



Brookline Age-Friendly City Program Biannual Report: 2014-2015

Late in 2012, Brookline became the first municipality in New England to be admitted to the World Health Organization's Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. Brookline based its application on a broad assessment of its age-friendly features. In joining the network, the Town committed itself to a comprehensive, multi-year effort to strengthen its age-friendly features. Age-Friendly Brookline is a collaboration of the Town of Brookline, the Council on Aging, and BrooklineCAN formed to respond to the needs of Brookline's senior population.

This document provides a progress report on the second and third years of the initiative. A previous progress report covered achievements in 2013. Age Friendly Brookline initiatives are organized according to the following categories: information dissemination, community participation, employment and volunteering, health and human services, housing, library, parks, property tax relief, public safety, recreation, and transportation.

The achievements reported here reflect efforts of the individuals who serve on the committee, BrooklineCAN, the Council on Aging as well as the support of many Town of Brookline departments.

The report begins with *Information Dissemination* because of its importance to the Brookline initiative. On a long-standing basis, Brookline has provided extensive and diverse supports for older residents. The resources are so rich

and varied that residents are often challenged to recognize all of the resources available to them. For that reason, information dissemination enjoys special importance in the Brookline age-friendly initiative. The need for a better understanding of what the Town offers for an aging population cuts across all of the efforts of various Town departments.

Other initiatives are reported alphabetically. In some cases, the Committee has identified explicit initiatives and reports achievements and plans with respect to those initiatives. Achievements and action plans are reported here. In other cases, Town departments offer age-friendly services on a regular basis. Those services are described here without calling attention to special achievements or plans.

Committee members are:

Nancy Daly, Board of Selectmen, Co-Chair
Ruthann Dobek, Council on Aging, Co-Chair
Frank Caro, BrooklineCAN, Co-Chair
Saralynn Allaire
Lloyd Gellineau
Shirley Selhub
Matthew Weiss
Roberta Winitzer
Henry Winkelman



Highlights

Information Dissemination

An Age-Friendly Cities TV show was launched on BIG channels in 2015 by the Age-Friendly City committee.

The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations has created a Lego display in Town Hall that features the various Age-Friendly themes in Brookline. The display changes seasonally.

Community Participation

The Health Department, the Council on Aging, and Hebrew Senior Life collaborated on a health fair held at the Brookline Senior Center in May 2015.

The Recreation Department's Point of Sale fee structure implemented in 2013 provides opportunities for seniors to swim, skate, and enroll in other health & wellness activities at a 35% discount from advertised fees.

Employment and volunteering

Through the Council on Aging, the Town has introduced a part-time, temporary employment program for seniors who live in rental housing. The program is similar to the popular property-tax work off program for low-income senior home owners.

Health Department

The Brookline Health Department coordinates the Emergency Preparedness Buddies program. The program matches volunteers with vulnerable elders to improve protection in case of emergencies. The program is the first of its kind in the nation.

Housing

The Age-Friendly City committee is seeking to expand the supply of senior housing by advancing a proposal to build senior housing above town-owned parking lots.

BrooklineCAN has substantially expanded its on-line guide to residential buildings with elevators. The guide covers both rental and condo buildings.

Library

Modifications have been made to the Main Library and the Coolidge Corner Branch Library to make them more accessible to low-vision seniors.

Parks and Open Space

The opening of the new 10-acre Fisher Hill Reservoir Park with many age-friendly features is scheduled for spring 2016.

Property Tax Abatement

The Town has extended access to the property tax deferral program for low-income seniors by raising the income threshold for eligibility to the maximum permitted by state law. The interest rate for the program has also been reduced to make the program more attractive to senior home owners.

Public Safety

The Brookline Fire Department has introduced a Smoke Alarm Installation Program at no charge to participating seniors.

In collaboration with the Senior Center, the Police Department offers the Home Safe program which uses GPS technology to locate residents with dementia who are at risk of getting lost.

Transportation

The Brookline and Newton Councils on Aging have introduced TRIPPS, an advisory service offering information on local travel options for those who are not driving

BrooklineCAN has conducted a pedestrian safety project in North Brookline involving seniors living in Brookline Housing Authority senior/disabled residences. An audit of pedestrian hazards has led to sidewalk safety improvements made by the Department of Public Works.

Veterans

In Fiscal Year 2015 the Brookline Office of Veterans' Services provided \$149,000 in direct emergency financial assistance to veterans and their spouses, over half of which were seniors.

Information Dissemination

Initiative

The Committee is proposing to continue an action agenda to disseminate information about Brookline's age-friendly features.

Achievements

1. Continued improvement in communication among Town departments
2. Improved dissemination to the public through the AFC-TV (Age Friendly Cities-TV) program on the Brookline Interactive Group channels.
3. Improved communication to the public through the use of social media supported by BrooklineCAN.
4. Coordination with the BrooklineCAN and Senior Center newsletters.
5. Organized well-attended expo in September 2014 on the contributions of Town Departments to the Age-Friendly City initiative. (The expo was offered as part of the BrooklineCAN annual meeting.)

Plans

1. Extend and further improve contacts to all departments and relevant organizations within the Brookline town government.
2. Expand AFC-TV interviews to include Town features that support of people of all ages with physical and cognitive disabilities.
3. Continue to file Age Friendly Cities Committee meeting minutes and formal documents and reports produced by the committee on the Town of Brookline web site.
4. Extend publication of information about Brookline's age-friendly features through BrooklineCAN and the Brookline Senior Center.

Community Participation

Initiative

There are myriad opportunities for senior citizens in Brookline to engage in social and educational programs. One of our challenges is to make sure that seniors can easily get to and from these activities. Another challenge is insuring that our seniors are aware of the many opportunities available. In addition, an important goal is to ensure that the community events sponsored by other town agencies are collaborative and sensitive to older adults. In the future, the Council on Aging hopes to continue to improve the transportation options and its collaboration with other town departments.

Achievements

1. A health fair was conducted in May 2015 involving collaboration between the Brookline Senior Center, Center Communities of Brookline, the Age-Friendly Cities committee, and other organizations. The event was well attended and offered extensive information to participants. The theme was *Healthy Brain*.
2. An exposition was offered in conjunction with the BrooklineCAN annual meeting in September 2015 with *Transportation* as its theme. Vendors who provide transportation participated. The key note address was given by former Governor Michael Dukakis to over 100 attendees.
3. The BrooklineCAN Education Committee with its founding partners plan and provide a number of educational events. This year's offerings included a sellout movie at the Coolidge Corner Theater on Alzheimer's disease and the Party of the Century, a celebration for residents who are centenarians.
4. Both the Council on Aging and BrooklineCAN participate in Brookline Day at Lars Anderson Park. Through this well-attended annual event, they call the general public's attention to seniors as a constituency that participates in the life of the Town and is served by the Town. Brookline Day is organized

by the Brookline Recreation Department.

5. The Council on Aging and BrooklineCAN also work collaboratively with the Public Health department and the Brookline Library to present programs for seniors. This includes the popular annual Public Health Forum and Brookline Reads. The Public Health Forum is held at the Brookline Senior Center.

6. In September, the Council on Aging mails its News and Events to every household with a member over the age of 60. This monthly publication reaches 3,000 elders each month in print form. In addition, it is published on the Council on Aging's web page.

7. BrooklineCAN produces a monthly newsletter that is distributed electronically and in print informing residents of activities and on programs.

8. Each year, the Council on Aging updates, prints, and distributes over 1,000 copies of its Elder Resource Guide. In addition, this important resource is made available on the Town website.

Plans

1. We will continue to plan, coordinate and participate in special events that provide information to seniors and strengthen the connections among residents of all ages.

2. We will continue to collaborate with the BrooklineCAN Communications Committee to insure that timely information is included in its monthly newsletter and on its website.

3. We will explore possible use of the Town's web site (Brookonline) to disseminate information about the Town's age-friendly features.

4. We will continue to explore transportation options for seniors to attend town activities.

EMPLOYMENT and VOLUNTEERING

Initiative

We seek to maximize opportunities for older people to be productively engaged through paid employment or community service volunteering. We are focused particularly on the role that Brookline's government can play in informing older residents of opportunities and in providing employment and volunteering opportunities for the Town's seniors.

Achievements

1. The Brookline Senior Center introduced the Retirement Engagement Alternatives Program (**REAP**) in 2013. The program assists seniors in finding either part-time employment or meaningful community service volunteer assignments.
2. In pursuit of its efforts to support volunteering the REAP program works closely with the Volunteer Coordinator at the Brookline Senior Center to place and train volunteers in community service jobs.
3. Together the **REAP** Coordinator and Counselor offer numerous educational programs and workshops throughout the year to facilitate the job search for older residents. Our programs include but are not limited to:
 - Interviewing Skills
 - LinkedIn workshops
 - Wisdom Works training classes
 - Resume and Cover Letter Skills training
4. The **REAP** program administers the **Senior Community Elder Service Program** for low income elders as well as the **Tax Abatement Program** which offers property tax relief to 30 Brookline home owners and 10 renters. The Brookline Renters Program was started in 2014 with private funding for 5 positions and expanded to 10 slots with Town funding in 2015. In November of 2015 Town Meeting voted to increase the dollar amount paid to participants to in the Tax Abatement Program to \$1,250, an increase of \$250 from previous years.

5. The **B-NOVA** program Brookline—Navigating Opportunities for Volunteer Activities— has been launched by a dedicated group of volunteers as a user-friendly website for people who are searching for meaningful volunteer opportunities in the Metro-Boston area.

Plans

1. Continue with monthly job skills workshops
2. Expand **B-NOVA** to be used exclusively as an independent online database and ensure it is kept current and up to date by interested volunteers
3. Expand on-going collaboration with:
 - Brookline Chamber of Commerce
 - ReServe Boston
 - All Town Departments to strengthen Tax Abatement program
 - **Senior Community Elder Service Program** administered by the National Asia Pacific Center in Boston, a federally funded program. We currently have a Program Assistant provided by this program.
 - Brookline Adult and Community Education to offer a unique senior-oriented Entrepreneur Workshop in the spring of 2016
 - Ongoing management of the expanded Tax Abatement and Renters Programs

Health: Health Department and Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations Department

Initiative

The Age Friendly City Human Services Subcommittee (AFCHSS) has collaborated on numerous projects that are senior focused and involve older adults in the development of these projects.

Achievements

For the last 10 years, the Brookline Public Health Department has organized events specifically for seniors during National Public Health Week. Some of the topics featured include the following:

- Food Safety for Seniors
- How Times Have Changed
- Why Some People Face Special Risks
- Recognizing Food-borne Illness
- Food Safety at Home
- Special Foods, Special Advice
- Eating Out, Bringing In

In 2015 the department hosted an event, “The Deep End,” at the Senior Center where Kerri Ann Tester, MSW, from Good Shepherd Community Care facilitated a group discussion on end-of-life decision-making for ourselves and our loved ones. Topics were based on the best-selling book, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*, by Atul Gawande, MD.

During National Public Health Week 2016 the Health Department will be hosting a program about hearing loss as we age.

1. Over the past few years, the Health Department has co-sponsored several health fairs for seniors, working with Hebrew Senior Life, the Senior Center, and Center Communities. In addition, the Health Department funds a yoga program at the Putterham Library which targets South Brookline seniors, though all are welcome.

2. The Health Department continues to provide blood pressure screenings. Public Health Nurse Barbara Westley holds regular blood pressure clinics at various locations throughout Brookline; mostly seniors attend these clinics (at two Brookline Housing Authority sites, the Senior Center, Temple Emeth and the Health Department). The Health Department coordinates the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), a group of community volunteers who are willing to assist the department with

medical, public health, and administrative needs in the event of an emergency and throughout the year at health fairs, flu clinics, and other health department activities. The MRC, along with the Police Department's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) helps to assist with the Health Department's Emergency Preparedness Buddies program. The program matches volunteers with vulnerable elders and adults with access and functional needs to help identify preparedness needs.

3. The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations has worked with the AFCSS to raise awareness of our Age-Friendly City. The Office has created a Lego display in Town Hall that features the various Age-Friendly themes in Brookline. The display changes seasonally. In addition, Chris Chanyasulkit (Human Services Specialist in the Brookline Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations) was featured in the November/December 2015 BIG Age-Friendly TV program in which she highlighted programs and services that may be of interest to older adults in Brookline. The office also hosts several programs throughout the year, including the "Raising of America" series that attracted several older adults. All of the programs are typically free and open to the public.

Housing

Initiative

Expand supply of senior housing

Achievements

1. Ongoing public education about the need for increased supply of senior housing
2. Recommend development of senior housing using air rights above town-owned parking lots

Plans

Support planning of a senior housing development using air rights above a Town-owned parking lot in Brookline Village

1. Continue to promote the idea among Town leaders, Town Meeting Members, and interested residents
2. Form an *ad hoc* study group to examine the concept thoroughly and identify an efficient process to achieve this goal
3. Ensure that the idea is included in the Housing Production Plan being prepared for Brookline under direction Department of Planning Community Development in 2016
4. Support other initiatives to expand supply of senior housing

Initiative

Establish Home Sharing Advisory Service

Achievements

1. To promote more efficient use of existing homes to meet needs of seniors, the Building Department and the Council on Aging have agreed to provide an advisory service for seniors to provide information on sharing of homes in ways that are permitted by law in Brookline.
2. The Council on Aging has developed a pamphlet describing the service. Council on Aging staff members will provide basic information about the program to seniors and their families. They will make referrals to the Building Department for specific information about home modifications permitted by Brookline's building code.
3. The Planning and Community Development department also offers the information on its website using the term "Aging at Home."

Plans

1. Encourage more effective dissemination of information about the home sharing advisory service through active distribution of the home sharing pamphlet and by offering an educational program on the topic through BrooklineCAN.
2. Make advice on the home sharing option available to seniors through the Housing Division of the Department of Planning and Community Development.

Initiative

Support older residents who are considering downsizing by providing information about single-level housing options in elevator buildings.

Achievement

BrooklineCAN has published an on-line guide to residential buildings with elevators in Brookline. Separate guides are provided for condominium and rental buildings. The guide has been expanded to include buildings with as few as eight units. With 30 buildings added, the guide now covers over 120 buildings. The expansion of the guide was made possible by a grant from Jewish Family and Children's Services that permitted the hiring of a RESERVE intern. The guide is available on-line.

Plan

Produce a print version of the guide and make the print version available to the public in key locations.

Library

Initiatives

1. Identify and implement programs through the Brookline Libraries of particular interest to seniors.
2. Ensure the Brookline Libraries are welcoming places for seniors.

Achievements

1. Low vision issues The Main library and Coolidge Corner branch library cooperated with the low-vision environmental scan of public buildings. Several of the recommendations have been adopted:

- Push plates have been installed to activate all of the rest room doors.

- Low shelves--we have turned the spines up on all bottom shelves and have continued weeding the collections at all locations to make space to shift books from the lower shelves.
- We have already moved furniture to meet the aisle widths suggested.
- The loose rugs have been taped down or removed.
- Furniture in sitting areas was rearranged to accommodate wheel chairs comfortably.
- Restroom signs were lowered to eye level

2. The library subcommittee proposed new programs of particular interest for seniors jointly sponsored by the Library and the Senior Center (ongoing). The trustees have generously funded Adult programs for all three libraries enhancing the variety and scope of programs, scheduled for afternoons, evenings, and weekends when the Senior Center is closed.

3. The subcommittee proposed methods of outreach to attract more seniors to the Putterham branch library.

4. The trustees in conjunction with Park and Open Spaces have a plan scheduled to start spring 2016 to make the Putterham Branch Library garden and grounds ADA compliant.

5. The subcommittee suggested ways in which shelved books could be placed so that they would be more accessible to seniors. The subcommittee is investigating ways to publicize and make more prominent the Large Type collections at all three libraries. Books on bottom shelves have been placed spine up to allow easier reading of the spine labels.

Plans

1. Encourage improved exterior maintenance to assure better access to the Coolidge Corner branch for patrons with mobility limitations. A proposal to replace the Coolidge Corner Branch facility; improved access for patrons with mobility limitations is a priority in planning a new building.

2. Encourage better publicity for introductory computer classes. Publicize via social media our user friendly technology classes held at the library and Senior Center.
3. Investigate use of Creative Aging Toolkit for Public Libraries (www.creativeagingtoolkit.org)
4. Continue to partner and produce with the local cable access (BIG) programs which promote events, services, and programs sponsored by Brookline Town Departments and provide DVD copies of the Age Friendly Community programs produced to the library for circulation.
5. Provide outreach to seniors via the Friends of the Library sponsored book bike which travels to the Brookline Senior Center and housing Provide outreach to seniors via the Friends of the Library sponsored during the spring/fall season.
6. A design committee is developing a plan to standardize our signage in all three libraries. For the Main library, the administration is investigating the purchase of a digital sign board.
7. All low vision concerns raised will be addressed in the proposed replacement of the Coolidge Corner branch library.

Parks

Initiatives

1. The Brookline Parks and Open Space Division is committed to supporting the interests and needs of all users, including seniors and elderly residents of the community.
2. The Division works to ensure that each of 50 properties under their control, which includes many parks, several sanctuary or conservation areas, a golf course, and a historic cemetery, is safe, handicapped accessible and well maintained for both passive and active recreational use.

3. The Parks Department recognizes that healthy activity among older residents contributes significantly to their health and well-being.

Achievements

1. The Parks and Open Space Division has incorporated age-friendly features in three parks that were renovated in 2014 and 2015. The Waldstein Playground and Eliot Playground/Warren Field have been revitalized. Features of particular interest to seniors at Waldstein Playground are a walking path around the park and improved accessible entrances. Enhanced social seating in both sun and shade allows accessible places to read, socialize, picnic and participate in park activities. Private fund raising is underway to finance additional seating. The Waldstein Playground is an important walking destination for residents of the neighborhood. The walking paths bring more seniors to the park to walk for exercise. The comfort station at Waldstein Playground has been renovated to improve accessibility both into and within the restroom area.

2. Construction is nearly complete for the Fisher Hill Reservoir Park at a historically important site that was once part of the Boston water supply system. The 10-acre park will include a promenade that will offer a level walking surface and a sculptural water feature that will be attractive to seniors, accessible paths at the top of the berm, in the woodlands and through the meadow; an accessible picnic area and field/open space and many opportunities for sitting, taking in the views and exploring nature. The park will include fully accessible restrooms. The park is scheduled to open in the spring of 2016.

3. Clark and Billy Ward Playground renovations were completed in 2014 and both included improvements for accessible entrances and circulation through the park, seating areas in both quiet and more active portions of the park and accessible picnic tables. At the Billy Ward Playground improved seating in a quiet area is planned.

4. In 2014, A bench was added to the exterior of the Putterham Library by the Parks and Open Space Division that helps with pick-ups and drop offs,

waiting and resting for seniors and other patrons to the library. Extensive improvements have been planned for the sunken garden adjacent to the Library to make it more attractive and accessible. The renovated garden will be handicapped accessible.

5. The Town's capital improvement plan includes plans for the addition of restrooms at Brookline Reservoir Park, a popular destination for walkers especially due to its stone dust pathway and water views.

6. BrooklineCAN advocated for a bus stop for the northbound Route 51bus at the Dudley Triangle to provide improved access for South Brookline residents to the Brookline Reservoir Park. The bus stop has been approved by the MBTA and the Transportation Board. The MBTA requires the addition of pavement at the bus stop for handicapped access. The Department of Public Works plans to provide the necessary pavement in 2016.

7. BrooklineCAN seeks to make bocce available to Brookline residents in a public open space. BrooklineCAN has negotiated a tentative plan to offer bocce in the open space between Town Hall and the Main Library. Equipment will be available to be borrowed at the Main Library. Competition with Pierce School for access to the space remains a barrier.

Plans

1. A brochure identifying features of Brookline parks attractive to older people will be published in 2016. The brochure will be issued after the Fisher Hill Reservoir Park has opened.

2. Improvement of an open space at the intersection of Green and John Streets to make it more attractive to seniors will begin in 2016. The open space is in the area of high density senior residence.

Property Tax Relief

Initiative

Further efforts to inform older residents about tax exemption and tax deferral programs appear warranted. The information-dissemination action agenda of the Brookline Age-Friendly Cities program will include reinforcement of the Board of Assessors efforts to inform older homeowners about these tax relief and tax deferral programs.

Achievements

1. The Town has extended access to property tax exemptions by raising the income threshold for eligibility for the tax deferral program for seniors to the maximum permitted by state law. The Town has also improved incentives for participation by lowering the interest rate charged to participants. Together, the reforms make the program more accessible and attractive to seniors. Efforts to publicize the program have also increased, including a more prominent and user friendly information section with the Town's web-site renamed as 'Tax Assistance Programs'.
2. The Town has also introduced a water and sewer rate discount program for qualifying senior homeowners that provides a 20% rate reduction.
3. The maximum tax exemption for participants in the property-tax work-off program has been increased to parallel increases in the MA minimum wage while maintaining the number of volunteer hours worked at 125 hours per year. The maximum will continue to increase in 2017 as the MA minimum wage increases to \$11 per hour.
4. A part-time employment program for low- and moderate-income senior renters has been introduced. The program parallels the senior property-tax work off program. At present, 10 slots are available. Brookline is the first municipality in MA to offer an employment program specifically for senior renters.

Public Safety

Initiative

The Brookline Police Department tries to provide excellent service and a rapid response to all residents of the Town. Because of its sensitivity to the special vulnerabilities of many senior citizens, the Police Department is trained to pay particular attention to their needs. Through the Age-Friendly City initiative, the Department seeks to make information about police services more widely available.

Achievements

1. The Department continued its efforts to inform seniors about scams directed to seniors. While the Department assisted seniors who are victims of scams, the Department's emphasis is on public education to prevent seniors from being victimized by scams.
2. In collaboration with the Senior Center, the Department offers the Home Safe program which uses GPS technology to locate residents with dementia who are at risk of getting lost. Since the program's inception in 2013, eight residents have enrolled.
3. The Brookline Health Department coordinates the Emergency Preparedness Buddies program – the first program of its kind in the nation. The program matches volunteers with vulnerable elders and adults with access and functional needs to assist in identifying preparedness needs, setting up communication plans, and preparing supplies for evacuation or sheltering in place, so that elders are more resilient in an emergency. The program also encourages use of the File of Life, RUOK, and 911 Disability Indicators. Trained program volunteers come from the Police Department's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and the Health Department's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The program enrolled 14 Brookline residents in the first 18 months.

Plans

The Police Department will work with BrooklineCAN to disseminate information more effectively about services that are offered to seniors.

Initiative

The Brookline Fire Department is implementing a Senior Smoke Alarm Installation Program which is a fire safety project funded through an Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A premise of the program is that more than half of all fires can be prevented through a combination of fire prevention education and appropriate corrective action. This service focuses on providing fire prevention and general safety instructions in areas of major concern to senior residents. Participants are provided with free smoke/carbon monoxide detectors that are installed by Brookline firefighters.

Through January, 2016, 28 households had signed up for the program.

Recreation

Initiatives

The Town of Brookline Recreation offers a vast variety of facilities and services that create an extensive menu of recreation opportunities that are both inviting and accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

Achievements

1. Our older community members' interests vary greatly, as do the wide range of ability age levels. Our services are created to be inclusive to all abilities, ages and income levels. Brookline Recreation provides program opportunities from basic, introductory levels to advanced, more specialized offerings. Leisure trips and special events, volunteer, employment and social opportunities are also offered throughout the year.
2. The Recreation Department offers its swimming, skating, and health & wellness program to seniors at a 35% discount. The reduced rates make the programs more affordable for seniors.

3. The aquatics center continues to experience a consistent sale of passes for both the seasonal and annual passes. This is due in large part to their affordability and accessibility. The Health & Wellness aquatic classes maintain a large percentage (over 50%) of enrollment from the seniors in our community.

4. The Recreation Therapy services have experienced a growth in participation with the senior population. Seniors join us year-round to participate in Special Olympics teams and the popular bi-monthly dinner groups. Both opportunities provide great access to social and wellness experiences for some of Brookline's most vulnerable community members.

5. Community outreach continued in 2015 with Recreation sponsoring an annual BBQ and info session for the South Brookline Neighborhood Senior Association at the Putterham Library.

6. The day trips for 55+ continue to thrive and grow in popularity with the day trips in 2015 having an average of 25 or more participants.

7. New in 2015, an indoor walking club has been created and is offered at the Soule Gym once a week during the months of January – April.

8. Twice per year we host Meet & Greet times at the Senior Center to meet Brookline residents, take suggestions, and educate on services that the Recreation Department provides.

9. Employment and volunteer opportunities continue to be available to seniors at Recreation Department facilities. The Robert T Lynch golf course will have many seniors as part of their seasonal team, both in paid and volunteer positions.

Plans

1. Expand Health & Wellness programs
2. Introduce senior-specific golf program.

Transportation

Initiative

Provide improved pedestrian access and safety in areas with large concentrations of older people.

Achievements

1. BrooklineCAN monitoring of slippery sidewalks in commercial areas led to Town Administrator's Slippery Sidewalk task force that put in place a comprehensive program to improve sidewalk maintenance after snow storms. The program includes improved snow removal equipment for the Department of Public Works, improved public education about the responsibilities of property owners for winter sidewalk maintenance, proactive enforcement of the bylaw regarding property owner responsibilities for sidewalk maintenance, improved coordination among departments responsible for enforcement, and increased fines for noncompliance with the slippery sidewalk bylaw.

2. A sidewalk audit was completed in June 2015 by BrooklineCAN in neighborhoods surrounding Brookline Housing Authority senior/disabled developments. The audit was conducted by residents of the developments with leadership provided by BrooklineCAN. The audit covered both sidewalk conditions and street crossings. A grant from Jewish Family and Children's Services permitted the hiring of a project director. Results have been shared with the Department of Public Works. Some of the problems that were identified have been addressed effectively. Most notably, the sidewalks on both sides of Auburn Street have been replaced. Follow up is ongoing.

3. The proposal for a North Brookline Pedestrian District was developed more fully. A map of the proposed district has been prepared. A system for classification of sidewalks within the district according to the extent of their use has been developed. More heavily used sidewalks would receive more extensive attention from the Town. The most heavily used sidewalks, for example, would receive benches at regular intervals. On the most heavily used sidewalks, cyclists would be required to walk their bikes. The proposal

has been presented informally to various Town bodies. No formal action has been considered on the proposal by any Town bodies.

Plans

Pursue formal adoption of the proposal for a North Brookline Pedestrian District.

Initiative

Improve transportation options for those who do not drive.

Achievements

BrooklineCAN, the Brookline Council on Aging, and the Age-Friendly City initiative introduced the TRIPPS program that provides public education and counseling about transportation options for those who do not drive. Program was launched in November 2015 with grant funds from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. Through February 2016 the program's achievements included:

- Hiring a director
- Recruiting and training 10 new volunteers
- Development of performance measures
- Development of a resource guide
- Launching individual counseling service
- Presentation of 9 public education programs

Plans

- Sponsor at least 12 outreach/educational/training events
- Conduct follow-up with consumers of all types (group and individual)
- Expand individual counseling services
- Offer travel support through volunteers

- Launch website
- Update, expand, and distribute the resource guide
- Lay the groundwork for expansion to additional communities in FY2018

Initiative

Obtain more secure funding for Brookline’s subsidized taxi service (BETS).

The need to strengthen BETS continues. The taxi industry in Brookline is in distress because of competition from ride-sharing services. No new subsidies are on the horizon. The purchasing power of existing subsidies is declining.

Initiative

Encourage Brookline to establish a standing pedestrian committee.

Achievements

BrooklineCAN’s Livable Community Advocacy committee has been very active with the Brookline Transportation Board on issues affecting pedestrians. Informally, the Transportation Board has looked upon BrooklineCAN as the Town’s major consumer voice on pedestrian issues.

Plans

The Brookline Transportation Board is now actively considering the formation of a standing pedestrian committee. BrooklineCAN has proposed a mission for the committee and expects to be involved in recruiting members for the committee.

Initiative

Provide Safer Street Crossings for pedestrians with mobility limitations.

At intersections that are controlled by traffic signals, pedestrians who have mobility limitations often need extra time to cross safely. We have proposed

a demonstration project that would allow eligible pedestrians at a few selected intersections on Harvard Street to trigger an electronic signal that would extend the length of the “walk” phase of traffic signals. A special signal system for this purpose has been established successfully in Singapore. We have learned that Brookline’s traffic signal technology will not permit replication of the Singapore system. Our advocacy for the demonstration project is “on hold.”

Achievements

BrooklineCAN has launched a project on adequacy of street lighting for pedestrians in North Brookline. The committee conducted inspections in the most densely populated neighborhoods in September 2015. Over 50 problems were reported to the Department of Public Works.

BrooklineCAN co-sponsored a public education forum on Complete Streets in 2014. A BrooklineCAN representative also participated in the Town’s Complete Streets study committee representing the pedestrian perspective. The Committee’s aim is to develop a Complete Streets policy that the Town will adopt and pursue. An important objective of Complete Streets is to provide stronger, ongoing support to pedestrians.

Veterans

Initiatives

1. The Brookline Office of Veterans’ Services endeavors to provide excellent service to all residents who are honorably discharged veterans. Because the needs and interests of veterans change during different stages of their lives, our staff pays particular attention to the specific needs of veterans of each era. Through the Age-Friendly City initiative, the Department seeks to make information about veterans’ services and benefits more widely available.
2. We strive to ensure that the Brookline Office of Veterans’ Services and Veterans Post are both welcoming places for veterans who are seniors.

Achievements

1. Our office provides MGL-115 emergency financial assistance to qualified veterans and their families. In FY 2015 the office provided \$149,000 in direct assistance to veterans and their spouses, over half of which were seniors.
2. Our office works with the Brookline Public Health Department, the Brookline Senior Center, the Brookline Police Department - Community Services Division, the Brookline Public Library and other organizations to address the specific needs of veterans who are seniors.
3. As many of our veterans (including many of our seniors on fixed incomes) find themselves having difficulty managing the rising cost of living but are over income for many assistance programs, our office assists qualified veterans who suffered injury during their military service to obtain or increase well deserved and often overdue VA compensation pensions. Consistently for the last 10 years we have assisted veterans who are residents in obtaining/increasing over \$100,000 of new VA compensation benefits annually.
4. We assist our veterans in obtaining low cost or no cost VA Healthcare including prescriptions, and advocate for services and appointments if necessary. Each year we assist over a dozen Brookline veterans in obtaining no cost hearing aids through the VA Health Care system.