish some from American citizens or from immigrants who have legal status.

Despite the limitations, we believe the groups were valuable and that there are stories to tell that may help Waltham shape its age-friendly efforts.

### Findings

This section presents our findings in two parts: (1) brief sketches of each focus group and (2) detailed findings by WHO and healthy aging categories.

*(1) Sketches of focus groups*

The table below provides details of the six focus groups, including number, gender, age, and years in Waltham of participants, and the language(s) in which each focus group was conducted. After the table are brief narrative sketches of how the groups were formed, the participants, and things that stand out in their responses to the questions.

| Group membership | # of participants | Ages   | Years in Waltham   | Language(s) of focus group |
|------------------|-------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| Haitians         | 2 men<br>5 women  | 63-77  | 8-22   | Haitian Creole             |
| NWC clients      | 6 women           | 64-69: 2<br>70-74: 2<br>75-79: 1<br>90-95: 1                           | 39 yrs: 1<br>Most of life: 4<br>Whole life: 1                        | English                    |
| Chinese          | 5 men<br>5 women  | 64-69: 1<br>70-74: 2<br>75-79: 2<br>80-84: 3<br>85-90: 2               | 1-5: 6<br>6-9: 2<br>10-19: 2   | English                    |
| Latinos          | 21 men and women  | 57-63: 10<br>64-69: 6<br>70-74: 1<br>(over 60: 4)                      | 1-5: 3<br>6-9: 2<br>10-19: 1<br>20-29: 6<br>30-39: 4<br>40-50: 5     | English & Spanish          |
| Veterans         | 10 men            | 70-74: 2<br>75-79: 1<br>80-84: 2<br>85-89: 3<br>90-95: 1<br>unknown: 1 | 10-19: 1<br>30-39: 1<br>50-59: 3<br>60-69: 1<br>70-79: 3<br>80-89: 1 | English                    |
| Ugandans         | 3 men<br>10 women | 59-63: 4<br>64-69: 5<br>70-74: 4                                       | 6-9: 1<br>10-19: 3<br>Unknown: 5<br>Not Waltham: 4                   | English                    |

Haitian Americans: We organized a focus group of 7 Haitian-Americans with the assistance of an outreach worker at the Charles River Community Health Center, who translated consent forms, recruited participants, led the focus group discussion, and found a translator to take notes in Creole. The translator and

outreach worker back translated the notes into English. Participants ranged in age from 63 to 77 years. Two were male and five female. Six out of the 7 have lived 8 to 22 years in Waltham, while the other came two years ago.

When asked how Waltham supports healthy aging, the things most mentioned were an attractive physical and social environment and medical services. Regarding how Waltham could do better, these immigrant seniors were looking for activities (walking group, chances for conversations), local legal assistance (instead of having to go to Dorchester), and English language classes. Regarding what older adults do to be healthy, responses covered exercise but mostly cooking and eating. Ideas about things seniors could do to be healthier covered avoiding stress, smiling, and seeing the doctor. Seniors create healthy community by taking walks with grandchildren and cooking for their neighbors.

Neighbors Who Care clients: Seniors who live alone and have disabilities that hamper their ability to get out of the home may be at risk of isolation and inability to access services and participate in community life. We assembled a focus group of six clients of Neighbors Who Care (NWC), which provides volunteer visitors to NWC seniors. The focus group was held at the Mill apartments, where NWC is based. Participants ranged in age from 68 to 96; all were women; several were residents of subsidized housing; and all were White and long-time Waltham residents.

All used and were appreciative of services in Waltham. They mentioned subsidized housing, special transportation (the Ride, the CoA shopping shuttle), meals on wheels, and service providers who come to their buildings (podiatrist, hair dresser, the Triad officer to the Mill; exercises classes at Pond Street housing). But they pointed to shortcomings, too, e.g., the barriers to applying for the Ride; some taxis not accepting CoA vouchers; the loss of the Grover Cronin, the 5&10 and other downtown Waltham shopping; the loss of the shuttle to Newton Wellesley hospital; lack of things for seniors to do at night and on weekends; and poor snow shoveling.

Things they do to be healthy include healthy diets, prayer, friends to talk to, crafts, baking and helping others. Threats to being healthy include loneliness (particularly on weekends), separation from families that are too busy for them, poor eyesight, and loss of interest in life. The things they pointed to for creating a healthy community involved volunteering: at the library, the thrift shop, meals on wheels, baking for others where they live, a community sing-along, and teaching ESL.

Chinese Americans: A Chinese-American resident of the Mill apartments helped us assemble a focus group of 10 Chinese-American Mill residents. They included five men and five women ranging in age from 76 to 87. Their time in Waltham ranged from 1 to 16 years. The Mill is the home of about 95 Chinese-American seniors in its 250 units, which has allowed them to form a close community.

The ways Waltham supports healthy aging for these seniors revolves largely around the Mill apartments and its location: near beautiful outdoor spaces and walking paths, convenient shopping, multicultural food, cultural resources (the library, outdoor concerts), and good transportation. They also appreciated in-home services, the Senior Center, and Brandeis tutors in English. They thought that Waltham could do better by keeping the walking paths cleaner and regulating bikers who use pedestrian foot paths, by expanding bus routes, and by offering more culturally friendly activities for Chinese immigrants and more Chinese materials in the library.

The group's ideas for keeping healthy included lots of walking, swimming, and intellectual activities. The way the community could be even healthier is to have better mental health services for Chinese residents.

Latino-Americans: A staff member from WATCH helped us organize a focus group of 21 Latino-Americans at the WATCH office. WATCH is the federally qualified Community Development Corporation servicing low-income persons in Waltham. The majority of participants were from Puerto Rico with other seniors from other parts of the Caribbean and Central America. As a whole, this group was considerably younger than the other focus groups with ages ranging from 57 to 70 and only 1 person 70+. The group was about 2/3 women. Residence in Waltham ranged from 4 to 50 years. The WATCH staffer provided ongoing translation of comments in Spanish into English (and vice versa). The unexpectedly large size of the group and the need to translate each comment for the rest of the group made it impossible to hear the views of all participants. Nevertheless, there was a lively conversation.

When asked about how Waltham supports healthy aging, the first response was "Waltham has been no help for me." Others mentioned support for food, housing, fuel assistance, parks and fresh air, English classes, transportation to medical appointments, and Senior Center assistance with parking passes and taxes. But for many participants these services are "hidden" in the sense that many who spoke had a vague idea of them but do not know what they are, for whom they are, and how to access them. Only three had been to the Senior Center. Others said there is no Spanish community in the Senior Center. Also lacking has been translators at doctors' offices, hospitals, and government offices.

When asked how Waltham could be more supportive, the most emphatic answer was more affordable housing. They cited housing discrimination, rising rents and taxes; and pointed out that many people they know have moved further west (in Massachusetts) for less expensive housing. Also desired were fuel assistance, lower drug copays, and help with jobs and discrimination (many were still working).



Regarding what they do to stay healthy, they described a range of exercise: walking, dancing at parties, stretching, yoga, and pilates. Some go to the YMCA though others thought the Y was too expensive. They noted the importance of drinking water and eating salad and fruit. Some had heard of nutrition classes but did not know where they might find them. To create a healthy community they wanted walking groups, cooking classes and community meals, inexpensive trips, and opportunities to volunteer.

**Veterans:** With the help of VFW Post we held a focus group of Waltham veterans at the post on Trapelo Road. We decided to conduct a veterans' focus group so we could hear the voices of older men, more specifically men with special benefits that go with their veteran status. The ten males in the group ranged in age from 70 to 91, their time in Waltham ranged from 11 to 86 years, all were White, and all were native English speakers.

These veterans had a lot to say about how Waltham supports healthy aging, including many mentions of Senior Center programs (meals, card games, help with taxes, healthy food and exercise classes, and transportation to shopping), veterans' services (medical care, tax deductions), police and fire departments, and the library. They told us that Waltham could do better with more affordable housing, better bus service, more accessible buildings, and easier transportation to the VA medical center in Bedford. The most enthusiastic part of the discussion was about how to improve roads and traffic lights.

The veterans reported that they try to stay healthy by walking, watching their diets, following doctors' orders, using hearing aids, and swimming at Bentley (for \$175 a year), the Boston Health Club and at the Hanscom Field. They also value being in veterans' groups, where other men understand their experiences. To create a healthier community they said that seniors could learn about healthy eating (including how to read and understand nutritional labels), deliver meals on wheels and that the Tribune and cable station could have feature stories on healthy eating.

**Ugandan-Americans:** We received help organizing a focus group of Ugandan-American seniors from African Cultural Services and the St. Peters congregation of Christ Church. The group included 3 men and 10 women ranging in age from 59 to 74. Time in Waltham ranged from 7 to 14 years. Four of the participants did not live in Waltham and ended up in the group because they come to church in Waltham and spend much of their free time (especially on Sundays) in the city.

For these Ugandan-Americans, Waltham supports healthy aging with good churches; a good library; walk-able, safe and peaceful outdoors; and welcoming people (including the police and the mayor). The city could be more age-friendly with cheaper housing – some in the group had been forced out by high costs. None had ever been to the Senior Center, and only one had been to the community health center. They get their information from the church, the Internet, the library, and word of mouth.

They stay healthy with good diets, exercise, seeking regular medical care, and learning how to take medication as prescribed to them.

## *(2) Detailed findings from focus groups*

This section presents the analysis of how participants' responses fit into the 8 WHO age-friendly categories and the 6 healthy aging categories. Our analysis began by looking at all the passages from the focus groups that we assembled in each category. Then we grouped the passages by common messages and themes. This section presents the messages/themes and illustrates them with passages from the focus group notes (indicated by double indenting).

We start first with the findings for the questions: "How does Waltham support healthy aging?" and "How could Waltham do better?" Then we present findings for the questions "What do older people do to stay healthy?" and "What else could they do?" We present the findings in each of the 14 WHO/healthy aging categories. We note how many groups had an answer that related to the category and how many mentions there were.

### **A. How does Waltham Support healthy aging and how could it do better?**

#### **1. Outdoor spaces and buildings**

##### **How does Waltham support healthy aging? (5 groups - 15 mentions)**

At least one person in every group except the NWC group had something good to say about Waltham's outdoor spaces and buildings. Good outdoor spaces were mentioned in three groups and "walkable" was mentioned in two others.

The first thing is the environment of Waltham area is very good. I'm especially in favor of Greenway – Charles River. I walk there almost every day. Spring, summer. All shaded by trees and water with geese and ducks. Sometimes I saw a Blue Heron. Path called Blue Heron. This is a very good place for older people to exercise at own pace. Many places like that in Waltham area. (Chinese male age 86)

Similarly, "Peaceful" "Safe" and "Clean" were mentioned in two groups. New building and walkways were mentioned in two groups, including the reconditioning of the riverbank and: "Renovations – the change is good. A Facelift for Waltham." (Ugandan male age 59)

##### **How could Waltham do better? (3 groups - 10 mentions)**

Four areas for improving outdoor spaces and buildings were mentioned: walking paths, a pedestrian street crossing, accessibility, and snow removal.

The Chinese focus group had the most to say about improving outdoor spaces (six of 10 mentions), which is not surprising from their reports of enjoying regular walks from their base in The Mill apartments. Litter is an issue but more important is problems sharing paths with bikers:

Bike person does not have a bell and when pass by say nothing and give no signal and they go by so fast. Very dangerous. Maybe the city can do something about this issue. (Chinese female age 76)

Two years ago my wife was hit by bicycle on a trail. Fortunately, no one was hurt though both biker and my wife fell down. Bikers should have to follow special rules. (Chinese male)

Mill residents also have problems with crossing Moody Street at the bridge:

When we go to Moody Street we need a (pedestrian) crossing, so cars will stop and let people walk across. A car almost hit me and I knocked on window and told them. Don't know what to do, but maybe a signal or sign or something. (Chinese female age 76)

A 91-year old disabled veteran reported that he has problems:

...getting into buildings that don't have automatic doors, and into lavatories and rest rooms that have non-handicapped accessible doors.

Inadequate snow removal was mentioned in veterans and NWC groups:

Snow removal isn't the best but this year we will know who the contractors are and keep watching them. (Veteran)

## **2. Transportation**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (4 groups - 12 mentions)

Four groups (not Haitians, not Ugandans) had something good to say about transportation in Waltham, including MBTA buses, special transportation, and parking discounts.

Veterans and Chinese had good things to say about bus service:

When I moved here in 1947 my mother said there's going to be bus service at the end of my street – that bus is still there and I use it. (Veteran)

Senior center transportation support was praised in veterans, NWC and Latino groups, including taxi vouchers, \$5 parking passes to city lots, and the Senior Center van:

I'm "car-less" since last September. I've benefited from the Shuttle one time a week to Market Basket and also to medical appointments within city limits. It's free but you can make a donation. (NWC group female age 68)

**How could Waltham do better?** (4 groups – 22 mentions)

Four groups (again not Haitians, not Ugandans) had a lot to say (22 mentions) about how to improve transportation. Recommendations related to buses, traffic/roads, and special transportation.

Buses: Veterans and Chinese respondents gave suggestions for improving public transport, including more routes and better information about systems. One veteran offered:

We live off Trapelo Rd. but I haven't figured out how to get bus service because there's nothing there – used to be years ago. We're all getting older and we will need the buses.

Two Chinese respondents pointed to specific places they would like to go to:

Also, we need transportation to doctor appointments, like to Lahey, Lexington. We're close to Lexington, but transportation doesn't go there. It's dangerous to cross street by the highway. (Chinese female)

For myself, I do exercise like walking daily and swim three times a week for 1 hour in water. I go to the YMCA in Brighton. There is a Y in Waltham, but no public transport (there). I can get to Brighton by bus – 70 – to Watertown Square and then connect to another bus. You could go to the Y in Waltham by bus, but it's still a long way to walk. And 70a bus is only once an hour and have to wait a long time if miss it. (Chinese male)

Traffic/roads: All five comments on roads and traffic came from the veterans' group, which discussed synchronizing lights, using left turn arrows at particular intersections and improving road maintenance:

Watch City is also known as pot-hole city. I don't know if the DPW does pot-hole repair? There's been a pot-hole on my street for 13 months. I don't own a car but I hesitate to have people come visit

me because it's a dead-end and people have difficulty going around.

Special transport: Not surprisingly, the NWC group was especially interested in special transportation, including barriers to the Ride, unreliable taxis, and the loss of bus service to Newton-Wellesley Hospital:

The Ride should not be so difficult. Have to have doctors' notes and other information about why we can't take public transportation. Should be easier. They really grill you and give you a test -- walk, going up steps, turning around even with doctor's note. It takes about a half-hour. (Female age 67)

Waltham Taxi no longer takes vouchers. No one told anyone... All taxis are owned individually so there's no one central place to call. (Female age 72)

We used to have bus to Newton-Wellesley during the day. If I need an x-ray now I have to go out of town. You need to find someone to take you. (Female age 96)

### **3. Housing**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (4 groups – 13 mentions)

Waltham's support for healthy aging through housing was mentioned 13 times in four groups (not Haitians, not Ugandans). Aspects included:

The good location of the Mill apartments downtown:

The library, the CVS and supermarket are all a short distance so can walk to them in 20 minutes so very convenient. There are more than 7 bus stations here. Most Chinese have no car so this is very good for us. (Chinese male age 87)

The low cost and good amenities of subsidized senior housing:

Elderly housing and being on first floor makes a big difference. Accessible elder housing. (Chinese female age 79)

The podiatrist comes to you and don't have to find way to office. (NWC group female age 96)

Have someone to help with exercise at Pine Street. (NWC group female age 67)

There was mention in the Latino group that Waltham helps with housing and fuel assistance, but their perspective seemed more like that of outsiders trying to figure out how to access these programs:

WATCH has been valuable as a voice for a tenant action group.  
WATCH provides a list of things going on and has information  
of the periodic lottery for low cost housing.

### **How could Waltham do better? (4 groups - 12 mentions)**

Given the residence of the Chinese group in subsidized senior housing, it is not surprising that they did not mention how Waltham could do better with housing. Nor did the Haitians. The other four groups had 12 mentions of how to improve, including:

More help to age in place, including handyman (Latinos) and help with snow removal:

I'd like to have someone who could clean sidewalks and stairs when it snows. I worry about falling down. My son is not healthy so he can't do it. Later in the day I can get someone to clean the driveway but it would be good to have help with snow first thing in morning. (Female age 74 in NWC group)

More services in Pond Street housing:

We don't have anything at all at Pond Street. The person who used to lead exercises stopped and then we needed someone and no one came forward. (Female age 74 in NWC group)

In the Latino group there was much discussion of rising costs, one-year leases with increases, the need for rent control, and people moving west for lower prices:

"Hold landlords accountable for discrimination."  
"We need rent control."  
"Taxes are rising."

Similarly, the Ugandans called for lower costs:

"Cheaper rents (applause). The cost of living is high."  
(Female)  
"I Love Waltham but I can't afford to stay here." (Female 66  
living in Framingham)

In response to a query from the focus group leader, the Ugandans did not know anyone who lives in subsidized housing and did not seem to know it exists.

#### **4. Social participation**

##### **How does Waltham support healthy aging? (1 group - 2 mentions)**

The only group to mention something related to social participation was the Chinese, who cited the chance to socialize with each other, and also the availability of adult day services:

My wife and I use the day care center – two or three days – in Watertown. They provide health care and social activities – singing, dancing, birthday party and we also can watch Chinese TV and play Mahjong. It improves mental health. It makes Waltham a good place for us. (Male age 87)

##### **How could Waltham do better? (2 groups - 6 mentions)**

Waltham could do better by providing ways/places/times to have conversations with friends:

I don't have a wife. I am by myself. I am lonely not for a wife but a conversations buddy. (Haitian male)

Waltham has a cultural community center on Moody and High. They rebuilt the entire Wal-Lex (bowling and roller rink) in the community center. Mostly it is for children or for families. There needs to be something for adult-age seniors. Particularly at night need something. (Female age 68 in NWC group)

#### **5. Respect and social inclusion**

##### **How does Waltham support healthy aging? (3 groups - 8 mentions)**

Three of the focus groups (Chinese, Ugandan, and Latinos) had statements that we coded showing respect and social inclusion in Waltham. Ugandans pointed to being treated well by public officials:

The Mayor has come a couple of times to our church. She's a good mayor. (Male age 64 who lives in Revere)

The police are friendly. No racism. Black and white are treated the same. (Female age 64)

The Chinese group reported they feel part of the town and have a future in Waltham:

Here it is multicultural. I enjoy Indian food, Vietnam food, many kinds of food and culture. Especially on Moody Street we have shopping market and is very convenient for us. They have many healthy foods and vegetables in the Indian market. I think Waltham is a good town for us. I came from China in 1999. First year had no place to live so applied for an apartment. Waltham accepts me; I'm very thankful for Waltham. (Female age 83)

We have future in US. My son lives in NJ, another in Florida. Too far away to take care of us. We've lived here for 10 years; we have confidence to live here. This was a good place for us. (Male age 87)

A positive support for inclusion mentioned in the Latino group was English classes, "but we need more."

#### **How could Waltham do better? (3 groups - 9 mentions)**

The NWC, Chinese and Latino groups mentioned ways Waltham could do better at inclusion and respect, including language inclusion and activities for their ethnic group.

Seniors in the NWC group asked for more positions:

They could give more effort to hiring or give volunteer positions to seniors (Female age 68)

Latinos asked for jobs on fair terms:

We need more help in finding jobs, especially for those over 50 who face discrimination in hiring or are offered lower pay for ironing in a laundry than is offered to younger workers. Many older people are still working. Several incomes are needed to support the family. This is especially true as landlords are seriously raising rents every year.

Both Latinos and Haitians asked for more English classes:

School for immigrants because I came here I do not speak English at all, and they don't have a school around here where someone like me can go to speak English. (Haitian group)

Chinese and Spanish participants asked for more programming for their group:



In NJ there are a lot of Chinese and had more Chinese activities. General exercise and with leader every day. Here it is not free. More Chinese materials in library are needed. There are lots of programs at the Senior Center but not free. (Chinese female age 76)

There is no Spanish community in the Senior Center. They should speak Spanish at the Senior Center. (Latino group)

## **6. Civic participation and employment**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

**How could Waltham do better?** (3 groups - 4 mentions)

Although there were no mentions of how Waltham supports civic participation and employment, there were mentions of employment and volunteering in the NWC, Latino and Veterans groups:

(I should deliver meals on wheels) There is always need for more drivers for meals on wheels. (Veteran)

## **7. Communication and information**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (1 group - 3 mentions)

Communication and information as a support for healthy aging were mentioned only in the Ugandan group, which cited the library, church, and word of mouth as sources.

**How could Waltham do better?** (2 groups - 4 mentions)

The Veterans group recommended a weekly column on aging services in the Tribune. The Latino group had several ideas: translators in businesses and doctors offices and the Senior Center. They also suggested more focus groups as a way to share information.

## **8. Community and health services**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (6 groups - 25 mentions)

All groups had a lot to say about how Waltham supports healthy aging through community and health services. Domains included medical care, the Senior Center, home care/day care, and services more broadly.

Medical care: Participants had praise for specific aspects of medical services:

Facilities where people can go to take care of conditions. Also, urgent care. Even if you have a primary doctor, you can't just see them in an emergency. Right behind Shell station there's a walk-in facility. They take care of you. (Ugandan male age 59 from Framingham)

I get health services from the VA so we are very fortunate. (Veteran)

Two months ago when I got up I felt hard to catch breath. So I called 911 and got to hospital in 20 minutes. I stayed in hospital for 5 days – Newton Wellesley Hospital. I always go to MGH but that time to NW Hospital. Good place to have. (Chinese male age 87)

I love that they have this clinic and that I can walk to come see my doctor. I am very happy with this clinic. It helps me so much, it helps me with controlling my blood pressure and takes good care of me. (Haitian group)

CoA: Senior Center supports for healthy aging were mentioned only in the Veterans, NWC, and Chinese groups. Only three of the 21 Latinos had ever been to the Senior Center, and none of the Haitians or Ugandans seemed to have been there. Those who mentioned the Senior Center generally had a lot of specific things to praise:

They have a great Senior Center that helps with taxes, card players. It's a good place for seniors to communicate and I think (City) supports the veterans – especially older ones. (Veteran)

The best thing is the Senior Center. I came from Livingston NJ. Their center was all ages. Here is different. I get spoiled here. Here the Center does a lot of things, health education every month. Also have exercise program and have safety program and entertainment program (movie, trips). Of course you need money. They have a transportation program which is very good. Have a bus for people to go shopping. There was a program for doctor appointments in Waltham. I never used it but hope they have it again. I'm just spoiled. So grateful. (Chinese female age 76)

It's a lot better than when I was growing up. City Hall didn't like to see you come in. My father died when he was 49 and my mother had to raise 6 children. City Hall told her to get a job. When I look at CoA today – they help people with food and

other needs. Thank God we have that today. I feel that City Hall has done a lot for elderly today that certainly did not do in 30's (1930s) when they did absolutely nothing. (NWC group female age 96)

One Chinese participant had home care:

We have home services – very important for us, particularly since our son and daughter are far away. This is very important for independence. We are members of United Health Care Insurance (and have Medicare). Have homemaker to clean and very useful for us. (Chinese female age 81)

Other services were also praised:

I can swim at the Boys and Girls Club and see boys and girls and they are happy. So I hope I can have more opportunities to be with other ages. Cost is \$37 for half a year. (Chinese female age 81)

I use all of the above and think Waltham is doing good job with elders. Things we never had before we now have and I think it is wonderful. Wouldn't be able to survive without them. The Shuttle. At 48 Pine Street we have lunch every day for people in the building. Waltham is doing better than they ever have with seniors. (NWC group female age 67)

### **How could Waltham do better? (6 groups - 12 mentions)**

All the groups had something to say about how services could be more supportive of healthy aging. Here we coded the previously mentioned calls for staff who speak their language. WATCH meets those criteria for Spanish speakers. Haitians told us they go out of town for more specialized services:

I have to go all the way to Dorchester where they have a lot of Haitian agencies that help you a lot, with problem with immigrations, citizenship and help with lawyers.

Among the NWC group there were nostalgic calls for the Waltham medical system they remember:

We should have a hospital. The one we had was beautiful. You knew doctors and now don't know who you are getting. You don't get to know doctors anymore. I've had 3 doctors in 6 years. (Female age 96)

You don't even get to see a doctor but have to see nurse practitioners. (Female age 67)

There were also calls for mental health services (Chinese female age 83), a singing group at the Senior Center (Veteran), and cheaper child care (for young children) (Ugandan female age 64).

## **9. Physical exercise**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (3 groups – 4 mentions)

We found a few mentions of ways Waltham supports physical exercise, including good places to walk and bike, exercise classes at the Senior center and the Mill, and swimming at the Boys and Girls Club \$37 for a half year and Bentley for \$175 a year.

**How could Waltham do better?** (3 groups - 4 mentions)

Seniors in three groups had suggestions: access to the Brandeis pool (Chinese female); bringing exercise programs to Pond Street and Pine Street senior housing (NWC group females age 72 and 67), and a walking program:

Waltham should have a walking program for people like me. They need to put it somewhere I can see, and I will walk and talk with people my age, like we are doing now.... I am enjoying myself and laughing and not thinking about my problems. (Haitian male)

## **10. Diet**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (2 groups - 4 mentions)

Most of the few mentions about Waltham's support for good diets came from the Veterans group, which cited the Senior Center's food classes and meals on wheels, the farmers' market, and the convenience of markets to downtown.

**How could Waltham do better?** (0 groups – 0 mentions)

## **11. Finding meaning and purpose in life**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (3 groups - 11 mentions)

All of the items related to how Waltham supports finding meaning and purpose in life came from Ugandan and Chinese groups. Ugandans praised the library ("Good atmosphere in the library" - Male age 64 from Revere;), the

universities (“I go there for speeches” - Female age 64), and the churches (“Church is good – we came here for that” - Male age 59 from Framingham).

The Chinese group cited the universities (Brandeis English tutors and the LaSalle life-long learning program), as well as the general cultural life:

I want to add about cultural life in Waltham – library, museums, summer concerts on Waltham Common on Tuesday evenings. There is an internet center by the Museum of Industry. All of this facilitates old people to have cultural life.  
(Male age 87)

**How could Waltham do better?** (1 group - 1 mention)

A Chinese female wanted:

Lifelong learning for seniors. We need more chance to learn more, especially for Chinese seniors. We have language troubles and culture troubles. I would like to learn more about American culture and also have more chance to learn English.

### **12. Being pro-active about health**

In coding this category we found it difficult to distinguish between what seniors do to be pro-active about health from what Waltham does to help seniors be pro-active about health. Certainly the availability of medical care, cooking classes at the Senior Center, nice places to exercise, healthy foods in the markets, etc., all help people to take steps to be healthy. We could have coded those things here, but we decided to put this material in the section below on “What do older people do to be healthy?”

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (0 groups – 0 mentions)

**How could Waltham do better?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

### **13. Physical safety**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging?** (2 groups - 6 mentions)

As mentioned in the outdoor spaces and inclusion categories, Ugandan seniors said Waltham is a “safe” and “peaceful” place with a friendly police force. The Veterans’ group also mentioned the police, including at-home “well-being checks from officer Bailey (the Triad officer)”, at-home smoke detector installation by the fire department and appointments with officer Bailey (at) “... part of the Senior Center.”

**How could Waltham do better? (1 group - 1 mention)**

We coded a mention of snow removal problems here:

Where we live they may plow, yes, but if there is ice no one puts on ice melt and you just have to be careful where walking. This is on Pine Street. No one cares about whether or not we are safe. (NWC group female age 79)

**14. Financial security**

**How does Waltham support healthy aging? (3 groups - 4 mentions)**

We coded several things here: a discount on taxes (Vet), the commissary at Hanscom Field (Vet), and free help with taxes (a Latino re: help at the Senior Center and a Ugandan re: help at Bentley).

**How could Waltham do better? (1 group - 1 mention)**

We did not code addressing high and rising housing prices in this category, but we did put a request for help with prescription drug copays here (Latino group).

**15. Other**

The only thing that came up that we could not code in one or more of the other 14 categories was shopping, which received at least one positive comment and several calls for improvement.

**How does Waltham support healthy aging? (1 groups - 1 mentions)**

A Ugandan female mentioned Market Basket and shopping centers as supports.

**How could Waltham do better? (2 groups - 5 mentions)**

Four out of five mentions were from the NWC group:

There is a bank on every corner.... Lots of condos but no stores. (Female)

We've got enough restaurants but wish we had more places to go clothes shopping. I'd like a department store in town. (Female age 79)

We used to have a 5 and 10 and Grover Cronin's. (Female age 96)

## **B. What do older people do to stay healthy and what else could they do?**

### **1. Outdoor spaces and buildings**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (2 groups - 2 mentions)

A Vet said "I walk. I have places to walk."

A Chinese female was more expansive:

I like to read, cook, sew, play piano, plant vegetables and flowers. They give me a place. Water and see them come up and bloom. Good when it rains. We help each other. We have a happy life.

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

### **2. Transportation**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (2 groups - 2 mentions)

Two Chinese respondents use transportation to get to exercise and leisure:

Two aspects, physically and mentally. For myself, I do exercise like walking daily and swim three times a week for 1 hour in water. I go to the YMCA in Brighton. (Because it is easier to get public transport there than to the Y in Waltham) (Male)

Last Sunday (the day after the big downtown fire) I went to Revere Beach by myself. I took the commuter train to Porter Square and transferred to two subway lines. Air was too warm here, and it was easy to go to beach. Two hours each way and stayed there one hour. Very interesting. (Female age 83)

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

### **3. Housing**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

### **4. Social participation**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (2 groups - 3 mentions)

Social participation was mentioned in two groups as a way to stay healthy. A Veteran said:

How does joining a veterans' organization help health? Veterans face getting old differently than others. When they're with other veterans they never have to explain what they did. I don't give a shit about "thank you for your service" comments, if they didn't give a damn 50 years ago. I'm not interested now.

A 68-year-old female in the NWC group was nostalgic but finds things to do at the Mill:

There used to be inter-generational things going on, like (another member of the group) said within your own community, and that helps. At the Mill, we have a monthly sing-a-long, and a woman plays by ear and she practices to learn. It just started and had about 8 or 9 people and that was a start.

#### **What else could they do? (2 groups - 8 mentions)**

The Latino group wanted more sharing as a community and wanted to get together more often. They asked for some short trips - not elaborate or expensive - to museums, Boston, duck boats, casinos, or to pick apples.

Some members of the NWC group reported that isolation is hard to overcome:

Sometimes on weekends I don't see anybody. After 5:00 everyone is in for the night and on weekends. (Female age 96)

It's a long, long weekend (Female age 67)

### **5. Respect and social inclusion**

#### **What do older people do to be healthy? (3 groups - 3 mentions)**

We coded three answers in this category. They point to reaching out across generations, cultures and friendships:

I asked my 8-year-old granddaughter to take a walk with me. I told her let's go take a walk with Granma, to the park.  
(Haitian group)

Sometimes I go to the library and also like to read some English. How to contact American people is not easy. So when



I come to my apartment I am trying to understand English jokes and riddles from the Internet. I ask American residents and can know English from them. (Chinese male age 79)

Call someone to talk to – a friend. Don't know what else to say. I do call people I know but not as much as I used to do. I have a lot of things I can do in my own house. Videos, etc. But lots of times I don't feel so much like doing anything. (Female age 79 in NWC group)

**What else could they do? (3 groups – 4 mentions)**

They could try to connect with their family but that's not always easy:

Complain once in a while. My son said you have to call me, but if you don't have that kind of personality it's hard to do but you need to do it. These are the ones who we took care of and they didn't register what should now happen. We have learned to "text" and also to change wording: "I don't expect you to call me back but I would appreciate it if you did." (Female age 68 in NWC group)

I have 5 grandchildren but the older they get they have their own lives so I don't see them as much as I would like. What can you do – I just let it go. (Female age 72 in NWC group)

More activities for my group:

We need more activities for the Spanish (Latino group)

Get help with hearing deficits:

Hearing issues – my wife wears hearing aids and we don't go to movies because they don't have subtitles for hearing impaired. Lowest prices (for hearing aids) are at VA and Costco has a good program as well. (Veterans group)

**6. Civic participation and employment**

**What do older people do to be healthy? (3 groups - 11 mentions)**

Ten of the 11 brief mentions pointed to volunteering: the hospital, meals on wheels, the library, teaching ESL, the WATCH race, and Neighbors Who Care.

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

**7. Communication and information**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

**What else could they do?** (1 group - 3 mentions)

One veteran recommended a regular piece in the Tribune on healthy aging, and another asked for more programming about activities for seniors on Waltham Community Access TV station, e.g., a medical/health related program.

**8. Community and health services**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

**9. Physical exercise**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (6 groups - 21 mentions)

Exercise was mentioned in all groups – and on the average three plus times per group – as a thing older people do to be healthy. Most of the participants cited walking (“No one charges you for that.”), but swimming, jogging, table tennis, tai chi, yoga, and dance were also mentioned.

We need to admit we aren’t young anymore and do what we should. I use the pool at Bentley. There’s a \$175 seniors pool pass. (Veterans group)

Simple, move your feet every day. That’s my plan. I have hypertension so I always walk 2000 steps – count them. Every day walk same way. Every day I don’t worry and am very happy. I just care about my health. (Chinese male age 80)

What I do to stay healthy? I walk. I like to walk, sometimes 30 minutes or more. I will go to the store, grab something and walk back home. (Haitian group)

**What else could they do?** (3 groups - 3 mentions)

The Latino group suggested walking or running in groups. There were calls in the Veterans and Chinese groups to open the Brandeis and Bentley athletic facilities to seniors:<sup>5</sup>

It would be good to get a plan for limited facility usage for less money like Universities. Specially directed to seniors.  
(Veterans group)

## **10. Diet**

### **What do older people do to be healthy? (5 groups - 10 mentions)**

All groups except the Chinese offered ideas about how to have a healthy diet, including more water, less fat and sugar, more fruits and veggies, nutrition classes, and cooking healthy. A better diet can be part of a larger program:

When I came here I was fat. But I went for physicals and they said you have cholesterol. I took the medicine and I asked Ugandans. We don't work out. I started jogging and walking and I cared for myself. I don't eat meat. No cholesterol. And now I'm (thumbs up and wags fingers). (Ugandan female age 66)

Diet also figures into social life:

I share my ideas of healthy cooking with my neighbors when I gave them food and they asked me how I cook it. I told them about the fresh ingredients that I used. (Haitian male)

### **What else could they do? (0 groups - 0 mentions)**

## **11. Finding meaning and purpose in life**

### **What do older people do to be healthy? (6 groups - 22 mentions)**

We classified 22 passages from all of the focus groups as examples of how pursuing meaning and purpose in life is something that seniors do to be healthy. Ways cited included reading and learning, games, crafts spiritual practice, and music.

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<sup>5</sup> Note: Bentley allows Waltham seniors to buy a \$175 per year pool pass and has recently opened its fieldhouse to Waltham seniors, for walking, one hour each week. Brandeis does neither.

Mentally, like reading. I like periodicals. My favorite is National Geographic because I can get new knowledge about all categories of science. I'm a subscriber and so every month I read it. I also read some newspapers, Chinese newspapers. (Chinese male)

Meaning is also found by learning from others and helping others and taking help. Be open to new friends.

I live by myself, so when I cook, and the other single guys in my building smell my food they come to me: "Oh my friend what are you cooking? It smells good." And I feel good when people tell me that, and I am always happy to share my meals with them too when I cook. (Haitian male)

I met someone who was struggling with a few things in the laundry room and that interaction blossomed into a wonderful friendship. She helped me through my grief and I helped her with what she needed. You can't always get that. Need to be receptive to it. (NHC group female age 68)

Barriers to finding meaning cited included expense, loss of eyesight, and advanced age:

You lose interest in doing these things. Around 85 or so you're no longer interested. (NWC female age 96)

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

## **12. Being pro-active about health**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (6 groups - 13 mentions)

We found items to code into the pro-active about health category in all groups. The most frequent mentions were exercising and healthy diets (discussed in those categories), and seeing your doctor and following the doctor's advice:

Get a checkup. Some are worried about seeing the doctor because they might find something. They say, "I wish you had come earlier." (Ugandan male age 74)

They have to see their doctor to make sure they are healthy ... just because they might feel good doesn't mean they are healthy on the inside. I will tell them make sure you go to your appointment. (Haitian group)

A Vet wished he had learned about health earlier in life:

That's the hardest question you could ask. From my perspective we needed to start when we were in high school about things that would happen when we get older. When you tell me at 65 to stop eating salt or to exercise, it's too late. The doctor said, "Get rid of your salt shaker," but I don't have a salt shaker. It was about processed and fast foods with high sodium content. I found this out from labels - years too late.

A 74-year old female in the NWC group recommended reaching out to others:

When I'm really sick others come to help me. When I have a problem it's good to have someone who will listen. If you can talk to someone and get it out of your system that's helpful.

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

### **13. Physical safety**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

### **14. Financial security**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (1 groups - 3 mentions)

Three participants in the NWC group said to watch out for scams, and they appreciate the Triad officer's warnings:

Be aware of the bad stuff going on around you. Don't answer phone calls, don't be afraid to report to someone who is going to act on your behalf. Be aware of mail scams, phone scams.  
(female age 68)

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

### **15. Other (name)**

**What do older people do to be healthy?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

**What else could they do?** (0 groups - 0 mentions)

## Discussion

Echoing our 2016 report on healthy aging in Waltham, there is much to like about the City in the eyes of the participants in these six focus groups, but there are also ways that Waltham could be more aging friendly. These seniors also do things to be healthy and there are additional things they could do.

Another echo from the 2016 report is the differences between the four immigrant focus groups (Haitians, Chinese, Latino, and Ugandan) and the two groups of US-born Whites (Veterans and NWC). The latter discussed needs and desires that could be more effectively met, but those needs and desires are consistent with our earlier report and recommendations. In contrast, the immigrant groups add distinct situations and challenges, highlighted below.

*A welcoming place:* We heard in several of the immigrant groups that Waltham is a safe and welcoming place for them. Public officials and others treat them well: “Waltham accepts me; I’m very thankful for Waltham,” said a Chinese respondent. Similarly, a Ugandan said, “Black and White are treated the same.” Although we must note that some Latinos reported job and housing discrimination, overall Waltham appears to have a healthy base to build on in its relationships with its immigrant seniors.

*Good supports, amenities, and services:* Respondents in all six groups had good things to say about outdoor spaces, the library, and medical care (including the community health center, area hospitals, walk-in clinics, and the nearby VA). Participants also had good things to say about special and public transportation (most groups), housing (Chinese and NWC), the Senior Center (not Latino, Ugandan, Haitian), and access to swimming pools at Bentley, the Boys/Girls Club and private sports clubs. With the exception of expanding subsidized housing, which is a long-term and expensive proposition, access to these services could be expanded with improved outreach and/or modest subsidies. Unsafe crosswalks (Chinese group) and accessibility of public buildings (Vets group) could be addressed in the City’s new Commonwealth Community Compact on ADA accessibility.

*Healthy behavior:* All groups expressed a desire to be healthy and pro-active about their health, and many already indicated that they had learned or understood the behaviors necessary to support these aspirations. These included getting regular exercise, eating a healthy diet, reaching out to others to give and get help, and accessing needed medical care. These are behaviors that can be built upon through creating new walking clubs, publicizing and expanding food pantries and healthy cooking and eating classes, facilitating access to medical services, etc.

*Social connections:* In each of the immigrant groups a desire to interact with and get to know “Americans” was expressed. Waltham’s immigrant seniors live in a predominantly White-American city but their relationships and activities are generally within their own groups. Even some churches that serve both immigrant

and majority culture groups (e.g., St. Mary's and Christ Church) have separate services for their immigrant members. The library is a place that immigrants feel comfortable talking informally with Americans. Creating more settings and activities that cross cultures is an opportunity to pursue. Activities suggested in the groups include evening and weekend activities, community meals, and affordable trips.

*Language matters:* It is clear that not speaking good English is a barrier to accessing services and participating in all that Waltham has to offer. Immigrant seniors wish their languages were spoken – and written - at more places they go or might go, e.g., medical providers, city services (including the Senior Center), and businesses. Just as important would be activities (Senior Center classes) or materials (library resources) in their language. Many also want to learn English. Although ESL classes are available in Waltham, participants in several groups seemed not to know that or to feel that classes were difficult to access. Once again, these are problems that Waltham could address in specific and incremental ways that could make a difference. For example, the Springwell website has pages in Russian and Chinese but not Spanish or Haitian Creole. The Waltham CoA website is currently English only.

*Lack of information:* In our previous focus groups, White residents of Waltham often said they lacked information about services and activities. Not surprisingly this deficiency appears to be much greater among immigrant groups. Haitians and Ugandans did not mention any pluses regarding housing or special transportation, perhaps showing that they don't know much about either or how to access them. Some participants in the Latino group knew about and used services, e.g., tax help at the Senior Center, but others said they were essentially in the dark. Haitians said they go to the Community Health Center for medically related help but need to go to Dorchester for other help in their native language (Haitian Creole). An effort to improve the flow of information to immigrant groups might identify community contacts to whom they turn for information, e.g., churches, medical providers, hairdressers; determine what information is most relevant; translate it; and distribute it. The community contacts might also receive training in how to refer people to agencies that could help, e.g., the Senior Center and Springwell (but of course these agencies would have to have language-capable staff).

*Housing costs:* High and rising housing costs in Waltham are affecting all middle and low-income renters, as well as some homeowners with low incomes. The Latino and Ugandan groups discussed the pressure in their communities to leave Waltham for cheaper housing. The Chinese seniors from the Mill had no complaints, but we would have likely heard problems had we formed a group from Chinese renters in the private market. Building additional subsidized housing and controlling rents in a hot market are major planning and policy challenges that should be addressed, but in the meantime other smaller incremental efforts should be identified and pursued.

*Immigration status:* We did not ask focus group participants about immigration status and they did not volunteer it. Of course, this is an increasingly important and sensitive topic that Waltham's immigrants may not want to discuss with outsiders. It may also lie beyond the scope of age-friendly efforts. However, age-friendly efforts would do well to learn about how immigration status intersects with eligibility for services, e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, fuel assistance, taxi vouchers, library cards, and more. This would help shape effective information and service access initiatives.

## Conclusion

As in our earlier study, these focus groups show that Waltham seniors find a lot to like about how Waltham supports healthy aging, but there are also ways things could be better, particularly for immigrant groups. Waltham has a solid core of good infrastructure in outdoor spaces, housing and transportation. Services from public and private agencies meet many diverse needs. Older adults from diverse cultures feel welcomed and included in many ways. And older adults understand the need to be pro-active about health look for ways to do so. Even with these strengths, Waltham could do better.

A major issue is information and communication. Waltham agencies and government offices generally do not communicate in languages other than English. This could be remedied by translating and distributing written materials and having translators available in more settings. To foster healthy eating, materials about food pantries, soup kitchens, farmers' market discounts, and low-cost community farm distributions could be translated into Spanish, Creole, and Chinese and distributed to places immigrant seniors will see them. The same goes for information about special transportation, supported housing, fuel assistance, Springwell, and more. There seems to be an unmet demand for ESL classes, which in part may be due to the need for more communication about what is available.

Another issue is inclusion in community activities, which relates to isolated, low-income, and immigrant seniors. Isolated seniors are looking for activities in the evenings and on weekends, and immigrants are looking to be included in settings and activities where they can meet "Americans." Cost is an issue for many. There are social participation models that could be expanded, e.g., WATCH community dinners, Connections senior teas. Could faith communities, social clubs, service agencies, restaurants, and others get involved? Related to this is agency programming that reaches out to and welcomes immigrant groups, particularly at the Senior Center.

It took us many months to organize most of the immigrant focus groups that we conducted. We had to find and gain the trust of agencies and individuals who would help us form and conduct the groups. We had to show we were sincere, willing to listen, and ready to help. We were fortunate to be able to build the trust with the individuals and agencies who helped us organize the groups. Any effort to



bridge cultures and language to improve communication, create more inclusive and appealing activities, and improve access to services will need broader, deeper and continuing effort and resources to build common ground. Fortunately, from what we have seen, there are individuals and groups from Waltham's immigrant communities who are ready to help create and stand on that common ground.

