#### **RESOURCE GUIDE SERIES: INTRODUCTION**



**CONNECTICUT AGE WELL COLLABORATIVE** 

Fostering Aging, Dementia, and Disability Inclusivity



An initiative of Connecticut Community Care

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Formal and organizational partners are separately defined and listed in the body of this report (pages 10-11).

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Municipal governments, community stakeholders and residents can work together to create more aging, dementia, and disability-inclusive communities, resulting in more just, equitable communities for everyone.

This resource guide introduces the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative and is the first in a series of guides to support local government in fostering more aging, dementia and disability-inclusive communities. This guide describes the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative, summarizes key data, describes the history of the livability movement, describes our collective impact partners, and provides a framework for shaping great Connecticut communities where we all thrive as we grow up and grow older.

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Connecticut's changing demographics create tremendous opportunity to celebrate and leverage the idea that we all can **age well**.

#### **ABOUT THE CONNECTICUT AGE WELL COLLABORATIVE**

The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative is a statewide, cross-sector initiative that fosters Connecticut communities where we all thrive as we grow up and grow older.

The Collaborative co-creates, educates, innovates, celebrates and evaluates best practices, projects and policies to shape inclusive, vibrant, intergenerational places where we all can thrive across the lifespan. Such places include physical infrastructure, services, and opportunities for connection for all residents. They are intentional in planning with an aging, dementia and disability lens.

The Collaborative centers its work around promoting equity. Our current systems and structures produce disparate outcomes for women, people of color, LGBTQ+ populations, low-income and rural older adults, including declining health at an earlier age, higher rates of social isolation, and economic life near or below poverty.<sup>1</sup> Structural racism and other biases follow populations across the lifespan. Building a more just society helps us all as we journey through different ages, stages and abilities.



The Collaborative optimizes impact through its multi-layered approach of:

- Informing and co-creating community efforts with lived experience
- Raising awareness on issues of aging, dementia and disability inclusivity
- Supporting communities with targeted technical assistance
- · Recognizing and celebrating aging, dementia and disabilityinclusive communities
- · Partnering with academic stakeholders to conduct communitybased participatory research and to inform local efforts with evidence-based practice

This approach is responsive to needs identified by an environmental analysis of communities in Connecticut and beyond, as well as formally-documented key stakeholder interviews with 23 organizations and 12 municipalities (see the Acknowledgements section for a full listing), inclusive of planning and zoning, social services, community development, aging and disability commissions, conservation and energy, library services, public safety and staff and community volunteers, as well as additional discussions with organizational partners (see Partners section, pages 10-11).

Our guiding principles are:

- Emphasize access, equity, and inclusion.
- Change the conversation from "challenge" to "asset."
- · Listen more and let everyone's voice be heard.
- Maintain a sense of urgency and accountability.
- Ensure the nature of the work is interactive and transparent.
- Be responsive to evolving and emerging issues.
- Promote a community of continuous learning.
- Celebrate success among our partners and stakeholders.

To find out more about the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative, visit ctagewellcollaborative.org.

#### **OUR LEADERSHIP**

The Collaborative is led by its Steering Committee, whose members represent local, regional and state government, philanthropy, nonprofits, academia, and grassroots leaders from community centers of power, all united by a shared passion for shaping age, dementia and disabilityinclusive communities.



#### **THE STORY OF OUR LOGO**

Our logo consists of ascending leaves, the idea that vitality can happen across the lifespan. The leaves are diverse but all grow from the same stem, a reminder of our shared journey and connection. The design is rounded and open, to embody inclusivity and collaboration. And we emphasize that we all can age well.

#### **HEALTHY AGING AND OTHER DATA**

Our communities are stronger when they include the full scope of our energy, including the contributions of older people, individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and individuals with disabilities. Accordingly, with Connecticut's changing demographics comes tremendous opportunity.

Connecticut is the 7th oldest state in the nation, with 823,529 people (23% of the state's population) age 60 or older.<sup>2</sup> Over 80,000 Connecticut residents live with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias (14%),<sup>3</sup> and 613,853 people in Connecticut report living with at least one disability (22%).<sup>4</sup> The percentage of residents age 65 or older in communities ranges from 4-45%, with a state average of 16.4%.5 Connecticut's population of older adults is the most diverse in New England in terms of race and ethnicity, an incredible asset, with 17.5% identifying as people of color.<sup>6</sup>

In partnership with the Gerontology Institute of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts and the Point32Health Foundation (formed by the combination of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation and Tufts Health Plan Foundation), the Collaborative released a first-of-its kind Connecticut Healthy Aging Data Report in 2021. The report helps Connecticut residents, agencies, lawmakers and community leaders understand the older people who live in our cities and towns. It provides data across 190 indicators for each of the state's 169 municipalities, as well as recommendations to help advance healthy aging, in part by building vibrant, healthy communities for all ages.

Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island are the only four states to have such extensive data available for healthy aging. Data can be compared locally and regionally to state averages and across states. Detailed data about Connecticut's changing demographics provides an important starting point for conversations about embracing opportunity and innovating systems to enable people to thrive across the lifespan.

We encourage you to visit your community's healthy aging profile.<sup>7</sup> In addition to profiles for each of the state's 169 municipalities, there are profiles for 12 specific neighborhoods (3 each for Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Stamford). Each profile contains estimates for 190 health indicators with 95% confidence intervals to help display the accuracy of individuals estimates. The indicators include measures of population characteristics, wellness, falls, prevention, nutrition and diet, oral health, chronic disease, behavioral health, mental health, disability, caregiving, access to care, service use, community, safety and crime, transportation, economic status, and statewide living.

Contact the Collaborative for additional support in understanding your community's profile. We further encourage your community to view this data in the context of other Connecticut municipal profiles, such as the Partnership for Strong Communities Housing Data Profiles<sup>8</sup> and AdvanceCT's town profiles<sup>9</sup> of demographic and economic information. Racial equity is when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved.

The Government Alliance on Race and Equity

In reviewing your profile, we also encourage you to consider the impact of race and ethnicity on healthy aging. The Healthy Aging Data Report distills data from 56 chronic disease, disability, and Medicare service use indicators to create a multidimensional measure of community aging. Among these 56 indicators there were only four (heart attack, liver disease, PTSD and stroke) that did not demonstrate racial disparities. In other words, communities still have much work to do to promote racial and health equity. The Government Alliance on Race and Equity define "racial equity" as when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved.<sup>10</sup> The Collaborative embraces this definition and celebrates the capacity of local government in creating and maintaining equity. Promoting equity requires unrelenting commitment and focus in robust collaboration with community stakeholders.

#### AGING IN CONNECTICUT: BY THE NUMBERS



# Connecticut is the **7th oldest state** in the United States.

16.4% of Connecticut residents are **65 or older**.



14% of Connecticut residents 65 or older live with Alzheimer's Disease or related dementias.



22% of adult residents in Connecticut live with at least one disability.



17.5% of Connecticut residents 65 or older **identify as people of color.** 

#### **FOSTERING LIVABILITY**

Livable communities are inclusive, vibrant, intergenerational places where we all can thrive across the lifespan. They include physical infrastructure, services, and opportunities for connection for all residents. They are intentional in planning with an aging, dementia and disability lens. In 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO) convened focus groups of older people, caregivers and service providers in 33 cities and 22 countries to provide a global framework for its *Age–Friendly Cities* initiative.<sup>11</sup> Eight interconnected areas emerged to address age–friendliness:

- Community and Health Care
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social Participation
- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- Respect and Social Inclusion
- Civic Participation and Employment
- Communication and Information<sup>12</sup>

Centered around these domains of livability, the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities was established in 2010 to facilitate the exchange of information, resources and best practices on age-inclusivity. Nationally, the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities became the United States Affiliate of the WHO international initiative.<sup>13</sup>



Effective July 1, 2013, the Connecticut General Assembly established a statewide "livable communities" initiative to foster communities with affordable and appropriate housing, infrastructure, local services and transportation options for residents of all ages; including enabling Connecticut residents to stay in their own homes or community settings of choice, regardless of age or disability.<sup>14</sup>

Actively led by Connecticut's former Legislative Commission on Aging and continued by the consolidated Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO), the Connecticut livable communities initiative shapes policy and provides information and inspiration for community leaders toward more age-positive systems.

Effective September 1, 2022, CWCSEO formally delegated the leadership of the livable communities initiative to the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative. As leader of the state's livable communities initiative, the Collaborative works with CWCSEO in partnering with wide-ranging stakeholders, recognizing communities and sharing resources, among other statutory responsibilities.<sup>15</sup>

# 2007

World Health Organization (WHO) implements *Age-Friendly Cities initiative* 

#### 2010

WHO establishes Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

## 2012

AARP launches U.S. Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities

#### 2013

Connecticut General Assembly empowers former Commission on Aging to establish statewide livable communities initiative

### 2015

Connecticut celebrates international recognition through its report on the livability of New Haven and Connecticut<sup>16</sup>

# 2020

Connecticut Age Well Collaborative is established

### 2022

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity delegates leadership of livable communities initiative to Connecticut Age Well Collaborative

#### **A FRAMEWORK** FOR COMMUNITIES

The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative is aligning efforts across organizations and has established an integrated framework for communities across Connecticut to foster greater aging, dementia and disability inclusivity across the lifespan.

Through a process of organizational engagement, the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative adapted the World Health Organization's (WHO's) original framework for application in Connecticut communities. This newly revised framework explicitly goes beyond aging to address disability and dementia, recognizing that steps to create more thriving communities can help multiple populations, and ultimately everyone. As compared to the WHO model, the Collaborative's framework also:

- Creates an explicit category on equity inclusion and belonging
- · Goes beyond health care to include health, well-being and food systems
- Emphasizes technology as a critical component of communication and information
- Goes beyond outdoor spaces to include all public spaces (including) downtowns) and businesses
- · Looks at employment as part of a larger category of economic opportunity
- Expands social participation to also include cultural engagement
- Adds a new category to consider public safety and preparedness
- · Recognizes the importance of families and care partners of affected individuals

0 Public Safety & Preparedness

Economic Opportunity

0 Social, Cultural & **Civic Engagement** 

Public Spaces, **Buildings & Businesses** 

0

Transportation 0

#### The Collaborative's evolving descriptions of each topical area of our framework are:

Our framework recognizes that livable communities must also support the families and care partners of affected individuals.

#### Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Recognizing the intrinsic value of each community member, acknowledging and addressing that systems

do not enable everyone to start from the same place, building community authority for all, and promoting systems and spaces in which everyone belongs.

#### **Community & Social Services**

Empowering residents with choice, independence and dignity, and enabling highquality lives at home and in the community, regardless of age or ability.

#### Health, Well-Being & Food Systems

Promoting the physical and behavioral health of all community members through thoughtful community design, conditions in which people can optimize vitality, and just food systems.

#### **Communication**, Information & Technology

Emphasizing transparency and thoughtful application of an equity, aging, dementia and disability lens to optimize inclusivity and community connectivity, including thoughtful incorporation of established and emerging technology.

#### Housing

Offering a broad range of accessible, affordable and community-promoting housing options in thoughtful, diverse, connected, intergenerational neighborhoods of opportunity.

#### Transportation

Advancing inclusive and safe mobility and access for all roadway users-including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motor vehiclesregardless of age, ability, income, or ethnicity.

#### **Public Spaces, Buildings** & Businesses Encompassing safe and accessible places—ranging from green spaces to places of civic engagement to places for commerce—that help foster a sense of community, mutual caring, and engagement of users of all ages and abilities.

# Social, Cultural & Civic Engagement places where all residents enhance community capacity, diversity is celebrated, and



Creating vibrant, intergenerational lived experience is valued, cultural opportunities for engagement are available across the lifespan.

# **Economic Opportunity**

Providing opportunities for economic security, access to commerce, and meaningful employment at all stages of life.

#### **Public Safety and Preparedness**

Integrating thoughtful training and planning into promoting public safety, understanding how to appropriately support all residents in emergency circumstances, and empowering, respecting and optimizing the dignity and independence of all residents.

#### **COLLECTIVE IMPACT PARTNERS**

Collective impact partners are strategically cultivated partners committed to collaborating with the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative to align efforts and share resources toward fostering Connecticut communities where we all thrive as we grow up and grow older.

Collective impact brings people together in a structured way to achieve social change. Specifically, collective impact is a network of community members, organizations and institutions who advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population and systems level change.<sup>17</sup>

The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative plans and implements its work through a collective impact model, as creating more aging, dementia and disability-inclusive communities is a multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary endeavor. We celebrate the leadership, resources and contributions from partners across various sectors in Connecticut and beyond. Please note that this list is always growing as this movement builds.

This initial list reflects strategically cultivated relationships with governmental, nonprofit and academic organizations who were invited as partners. The Collaborative defines partners as organizations committed to collaborating to align efforts and shared resources toward fostering Connecticut communities where we all thrive as we grow up and grow older. As we move into this next phase of our work, we also look forward to cultivating more formal relationships with municipalities, community centers of power, grassroots leaders and other key stakeholders.

To explore partnership with the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative, e-mail ctagewell@ctcommunitycare.org

#### **Core Partners**

# Point32Health Foundation

Philanthropic Funder & Convenor Formed by the combination of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and Tufts Health Plan foundations, Point32Health Foundation works with communities to support, advocate and advance healthier lives for everyone.



#### Funder & Collaborator The Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services

maximizes opportunities for independence and well-being for people with disabilities and older adults in Connecticut.



Founder & Fiscal Sponsor Connecticut Community Care helps people of all ages, abilities, ethnicities and incomes live their best lives at home with active and meaningful connections to their communities.



#### Partner & Supporter The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

delegates its statutory charge (CGS Section 17b-420a) to lead a statewide livable communities initiative to the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative.

#### **Collaborating Partners**

- AARP Connecticut
- Alzheimer's
  Association CT Chapter
- Center for Medicare Advocacy
- Central Connecticut
  State University
- Connecticut Association of Senior Center Personnel
- Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness
- Connecticut Conference of Municipalities
- Connecticut Main
  Street Center
- CT Aging
- CT Department of Public Health
- CT Healthy Living Collective
- CT State Independent
  Living Council
- CTData Collaborative
- The Housing Collective Centers for Housing Opportunity
- Regional Plan Association
- Sustainable CT
- UConn Center on Aging, University of Connecticut

#### **CONNECTING COMMUNITIES WITH RESOURCES**

The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative celebrates the work of AARP, Dementia Friendly America and Sustainable CT in shaping more inclusive communities for residents of all ages. The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative can connect communities to existing resources and technical assistance opportunities in these programs.

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities is a national network of communities who all believe that places where we live are more livable, and better able to support people of all ages, when local leaders commit to improving the quality of life for the very young, the very old, and everyone in between. The work that happens in the network is hands-on and locally determined and directed. AARP engages with elected officials, partner organizations and local leaders to guide communities through the agefriendly network's assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation processes.

**Dementia-Friendly America** (DFA) is a national network of communities that foster the ability of people living with dementia to remain in community and engage and thrive in day-to-day living. Communities who join DFA are engaging in a process to become more informed and respectful of individuals with the disease, their families and caregivers. DFA provides supportive options that foster quality of life.

**Sustainable CT** is a voluntary certification program to recognize thriving and resilient Connecticut municipalities. Sustainable CT recognizes the natural environment as the foundation for the health and well-being of all people and the strength of the local economy. Sustainable CT is committed to equity and creating communities where all are welcome and have the opportunity to thrive.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Municipal government, community stakeholders and residents can work together to create more aging, dementia, and disability-inclusive communities, resulting in more just, equitable communities for all.



This resource guide is the first in a series of guides to be released, with subsequent guides to be focused on topics identified through listening sessions, including:

- How to reframe the aging narrative
- · Storytelling and celebration of community innovations
- How to understand and translate your community's data into action
- · How to create community authority and lived experience, and
- How to plan for and implement specific policies and practices to promote aging, dementia and disability inclusivity

You can learn more about the release and launch events for each of these guides by visiting the Collaborative's website and signing up for our e-news.

We hope you will join us this year by following, promoting and participating in the following activities:

- Informing efforts with lived experience. The Collaborative is launching the Community Leaders Fellowship, a compensated opportunity for individuals with lived aging, dementia and disability experience and their care partners to guide and shape the Collaborative's work. Through a process of shared learning, trust-building and empowerment, a subset of the Fellows will be selected to join the Collaborative's Steering Committee longerterm. The group may also serve as a learning laboratory and model for municipalities in valuing and engaging with lived in experience and lifting up historically disempowered voices.
- Raising awareness on issues of aging, dementia and disability inclusivity. Based on topics listed above and other emerging topics identified by communities and organizational partners, we are creating an education series for local governments and their community partners.
- Celebrating and scaling action. Through collaboration with key partner organizations and community listening, we'll be promoting specific best-practice actions for municipalities across all of the impact areas in our initiative framework (see pages 8 and 9) to promote aging, dementia and disability inclusivity.
- **Providing municipal support.** Through a framework to be developed this year, municipalities will be invited to apply for targeted technical assistance.
- Conducting research and sharing evidence-based practice. We're partnering with academic stakeholders to conduct research, driven by the community. We'll also be informing local efforts with evidence-based practice.

Connecticut's changing demographics create an opportunity to celebrate and leverage the ongoing contributions of all of us as we age.

The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative invites you to join our robust momentum toward shaping inclusive, vibrant, intergenerational places where we all can thrive across the lifespan. Together, we can ensure our communities include thoughtful physical infrastructure, services, and opportunities for connection for all residents. Our systems moving forward must plan intentionally with an aging, dementia and disability lens, all while working to promote equity, and thereby a more just society for all of us.

Please join us in following, promoting and participating in our work, along the way celebrating the notion that in Connecticut, we all can **age well**.

#### **NOTES**

- 1. National Council on Aging, Our Equity Promise (2022), available at https:// ncoa.org/page/our-equity-promise.
- 2. Gerontology Institute of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Connecticut Healthy Aging Data Report (2021), available at https://healthyagingdatareports. org/connecticut-healthy-agingdata-report/.
- 3. Ibid. This figure was estimated from the percentage of Medicare beneficiaries age 65 years and older with Alzheimer's Disease or related dementias. Because the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative serves all Connecticut residents, the actual number is even higher, as this figure does not include earlieronset dementias.
- 4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CT Disability and Health State Profile (2022), available at https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/ disabilityandhealth/impacts/ connecticut.html.
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- 6. Ibid.
- Your community's profile can be accessed from http:// ctagewellcollaborative.org or directly at https://healthyagingdatareports. org/connecticut-healthy-agingdata-report/.
- 8. Partnership for Strong Communities, Housing Data Profiles (2022), available at https://housingprofiles. pschousing.org/, created in partnership with the Connecticut Data Collaborative.
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- 10. Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government: A Resource Guide to Put Ideas Into Action (2015). Government Alliance on Race and Equity, available at https://www.racialequityalliance.org/ resources/advancing-racial-equityand-transforming-governmenta-resource-guide-to-put-ideasinto-action/.
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- 16. Mary Buchanan and Mark Abraham (of Data Haven), with support from Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging. The Ageinclusivity of New Haven and Connecticut: A pilot of Measuring the Age-friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators by the World Health Organization Centre for Health Development (2015), available at https://www.ctdatahaven.org/ reports/livability-new-haven-andconnecticut-aging-population.
- 17. Collective Impact Form, What is Collective Impact? (2022), available at https://collectiveimpactforum.org/ what-is-collective-impact/.

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