Aging in Weston: A Community Needs Assessment

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Plan for this presentation

- Purpose
- Methods of investigation
- Key findings
- Key recommendations
- Questions / Discussion
Background & Purpose

▸ To investigate the needs and opinions of Weston residents age 55 and older.

▸ The final report is meant to:
  ▸ increase awareness about demographic changes and related challenges facing Weston
  ▸ inform the COA, and organizations that work with and on behalf of older residents of Weston, about the strengths and challenges of aging in Weston
  ▸ present recommendations to support Weston in responding to the changing demographics and the community concerns
Methods

Components of Weston Needs Assessment

Demographic profile
Focus groups (4)
Key informant interviews (5)
Document review
Peer community comparison
Resident survey 55+ (n=1,211)
## Age distribution of survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residents age 55+</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
<th>% age distribution for responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90+</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1,211*</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes 6 surveys where people declined to provide their age*
Weston is getting older

Percentage Weston population age 60 + in 2010, with projections to 2020 & 2030

*Figures for 2020-2030 are projections generated by the Donahue Institute, University of Massachusetts: http://pep.donahue-institute.org/ and Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC): https://www.mapc.org/learn/projections/
Key Findings
Benefits to Living in Weston

- Natural beauty and extensive conservation land
- “Small town” environment
- Strength of public safety services
- High quality schools
- COA programs and services

“COA is my lifeline”
Weston COA Use

- 75% of respondents report being very or completely satisfied with programs & services offered by the COA

- 63% of respondents have never used

- Majority of respondents who use COA, use it infrequently
Reasons for not using programs or services offered by the Weston COA

- Not old enough: 30%
- Do not have time: 26%
- Not interested: 20%
- Unaware of available programs: 17%
- Other: 16%
- Participate in programs elsewhere: 10%
Percentage of survey respondents who have ever attended programs or used services offered by the Weston COA

- **Age 55-59**: 6%
- **Age 60-69**: 24%
- **Age 70+**: 56%
## Percentage of older adults in Weston

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>1472</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90+</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>4188</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weston COA Layout and Image

- Focus group and survey respondents suggested:
  - need for updating programming to meet changing needs of older adults
  - reorganizing space would support different types of programming
- Peer COA/Senior Center comparisons
  - Weston has less space and less dedicated space
Peer Communities:
Size of Senior Center/Council on Aging Space

All senior centers/COA’s that we compared with Weston have more space and more dedicated space.

- **Similar in Socioeconomic status**
  - Needham
  - Newton
  - Lexington
  - Sudbury
  - Wellesley
  - Westwood

- **Similar in size (or smaller)**
  - Littleton
  - Northborough
  - Southborough
# COA program/services - Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Non-users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Fitness activities</td>
<td>▶ Contractor lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Educational opportunities</td>
<td>▶ Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Social and recreational activities</td>
<td>▶ Fitness activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Contractor lists</td>
<td>▶ Physical health and wellness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Physical health and wellness</td>
<td>▶ Educational opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Trips and outings</td>
<td>▶ Social and recreational activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Volunteer opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>30-40%</strong></td>
<td><strong>24-27%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top COA programs that respondents would like to see expanded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Age 55-59</th>
<th>Age 60+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational programs</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; wellness programs</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiking/walking club</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performances/presentations</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where do you prefer to find information about the activities and services offered by the COA?

- Email, websites, or social media
- COA newsletter
- Word of mouth
- Television
- Local newspaper

Age 70+
Age 60-69
Age 55-59
Housing

Adapting current housing

- 47% of survey respondents stated their current residence needs home repairs and/or home modifications
- Many expressed concern about ability to identify trustworthy assistance
- Small segment stated they can not afford repairs or modifications

Downsizing and other housing options

- More than half of respondents would prefer to own their next residence if they move
- Many survey respondents 70+ indicated a preference for senior independent living community if need to move
- Key informants reported lack of senior housing and downsizing options
“In the next 5 years, if a change in your health/physical ability required that you move from your current residence, what kind of housing would you prefer?”

- Assisted Living Community
- Senior independent living community
- Continuing care retirement community
- Apartment, condominium or townhouse
- Accessory apartment
- Multi-family home
- Single-family home

Age groups:
- Age 70+
- Age 60-69
- Age 55-59
Transportation

- Limited transportation options were expressed by residents, town leaders, and key stakeholders.

- More than 30% of those who either drive with modifications or don’t drive reported difficulty getting where they want to go. Top 2 reasons:
  - Limited access to public transportation
  - Unaware of local transportation options

“When I can no longer drive, I will move.”
Social Isolation

“We are concerned about lack of transportation and social isolation if we stay in our Weston home to age in place.”

- 27% of survey respondents get together in person with family or friends monthly or less frequently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily or weekly</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly or never</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you know someone living close by on whom you can rely for help when you need it? (Percentage indicating no)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 55-59</th>
<th>Age 60-69</th>
<th>Age 70+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All living situations

Living alone

- Age 55-59
- Age 60-69
- Age 70+
Economic Insecurity is a Concern for Some Older Adults

- About 14% of Weston residents age 65 and older report annual incomes under $25,000
- There are limited affordable housing options
- Many commented regarding property taxes

“Property tax is quite high for someone on fixed income and this [probably] is reason for us to leave town in the years to come.”
Disability

- Has condition that limits community participation
- Has difficulty with household activities
Caregivers

- One third of respondents have recently or are currently providing care

“How challenging is/was it for you to care for this person(s) and meet your other responsibilities with family and/or work?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Very or somewhat challenging</th>
<th>Neither challenging or easy</th>
<th>Somewhat or very easy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 70+</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60-69</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 55-59</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for the Town of Weston
Update and Expand Council on Aging

- Prepare for increased number of older adults
- Expand and reorganize space
  - Place to socialize and mingle
  - Lunch area / food options
  - Fitness center
- Expand educational and fitness activities
- Consider renaming the Senior Center
Support Aging-in-Community

- Increase awareness of transportation options, expand current options, explore new options, and promote driver safety programs
- Continue to participate in dialogue regarding housing development
- Support home modifications (e.g., provide updated contract list)
Provide Resources for Those Who are Struggling

**Caregivers**
- Host family caregiver “resource fair” and/or a “caregiver’s night out”
- Collaborate with surrounding communities to meet caregiver needs (e.g., adult day health)

**Socially Isolated**
- Develop programming such as a welcoming committee, COA buddy system, etc.

**Economically Insecure**
- Provide education about available programs (e.g., tax work-off)
- Develop programming around employment, retirement planning, alternative housing opportunities, etc.
Elderly & Low Income Programs: Tax and Fee Relief

- Transfer Station Sticker Waiver
- Water Discount Program
- Weston Service Program
- Community Preservation Surcharge Exemption
- Property Tax Exemption Limits set at Maximum
- Property Tax Deferral Program
Spread the Word

- Continue to use multiple ways to disseminate information (e.g., newsletter, email, social media, etc.)

- Consider a town-wide calendar

- Communication methods and preferences are changing - continue to monitor best ways to get the information to the people who need it
Thank you!

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http://www.umb.edu/demographyofaging