

## **Coming in May: The Waltham Summit on Healthy Aging Could Waltham be an Age Friendly City? Is it already?**

A Framework from Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging  
April 6, 2022

### Purpose of the Summit

On May 20 Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging (Connections) is hosting a Waltham Summit on Healthy Aging to further develop the way for Waltham to join the WHO/AARP Age-Friendly city program. The Summit will bring together Connections' partner agencies and diverse seniors to examine how City and private agencies are serving seniors. We believe the Summit will build on Connections' accomplishments and shape a stronger future.

### Who is Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging?

Connections is a coalition of Waltham agencies (City and private) and Waltham seniors working to make Waltham more age-friendly, supporting Waltham seniors in experiencing healthy aging, and promoting a vibrant and inclusive community. Seniors lead Connections, raise funds, support programs, create events, and more. We entered our sixth year in January. We've received grants from many funders, including six years of funding from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. See our website for more: <https://www.walthamconnections.org/>

### Why go Age Friendly?

The WHO/AARP Age Friendly model helps us put our work within WHO's eight-category framework for how communities can support healthy aging. The list below shows that Connections' programs over the last five years (and our future plans) are working in almost all eight. We also note how the senior-volunteer-heavy Connections model scores in some of the categories.

1. Civic participation and employment: 2021 Senior Civic Academy. 2022 Healthy Aging Summit. Senior volunteer leadership and service are the core of Connections.
2. Information and communication: 2018-2022 translations of CoA newsletter and outreach materials into Spanish. 2021-2 Welcome to the Digital Age (WDA) free computer and training program for low-income Waltham seniors.
3. Respect and Social Inclusion: Seniors lead and serve. Cross-cutting focus on inclusion of seniors who are immigrants, have low incomes, and/or are isolated.
4. Social participation: Inclusive events at the Senior Center. Volunteer leadership and service.
5. Community support and health services: 2021-2 Latina outreach worker at the CoA. 2020 Waltham history course at the CoA. 2021 Mind/Body/Spirit program at the CoA.
6. Housing: 2018-2022 food pantry in senior public housing. WDA marketing focus in supported housing.
7. Outdoor spaces and buildings: Walking club in Bentley fieldhouse.
8. Transportation: CoA van and taxi vouchers support Connections initiatives.

With all of this good Age-Friendly work, Waltham has what it takes to join the AARP/ WHO initiative. We hope the Summit results in new work to propose for an Age-Friendly designation.

#### How will Connections prepare the City for the Summit?

We are working with Waltham seniors, agency partners, and elected officials to create the Summit.

Seniors: In January and February we held listening sessions with diverse groups of Waltham seniors. In the sessions we asked them how they define healthy aging, how Waltham supports healthy aging, how it could do better, and where they are interested in taking action. In April we finished an Issue Brief on findings, distributed it to seniors from the groups, and invited them to meet to discuss findings. Seniors met in workshops by issue area. We are asking for volunteers to work on the issues and come to the Summit.

Agencies: In April we will ask current partner agencies (e.g., the Council on Aging (CoA), Healthy Waltham, the Housing Authority, Jewish Family and Children's Service, area hospitals) to think through how they can support new efforts. We may also reach out to other agencies that could help us address the specific issues identified by seniors. We will also invite public officials.

Summit: Seniors, agencies, and officials ready to work on issues will be invited to the Summit on May 20 at the Senior Center. They will receive an update of the Issue Brief, which will summarize agency discussions and recommend new initiatives. At the Summit, the agency representatives and the seniors will attend workshops by issue area to refine approaches and next steps. The Summit report will be an application to become an Age-Friendly city, which requires the type of needs assessment we are doing and descriptions of age-friendly work. We will include Connections' current initiatives.

#### What is our model to manage and resource the Age Friendly effort?

We go into the Summit with the current Connections model, and something like it is likely to come out: A community collaboration of senior volunteers and City and private agencies. The CoA would continue as the lead city agency. The CoA Director's time and leadership would be the major material city commitment, plus support from other departments. The model relies on strong volunteer leadership and followership. We've tried to structure the Summit to strengthen seniors' involvement.

#### What will happen at the Summit?

The Summit will be held on May 20 from 9:00 AM -12:30 PM at the Senior Center. It will start with coffee/tea followed by a session with all participants to review the proposed initiatives, as well as Connections' recent programs. This will be followed by three or four agency/senior workshops by proposed initiatives. Workshops will report out to another session with all participants. Conveners will end the Summit with an outline of next steps. Coffee/tea will be served before the 9 AM start, and a light lunch will be available before the closing session.