



Contact: Jayne Colino

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[jcolino@newtonma.gov](mailto:jcolino@newtonma.gov)

617-796-1671

Date: September 12, 2016

## NEWTON DESIGNATED AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY BY WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION/AARP'S NETWORK

### *Community Launch for resident engagement in Age-Friendly Planning: Tuesday, September 20*

The City of Newton was accepted this past winter into the AARP's Age Friendly Community Network, which is part of an international effort of the World Health Organization (WHO) initiative to promote planning to prepare cities to address the needs of rapidly aging populations. Led by the Department of Senior Services and the Council on Aging, Newton will launch a comprehensive planning effort that will engage residents in identifying the challenges and strengths that Newton's seniors and their families face. Participants will brainstorm ways to best incorporate neighborhood ideas into the goals and action steps of the age friendly initiative.

The kick-off event will occur Tuesday, September 20 from 7pm to 8:30pm at Newton Free Library, Druker Auditorium. Mike Festa, AARP Massachusetts Director will present the WHO/AARP certification to Newton. Alice Bonner, the Executive Secretary of Elder Affairs for the State of Massachusetts, will provide a context from the State. There will be a panel presentation including Marian Knapp, Chair of Newton's Council on Aging, Valerie Spain, Community Outreach Specialist for AARP and Frank Caro and Ruthann Dobek from BCAN Brookline's Age-Friendly initiative. Residents will have time to ask questions and offer ideas.

In addition to the kick-off, there will be two additional focus group meetings held at the Newton Free Library, Druker Auditorium from 7pm to 8:30pm on Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>. All the sessions are free and open to the public. Residents of all ages are encouraged to participate. Registration is not required. Transportation will be provided on as needed basis, for transport information contact Alice Bailey at the Department of Senior Services at 617-796-1664.

Newton joins over twenty nations and three-dozen cities and towns in the United States in the WHO network. Members have committed to adopting specific benchmarks for better housing, transportation and social and educational opportunities for residents to be active participants in their communities. Mayor Setti Warren in endorsing this initiative has stated that "a critical part of our efforts to plan for our residents now and 25 years from now is to focus on economic sustainability across the lifespan including for seniors as they consider retirement. Keeping Newton affordable for those who wish to age in place as well as utilizing the skills of older residents who wish to contribute to the community are important components to maintaining the vitality of our City."

The mission of the Department of Newton Senior Services and the Council on Aging is to optimize quality of life for older adults. In addition to hundreds educational and recreational activities conducted annually through the Senior Center, the department facilitates a variety of support groups for seniors and their families and is a resource for residents to access social services. For more information visit: [www.newtonseniors.org](http://www.newtonseniors.org) or call 617-796-1660.

###