Wenham Connects: An Age and Dementia Friendly Needs Assessment

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Outline of Today’s Presentation

- The Age and Dementia Friendly framework
- Strategies used to hear from Wenham
- Wenham Characteristics and Recommendations by Age-Friendly Domain
- Discussion
Age-Friendly Framework
The Eight Domains of an Age-Friendly Community

- Enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age.
- Makes it easy for older people to stay connected to people who are important to them.
- Helps people stay healthy and provides support to those who can no longer live independently.
Dementia Friendly Community

- Fostering meaningful access to and engagement in community life for people living with dementia and their family and friend care partners.

- Each sector of community works to create an informed, safe and respectful community.

- Prioritizing the promotion of quality of life for those living with dementia and their care partners.
Goals in Developing the *Age and Dementia Friendly Wenham Report*

- Develop an understanding of Wenham’s assets and *concerns* of the community

- Provide preliminary ideas for ways in which Wenham’s age and dementia friendly features may be improved

- Draw on resident and stakeholder input
Strategies for Learning about Wenham

- Review of Existing Data
- Five Key-Informant Interviews
  - COA director
  - Town Administrator
  - Police Chief
  - Fire Chief
  - Permitting Coordinator & Special Projects Manager
- Four Focus Groups
  - Town Office Representatives
  - Representatives of nonprofits and other organizations serving Wenham
  - Wenham Residents (two Groups)
By 2030 Nearly 30% of Wenham Residents Will Be 60+

Sources: Population figures for 1990 through 2010 are from the U.S. Census. Projection figures are from the Donahue Institute and MAPC.
83% of Wenham Householders Age 60+ Own Their Home

Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016, Tables B25007 and B25011
Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates.
3 out of 10 Wenham Residents Age 65+ Live Alone

- Lives with others, 69%
- Lives alone, 30%
- [CATEGORY NAME], 1%

Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016, Table B09020. Numbers are calculated from 5-year survey estimates
Almost 3 in 10 Wenham Residents Age 65+ Report Having At Least 1 Disability

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2012-2016, Table C18108
Cross-Cutting Theme: Affordability and Economic Security

Community Input:

- Participants perceive that there is a segment of the senior resident population that “can’t afford to live here” and yet they remain living in a vulnerable economic state. It is an “invisible” need.

- Some participants observe a division between high- and low-income residents.

- Because Wenham lacks a commercial base, town finances rely on private homeowners.

Suggestions from the Community:

- Improve communication and publicity about the Senior Tax Work Off Program and the Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit.

- Consider creating part-time flexible employment opportunities for seniors in Wenham.
Housing

• *Rural feel with access to urban areas*
• *Lack of housing options to age in community*
• *Prohibitive cost to live in Wenham, high property tax*
• *Need for access to trustworthy home maintenance information*

**Suggestions from the Community**

- Develop co-housing models
- Create a mechanism for older residents to access trustworthy resources
- Develop more affordable downsizing options, including closer to the “center” of town
- Better educate the community on current zoning laws
Transportation

- COA Van and Public transportation to Boston are assets
  - Limited local transportation options
    - Lack of walkable options

Suggestions from the Community

- Recruit local residents to drive for Uber or Lyft
- Pilot-test use of the COA van for evening events or weekend programming
- Learn more about how Hamilton’s medical transportation system operates
- Generate a more creative slogan or name for the side of the COA van. For example, “Take a ride. You have earned it!”
Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

- Beautiful trails and parks
- Most municipal buildings are ADA compliant
- Outdoor Spaces & Recreation plan includes several “age-friendly” action

Suggestions from the Community

- Ensure all parks and trails in Wenham are accessible, including parking, benches and signage.

- Better promote the availability of local greenspace.

- Create increased “connectivity” in Wenham via sidewalks, paths or bike routes.

- Develop more destinations to walk to.
Communication & Information

• *The Wenhamite* (COA); *Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle*; several social media pages

**Suggestions from the Community**

- Make *The Wenhamite* available as an e-news listserve.
- Expand the content of *The Wenhamite* to include services and other community resources.
- Create an online senior services directory.
- Use the Town Meeting Warrant Articles mailing to distribute information about Wenham resources available.
- Create a “Welcome Packet”.
- Publicize a “senior information hotline” at the COA.
- Place suggestion boxes in high-traffic areas to gather programming ideas for the COA.
Social Participation

• The Library, COA, Wenham Tea Room, and Wenham Museum
  • Lack of intergenerational communal space

Suggestions from the Community

➢ Consider ways to expand the capacity of the COA, including increased collaboration with the Hamilton COA.
➢ Engage Gordon College to partner on programs that will foster intergenerational experiences.
➢ Expand the “Senior to Senior” day program and develop relationships between various departments in Wenham.
➢ Develop a technology “help desk” at local schools.
➢ Start a breakfast club.
➢ Encourage neighborhood block parties or meetings.
Community Supports & Health Services

- Trend toward families being geographically dispersed leading to “long-distance” caregiving
- Need for increased communication between residents, municipal departments, and organizations

**Suggestions from the Community**

- Expand the social work capacity of the Town, COA.
- Explore opportunities to develop a “Village” program or “Neighbors Brigade” program.
- Target outreach and resource development for local and distant caregivers and include opportunities for respite.
- Continue to encourage residents to “check on their neighbors” during storms or extreme temperatures.
Civic Engagement & Employment

- *Wenham Citizen’s Leadership Academy*
- *Fully-subscribed Senior tax work-off program benefits both residents and municipal departments*
  - *Many older residents are well-educated and experienced*

**Suggestions from the Community**

- Host the Citizen’s Leadership Academy during the day.

- Continue to ensure that older residents or a representative from the COA are involved in community planning.

- Limit board and committee terms to ensure healthy turnover.

- Engage in a systematic review of boards, committees and commissions to ensure mission statements are adhered to and that duplication or gaps in services are not occurring.
Respect & Social Inclusion

- Limited spaces for residents to gather.
- Divide between parents and older residents.
- Residents leave after children graduate from school system diminishing a sense of community.

Suggestions from the Community

- Continue to develop mechanisms to outreach, education, and support to families dealing with dementia.

- Consider re-messaging efforts at the COA to avoid inferences of ageism.

- Target engagement efforts at persons without children, including empty-nesters and seniors. For example, send a birthday to residents when they turn 60.
Recommended Priority Areas

- Housing
- Communication and Information
- Community Supports & Health Services
- Social Participation
Thank You!

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