



**Waltham Connections**  
for Healthy Aging

**Report on the Waltham Healthy Aging Summit**  
Held May 20, 2022 at the Waltham Senior Center  
From Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging  
June 1, 2022

Table of Contents

	Page
1. Waltham Connections	1
2. Purpose of the Summit	1
3. Preparation for the Summit	
Research	2
Invitations to Seniors	2
Invitations to agencies and officials	3
4. The Summit	
Participants	3
The Day	3
Breakout Groups	
- Outdoor Spaces	3
- Intergenerational Programs	4
- Inclusion	4
5. Next Steps	5
 Attachment 1: Issue Brief	 6
Attachment 2: Description of Summit	15
Attachment 3: Bench Survey	18



## **Report on the Waltham Healthy Aging Summit**

### **1. Waltham Connections**

Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging (Connections) has been working with Waltham agencies and officials for over five years to make Waltham a better place for older people to live. We use a community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) approach that involves seniors in (1) gathering information about how Waltham does well and could do better to promote healthy aging, and (2) taking action on findings.

Connections approaches its work with agencies and officials in a collaborative way. We acknowledge that staff and budgets are already committed to agencies' missions. Our approach is to bring additional human and financial resources into partnerships that can help agencies do the things they would like to do but can't with current resources.

Connections is guided by a Coordinating Committee consisting of 4 senior volunteers, the Council on Aging (CoA) Director, a paid Program Manager, and a representative from Healthy Waltham, which manages our grants (Connections is not a legal entity). With our grants and volunteers, we have developed and helped pay for large and inclusive social events at the CoA, food pantries in senior public housing, free computers/internet/and training to Waltham seniors who can't afford them, a walking program at the Bentley University fieldhouse, translation and distribution of the CoA newsletter into other languages, a pilot of a Latina outreach worker at the CoA, and two pandemic programs on zoom: the Waltham Senior Civic Academy and the Mind/Body/Spirit program. As of June 30 we will have about \$55,000 in grant funds to devote to Connections initiatives. More details on our programs, operations, studies and grants can be found on our website: <https://www.walthamconnections.org>.

### **2. Purpose of the Summit**

The purpose of the Waltham Healthy Aging Summit was to bring Waltham seniors together with agencies (public and private) and officials serving Waltham to discuss how to make Waltham even more friendly to older adults. The discussions focused on three issue areas that were identified in listening sessions with seniors prior to the Summit: Outdoor Spaces, Intergenerational Programs, and Inclusion of seniors who are immigrants. The discussions were designed to (1) start discussions among seniors

interested in these issues and with agency staff and public officials associated with these issues, and (2) begin to develop plans for moving forward jointly on the issues.

### 3. Preparation for the Summit

Research: We began to prepare for the Summit in February and March by holding seven listening sessions (focus groups) with a total of 87 Waltham seniors. Groups included seniors answering an announcement in the Council on Aging newsletter (one in English, one in Spanish), residents of the Mill Senior housing (one in English, one in Mandarin), Ugandan immigrants (in English and Luganda), residents of Pine Street senior public housing, and participants in Connections' Waltham Senior Civic Academy. We asked participants how Waltham supports healthy aging, how it could do better, and in what area(s) they would be interested in getting involved.

The listening sessions identified a wide range of important issues in healthy aging – many of which Waltham does well with, and others where Waltham could do better. In choosing what issues to address at the Summit, we considered our capacity to address an issue within the Waltham Connections model of senior/agency collaboration. We brought issues in three areas to the Summit:

Outdoor spaces: Return benches to more bus stops on Moody and Main Streets. Create more outdoor activities for seniors, e.g., fitness stations, walks. Clean up after dogs, birds, and people along the river downtown.

Inclusion: Bring more immigrant seniors into the CoA and other services and activities. Key public and private programs should speak and write in the main languages spoken by Waltham seniors: English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and Haitian Creole.

Intergenerational programs: Find more ways for seniors to connect with high school and college age youth. Both youth and seniors could benefit from such connections.

Invitations to the Summit for seniors: In late March, we circled back to listening session participants and 15 Connections volunteers to ask them if they would attend discussion groups in one or more of these three areas. The groups were designed to get more detail on the issues and to identify seniors interested in getting involved as Connections volunteers. Seventeen seniors attended, and some others were interested but could not attend. These are the seniors we invited to the Summit. After the three discussions, we shared with the seniors an 8-page Issue Brief on the listening sessions as well as a 2-page description of the Summit. The outdoor spaces group also received a “bench survey.” (All attached). Also, in early May we sent them a program for the Summit and a description of the breakout session they would be attending, including what agencies we were expecting. We reached out to Spanish speakers with translated materials and through the new Spanish-speaking outreach worker at the CoA.

Invitations to agencies and officials: In April we identified and contacted agencies and elected officials serving Waltham that might be able to help with these issues. We shared the Issue Brief and the description of the Summit. Most of those contacted were responsive and interested in the Summit. As with the seniors we shared with them descriptions of their breakout session, including expected senior participation.

#### 4. The Summit

Participants: Forty-eight people attended the Summit. They included the Connections Coordinating Committee, which created the Summit and led the program. An additional 28 seniors attended, including seniors from Spanish-speaking and Ugandan communities, and residents of subsidized housing. Two city council members attended. Fifteen agencies were represented, including Springwell, Mt. Auburn and Newton/Wellesley hospitals, the Mazie Mentoring Program, JF&CS, Bentley and Brandeis Universities, WATCH, Mill Housing, Africano, the Waltham Land Trust, the Waltham Housing Authority and two City departments: The Library and Parks and Recreation.

The Day: The Summit ran from 9 AM to 12:30 PM at the Senior Center. There was a plenary introduction, followed by three breakout groups, and a final plenary for reports from the groups. We translated the script for the introduction into Spanish, and we did a concurrent translation between Spanish and English for the reports. We served coffee, snacks and lunch.

#### Breakout Groups:

- Outdoor Spaces. The outdoor spaces breakout was attended by 6 seniors and representatives from the City Parks and Recreation Department, the Waltham Housing Authority, and the Waltham Land Trust. Three areas gained the most interest among both agencies and seniors.

*Messy spaces on the river downtown:* Too many dog walkers don't clean up messes; the geese and ducks go everywhere; and there are litterers. Most of the land on the riverfront is owned and controlled by the Metropolitan District Commission. The City and private agencies are on the perimeter, taking care of trash on their properties. The Land Trust collaborates with DCR on the River Walk. A promising suggestion is to bring together residents of area apartments to create joint clean-up and education crews. One of the seniors interested in these issues lives in Pine Street Apartments. From the listening sessions, Connections already has other contacts in The Mill and Pine Street, including the Housing Authority rep and the Mill manager attending another breakout. One of the agency participants has contacts in Edison Apartments. The Land Trust has cleanup crews on its trails. They wear vests and do training. The downtown cleanup crews could have parties to celebrate new community connections. Educational efforts could be targeted to dog walkers and those who may leave litter on trails.

*Outdoor activities:* Parks and Rec and The Land Trust shared what is going on and an interest in doing more. The Park Department's Sunset Trail on Prospect Hill will be getting five new exercise stations. The Department will try to make the equipment as inclusive as possible. The Land Trust offers outdoor yoga. Some public parks already have exercise stations with bars, courses, and instructional material. More pickle ball courts are going up. There is going to be Zumba every Wednesday morning on the Common. The CoA could help distribute this information. All six seniors are interested in following up on these issues and approaches.

*Benches:* Connections' bench survey showed that most bus stops on the commercial sections of Main and Moody Streets lack benches. Unfortunately, none of the agencies participating in the Summit can act on benches. This is the province of the Consolidated Public Works Department. One follow-up for the Summit is for seniors to reach out to Public Works. Three seniors want to work in this area. We could also offer help to raise funds.

- Intergenerational Programs. The intergenerational programs breakout group was attended by seven seniors and representatives from the Mazie Mentoring Program at Waltham High School, the Bentley Service Learning Program, and a Brandeis student who has helped Connections interpret meetings with Chinese Mandarin residents of The Mill.

The participating seniors expressed interest in working with younger people around civic engagement, tutoring/mentoring, an intergenerational book club, and community service (i.e., receiving help with chores like shoveling snow).

The participating agencies described their work in some of these areas. Mazie is looking for mentors. This is a big commitment of 2.5 years with a student. All Bentley students take part in Service Learning. Relevant efforts include a memoir project, activities/crafts projects, technology assistance, interns, and language/tutoring. Other Waltham intergenerational programs to investigate include "Sages and Seekers" at Rivers School, the More than Words used book store, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

The agency representatives and all the seniors want to stay in touch by email and reconvene to discuss next steps for intergenerational programming.

- Inclusion. The inclusion breakout was attended by 12 seniors (including 8 Latinos and 3 Ugandans) and staff from 9 agencies: Springwell, Mt. Auburn and Newton/Wellesley hospitals, JF&CS, WATCH, Mill Housing, Africano, the CoA, and the Waltham Library.

The goals of the session were (1) to introduce immigrant seniors to agency staff (and vice versa) and (2) to propose and explore a "single point of contact" model for the CoA to work with partner agencies on behalf of immigrant seniors.

Introductions and discussion in this breakout were translated from/to Spanish/English.

In their introductions the seniors mentioned needing more information about services and activities, being denied services because of income just above guidelines, high cost of living in Waltham, feeling secure in Waltham, enthusiasm for the work being done at the Summit, and a recommendation to choose priorities among many issues being proposed.

Connections will hire a new Latina outreach worker for the CoA to start in July. She will do outreach to Latinx seniors in Waltham and also be the CoA's point of contact for other agencies working with Latinx seniors from Waltham. We asked for corresponding single points of contacts at these agencies, whom the outreach worker can work with to make sure that referrals and communications are successful. WATCH, JF&CS, and Africano designated contact staff, and other agencies are considering, pending hearing more about the model.

The hiring of the Latina outreach worker for the CoA reflects Connections' extensive outreach to the Latino community in Waltham over the years, including parties (a fiesta), food pantry volunteers, and participation in the WDA computer classes. Connections intends to hire a Ugandan outreach worker for the CoA, but this will take more time to define the job, find an individual with the necessary communications skills, and train the worker in the senior service system. We will work with Africano to find the right worker.

Inclusion hires in the future may be outreach workers for the Mandarin-speaking Chinese community and the Creole-speaking Haitian community. Our listening sessions with Chinese seniors in The Mill did not raise sufficient interest among seniors there to hire a Mandarin-speaking outreach worker. Connections has found it very difficult to connect with Haitian seniors but will continue outreach efforts.

## 5. Next Steps

Connections is translating this Report into Spanish and is sending it to all the Summit participants, as well as to agencies and seniors who were interested but could not attend. Connections staff and members of the Coordinating Committee will help seniors and agency staff who expressed interest in particular issue areas to communicate and convene to discuss how to proceed. In the meantime, if people are eager to get to work, they should not hesitate to reach out and should not feel that they need to wait on us to get back to them. If an issue area generates commitment among seniors and/or agencies to address an issue, we will ask for a representative to join the Connections Coordinating Committee. Connections will consider requests for funds and fundraising assistance and also help with communications and coordination with other Connections initiatives. Finally, Connections will continue to explore with Waltham officials whether the City will apply for the WHO/AARP age-friendly community program.

## Attachment 1: Issue Brief



### **Issue Brief on Healthy Aging Listening Sessions Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging April 6, 2022**

Waltham Connections is a coalition of senior volunteers and agency partners (public and private) that has worked for more than 5 years to make Waltham more age friendly. Strong grant funding has allowed us to support programs and paid hourly staff. This Issue Brief has two parts:

1. It summarizes what we learned from seven listening sessions conducted with 86 Waltham seniors in early 2022. It ends by selecting several domains for promising actions.
2. It summarizes what we learned from three follow-up discussions with 22 seniors interested in working on the three domains.
3. It ends with recommendations for immediate action.

During the month of April, we are reaching out to Waltham agencies and officials whom we hope will collaborate on these actions. Interested agencies and officials will be invited to meet with seniors at a Waltham Healthy Aging Summit, on May 20 at the CoA/Senior Center from 9AM-12:30 PM.

#### 1. Listening sessions

##### *a. Methods*

In January-March we held seven listening sessions with 86 Waltham seniors from selected populations. The WSCA session was conducted on Zoom, and the others were in person:

- Chinese-speaking residents of the Francis Cabot Lowell Mill Housing (conducted in Mandarin) (8 women/7 men).
- English-speaking residents of the Francis Cabot Lowell Mill Housing (11 women/2 men).
- Ugandan seniors (17 women/2 men) organized by African Cultural Services (conducted in English with some translation into Luganda).
- Residents of the Housing Authority's Arthur Clark Apartments (Pine Street high-rise) (12 women/1 man).
- Participants in Connections' 2021 Waltham Senior Civic Academy (5 women/4 men).
- 17 respondents to an ad in the Council on Aging newsletter

- one conducted in English (10 women)
- one conducted in Spanish (4 women/3 men).

This section of the Brief is organized by the questions posed for discussion in the sessions:

1. What is your understanding of “healthy aging”?
2. How does Waltham support healthy aging?
3. How could Waltham do better in supporting healthy aging?
4. What priorities should seniors be advocating for in the community?

Responses to Question 1 were coded into 6 behaviors that research has related to healthy aging. Responses to Questions 2-4 were coded into the eight areas in the WHO/AARP Age-Friendly model, through which communities can promote healthy aging. In the sessions, we did not tell seniors about either the healthy aging categories or the age-friendly categories but rather asked to the broad questions their answers to the broad questions. Below we show how we coded answers into the categories. This summary reports both the frequency of responses by category and some of the detail of the responses.

Given the number of groups and participants, they offer examples of views and experiences that we can use as starting points for further exploration in the lead up to and during the Summit. Also, reporting the results of coding loses the richness of responses, which were generally personal and multi-dimensional. Here is a vision of healthy aging from a woman in CoA English group:

“I think it should be a continuation of the basics: warm house, food to eat. Continuing an active life, social life, people to talk to, knowing where to find available resources, and independence.”

Or this man from the Pine Street group on how Waltham supports healthy aging:

“Food pantries. Public transportation is good. I take the ride. Feels that there is a sense of community. This building is better than where I was living before. People care about each other here.”

Underlying all the comments is the pandemic, which took a toll on the older adults in the groups. Several participants spoke about how isolating it was, and opportunities to see others were very limited. One woman spoke about only buying one or two items each time she went to the supermarket so she had a reason to go back the next day. We have drawn on the detail and nuance to select the recommended areas for action.

*b. What is your understanding of “healthy aging”?*

Table 1 summarizes participants’ views of the meaning of “healthy aging.” Mentions of being socially engaged are most frequent, followed closely by being pro-active about health and mental health. These were followed by being physically active, finding meaning and



purpose in life, feeling safe and secure, and having a good diet. Being pro-active about health was mentioned in only four groups, while the other areas were mentioned in six or seven groups. Each area is multi-dimensional, and overall the thoughts paint a picture of what a good life in old age can be.

*c. How is Waltham supporting healthy aging and how could it do better?*

Table 2 summarizes participants' views of how Waltham is doing supporting healthy aging and how it could do better, using the eight areas of the WHO/AARP framework to categorize findings. Clearly, the last category in the table – Community and health services – is the area most on seniors' minds, both in how Waltham does well (51 mentions) and how we could do

**Table 1: What is your understanding of “healthy aging”?**

<b>Areas</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>
<u>Be pro-active about health and mental health</u> (21 mentions/4 groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical health: Healthy body with help of my medical team. Able to stand on two feet with a walker.</li> <li>• Mental health: Mentally fit &amp; engaged. Right attitude. Stimulate mind.</li> <li>• Independence: Be independent. Make own decisions. Transportation.</li> <li>• Access services: Know where to find resources. Get support as I age. OK to ask for help.</li> </ul>
Be socially engaged (30/6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close relationships: Friends, family, younger people, care for grandson. Respect and embrace diverse neighbors. Going to church.</li> <li>• Social activities: Combat boredom, things to do together, parties, get past COVID,</li> <li>• Work: So I can support my family</li> </ul>
Be physically active (19/7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoors: Walking when it's safe, exercise, healthy body/healthy mind.</li> <li>• Indoors: Equipment, Zoom exercise class</li> </ul>
Have a good diet (11/7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating healthy. Good nutrition. Access to good food.</li> </ul>
Find meaning and purpose in life (15/7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valued activities: Learning, reading, music, going out and doing things, making bread with my sister, writing a biography.</li> <li>• Spiritual satisfaction: Feel comfortable and happy, finding meaning in retirement, going to church, confident in life, giving back to community.</li> </ul>
Feel safe and secure (15/6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical: Safety from violence, accessible buildings, warm house, food to eat, safe from COVID, transportation to medical help.</li> <li>• Financial: Independence, get assistance, affordable housing, have health insurance.</li> </ul>

better (50 mentions). The ways the Senior Center does well( and could do better) dominate this category, which is not surprising since two groups were organized through the CoA, and another (Pine Street) includes frequent users of CoA services.

**Table 2: How does Waltham support healthy aging?  
How could Waltham do better?**

<b>Healthy Aging Areas</b>	<b>How does Waltham support healthy aging? (# of mentions/# of groups)</b>	<b>How could Waltham do better? (# of mentions/# of groups)</b>
Outdoor spaces & buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walkable town, river.</li> <li>• The convenience of Moody Street. Restaurants. Cultural Center.</li> <li>• Improvements in crosswalks, sanded sidewalks. (10/4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return benches on Moody St and at bus stops. Put chairs on the Common for concerts.</li> <li>• Fix streets and potholes. More crosswalks with flashing lights.</li> <li>• Set up game areas outside the apartments. More trash barrels. Clean poop off walkways.</li> <li>• More outdoor activities, e.g., mini-concerts, walking groups, senior exercise stations (22/3)</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public transportation. The Ride.</li> <li>• Handicap parking spaces.</li> <li>• CoA's taxi vouchers and \$5 senior parking pass. (6/4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rides to the grocery store, to events on the Common, to the library, to nearby communities, and to medical appointments out of the city.</li> <li>• Better commuter rail service. (11/5)</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building management gets things done.</li> <li>• Homeless shelters.</li> <li>• Section 8. (5/3 – Pine and the Mill)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More affordable senior housing, including accessory dwelling units.</li> <li>• Management of senior housing (not the workers in buildings) is unresponsive to complaints &amp; requests. A few said they feared reprisals. (8/4)</li> </ul>
Social participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Churches, fellowship &amp; mutual aid.</li> <li>• Connections with friends (5/3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a list of how to volunteer.</li> <li>• More activities to get to know people.</li> <li>• Create better ways to follow what the City Council is doing. (7/3)</li> </ul>
Respect & social inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mayor helped in person during the downtown fire.</li> <li>• The food pantry.</li> <li>• Caring for each other. 8 languages spoken. (3/1 – Pine)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More intergenerational activities (e.g., with high school students).</li> <li>• Inclusion: More diversity at the Senior Center. More help to immigrant seniors to learn to ask for help (“we need an advocate”). More people who speak (my language) in housing, at the CoA, and other settings. (9/6)</li> </ul>

Civic participation & employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good work on aging issues by Tom Stanley, John Lawn, and Joseph LaCava.</li> <li>• Good City response to advocate (3/2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seniors could advocate to the City Council together.</li> <li>• Help accessing online job ads.</li> <li>• Offer courses in a new trade.</li> <li>• Volunteer opportunities (4/3)</li> </ul>
Information & communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No mentions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More people who speak my language (Mandarin) in housing and city.</li> <li>• Access to internet &amp; computers.</li> <li>• More outreach to isolated seniors.</li> <li>• An email newsletter from the Mayor.</li> <li>• More CoA lectures on adapting to old age.</li> <li>• Many (especially immigrants) are unaware of the CoA and other services.</li> <li>• (27/5)</li> </ul>
Community & health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Senior Center: Programs, support, staff, lectures, health fairs, tax prep, parking stickers, SHINE, bingo, trips, immunizations, concerts, van, meals.</li> <li>• Other: Diverse food markets. Springwell. Marist computer course. Bentley Thanksgiving dinners. Food pantries. Hospitals &amp; urgent care. Police. St. Mary's pantries &amp; clothing drives. WATCH English classes. (51/7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Center: Speak my language, follow-up to classes, bring back vans for to groceries.</li> <li>• Other public: Better police protection, more at the library for seniors.</li> <li>• Health services: Health van screenings, access to therapists and social workers, better COVID protections in senior housing, out of town medical transport.</li> <li>• Private services: Snow shoveling, home care, handyman, senior discounts in restaurants, ethnic and non-ethnic markets closer to senior housing. (50/6)</li> </ul>

*d. Where should seniors advocate?*

Table 3 summarizes how and where participants said that seniors should be advocating in Waltham. Echoing the responses on how seniors thought Waltham could do better, the most interest was in advocating for Community and Health Services (lifelong learning, restaurant discounts, and food and nutrition). Housing was next (more affordable units, housing for the homeless), followed by Transportation (special rides) and Inclusion (intergenerational connections and connecting with immigrant seniors). Information and Communication received only four mentions (mostly about finding resources), but of course I&C will be required to move forward on any of these issues.

e. Priority Domains from Listening Sessions

The seven listening sessions identified a range of important issues in healthy aging – many of which Waltham does well with, and others where Waltham could do better. In choosing what issues to address at the Summit, we have considered not only the importance of issues but also our capacity to address an issue within the Waltham Connections model of senior/agency collaboration. For example, we do not recommend our working on affordable senior housing even though seniors say it is a major issue. Others (e.g., WATCH) are already working on housing, we have relatively little to add, and progress won't be seen for a long time. Rather, given our model, our capabilities, and the possibility of success, four WHO/AARP domains stand out for offering promising ways to make Waltham more age-friendly. Examples of actions suggested to reach these goals are noted.

- **Outdoor spaces:** Return benches to Moody Street, bus stops, and other areas. Improve key crosswalks. More outdoor activities, e.g. fitness stations.
- **Inclusion:** Bring more immigrant seniors into CoA programs. Key public and private programs should speak and write in the main languages spoken by Waltham seniors: (English, Spanish, Chinese, and Haitian Creole). Develop intergenerational programs.
- **Community services and activities:** Hire CoA outreach workers to immigrant communities. Create a lifelong learning program at the CoA. Restaurants offer senior discounts. Snow shoveling service. Health screening van.
- **Information and Communication:** Improve communication by bringing information and assistance to seniors with little or no English.

**Table 3: In what areas should seniors advocate?**

Outdoor spaces & buildings (2 mentions/1 group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At Pine Street: Clean the dumpsters out and add a third one.</li> </ul>
Transportation (7/4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not everything needs to go to Boston.</li> <li>• Subsidized transport</li> <li>• Shared rides, regional rides, medical appointments outside Waltham.</li> <li>• Bring back the shopping bus at the senior center.</li> </ul>
Housing (7/3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More low-cost senior housing.</li> <li>• Lower the taxes for senior home owners.</li> <li>• More homeless shelter spaces.</li> <li>• Better relationships between tenants and senior housing management.</li> </ul>
Social participation (1/1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When COVID is over, bring back senior center trips, lunches, &amp; social activities.</li> </ul>

Respect & social inclusion (6/4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergenerational: Connect seniors to youth, high school, and universities – activities, help shoveling snow, scholarships, adult classes.</li> <li>• CoA outreach workers from immigrant communities.</li> <li>• Financial help for low-income seniors.</li> </ul>
Civic participation & employment (2/2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form an advocacy group and keep track of City meetings and agendas.</li> <li>• Work with City Councilors.</li> </ul>
Information & communication (5/2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on how to find resources, e.g., library programs, Land Trust programs.</li> <li>• How to volunteer &amp; get help from volunteers.</li> <li>• How the CoA works.</li> <li>• Free internet</li> </ul>
Community & health services (20/6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CoA: Create a lifelong learning center, programs to support mental health, computer course, more courses on phones and iPads.</li> <li>• Outreach to isolated seniors.</li> <li>• List of skilled volunteers to help seniors.</li> <li>• Senior discount times &amp; free delivery from restaurants. Free time for seniors at the cinema.</li> <li>• Food and nutrition resources for healthy living.</li> </ul>

## 2. Follow-up discussions

In late March we held meetings of seniors from the listening sessions who expressed interest in working more on the issues in these four domains. We also invited 15 Connections volunteers to join the discussions. Three 90-minute discussions covered outdoor spaces (8 participants), inclusion (7), and community services and activities (12). We tried to refine the activities, asked if and where participants would consider volunteering, and if they wanted to attend the Summit.

The recommendations below draw on both the seven listening sessions and the three follow-up discussions. We have specified goals that lie within four WHO/AARP domains. For each goal we have prioritized specific actions to move forward immediately, with other related goals and actions saved for later.

The rationales and recommendations are based on several factors: seniors' thoughts on how Waltham could do better supporting healthy aging, where seniors are interested in joining the Connections volunteer model, opportunities for collaboration with Waltham agencies and officials, and available funding from Connections grants. The specific goals cover multiple WHO/AARP domains:

*a. Improve Outdoor Spaces*

Seniors from most meetings said that benches that were formerly at bus stops on the main commercial blocks of Moody Street and Main Street have been removed in recent years. This makes it difficult for seniors with mobility limitations to use these outdoor spaces. Seniors from the groups that met are ready to work with the city and merchants to talk about where benches should be, the design of benches, and to help raise the money to pay. Our recommendation for action now is to work with the Waltham DPW to make and implement a plan to position benches around Waltham in an age- and disability-friendly manner. Later actions could include improving key crosswalks and making outdoor walking spaces more interesting.

*b. Strengthen Inclusion, Information & Communication, and Community and Health Services, particularly for non-English-speaking seniors*

Seniors expressed interest in a wide range of services and activities: transportation, nutrition, language classes, workouts, legal help, book groups, volunteering, festivals, health care, the library, and more. Programming that responds to many of these interests is already in place at CoA and other local agencies, but many seniors - particularly immigrants - know little or nothing about what is available or where. Waltham especially needs to do more to reach out to and communicate with Latino, Chinese and Ugandan seniors. Our discussions show they are ready to get involved. Our Recommendation for immediate action is to use Connections and other grant funds to hire an outreach worker at the CoA from each of these three communities. Once these workers are in place, they can also help partner agencies in Waltham (public and private) find ways to better serve these seniors.

*c. Extend Inclusion across generations*

There was discussion in almost all the sessions about wanting to have more and better connections with the younger generation. It was said that youth are in their own world, and it can be hard to reach them. Seniors mentioned a variety of ways to establish relationships with young people, including youth help with the Connections' WDA program (free computers, wifi and training), joint political action on climate, youth/senior language classes or book groups, seniors providing mentoring, youth helping with chores, e.g., shoveling. Waltham seniors are ready to help make this happen. To begin we recommend partnering the high school and the library to strengthen and create programs that bring seniors and youth together. Other suggested partnerships can be pursued later, including WATCH, the Y, Brandeis and Bentley, and the Boys and Girls Club.

3. Next Steps

*a. Contact agencies and officials*

Based on these recommendations, in April we are identifying and contacting agencies and officials that might be able to help with these issues. We are sharing this Issue Brief and a description of the Summit with them. We will meet with those who are interested and

hopefully begin to outline some even more specific plans for action. To prepare everyone, we will share what we learn with all interested seniors and agencies before the Summit.

*b. Circle back to seniors*

We will meet with interested seniors as needed before the Summit, including sessions to discuss what we learned from agencies and officials. We will also get a more solid reading of seniors' commitment to working on the issues, including identifying spokespeople for issues and for diverse seniors.

*c. Hold Summit*

We are hoping that prior to the Summit this preparation will yield agreement by some seniors and agencies to work together on the three goals described above. Then the Summit will be a chance for seniors, agencies and officials to meet, to agree to work collaboratively, and to review initial goals, actions and next steps. The Summit will conclude with a plenary session that lays out these new steps in building an age-friendly city plan in Waltham.

## Attachment 2: Description of Summit



### **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.

## Attachment 3: Bench Survey



### The need for benches on Main and Moody Streets

Material from listening sessions with seniors and from a drive-by survey  
Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging – April, 2022

In the seven listening sessions we conducted with 87 Waltham seniors, a desire for more benches on the main commercial blocks of Main and Moody Streets came up repeatedly, particularly among residents living downtown in subsidized housing. A place to sit while shopping and/or waiting for the bus is very important for seniors with mobility limitations. Seniors remember when there were more benches in the recent past, but many were removed.

Here are excerpts from the listening session at the Housing Authority's high rise on Pine Street near downtown. The question posed was "How could Waltham do more to support healthy aging?"

- "I have told them about the benches and bricks missing on the sidewalks...they didn't do anything."
- "They need to return the benches at the bus stops. I don't have a car, so I walk to Waltham Commons to catch the bus to Hannaford's. When I come out, I am in pain but there are no benches at the bus stop. They moved them two years ago. There was a bus stop at the Pickle, but they moved it."
- "Benches. The bus stop at Pickle has been there for 45 years and it was perfect for the elderly and they depended on it."

After the listening sessions we held a second meeting of seniors who indicated interest in improving outdoor spaces. The discussion moved beyond the need for benches into how to get them.

- "I can't walk Moody St. without any benches"
- "Is there a plan from City Hall? Seniors should be involved with deciding where those benches should go."
- "Let's study successful communities."
- "If people feel it would be too expensive, money could be raised. Or sponsored by a business. Needs to be tasteful."

How bad is the problem? Connections did a drive-by survey of Main and Moody. Going west on Main from the Parmenter Home near Appleton (a few blocks east of City Hall) to

three blocks past South Street (1.1 miles), we counted three benches (two on the left and one on the right). From Main Street south on Moody, there are five benches in the 10 blocks/1.3 miles to Orange Street (one on the right and four on the left). There are no benches at most bus stops on either street.