



City of New Bedford  
Office of the Mayor  
Contact: Jonathan Carvalho  
(508) 979-1410  
[jcarvalho@newbedford-ma.gov](mailto:jcarvalho@newbedford-ma.gov)

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City of New Bedford  
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **New Bedford designated an Age-Friendly Community**

*Fourth City in Massachusetts to receive prestigious designation from the World Health Organization and AARP, New Bedford begins implementing its Action Plan for residents' well-being*

**New Bedford, Massachusetts** – Mayor Jon Mitchell joined AARP Massachusetts State Director Mike Festa and City officials to officially accept New Bedford's designation as an Age-Friendly Community, a livability index from the World Health Organization and AARP for older residents to stay healthy and active longer.

New Bedford's process to become an Age-Friendly Community began in 2015, when the City applied and was accepted to join the Age Friendly Network, becoming the fourth municipality in Massachusetts to begin the process. This culminated in late 2017, when the City completed its Age-Friendly Action Plan. Now, New Bedford enters the implementation stage of the plan, totaling more than 80 action steps with 20 already set in motion. The City's action steps include increasing maintaining a skilled workforce to support older adults and people with disabilities to age in the community, promoting options that provide housing stability and preserve tenancy, supporting housing for New Bedford's vulnerable older adults, improving accessibility of public areas, encouraging participation of older adults in outdoor activities, providing support for health and wellness in the community, and increasing social engagement for older adults.

The designation also aides the City in receiving grant funding because of New Bedford's continued commitment to improving the lives of its residents through this thoughtful and deliberate process. The Council on Aging, Department of Public Infrastructure, Health Department, Department of Community Services, the Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development, and Energy Office collaborated on the application, along with Coastline Elderly Services, Mass in Motion, and the Commission for Citizens with Disabilities.

During an announcement at Buttonwood Park, officials highlighted the assets that make New Bedford Age-Friendly based on the seven key features that make communities livable:

- Outdoor spaces
- Transportation
- Aging in the Community/Housing
- Community Support and Health Access
- Social Participation
- Civic Participation/Employment
- Communication

Mayor Jon Mitchell said, “New Bedford is proud to be designated an Age-Friendly Community based on our commitment to improve our residents’ quality of life. From health services to outdoor spaces to transportation, our action plan is designed to enhance the satisfaction with life in New Bedford for residents of all ages, and it will play a key role in meeting the future needs of our City.”

Council on Aging Director Debra Lee said, “The Age-Friendly Journey in New Bedford has been a collaborative and positive team project, bringing together City officials with social services and healthcare providers to best meet the needs of residents over the age of 50 – nearly a third of our total population. We’re excited to continue this work to build on New Bedford’s many assets, and we are grateful to AARP and the World Health Organization for their support of our efforts.”

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is an affiliate of the World Health Organization’s Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization. The program has participating communities in more than 20 nations, as well as 10 affiliates representing more than 1,000 communities.

Criteria for the designation includes the buy-in from elected officials and community groups to prepare the municipality for its aging population, including incorporating projects into existing projects and adding improvements like pedestrian safety features, bike lanes, enhanced parks and community centers, health facilities, and neighborhood and economic development.

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