



Watertown City Council

**Committee on Human Services Meeting
Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber - Second
Floor**

Agenda

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, the meeting and public hearing will be conducted with remote opportunities for participation. Remote participation and access methods include:

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on January 16, 2025 at 6:00 P.M. Location: Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber
- B. The meeting will be televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television): <http://vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/watch-now?site=3>
- C. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/88970754795>
- D. Public may join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 889 7075 4795
- E. Public may comment through email: jgannon@watertown-ma.gov
- F. Please Visit the Committee on Human Services Webpage here: https://watertownma.portal.civicclerk.com/?category_id=80

-
- 1. Call to Order
 - 2. Discussion
 - A. Discussion on the Health and Human Services Assessment
 - 3. Adjournment

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Anthony Palomba,
Chair

Caroline Bays,
Vice Chair

John G. Gannon,
Secretary

Health and Human Services Assessment

City of Watertown, Massachusetts

November 27, 2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

City of Watertown

George Proakis, City Manager

Emily Monea, Deputy City Manager

Steven T. Magoon, Assistant City Manager for Community Development and Planning

Tyler Cote, Community Engagement Specialist

Patrick George, Veterans Services Officer/ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator

Lydia McCoy, Director of Senior Services

Abbey Myers, Public Health Director

Stephanie Venizelos, Community Wellness Program Manager

City Council

Mark S. Sideris, Council President

Nicole Garnder, District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner, District B Councilor

Vincent J. Piccirilli, District C Councilor

Emily Izzo, District D Councilor

John Airasian, Councilor-At-Large

Caroline Bays, Councilor-At-Large*

John G. Gannon, Councilor-At-Large*

Anthony Palomba, Councilor-At-Large*

() members of City Council Committee on Human Services*

Health Management Associates, Inc.

Rob Buchanan, Associate Principal

Tara Kelly, Associate Principal

Nicole Lovitch, Research Associate

Muriel Kramer, Senior Consultant

Kirsten Bryan, Senior Consultant

Mayur Chandriani, Senior Consultant

John Eller, Managing Principal

Keyan Javadi, Consultant

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Background.....	10
Health and Human Services Gap Assessment.....	13
Demographics.....	14
Housing Insecurity.....	15
Food Insecurity.....	20
Wellness Promotion.....	23
Disability Supports.....	28
Older Adult Supports.....	30
Communications and Language Access.....	33
Migrant Supports.....	37
Veterans Services.....	40
Public Health.....	41
Healthcare.....	43
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.....	46
Health and Human Services Organizational Review.....	49
Recommendations.....	58
Appendices.....	71
Endnotes.....	129

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Watertown engaged Health Management Associates, Inc. (HMA), to conduct a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the community's health and human service needs, determine the scope of services presently available to meet those needs, identify remaining disparities in services, and recommend resources to fill those gaps. Through engagement and analysis, key community priorities emerged with a focus on programs and services relating to housing security, food security, wellness promotion, disability supports, older adult supports, communications and language access, immigrant supports, veterans' services, public health, and physical and behavioral health. In considering these priorities, health and human services should be viewed with an intersectional lens, recognizing their overlapping qualities and characteristics that reflect how real people experience their own unique needs and seek support from a multitude of public and private supports.

Components of the Assessment

The assessment is composed of three parts:

- **Health and Human Services Gap Assessment.** The first section begins with a health and human services gap assessment, which evaluates public and private health and human service organizations that serve the people of the City of Watertown. The gap assessment briefly describes available services, identifies populations that are being adequately or inadequately served, and highlights the organizations, agencies, and departments that provide health and human services resources in Watertown.
- **Health and Human Services Organizational Review.** The second section of the report reviews the operation of the various health and human services functions within Watertown and summarizes staffing, management, and organizational structure. It includes a scan of organizational practices in Massachusetts cities and towns that are comparable to Watertown.
- **Recommendations.** The report concludes with recommendations on organizational and program efficiencies and enhancements, as well as an implementation timeline.



Approach

To conduct the assessment, HMA facilitated extensive community outreach and data gathering efforts in 2024 to elicit a range of community perspectives regarding the strengths and needs of health and human services in Watertown. HMA conducted more than 20 interviews, which included representation from the City Council, City of Watertown department heads and staff, and leaders of community-based organizations (CBOs).

The City of Watertown, in collaboration with HMA, hosted a Community Forum in January 2024. More than 50 people attended the event, which included remote involvement via video conferencing. In addition, HMA conducted eight focus groups composed of representatives from public and private health and human services organizations, CBOs, and residents from historically marginalized and underserved communities, including people who do not presently access health and human services. HMA met with groups of older adults, veterans, persons with disabilities, residents of the Watertown Housing Authority buildings, and people who primarily communicate in a language other than English, including immigrants. The assessment includes relevant descriptive and quantitative data about Watertown’s health and human services needs from publicly available national, statewide, and local sources.

Recommendations

Informed by the health and human services gap assessment and the organization review, HMA offers recommendations to the City of Watertown for organizational and program efficiencies and enhancements, along with a timeline for implementation of the recommendations. These recommendations are offered in the context of the assessment's overall key objectives:

- Ensure comprehensive, data-driven services to make Watertown a healthy and vibrant community for all residents
- Promote collaboration among and between the existing network of City departments and community providers
- Advocate so that Watertown receives the full benefit of state and federal health and human service resources

Recommendation 1: Create a Watertown Human Services Director Position

Watertown needs designated leadership to address Watertown residents' human service needs, particularly in relationship to coordinating and championing services that address housing insecurity, food insecurity, and migrant supports. Under the direction of the City Manager, Watertown should create a Director of Human Services position. The role would oversee the planning, direction, management, and operation of Watertown's human services programs and referral pathways, including services that address housing insecurity (e.g., rental assistance), food insecurity, economic insecurity, and migrant supports. The director also would oversee Watertown's partnership with Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, including the Watertown's Social Services Resource Specialist (SSRS) program. As part of coordinating Watertown's initiatives to combat food insecurity, the Director of Human Services would promote food assistance programs and oversee the Watertown Food Pantry, which is currently part of the Senior Services Department. The role would also administer the Live Well Watertown program.

Recommendation 2: Establish a Watertown Health and Human Services Cabinet

A dedicated, cross-functional Health and Human Services Cabinet would significantly enhance resident well-being through a comprehensive and coordinated approach to health and social services. The Watertown Health and Human Services Cabinet should include the Human Services Director, Public Health Director, Senior Services Director, Veterans Services Officer/Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator, Community Wellness Program Manager, Housing Authority representative, Recreation Director, Public Library representative, Schools Liaison, Police Liaison, Department of Public Works, and organizations contracted to provide key services to the City. This cabinet will enable Watertown to create a more integrated, responsive, and effective system for meeting the diverse needs of its residents and engaging the community.

Recommendation 3: Improve Digital Front Door Awareness and Access to Watertown's Health and Human Services

The City of Watertown should improve digital front door awareness and access to health and human services by enhancing the user experience of Watertown's website, increasing the visibility and utility of health and human services, leveraging 311 infrastructure as an information source to connect residents with resources for health and human services; develop a comprehensive online and print Welcome Packet for both new and existing residents that includes an up-to-date and detailed list of available health and human services; and use email and mail campaigns to advise residents of health programs, upcoming events, and important health tips.

Recommendation 4: Establish Physical Front Door to Watertown's Health and Human Services

To enhance access and streamline navigation, Watertown should establish a physical front door location to its health and human services. This centralized facility would serve as a single, physical point of contact where residents can obtain information, receive assistance, and access a range of health and human services. Co-location of health and human service departments would also support better communication and coordination.

As a City-owned building, the Parker Annex Building could serve as a hub for health and human services. The location could also incorporate routine on-site presence from key health and human service organizations, such as Wayside Multi-Service Center and the Watertown Housing Authority, to provide specialized support and ensure a comprehensive range of services.

Recommendation 5: Establish Relationships with CBOs for Key Programs and Services

An output of the community engagement process highlighted the need for Watertown to develop long-term partnerships with local CBOs for the provision of key programs and services. At present, residents may receive case management and referral supports through the City of Watertown and other organizations. Opportunities exist to deepen existing relationships or formally establish new partnerships with local CBOs to provide needed services, such as tenancy navigation and support (i.e., landlord-tenant counseling and mediation, legal support, and financial aid) and support for migrants. As part of developing these partnerships, Watertown can work with organizations to build a more robust foundation of data that provide insights into the community's needs and underlying service gaps.

Recommendation 6: Improve Access to Food Supports

Under the leadership of the Director of Human Services, Watertown should improve access to food supports through multiple strategies. The Watertown Food Pantry should move to location that would allow for expanded hours. This location change will enable the food pantry to extend its hours of operation to accommodate a broader range of schedules. Additionally, the Director of Human Services, in collaboration with other City departments and CBOs, should coordinate Watertown's initiatives to combat food insecurity and maximize resident access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other food assistance programs. To improve awareness about available nutrition programs, Watertown should continue to develop easy-to-understand visuals and guides to convey information quickly and clearly.

Recommendation 7: Develop DEI Approach

To foster a more inclusive and equitable community, Watertown should establish a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy. Key components include establishing a DEI Director position. This individual would be responsible for leading and coordinating related initiatives, integrating DEI principles in the municipal strategic planning processes, developing an official statement that affirms the City's commitment to inclusion, developing and implementing awareness and education programs that promote inclusion, and actively engaging with the community on DEI issues.

The DEI Director should collaborate with the Watertown's Department of Human Resources to develop and provide regular training for all staff on DEI principles. The functions of Watertown's ADA Coordinator should be transitioned to the DEI Director to ensure that compliance with the law is integrated into the broader DEI framework, enhancing support for people with disabilities and promoting a more inclusive environment. The DEI Director should also lead Watertown's efforts to develop and update policies and supports to ensure equal access to Watertown's programs and services for people with limited English proficiency.

Recommendation 8: Establish a Language Access Program

To address the growing need for effective language access services, Watertown should establish a program either through a vendor, dedicated language access coordinator, or a relationship with one or more CBO(s). This approach could provide a centralized resource for managing and coordinating language access services.

Recommendation 9: Prioritize Health Promotion and Wellness

Watertown should create a comprehensive Health Promotion and Wellness Strategic Plan that outlines key initiatives for improving community health and wellness and foster more integrated and direct collaboration between the Health Department, the proposed Human Services Director, and Live Well Watertown. This approach will support the prioritization of health and wellness by ensuring that resources and efforts are aligned toward preventive and proactive care. This plan should include specific goals, strategies, and actions that address various health issues, promote wellness, and facilitate collaboration with CBOs to ensure a cohesive approach to community health improvement. The plan should explicitly include substance use disorder awareness, support, and prevention. To enhance coordination and focus on wellness program, Live Well Watertown should be incorporated into the new Human Services Department.

Implementation Timeline

#	Recommendations	Timeline
1	Create a Watertown Human Services Director Position	January 2025
2	Establish a Watertown Health and Human Services Cabinet	January 2025
3	Improve Digital Front Door Awareness and Access to Watertown’s Health and Human Services	March 2025 – June 2026
4	Establish Physical Front Door to Watertown’s Health and Human Services (Parker Annex Building)	January – March 2025
5	Establish Deeper Relationships with CBOs for Key Programs and Services (e.g., tenancy navigation and support)	July 2025 – ongoing
6	Improve Access to Food Supports (under leadership of Human Services Director)	July 2025 – ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocate Food Pantry 	November 2025
7	Establish a Comprehensive DEI Strategy	December 2025 – June 2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a DEI Director Position 	July 2026
8	Establish a Language Access Program	November 2024
9	Develop a Health Promotion and Wellness Strategic Plan	July 2025 – June 2026

BACKGROUND

The City of Watertown, MA, engaged Health Management Associates, Inc. (HMA), to conduct a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the community's health and human service needs, determine the scope of services presently available to meet those needs, identify remaining disparities in services, and recommend resources to fill those gaps. The origin of the assessment was based on needs that members of the City Council identified, community advocates, and the City of Watertown's administration in 2023. The following sections describe the assessment's objectives, scope, and approach.

Objectives of Assessment

In requesting the assessment, the City of Watertown sought to, in the words of the Preamble to the City Charter, "foster wise management of resources that guarantee the opportunity for all residents to reach their full potential while caring for one another and promoting the health, safety, and welfare of our community."

The assessment demonstrates the City's commitment to addressing the social determinants of health (SDOH) and creating a community with equitable, effective, and easy-to-access services. The results of the assessment will offer the City the information and recommendations to achieve the following objectives:

- Ensure comprehensive, data-driven services to make Watertown a healthy and vibrant community for all residents
- Promote collaboration among and between the existing network of City departments and community providers
- Advocate so that Watertown receives the full benefit of state and federal health and human service resources

Scope of Assessment

The central purpose of this report is to assess Watertown's health and human service assets and needs, determine which services are presently available to meet those needs, and identify gaps in services. For purposes of this assessment, health and human services were defined broadly. Through engagement and analysis, key community priorities emerged with a focus on programs and services relating to housing security, food security, wellness promotion, disability supports, older adult supports, communications and language access, immigrant supports, veterans' services, public health, and physical and behavioral health. In considering these priorities, health and human services should be viewed with an intersectional lens—meaning they have overlapping qualities and characteristics that reflect how people experience their own unique needs and seek support from a multitude of public and private supports.

The scope of the assessment is broken down into the following key components.

Health and Human Services Gap Assessment. The assessment evaluates public and private health and human service organizations that serve the people who live in Watertown. To the extent possible, this assessment briefly describes the available services, identifies populations that are adequately or inadequately served, and the organizations, agencies, and departments that provide health and human services resources for Watertown.

Health and Human Services Organizational Review. This assessment reviews the operation of the various health and human services functions within the City of Watertown, including the Health Department, Wayside Youth and Family Support Network (“Wayside”), Veterans Services Disability Services the Senior Center, Live Well Watertown, and other City services. The assessment includes an examination of the present state of these efforts, the staffing and functions, and management and organizational structure. As part of this component of the assessment, the report includes a scan of best practices related to the provision, management, and evaluation of health and human services in cities and towns comparable to Watertown.

Recommendations. Based on the assessment’s review of public, nonprofit, and for-profit providers of health and human services, the assessment recommends organizational and program efficiencies and enhancements, along with a timeline for implementing the recommendations.

Approach and Timeline

To conduct the assessment, HMA facilitated extensive community outreach and data gathering efforts in 2024 to elicit a range of community perspectives regarding the strengths and needs of health and human services in Watertown. Following is a summary of these activities.

Community Engagement. This report incorporates feedback and perspectives from a variety of community engagement activities designed to include City of Watertown employees, health and human service providers, community groups, and individuals of various ages, income levels, and backgrounds. Importantly, this assessment sought to capture perspectives from historically marginalized and underserved populations, especially people who presently are not accessing health and human services. A complete list of community engagement activities is included as Appendix 1.1.

- **Interviews.** HMA interviewed more than 20 individuals who serve on the City Council, work for the City of Watertown, and lead community-based organizations (CBOs). The interviews occurred at different times over the course of the assessment process to help understand services provided in Watertown, identify perceived gaps in services, and uncover services that could be delivered more efficiently or effectively.

- **Community Forum.** On January 29, 2024, the City of Watertown, in collaboration with HMA, hosted a Community Forum for all residents at the Watertown Free Public Library. More than 50 people attended the event, which included remote involvement via video conferencing. Watertown residents and community partners shared their perspectives and concerns about the health and human services landscape in Watertown. Key themes and discussion points from the Community Forum are included as Appendix 1.2.
- **Focus Groups.** In 2024, HMA conducted eight focus groups composed of representatives from public and private health and human services organizations, CBOs, and residents from historically marginalized and underserved populations, including people who do not presently access health and human services. HMA met with groups of older adults, veterans, persons with disabilities, residents of Watertown Housing Authority buildings, and people who primarily communicate in a language other than English, including immigrants.
- **Survey.** As follow up to the Community Forum process, HMA, in partnership with the City of Watertown, publicized and distributed a survey designed to capture qualitative information about residents' awareness of and access to health and human services. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix 1.11. A summary of responses is included as Appendix 1.12.

Data Gathering and Sources. The assessment includes relevant descriptive and quantitative data about Watertown's health and human services needs from publicly available national, statewide, and local sources. Data are cited in the Endnotes. Data sources include the US Census Bureau, housing and public health indicators, news reports, information provided by Watertown health and human service organizations, and other sources. This assessment also builds on the approach and data gathered in the City of Watertown's first Community Health Needs Assessment Report issued in February 2019.

About Health Management Associates, Inc.

HMA is a leading independent national research and consulting firm. HMA's mission is to improve the health and well-being of people and communities by making healthcare and the human services that support it more accessible, equitable, and effective. HMA, including its subsidiaries, has more than 700 consultants with more than 30 locations across the country, including Boston, MA. HMA successfully tackles a variety of healthcare issues, working directly with federal, state, and local government agencies, health systems, providers, health plans, foundations, associations, and other stakeholders to effect change.



HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES GAP ASSESSMENT

Like many communities in eastern Massachusetts, Watertown is experiencing significant growth and transformation. Established in 1630, Watertown has shifted from its agricultural roots to a center of trade and commerce; more recently, the City has been evolving into a post-industrial community characterized by a blend of cultural, racial, educational, and economic diversity.¹ This evolution, outlined in the City's 2023 Comprehensive Plan, acknowledges Watertown's ongoing journey of growth and diversification, with projections indicating this trend will persist in the years ahead.

This growth, however, also brings challenges for both current and future residents. The influx of research, technical, and highly skilled jobs in Watertown and the broader Boston region attracts new residents with greater purchasing power. Yet, longstanding residents, as well as individuals and families with limited financial means, face ongoing challenges.

Housing affordability is a pressing issue in Watertown, consistent with broader trends in Massachusetts. Statewide housing prices have grown precipitously from 2018, with prices for typical homes increasing 20 percent in 2021 and 33 percent in 2022.² For renters, housing affordability has also become more difficult. Other trends in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic include changes in inflation, shortages in the healthcare workforce leading to barriers in access to healthcare, and an increase in mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) needs. Taken together, these developments affect residents' concerns for their well-being. Factors such as race, ethnicity, language barriers, and the arrival of migrants from other countries all contribute to a complex landscape of needs for health and human services.

The following sections include an overview of Watertown's demographic profile followed by topical descriptions of health and human services available in the City. To the extent possible, the report seeks to determine the array of services provided, identify populations served and barriers for people who are facing access challenges, and identify the relationships and collaborations the organizations have with the agencies and departments in the Commonwealth that provide health and human services resources for the City of Watertown.

Demographics

In the context of a health and human services gap assessment, it is important to consider Watertown's demographic profile.

Population. Watertown's total population has been relatively stable in recent years. The City had an estimated 35,256 residents in 2023, a slight decrease from 2020 when the population was estimated at 35,337 and an increase from the 2010 census estimate of 31,915.³ Though Watertown's total population has been stable, nearly 18 percent of the people lived in a different residence one year prior, reflecting a degree population mobility, including people moving in and out of Watertown.⁴

Sex. Women comprise 52.3 percent of Watertown's population compared with 51.1 percent in Massachusetts and 50.5 percent nationally.⁵

Age. Watertown has more working age adults and fewer older adults and children than Massachusetts as a whole. Working age Watertown residents (18–64 years) comprised 67.7 percent of the population versus 62.3 percent in Massachusetts. Nonetheless, the proportion of children younger than 18 years old is growing, from 14.7 percent of the population in 2005–2009⁶ to 16.7 percent in 2012–2016⁷ and 17.7 percent in 2023.⁸ The median age of Watertown residents rose slightly from 37.9 years old in 2005–2009 to 38.1 years old in 2012–2016 and to 38.2 years old in 2022. Watertown's older adult population (ages 65 and older) was 17.6 percent in 2023 compared with 18.5 percent statewide.⁹

Race and Ethnicity. Most of Watertown's population is White, non-Hispanic (70.9%) versus 68.8 percent in Massachusetts and 58.4 percent nationwide. The population of individuals who identify as Asian has increased from 7.7 percent in 2012–2016¹⁰ to 11.7 percent.¹¹ Hispanic or Latine people comprise 6.5 percent of the population, and 3.9 percent of the residents are Black or African American—rates that are lower than for the rest of Massachusetts and the nation.¹² Notably, Watertown is home to the third largest Armenian community in the United States, with an estimated 7,000 and 8,000 of people of Armenian descent.¹³

Foreign Born Residents. Slightly more than one-quarter of Watertown residents were born outside the United States, compared with 17.6 percent in Massachusetts and 13.7 percent nationwide.¹⁴

Language. Watertown has greater language diversity relative to Massachusetts and the nation. Nearly one-third (31.3%) of Watertown residents older than age 5 speak a language other than English at home versus 24.5 percent in Massachusetts and 21.7 percent nationwide.¹⁵ Watertown Public Schools reports that 37 percent of students have a first language other than English.¹⁶

Education and Internet Access. Watertown residents are more educated than people living in other parts of Massachusetts and the nation. More than 95 percent of adults ages 25 and older have a high school diploma, and two-thirds (66.4%) of Watertown adults in this age group have a bachelor's or higher degree, compared with 45.9 percent in Massachusetts and 34.3 percent nationwide.¹⁷

Most Watertown residents also have access to the internet. Nearly all households (94.3%) reported a broadband internet subscription, compared with 90.7 percent statewide and 88.3 percent nationally.¹⁸

Socioeconomic Status. Only 6.5 percent of Watertown residents meet the US Census Bureau's definition of living in poverty compared with 10.5 percent in Massachusetts and 11.5 percent nationally.¹⁹ (The Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty.)

Veterans. Approximately 1,249 military veterans live in Watertown. As a percentage of all adults ages 18 and older, this equals 4.2 percent of Watertown adults compared with 4.7 percent in Massachusetts and 6.5 percent nationally.²⁰

Migrants. Massachusetts has been grappling with the needs of an influx of migrants who have come to the state in the past two years. Many migrants have been staying in state-run emergency family shelters. As of May 2024, a total of 7,462 families were living in shelters, hotels, or motels across Massachusetts, half (3,758) of whom entered Massachusetts as migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers. A May 2024 report indicated that 42 of these families were living in Watertown.²¹ The Refugee Support Group, a working group of Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice, and the Environment, estimated that approximately 150 migrants were housed in Watertown hotel shelter placements, 95 percent of whom were from Haiti.²²

Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity is an umbrella term that encompasses multiple dimensions of challenges that people may experience, including the affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and loss of housing. Housing affordability is the number one concern among Massachusetts residents. A statewide poll conducted by UMass Amherst and WCVB-TV in May 2024 indicated that 34 percent of respondents ranked the housing crisis at the top of their list of issues they want political leaders to address in the coming year—far surpassing concerns about immigration, transportation, crime, taxes, and healthcare.²³



Watertown, like much of the Boston metro area, has experienced explosive growth in home prices and rents. Metro Boston is one of the five most expensive rental markets in the nation.²⁴ An April 2024 report indicated that area rents had climbed 5.8 percent from 2022 to 2023, while wages declined by 1 percent over the same period.²⁵ An analysis by the real estate firm Zillow reported that renters from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities are more likely to be rent-burdened than White households. In metro Boston, BIPOC households spent about 41 percent of their income on rent in 2022, whereas White households expended 33.5 percent, according to the report. The rental burden gap in the region is wider than the national average, which is 34 percent for BIPOC households and 29 percent for White households.

A history of exclusionary zoning practices and increasingly high construction costs have contributed to housing shortages across Massachusetts. The City of Watertown, under the leadership the Department of Community Development and Planning in collaboration with the City Council, has taken steps to address the housing crisis, including approval of an updated Housing Plan in 2021 to encourage new housing construction;²⁶ creation of the Watertown Affordable Housing Trust, which began meeting in 2022; and adoption of a linkage fee for affordable housing in 2023.²⁷ Watertown also mandates that 12.5 percent of housing units in new developments of six to 19 units must be set aside as affordable living; 15 percent of developments with 20 units or more must comply with this standard.²⁸

In addition, the City's Watertown Square Area Plan,²⁹ which the City Council and Planning Board endorsed in July 2024, includes zoning to comply with the MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority) Communities Act. That legislation which requires that 175 MBTA communities in Massachusetts have at least one zoning district that allows multi-family housing within half a mile of a transit station. The City of Watertown also works with developers to develop affordable housing.

In addition to Watertown’s efforts to increase the supply of market rate and affordable housing, other local initiatives address housing insecurity.

- **Watertown Housing Authority.** The Watertown Housing Authority (WHA) owns or manages six public housing facilities composed of 235 units for families and veterans and 326 units for aging adults and people with disabilities who meet income eligibility guidelines. WHA also manages the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program for more than 200 families and individuals. The WHA has online and in-person information to help renters and landlords participate in programs.
- **Social Services Resource Specialist Program.** Watertown’s Social Services Resource Specialist (SSRS) program, which serves people ages 18–59, is funded by the City of Watertown and located at the Wayside Multi-Service Center on North Beacon Street. SSRS staff assist and refer people to health and human services available in Watertown, including those for individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity. SSRS staff connect residents to local and state applications and grant funding sources for rental assistance, such as the Helen Robinson Wright Fund¹ and the Marshall Home Fund.² SSRS staff also help clients apply for the state’s Residential Aid for Families in Transition program, which provides short-term emergency funding to help with eviction, foreclosure, loss of utilities, and other housing issues.

In addition, SSRS specialists work with people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and seeking to apply for public housing and other affordable living programs. They also connect people with emergency housing such as shelters. The SSRS program served 375 households in 2023, of which 157 had a housing need.³⁰ Many SSRS clients request multiple types of support such as housing, grocery, and financial assistance. Total SSRS staffing increased from 40 to 80 hours per month beginning April 2024 through December 2026 using \$318,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.³¹

- **Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment Housing Services.** Watertown also partners with Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment Housing Services, Inc. (CNAHS) to provide foreclosure prevention counseling to Watertown residents.

¹ The Helen Robinson Wright (HRW) Fund provides modest financial assistance to individuals and families experiencing short-term financial hardships. The foundation assists with food purchases, housing expenses, utility costs, medical expenses, childcare, and other essential needs. The Fund also supports a variety of educational, social service, and social justice programs that benefit Watertown residents.

² The Marshall Home Fund is a community-based philanthropic foundation dedicated to serving Watertown residents ages 55 and older and is dedicated to preserving the social, physical, and emotional well-being of older adults in Watertown, awarding grants to local social service agencies and other nonprofit organizations.

Opportunities

Though the City of Watertown and CBOs continue to take steps to increase the supply of market rate and affordable housing units and to help Watertown residents and families cope with the impacts of housing insecurity, residents and community partners that participated in the assessment expressed interest in how Watertown can further address these challenges.

- **Housing Security Policy and Leadership.** The City of Watertown has housing and community development leadership within its Planning Department. CBO partners, however, expressed interest in establishing a leadership position or department that would be responsible for championing, coordinating, and advancing services for Watertown residents and addressing the impacts of housing insecurity, specifically preventing and mitigating loss of housing and improving affordability. Community partners noted an ongoing need to better understand the supports that are available and how to access them, as well as which supports could be added or enhanced to support people on the cusp of qualifying for assistance. For example, participants in the January 2024 Community Forum expressed interest in understanding how to: expedite the process for accessing rental support, incentivize landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers, address the needs of retirees and older adults, and support individuals and families who are ineligible for WHA support but cannot afford their own housing. Community partners also identified the need for leadership that can unlock additional opportunities to use grants and philanthropy in support of housing services and potentially fund rental assistance and direct cash payments.
- **Tenancy Support Needs and Services.** As part of broader case management activities, staff within Wayside and Watertown’s Senior Services department help and refer individuals who request tenancy support services to state and local resources. CBO leaders, however, expressed a need for Watertown to establish explicit partnerships with their organizations to provide tenancy navigation and support services, including landlord-tenant counseling and mediation, legal support, and financial aid to support cost-burdened individuals and families at risk of eviction. For new renters, including young adults and newly arrived immigrants, lack of work history can be a barrier, and participants voiced support for a mechanism to provide funding or collateral for new renters.

**HOUSING AUTHORITY
RESIDENTS**
Focus Group Participant

“[I] feel that modern social media updates aren’t as relevant to me. I’m accustomed to how things were when I was growing up and feel that my input may not align with current preferences.”

- **Data Collection and Data-Driven Decision Making.** A cross-cutting need identified was development of a comprehensive strategy and approach to data collection on housing security. An enhanced and coordinated effort to collect more granular data about individuals and families at risk of eviction (including age, income, family size, etc.), those requesting assistance through multiple channels (i.e., Wayside, WHA, Senior Services, 311, Watertown Public Schools, etc.) and people experiencing homelessness could help the City determine the type and magnitude of support Watertown needs and guide future decision making and budget investments. Several participants also expressed an interest in understanding the need for accessible housing among older adults.
- **Shelter Services.** People in Watertown typically travel elsewhere if they need to find an emergency homeless shelter. Nearby communities with emergency shelters include Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. With the influx of migrant families seeking shelter, a hotel in Watertown was designed to serve as a family shelter.

Spotlight: City of Somerville Office of Housing Stability

The City of Somerville's Office of Housing Stability (OHS), modeled in part on a similar agency in Boston, seeks to prevent the involuntary displacement of people who are facing eviction or otherwise at risk of losing their housing, to rehouse those without stable housing or who need to relocate, and to support the enactment of policies and the creation of programs that avert displacement and enhance tenants' rights. OHS offers direct services, including: help accessing financial assistance for rent, mortgage arrears, and start-up rental costs; case management to stabilize tenancies; housing search services such as applications for affordable housing and Section 8 vouchers; support accessing emergency shelter; advocacy and referrals for legal services and tenant organizing; outreach and education about tenant rights; advice, information, and workshops for Somerville tenants, landlords, and advocates; and advocacy of anti-displacement policies. The office is led by a director and has 12 staff positions, including multilingual staff, who conduct intake, manage cases, support rental assistance advocacy, and develop programs and communication.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a pressing need for some Watertown residents and families. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Watertown's food pantries reported a significant increase in usage. "When I first began here, we were doing 40 families a week," reported Kathy Cunningham, coordinator for the Watertown Food Pantry, as part of a series reported by the *Watertown News* and Watertown Cable Access Television. "And then it graduated up to probably 70 families, and then, once the pandemic hit, we were running approximately 200 families every single day that we were open.... Now we're averaging between 140, 160 each week."³²

The spike in use of the Watertown Food Pantry aligns with broader trends. In 2019, 8.2 percent of Massachusetts residents experienced food insecurity. This number jumped in 2020 to an estimated 12.1 percent of residents.³³ Although post-pandemic needs related to food insecurity have eased, an ongoing need remains in Watertown to help residents who are experiencing food insecurity with accessing food and nutrition assistance programs.

Approximately 9 percent of Watertown residents use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits³⁴ (i.e., food stamps). The "SNAP Gap" refers to the number of individuals and families who are likely eligible for SNAP but not receiving benefits. According to a 2021 report, 2,470 of Watertown residents are likely eligible for SNAP. Of those eligible, 1,442 are not enrolled, resulting in a SNAP Gap of 58 percent.³⁵ To close the chasm, the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance and MassHealth collaborated to enable Medicaid program applicants to simultaneously apply for SNAP benefits beginning in 2022.

Watertown has a variety of food assistance programs and services, with varying levels of accessibility:

- **Watertown Food Pantry.** The Department of Senior Services operates the pantry, located at the United Methodist Church at 80 Mount Auburn Street and open Tuesdays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. It provides non-perishable goods and fresh produce, meat, and poultry to families in need. It also, provides toiletries and other household goods through partnerships with local organizations. This service is based on need, with no income eligibility guidelines, allowing families and seniors from Watertown and surrounding areas to access assistance freely. The food pantry serves approximately 150 families each week and is run by a part-time coordinator and dedicated volunteers. It maintains partnerships with the Greater Boston Food Bank and several other food organizations to ensure a steady supply of resources. The Watertown Food Pantry will be relocated to the Parker Annex at 124 Watertown Street to ensure greater accessibility, additional hours of operation, and expanded programming, such as nutrition education, cooking classes, and workshops. The Watertown Food Pantry delivers to homebound seniors.

- **Watertown Catholic Collaborative Food Pantry.** The Catholic Collaborative operates a food pantry in the basement of Sacred Heart Church (770 Mt. Auburn Street) in East Watertown on Thursdays from 10:00 am to 11:45 am. It is open to anyone in need and may be accessed once a week.
- **Watertown Social Services Resource Specialists.** Watertown's SSRS clinicians assist and refer residents with health-related needs, including food insecurity, to resources available in Watertown. In 2023, the SSRS program served 183 residents with food security needs.³⁶
- **Watertown Community Fridge.** The Watertown Community Fridge is a shared resource, collectively maintained by and for the community. This resource is located at Belmont-Watertown United Methodist Church (80 Mt. Auburn Street), which also hosts the Watertown Food Pantry.
- **Watertown Public Schools.** Watertown Public Schools has two community outreach counselors dedicated to helping students and families access essential resources, such as SNAP benefits, housing assistance, medical referrals, and other supports. In recent years, schools have observed a significant increase in demand for services. In 2022, they helped approximately 150 families, whereas in 2023, they assisted an estimated 180 families, including those seeking assistance for specific issues as well as people requiring ongoing support.³⁷
- **Watertown Housing Authority.** With grant funding from the Watertown Community Foundation, WHA started a grocery delivery program in 2022 through which public housing residents can order items once a month from a local grocery store. The program is open to residents at or below 30 percent of area median income. The WHA has also teamed up with the Farmers Market to deliver fresh produce.
- **SNAP.** SNAP is primarily an anti-hunger program in the United States. It provides cash assistance to low-income families to buy nutritious foods.
- **Massachusetts Health Incentives Program.** The Department of Transitional Assistance operates the Massachusetts Health Incentives Program (HIP), which deposits money back into households' electronic benefits transfer (EBT) accounts if they spend SNAP on HIP-eligible produce at farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. The Watertown Farmers' Market, described below, has three HIP-certified farm vendors.
- **Meals on Wheels.** Meals on Wheels is a federally funded home-delivered meals program that Springwell offers to aging homebound Watertown residents and people recently discharged from hospitals who find it difficult to prepare meals. A hot meal is delivered at lunchtime, Monday through Friday. Frozen

meals for weekends and accommodations for special diet requirements are available.

- **Watertown Farmers Market.** Watertown’s seasonal Farmers Market provides access to farm fresh and specialty foods, supports local agriculture and businesses, addresses food insecurity, builds community, and promotes healthy and sustainable living. It is located in Saltonstall Park every Wednesday, 2:30–6:30 pm, from mid-June through October. The Watertown Farmers’ Market accepts SNAP, HIP, and Farmers’ Market Coupons, including Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs. Residents may receive a dollar-to-dollar SNAP match, up to \$15 a week, and HIP benefits range from \$40 to \$80 a month, depending on family size.
- **Eat Well.** Further described below, Eat Well is Live Well Watertown’s longest-running program that teaches people how to prepare a variety of nutritious dishes featuring fresh local ingredients.

Opportunities

Though Watertown and local organizations offer variety of services to help residents access food, community partners and people living in Watertown who participated in the assessment expressed concerns about residents’ ability to satisfy their nutritional needs and the health impacts of the stress resulting from food insecurity. Interviewees and focus group participants identified several opportunities to improve Watertown’s food security infrastructure.

- **Food Security Leadership.** Partners from CBOs noted that, like housing security issues, no designated leadership position is responsible for advancing citywide strategies, coordinating services, and championing policies that address food insecurity for all Watertown residents. Such a role could focus on and oversee strategy development, food security programming, food security operations, and coordinating with community partners. The person in this role could also be responsible for collecting additional program and service data (i.e., usage, demographics, need) to leverage more funding and strategize on how to most efficiently use funds to improve community health outcomes.
- **Watertown Food Insecurity Working Group.** An idea that surfaced during focus groups was the formation of a food insecurity working group to collaborate and coordinate resources. For example, Cambridge operates a Food and Fitness Policy Council (FFPC) that promotes health by improving all residents’ access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods and to physical activity. In 2018, the FFPC began a three-year initiative to assess the Cambridge food system resulting in a Cambridge Food Action Plan. The 25-person FFPC includes representatives from the City’s public health, human services, community development, and school departments; CBOs; and residents.³⁸



COMMUNITY FORUM FEEDBACK

Several participants expressed that the food support programs run through the City of Watertown’s Community Wellness Program are highly favorable and valuable to the community, particularly the Farmer’s Market.

Food Pantry Access and Availability. Several participants pointed out limited access times to the Watertown Food Pantry and expressed a desire for expanded hours, particularly once it moves to a new location at the Parker Annex. Another participant said that the Watertown and Sacred Heart food pantries struggle to keep shelves stocked, and there are opportunities to improve demographic data collection, which would further leverage opportunities for grant funding.

- **Coordination and Referral from Healthcare Providers.** Newly implemented state and national requirements have led to increased health-related social needs screenings. Healthcare providers are seeking to identify patients experiencing food insecurity and ensure they are referred to appropriate resources to address the need. Opportunities are increasing for healthcare providers, the City of Watertown, and local CBOs to formalize partnerships and referral pathways to ensure individuals who screen positive for food insecurity are matched with appropriate resources.
- **Winter Farmers' Market.** Members of the community expressed interest in extending the Farmers' Market throughout the year, potentially including indoor space for a winter market. More than 220 summer/fall farmers markets operated in Massachusetts in 2023, with 49 winter markets in nearby Brighton, Cambridge, Somerville, Lexington, and Boston. Launching a winter Farmers Market in Watertown would require identifying an appropriate location and funding to support its operation. Grant funding could become available to support this initiative. For example, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources awarded more than \$205,000 in March 2024 to help farmers markets grow and expand their outreach to consumers.³⁹
- **Farmers' Market—Awareness and Public Outreach of SNAP and HIP Benefits.** Participants indicated that opportunities are available to elevate awareness about the ability to use SNAP and related matching funds and promote the Healthy Incentives Program at the Watertown Farmers' Market.

Wellness Promotion

Disease prevention is a vital part of public health initiatives designed to lessen the impact of chronic illnesses and enhance overall well-being. According to the World Health Organization, "Wellness is not just the absence of disease; it is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Public health must address this holistic perspective to create environments where everyone can thrive."⁴⁰ Health and wellness promotion includes a variety of evidence-based strategies and interventions that empower individuals to embrace healthy behaviors and make positive lifestyle changes.

Over the past decade, Watertown has embraced this holistic perspective by investing in and growing its wellness resources and programming through grants as well as private and public funding that contributes to the overall strategy for improved health outcomes for its residents. During focus group interviews, Watertown residents indicated an appreciation and need for wellness promotion within the community. One resident stated, “The community wellness programs provide not only helpful content, whether that’s cooking programs or walking programs, but also a connection to our Watertown neighbors.”⁴¹

Live Well Watertown. Live Well Watertown (LWW) is the community’s healthy community initiative, which launched in 2014 through a community health grant from Mount Auburn Hospital to support the establishment of an FFPC. In 2017, the City created a full-time community wellness program manager housed in the Health Department, to sustain and grow new wellness programs and initiatives. LWW offers free educational programs and resources to residents of all ages, many in collaboration with LWW Coalition members. In 2024, Watertown increased the number of staff resources dedicated to LWW to include a full-time coordinator with the goal of supporting more resident access to food assistance programs and wellness programming. The new coordinator position will support the LWW program manager. LWW also includes a Farmers Market and Program Coordinator and a Farmers Market assistant/SNAP coordinator—both part-time positions. Watertown offers programming, and resources within LWW, Watertown Cares Network, and W2B2 Youth Wellness Collaborative. Watertown has continuously expanded its programming to now offer more than 50 free wellness programs annually.⁴² LWW supports the community in the following domains:

- **Watertown Farmers Market.** As noted above, Watertown operates a seasonal Farmers’ Market, which serves over 800 visitors each week during peak season (20-weeks).⁴³ The Farmers’ Market offers a host site for musicians, artists, City and community agencies, specialty programs, and placemaking. LWW is exploring opportunities to offer additional farmers markets off season.
- **Food Assistance Programs.** LWW programming offers application assistance for residents who qualify for the food assistance programs referenced above, which may be used to purchase food sold at the Farmers’ Market. These programs can offer \$40 to \$80 in funds a month depending on the family size to support food security. To date, the Farmers Market Food assistance programs benefit approximately 100–200 families throughout the 20-week season.⁴⁴ In addition, LWW provides surplus food to the City Food Pantry and Community Fridge, reaching approximately 30–50 families per month. LWW serves an average of 50–100 people each month, providing free food through the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and SNAP-CSA.⁴⁵
- **Eat Well Watertown.** Eat Well Watertown is Live Well’s longest-running program, offering classes throughout the year for nutrition education,

multicultural eating, cooking programs, and indoor gardening. Eat Well provides all recipes on the town website, and hosts events to encourage community involvement throughout the year.

- **Active Living.** Active Living supports community programming to allow residents to partake in exercise and social outings focused on wellness. The program offers Watertown Walks, which allows residents to connect and explore the community. Active Living offers the Walk with a Doc program, where residents can connect with a healthcare professional and other ad hoc programming to support healthy well-being.
- **Social and Emotional Well-Being.** LWW offers programming throughout the year tailored toward stress reduction, social support, and resilience.
- **Youth Wellness Promotion.** Watertown offers youth wellness promotion in collaboration with the W2B2 Youth Wellness Collaborative and Wayside Youth and Family Support Network.
- **W2B2 Youth Wellness Collaborative.** In 2024, Watertown began participating in this statewide grant through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) to offer an afterschool diversion group at the Watertown High School, which develops and facilitates staff trainings, social norming campaigns, youth education, and caregiver education related to three themes: trusted adults, misperception of substance use, and belonging. W2B2 is facilitated by the Watertown Youth Coalition and the Peer Leadership Club.
- **Wayside Wellness.** In 2023, Wayside Youth and Family Support Network began offering a free six-week program, Wayside Wellness, to eighth graders in Watertown Public School. The school program focuses on supporting self-identity and making positive choices in the face of stress and peer pressure. Students learn how to ask for help, resolve conflicts in interpersonal relationships, apply positive coping strategies to real-life scenarios, and how to avoid risk-taking behaviors such as substance use. This program is funded through BSAS.

Watertown Cares Network. The Watertown Cares Network began as a City-led task force in 2015 in response to the opioid epidemic's impact on the town. The group shares information and resources and works to reduce the stigma of SUD, encourage people to seek support, and collaborate on annual educational events. The network hosts an annual event during National Recovery Month and facilitates network meetings every other month, creating an inclusive space where everyone is welcome to share experiences, seek guidance, and build connections in the community. Members include physicians, treatment providers, social service agencies, parents, individuals in recovery, community members, clergy, the Watertown Health Department, Watertown Public Schools, Watertown Police Department, Watertown Fire Department, Watertown Recreation Department, and elected officials.

Opportunities

During interviews and focus groups, Watertown officials and residents identified opportunities to further advance wellness promotion initiatives.

- **Wellness Awareness.** Several participants indicated opportunities to increase awareness of the programming and resources offered through LWW. To date, LWW has a robust presence on Watertown's website, which includes program details and a calendar of events. To increase community awareness, participants discussed how the City of Watertown can increase regular social media updates, advertise in high-traffic areas, and collaborate with local organizations to improve awareness of new programs, success stories, and upcoming events via newsletters and social media channels. Consistent communication can help maintain interest and engagement over time. As noted below, the City of Watertown created a full-time Community Engagement Specialist position in 2023, and feedback has been positive about recent efforts to further promote Watertown programming and activities.
- **Coordination of Local Health Promotion Efforts.** Participants expressed the need for a more coordinated effort for health promotion and prevention with the local Health Department and the City of Watertown. CBO representatives voiced concern about the duplication of resources within the public and private community health space. The new staffing resources available to LWW offer an opportunity for the City and the Public Health Department to develop a joint strategic plan, which would guide public and private entities in assigning resources and applying for grants that support prevention efforts within the community.
- **SUD and Mental Illness Prevention.** Several participants emphasized the importance and need for a more elevated approach to preventing SUD and mental illness within the community. For example, Natick 180 is a CBO established to support youth and families with SUD, educational, prevention, and recovery resources.

Spotlight: Natick Substance Use Prevention and Outreach Office (Natick 180)

The town of Natick, MA, launched a Substance Use Prevention and Outreach Office called Natick 180, which serves as the town's principal community-based coalition for inclusive and culturally responsive addiction education, prevention, and recovery. Natick 180 provides education and outreach to the community through events, programs, speaker series, workshops, and a website (www.natick180.org), social media, printed materials, youth marketing campaigns, and distribution of evidence-based curriculum. Natick 180 also provides referrals to local treatment agencies and recovery support organizations, provides free Narcan and opioid overdose prevention training, and collaborates with local community organizations. The office reports to the town's Director of Public Health and Board of Health and has three full-time staff member. Two of the positions have historically been funded through a time-limited Federal Drug-Free Communities Grant. Natick is investigating funding the positions through opioid settlement funds, which must be spent specifically on SUD treatment and prevention.



Disability Supports

Disability supports within the City of Watertown are essential to ensuring that people with disabilities receive the help they need. The commitment to including people with disabilities at the local level reflects a broader dedication to human dignity, equality, and opportunity for all.⁴⁶

As Watertown assesses its health and human services programs, maintaining a focus on disability inclusion will be crucial to address the needs of people with disabilities. In 2022, an estimated 11.6 percent of Watertown residents were living with disabilities, representing a notable portion of the population compared with the broader context of Massachusetts. Focus group participants indicated that many residents depend on state agencies and nonprofit organizations for support. Key organizations cited included MassAbility (formerly the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission), the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and independent living programs. Other areas resources noted include the Perkins School for the Blind, DEAF Inc., United Cerebral Palsy, and Alzheimer's Association. The City of Watertown has established two important resources for people with disabilities, including:

- **Commission on Disability:** Established in 1994, the Watertown Commission on Disability assists City officials in ensuring compliance with state and federal laws pertaining to people with disabilities. With nine members appointed by the City Manager, the commission meets monthly, with sessions broadcast for resident viewing. It provides closed captioning for all City Council meetings and is a resource for residents seeking information, referrals, and guidance on disability-related assistance. In addition, the Commission investigates local concerns that residents with disabilities and their families experience, working to address and resolve these issues.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator:** The City of Watertown employs a full-time equivalent (FTE) staff member who serves as both the Veterans Service Coordinator and the ADA Coordinator. In this dual role, the ADA Coordinator serves as a liaison between residents and the City of Watertown, ensuring compliance with the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Residents can collaborate with the ADA Coordinator to request reasonable accommodations, arrange communication access, and secure other accessibility-related services for municipal events and meetings. At present, Watertown's ADA Coordinator collaborates with the Massachusetts Office of Disability on a formal document outlining the process for reasonable accommodation requests. The City of Watertown recently released a formal bid for an organization to update the City's ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan, which will give the City actionable information to improve services for residents with disabilities.

Opportunities

During participant interviews, residents identified opportunities to advance disability supports.

- **Knowledge of Disability Supports.** Several participants expressed concerns about the challenges residents face in connecting with the disability supports that the City of Watertown offers. They highlighted barriers such as limited internet access and uncertainty regarding the agency to contact for assistance, which can impede individuals from using available services effectively. In addition to enhancing resident awareness, participants expressed a need for public and private supports to gain a deeper understanding of referral processes and available resources. This comprehensive approach is essential to ensuring that both residents and service providers are well-informed and capable of navigating the support system efficiently to ultimately improve access and support for people with disabilities.
- **Awareness of Accommodation Needs.** Participants identified an opportunity to improve awareness of disability-related services that are available at community events and social services. Disability accommodation is crucial in ensuring that social services and community events are inclusive and accessible to everyone. Proper accommodations empower people with disabilities to participate fully and enhance their overall quality of life. Accessible social services, such as tailored support and adaptive technologies, allow individuals to navigate and benefit from essential services without barriers. Similarly, community events that are designed with inclusivity in mind—such as venues with ramps, sign language interpreters, and accessible formats—promote equal participation and foster a sense of belonging for everyone in the community. Prioritizing awareness and delivery of disability accommodations will allow the City of Watertown to create a more equitable environment where all people can engage, contribute, and thrive.
- **Transportation Challenges.** Transportation services for residents with physical disabilities are an area of concern. Participants noted several challenges, including insufficient knowledge of available transportation options, difficulties accessing these services, and confusion about who to contact for assistance. Addressing these transportation barriers can improve mobility and ensure equitable access to services for people with disabilities.

FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

One participant of the Watertown Commission on Disability focus group mentioned that while they now know where to go for help, it took years to build this knowledge. They noted that someone who recently acquired a disability, or newcomers to town, likely wouldn't know where to seek assistance.

- **Increased Disability Supports.** During participant interviews, it was suggested that the role of the ADA Coordinator and staff be increased to FTE as means of supporting the Commission on Disabilities. This expanded position could enhance awareness of available services, provide training for City staff, and offer increased support for residents with disabilities. By centralizing these responsibilities, the dedicated role could ensure a cohesive and effective approach to disability services, improving overall service delivery and support for the community.

Older Adult Supports

The support systems available to older adults in the City of Watertown are essential to fostering a more inclusive and dynamic community. With nearly 90 percent of older adults preferring to age in place, ensuring access to healthcare, social programs, and transportation is critical for older adults who want to maintain their independence and actively participate in community life.⁴⁷ In 2023, residents ages 65 and older comprised 17.6 percent of Watertown’s population.⁴⁸ Focusing on the physical, emotional, and social needs of older residents improves their quality of life, reduces isolation, and strengthens community cohesion. Supports for older adults demonstrate Watertown’s commitment to evolving with the needs of its residents and ensuring that everyone, regardless of age, can thrive. These supports also provide necessary relief and resources to families and caregivers, thereby reinforcing a compassionate and resilient community for all.

Watertown’s Department of Senior Services is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for residents ages 60 and older. It is committed to fostering a supportive and vibrant community for Watertown seniors, ensuring they receive the care, assistance, and social engagement they deserve to age in place and thrive in the community throughout their later years. Examples include:

- **Watertown Senior Center.** Located at 31 Marshall Street, the Watertown Senior Center is the central hub for all senior services. The center offers a variety of outreach programs designed to connect older adults with essential services they might not otherwise access. Transportation is a key component, with the department providing safe and independent transportation for medical appointments and Senior Shuttle Bus Services for grocery shopping and social outings, including trips to restaurants, museums, and community events. The Senior Center also hosts monthly meals, conducts health screenings through community partnerships, offers fitness classes, and provides artistic, cultural, and educational activities. The City of Watertown is interested in finding a larger Senior Center location that could provide more programming and services for aging adults and is determining next steps.
- **Council on Aging.** The Department of Senior Services includes the Council on Aging, which plays a vital role in identifying, coordinating, and implementing

programs that meet the needs and interests of Watertown residents ages 60 and older. This proactive approach ensures that the services provided are relevant and beneficial to the community. The Council on Aging Board has nine resident members, five of whom are at least 60 years old, appointed by the City Manager.

- **Watertown Food Pantry.** The Food Pantry is described in the section on Food Insecurity.
- **Case Management and Support Services.** Watertown's Senior Case Manager works at the Senior Center and in the community, providing home visits as needed. The Senior Case Manager advocates for seniors, assisting with applications for support programs such as SNAP, utility assistance, and housing support. The Senior Case Manager is a certified SHINE Counselor and offers Medicare and MassHealth assistances, provides education on prescription drug coverage, and helps seniors navigate medical transportation options, ensuring that they can easily schedule rides through programs like GoGo Grandparent.
- **Communication and Community Engagement.** The Department of Senior Services publishes a monthly newsletter that details upcoming trips, movies, activities, and concerts. This newsletter is distributed in various locations throughout the City, including City Hall, the Senior Center, public libraries, banks, places of worship, malls, and senior housing complexes, ensuring that all seniors have access to the information they need to stay engaged. The department has an active Facebook following.
- **Outreach Programming.** To ensure that all aging adults in Watertown have access to services, the Department of Senior Services conducts outreach programming throughout the City. These activities include initiatives at local housing authorities, senior apartment complexes, and public events, providing seniors with opportunities to engage with their community and access essential resources. Examples include workshops on social services, mental health, self-care, financial education, and recreational activities like the senior birthday and holiday parties and Health and Wellness Fair.
- **Friends of the Council on Aging.** The Director of Senior Services advises the Friends of the Council on Aging, a nonprofit organization that provides fundraising and volunteer support for Council on Aging activities and services. This partnership plays a crucial role in subsidizing program fees, thereby making a positive impact on seniors in need.

- **Partnerships.** The Department of Senior Services has several community partnerships that support the work of the department, such as monthly meetings with the Chiefs of the Watertown Police and Fire Departments, monthly meetings with Massachusetts State Rep. Steven Owens, and ongoing collaborations with the Health Department, Public Library, Watertown Community Foundation, Marshall Home Fund, and Rotary Club.

Opportunities

Residents praised Watertown’s Senior Center for its comprehensive support and resources but identified additional needs through the participant engagement process, including:

- **Transportation Challenges.** Participants often spoke about the transportation challenges facing aging adults, noting the impact on their independence and quality of life. Many seniors said they struggle to find reliable and affordable transportation, which can make it difficult for them to schedule medical appointments, participate in social activities, and manage daily errands. Technology also was identified as a significant barrier to accessing transportation. Many older adults find it challenging to navigate digital platforms or use ride-sharing apps, which can complicate their ability to arrange and use transportation services effectively. Participants recommended exploring transportation models other towns use to offer reliable and subsidized services. They suggested that adopting similar approaches could provide valuable insights and enhance local transportation options for older adults.
- **Supports for Adults Ages 55–65.** Many participants discussed the gaps in services and programs for adults ages 55 to 65. They noted that though resources often are available for people who are ages 65 and older, individuals in this younger age bracket may have difficulty accessing the support and opportunities they need. One participant suggested expanding the age requirement for SSRS to include people younger than 65 years old to help bridge these service gaps and provide more comprehensive support.

FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

All participants of the Older Adults focus group noted that they utilize the Senior Center as their main point of entry to access services and benefits. Participants also shared examples of the support they have received from the Senior Center, including assistance with moving to Massachusetts, help with health insurance, and access to community activities.

- **Awareness of Senior Center and Services.** Participants noted that some residents are unaware of the range of services that the Senior Center offers. They recommended increasing outreach efforts to spread awareness by engaging directly with the community. They also suggested connecting with City offices, private businesses, and public organizations to ensure proper referrals and improve the Senior Center's visibility.
- **Referral System for Older Adults.** Participants emphasized opportunities for public and private organizations to improve referrals for the older adult population, particularly with respect to knowing where to direct individuals and ensuring a smooth transition to support services. Participants emphasized the need for a more streamlined and coordinated approach to directing individuals, with a focus on providing a warm handoff to ensure that older adults receive the appropriate health and human services they need. Improving communication and collaboration among service providers can help bridge this gap and enhance the overall support system for aging adults.



Communications and Language Access

With nearly one-third of Watertown's residents older than five years of age speaking a language other than English at home, providing multilingual resources and services is essential to bridging communications barriers in the community and ensuring that all residents can effectively access and understand public health information.⁴⁹ Furthermore, communications should be disseminated in formats that are accessible to people with disabilities, including large print, Braille, and digital aids, such as screen readers. By addressing these needs, the community can ensure that critical health messages reach all residents, fostering greater inclusivity and improving overall health outcomes. The City of Watertown has established a variety of resources to enhance communication and language access, including:

- **Communications Team.** Watertown has a dedicated team that is actively working to enhance the information and resources available to all residents to better inform people of the health and human services provided. Watertown's Communications Team includes a full-time Community Engagement Specialist—a role that was created in 2023 to satisfy a need identified in the recent update to the City charter. This position involves building relationships with community members and key partners to effectively understand and address their needs and improve service delivery. The City of Watertown is actively researching language access services to expand communication and better reach a range of residents.
- **311 Service Center.** Watertown launched the 311 Service Center in June 2024, with the support of a full-time Constituent Services Director and one additional staff member. This center serves as a resource for nonemergency inquiries, allowing residents to report issues and request information about town services. Residents can access 311 by phone or through an online request. The 311 Service Center leverages data to tackle key concerns, enhances internal technologies such as See-Click-Fix and OpenGOV for consistent citywide processes, and provides accurate data to department leadership to ensure accountability and transparency.
- **Digital Media.** The City of Watertown uses social media to share news, resources, and upcoming events with its residents, with the support of a full-time digital media manager.

Opportunities

As part of the community engagement process, residents and partners from CBOs praised the City of Watertown's recent efforts to improve communications through enhanced digital media outreach as well as new staff to deepen community engagement. The following opportunities for further improvement were noted.

- **Health and Human Services Digital Front Door.** Residents and City staff indicated that Watertown's website could be modified to improve user experience and enhance its visibility and usability. Watertown's website does not have a single resource page dedicated to health and human services. Users can navigate to the City department or resource page that they believe best meets their needs and, if necessary, contact the relevant staff person for assistance. For example, under the Residents menu on the Watertown website, users will find webpages for Food Resources, Health Care, the Watertown Housing Authority, and Watertown Senior Services, among others. It is somewhat unclear though, how an individual or a family with one or more needs can learn about and quickly access available health and human services, in particular some of the case management and referral supports offered by Wayside SSRS clinicians, Senior Services, the ADA Coordinator, Veterans Services Officer, or Watertown Public Schools. Watertown's website can make health and human services more prominent, centralized, and easier to navigate.
- **Community Calendar.** Many participants requested consolidated information for health and human services, emphasizing the need for easy access to all meetings, events, and other community activities. They highlighted the importance of having a central source of information that provides clear, comprehensive details about available services and upcoming opportunities, making it easier for residents to stay informed and engaged. A community calendar could be hosted on a City website and displayed on a screen in one or prominent locations such as the library, Senior Center, and City Hall.
- **Improving Non-Digital Communication.** Older residents in Watertown said they experience challenges when seeking to learn about events. They find the current communication modalities difficult to navigate and are unsure where to look. Participants recommended using accessible formats like large print and audio, and simplified language that avoids unfamiliar jargon to effectively communicate with the older adult population. They suggested continuing to distribute information through trusted channels such as the Senior Center, but also expanding distribution to other organizations and locations in the community. Participants discussed the benefits of in-person consultations.

- **Language Access Services.** Participants identified opportunities to improve access to health and human services, developing a comprehensive language access plan (LAP) and securing funding for translation services. Some participants were unaware that the City of Watertown’s website includes a “button” that enables people to view content in languages other than English. They indicated that access to website information and resources in multiple languages is essential for residents who primarily speak other languages and want to connect with available services. Creating an LAP involves recognizing the most common languages in the community, establishing effective translation and interpretation processes, and integrating these services into public health and human services. Securing funding for these translation services would ensure consistent and high-quality support, allowing all residents to access and benefit from the City’s services, regardless of their primary language. As noted earlier, the City of Watertown is working to secure a translation service.

Spotlight: Medford Multilingual Resource Line

The City of Medford’s Office of Prevention and Outreach established the Medford Multilingual Resource Line to answer questions, provide support, and connect people with health and human services. Anyone can call 781-475-5644 and select a preferred language from the menu to leave a voicemail. Trained social work, mental health, and public health professionals will return calls or correspond via email to ensure that residents receive answers to questions and are connected with support services in their native language through the use of interpreters. Staff assist with connections to services or resources such as SNAP and other food access resources, mental health services and supports, housing resources, educational supports, and more. The Resource Line is funded through time-limited grants, and the City of Medford is seeking new funding sources to support ongoing operation of the service.



Migrant Supports

People around the world make the difficult decision to leave their homelands in search of safety and better lives elsewhere. While the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily shut down the US-Mexico border and slowed migration globally, the number of migrant encounters at the US-Mexico border surged after 2020. Migrant encounters at the border hit record highs in late 2023 and early 2024.⁵⁰

As of May 2024, a total of 7,462 families are living in Massachusetts shelters, hotels, or motels. More than half of these families (3,758) arrived in the state as migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers.⁵¹ Approximately 150 migrants are living in shelters in Watertown, with approximately 95 percent of these individuals coming from Haiti, with others from the Dominican Republic and Mexico.⁵² Beginning in the summer of 2024, migrant encounters significantly declined nationwide because of executive actions by President Biden to severely restrict asylum claims.⁵³ Notably, Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healy implemented a five-day limit in August 2024 for some families who do not meet priority eligibility requirements.⁵⁴

The following organizations work to support the needs of immigrants living in Watertown:

- **Watertown Refugee Support Group.** The Watertown Citizens Refugee Support Group was established in 2015 to address the Syrian Refugee Crisis and has since expanded its mission to assist refugees from around the globe. The organization is involved in a range of activities, including vigils, cultural celebrations, clothing drives, legislative advocacy, film festivals, and direct support for refugee families in Massachusetts. The organization works with families in Watertown to find clothing and shelter, enroll their children in school, obtain healthcare, apply for refugee status, attend English classes, and address other basic needs.
- **Watertown SSRS Program.** In coordination with the Watertown Refugee Support Group, SSRS clinicians provide support to refugee families. In December 2023, SSRS clinicians provided critical support to 13 newly arrived Haitian families, meeting with them to assist in completing applications for MassHealth and Temporary Aid for Families with Dependent Children and point them toward other resources. They facilitated the application process using a translation line or communicating directly in Spanish with the families. SSRS clinicians collaborated with the Health Department, Refugee Support Group, National Guard, and Public Schools to ensure the families had access to essential resources and services, including childcare, donations, food, and mental health referrals. This effort was designed to address the families' immediate needs and help them integrate more smoothly into the community. The SSRS teams continue to support refugees seeking support within Watertown.
- **Project Literacy.** Project Literacy provides free services to adults seeking to enhance their ability to read, write, and speak English. Serving residents in Watertown, Waltham, Newton, Cambridge, Boston, and Belmont, the program operates out of the Watertown Free Public Library. Project Literacy offers additional supports, including free immigration legal consultations, job skills development, assistance with children's education, computer classes, and guidance for US citizenship. As of 2024, the program serves more than 800 students annually, with the majority residing in Watertown. Over the past decade, Project Literacy has experienced a 127 percent increase in the number of students accessing its services.⁵⁵ Project Literacy serves as a central point of contact for people seeking health and human services supports.

**FOCUS GROUP
FEEDBACK**

One Project Literacy focus group participant experienced language barriers when they first arrived in Watertown. For example, he found it very difficult and overwhelming to determine which medical care provider is the best fit. Friends who speak English help with navigate different types of systems and procedures, the resident shared, but stated it takes time to build relationships.

Opportunities

During this assessment, support for migrants was a predominant topic of discussion, highlighted by nearly all groups throughout the participant engagement process. As identified in interviews, many participants addressed concerns about the need for better coordination of efforts and social supports available to the migrant population. Opportunities identified included:

- **Coordination of Public and Private Efforts.** Participants identified a need for greater coordination between the City of Watertown and other organizations to address both the immediate and long-term needs of migrants. Although various organizations are actively working to provide essential services, such as housing, healthcare, and legal assistance, the need for a more unified coordination strategy leaves open the potential for fragmented support and other inefficiencies. This situation may result in overlapping efforts or gaps in service delivery, making it more challenging for families to access the comprehensive supports they require. Improved coordination would help streamline resources, better address all needs, and enhance the overall effectiveness of support systems for these individuals and families.
- **Awareness of Health and Human Services for Migrants.** Participants frequently discussed the need to build awareness regarding the health and human services available to immigrants. Many migrants may have limited information about the range of services and resources that could support their well-being and integration into the community, including healthcare, legal assistance, and social services. This lack of awareness can result in underuse of available resources, leaving individuals and families without the critical support they need. Enhancing outreach and communication about these services could help bridge this gap, ensuring that migrants are better informed and able to access the comprehensive assistance necessary for their health and well-being.
- **Challenges in Accessing Support Because of Language Barriers.** Participants described their experiences with trying to access and navigate social supports and highlighted significant challenges related to language barriers. Many individuals faced difficulties in understanding and accessing available services because of limited English proficiency. Participants noted that without adequate language support, such as translation services or multilingual staff, migrants struggle to complete forms, follow instructions, and fully benefit from social support programs. Addressing these challenges by improving language accessibility and providing comprehensive support can ensure that all individuals have equitable access to essential services.

Veterans Services

Veterans' services in Watertown are vital to offering the specialized supports that people who have served our nation need, such as healthcare, housing, and employment assistance. These services foster a sense of community and belonging and assist veterans in their successful transition to civilian life, enhancing their well-being and strengthening community cohesion. According to voter registration records, 600 veterans live in Watertown, whereas US Census Bureau data from 2018–2022 indicate 1,249 veterans live in the City, comprising approximately 4.2 percent of the population.

Watertown Veterans Services offers an array of support for veterans, including federal, state, and local benefits.

- Federal benefits include helping veterans or their eligible dependents apply for Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability, VA nonservice connected pensions, Aid and Attendance, education benefits, VA healthcare, VA home loans, homelessness prevention, burial benefits, and military awards and record retrieval.
- State benefits include 100 percent disabled veteran annuities, service-related death annuities for spouses, legal aid, Women Veterans Network resources, and employment resources.
- Locally, Veterans Services administers the Chapter 115 needs-based benefit and serves as a liaison for veterans to apply for other benefits, including property tax abatements, vehicle excise tax exemptions, and VA burial plaques through Watertown's Ridgelawn Cemetery. Veterans Services also leverages interdepartmental relationships (i.e., the City Clerk's Office) to identify veterans in the community who may be underusing the benefits they have earned.

Participants noted that they rely on the VA for most of their needs. The Veterans Services Office is working with the City Clerk to update records and develop outreach initiatives to register more veterans in Watertown.⁵⁶

Watertown has three important resources for veteran residents seeking services, including:

- **Veterans Services Officer.** The City of Watertown has a dedicated Veterans Services Officer (VSO) who facilitates access to support services, including assistance with administrative documents and benefits for injuries sustained in active duty, tailored to the veteran's status (e.g., recently discharged or retired). The VSO regularly attends meetings and is accessible to veterans. Watertown receives veterans' information indirectly through City census data rather than direct notices from Massachusetts. Additionally, the Officer serves as the ADA Coordinator and liaison to the Watertown Commission on Disability, providing advocacy and education on disability issues within the community.

- **Pvt. Charles J. Shutt Marine Corps League.** The Shutt Detachment of the Marine Corps League supports veterans and their families by offering a range of services and programs. They assist with VA benefits, community support, and outreach activities, including organizing events and fundraisers to benefit veterans. The group fosters camaraderie among Marines and promotes the well-being of the veteran community through various initiatives and advocacy efforts.
- **Watertown Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 1105 Group.** VFW Post 1105 is a local chapter of the VFW that supports veterans and their families. The group provides a community space for veterans to connect, helps with VA benefits and claims, and engages in fundraising and community events to support veterans' needs. The VFW also focuses on advocacy, providing a platform for veterans to voice concerns and works to improve living conditions for all veterans.

Opportunities

Residents and veterans who participated in the assessment expressed overall support for the accessibility and quality of the services that the City of Watertown offers to veterans. Nonetheless, they indicated interest in further assisting returning and younger veterans:

- **Support and Connection for Younger Veterans:** Participants noted challenges in integrating returning and younger veterans who are new to Watertown with existing services and support networks. These veterans often need additional assistance in navigating available resources and identifying key contacts for support. To address this concern, participants suggested improving outreach efforts and incorporating information about veterans' services into a Welcome Packet for newcomers to the community.

Public Health

Local communities have diverse public health needs that encompass access to healthcare services, preventive measures, mental health support, and nutrition. Key priorities include ensuring availability of primary and specialized care, promoting vaccinations and regular screenings, and addressing mental health issues through counseling and crisis support. Food security and environmental health, such as clean water and pollution control, are also critical. Education about health, emergency preparedness, and addressing SDOH like economic stability and social support are essential. Equity and inclusion are important to ensure that all community members, including marginalized groups, have access to necessary resources and culturally competent services.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of public health systems. Effective collaboration among local governments, healthcare providers, and community organizations is vital to addressing these needs and improving overall health outcomes. In the City of Watertown, public health services oversight and operations are through the Board of Health and the Health Department.

- **Board of Health.** The Watertown Board of Health serves as a central hub for overseeing and coordinating public health efforts within the City. The Board of Health, operating under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 111, Sections 26-33 and other relevant laws, is responsible for enforcing state Sanitary and Environmental Codes, reporting diseases that endanger public health, and implementing state and local regulations. It assesses community health needs based on population size, characteristics, health issues, and environmental conditions, and ensures appropriate health services are provided. The Board, which consists of three members appointed by the City Manager and confirmed by the City Council (including one physician), meets on the third Wednesday of each month. Members serve three-year terms, expiring on the first Monday in February. The staff liaison is the Public Health Director. The Board has been authorized since 1888.
- **The Health Department.** The mission of the Watertown Health Department is to protect and promote health, prevent disease, and enhance community health. Its divisions include Animal Control, Public Health Nursing, Emergency Preparedness, Environmental Health Services, Tobacco Control, and Communicable Disease response. Environmental Health Services handle inspections for housing, body art, food establishments, and more. A full-time Animal Control Officer manages complaints and enforces regulations, hosts an annual rabies clinic, conducts rabies investigations, and relocates wildlife. The Health Department also provides free community health services such as flu clinics, blood pressure checks, and health education. The Public Health Director leads the Health Department.

Opportunities

Community partners and residents participating the assessment process articulated opportunities to further advance public health priorities in Watertown.

- **Integration of Health Promotion, Public Health, and Community Health.** Participants emphasized the importance of integrating health promotion, public health, and community health to better serve residents. This integration ensures coordinated and efficient service delivery, aligning wellness programs and health services to address both individual and community needs. By unifying these efforts, communities can enhance prevention, education, and care, leading to more effective and comprehensive health interventions.

- **Improved Emergency Preparedness Measures.** Strengthening these measures involves developing comprehensive emergency response plans, conducting regular drills, and ensuring that resources are readily available and efficiently allocated. Local communities benefit from enhanced coordination among emergency services, public health agencies, and community organizations, which helps ensure the delivery of timely and effective responses. Investing in robust communication systems and training for both officials and residents ensures that everyone is informed and prepared to act swiftly during emergencies. By focusing on these areas, communities can better protect public health, reduce risks, and ensure a more resilient and organized approach to managing unforeseen events.
- **Collaboration with Wayside.** Wayside supports the multiple health and human service needs of residents, including mental health supports, social services, and wellness programs. These contributions ensure residents have access to comprehensive care and assistance, helping to improve overall community health and well-being. Participants discussed improving the advertising of services through City channels to boost visibility. They also discussed enhancing integration with Wayside to align its initiatives more closely with the overall public health strategy.
- **Defined Roles and Responsibilities.** Participants noted opportunities to further define roles and responsibilities within public health, especially concerning the Health Department's scope and other community health initiatives. This confusion can result from overlapping duties and unclear boundaries between different organizations and programs. Addressing these ambiguities and clarifying roles can improve coordination and efficiency, leading to a more effective and streamlined approach to public and community health efforts.

Healthcare

Healthcare is a vital component of life in Watertown, ensuring that residents have access to essential physical and behavioral health services, which in turn promote overall well-being and quality of life. It also bolsters public health, economic stability, and emergency preparedness, making the community stronger and more resilient. Notably, only 1.5 percent of Watertown's population lacks health insurance coverage, reflecting Massachusetts's high rate of health insurance coverage.⁵⁷

Though Watertown lacks a hospital within its borders, nearby facilities include Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, St. Elizabeth's Medical Center in Brighton, McLean Hospital in Belmont, and Newton/Wellesley Hospital in Newton.

Charles River Community Health Center, a federally qualified health center, has locations in Brighton and Waltham and provides outpatient health services for underserved people. Services include primary care, dental and vision care, behavioral health, and a pharmacy. It is part of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center's Community Care Alliance.

Another key healthcare resource for Watertown residents is Advocates, which offers a comprehensive set of services, including mental health counseling, case management, crisis intervention, and support for intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) through residential services, vocational training, life skills programs, and transportation assistance for MassHealth beneficiaries. Advocates is headquartered in Framingham and has locations in several Massachusetts communities. Advocates' Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC) is located in Waltham with a service area that includes Watertown. The CBHC offers 24/7/365 access to Watertown residents who need routine and crisis behavioral health services, including on-site and mobile crisis intervention, community crisis stabilization, individual, family and couples counseling, group therapy, psychiatric assessment, and SUD treatment and recovery services.

The Watertown Police Department has partnered with Advocates to implement a pre-arrest jail diversion program. In September 2007, the department received the Pre-Arrest Jail Diversion Grant for Massachusetts residents with mental illness or emotional disturbance. This grant enabled the hiring of a full-time mental health crisis counselor from Advocates, who now works at the police station. The program is designed to offer alternatives to incarceration for individuals with mental health or substance use disorders by diverting eligible individuals into appropriate treatment or support services. Through collaboration with mental health professionals and community resources, the program is intended to address underlying issues, reduce recidivism, and support individuals in recovery, ultimately leading to better long-term outcomes and enhanced community safety.

Opportunities

As part of the engagement process, residents and community partners expressed ideas for further improving access to healthcare services.

- **Referral from Local Healthcare Organizations:** Watertown has an opportunity to strengthen communication and collaboration with local healthcare organizations. For example, social workers and discharge coordinators at Mount Auburn Hospital routinely screen people being discharged from inpatient beds and the emergency department (ED) for SDOH such as housing and food security needs. Watertown residents who receive care at Mount Auburn (and from other local healthcare providers) have the opportunity to experience strengthened referral pathways to health and human services in Watertown.

- **Referral to Local Healthcare Organizations.** There are also opportunities to improve awareness and strengthen referral pathways to local healthcare providers, such as Advocates' CBHC and other providers. For example, Watertown's website lacks information on where and how to access local providers, although Wayside is linked as a mental health service provider. Partners from community-based health agencies recommended increased engagement with City of Watertown staff to engage in these efforts. Other examples of local efforts to increase access to services were highlighted, including Arlington's Youth Counseling Center.
- **Health and Human Service Directory.** Another idea that surfaced during participant discussions included developing a Watertown health and human service resource directory to enhance access to services.

Spotlight: Arlington Youth Counseling Center

The Town of Arlington operates a unique community-based mental health counseling center that serves local youth (ages 3–21) and their families. The Arlington Youth Counseling Center (AYCC) is a licensed healthcare provider composed of clinicians, including social workers, mental health counselors, and psychiatrists. The AYCC provides a variety of high-quality, innovative, and therapeutic outpatient and school-based mental health services, including individual, group, and family counseling; psychiatric evaluation; and medication management. AYCC accepts most major health insurance plans and offers grant funding to income-eligible families who are uninsured or underinsured. Through local grants and other fundraising initiatives, AYCC also provides case management services to residents with basic resource needs (e.g., housing, food, fuel assistance, health insurance coverage, etc.) and offers support groups to at-risk populations, including survivors of domestic violence, substance using youth, and youth on the autism spectrum. Arlington's Department of Health and Human Services champions AYCC fundraising efforts, including corporate and community donations. According to the Town of Arlington, the AYCC is relatively unique in that it is also a licensed healthcare provider.

The Town of Burlington also offers individual, family and couples counseling through its Burlington Youth & Family Services. Burlington's counseling services are offered for charge based on income.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Following the death of George Floyd, an African American who was killed by a White police officer in Minneapolis, MN, in 2020, a national reckoning soon followed to address systemic racism, injustice, and inequalities that persist despite decades of advances in civil rights. Both public and private sector institutions engaged in renewed efforts to ensure their communities, workforces, and services were more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. At the local level, state and City governments have grappled with how to address government policies and practices that favor populations who have benefitted from historical inequities. Even in the most inclusive communities, there can be a tendency to engage more with certain groups of residents than others. Outdated policies and processes can unintentionally harm or exclude certain groups, preventing them from full participation in the community.

To answer the call to action stemming from George Floyd's death, public and private sector organizations launched diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and established chief diversity officer roles. According to a LinkedIn study, jobs for chief diversity officers were the fastest growing C-suite title in 2020 and 2021 but declined in 2022.⁵⁸ Other reports indicate that the pace of private sector DEI commitments have slowed because of sluggish progress⁵⁹ and the politicization of DEI initiatives.

State and local governments have sought to incorporate DEI into municipal strategic planning. As of April 2024, the DEI Advisory Committee of the Massachusetts Municipal Association is working to complete its DEI strategic plan for municipalities in partnership with the Racial Equity Group. The plan reviews the results of surveys and focus groups that the Racial Equity Group conducted to better understand the progress Massachusetts municipalities have made in advancing DEI.⁶⁰ The Racial Equity Group also has developed a toolkit to advance DEI at the local level and is recommending that it be tested by several communities before dissemination.

Other states, communities, and organizations also have prioritized DEI initiatives. For example, the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington provides resources, tools, and sample documents related to DEI programs in local governments in Washington State.⁶¹ Local governments throughout the state have formed advisory groups, have gathered data, and are reviewing and revising policies and procedures that block progress toward equity and inclusion. The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus of Chicago also provides resources, case studies, and information to help communities understand their unique history, demographic characteristics, and socioeconomic profile that affect needs and priorities.

Watertown also has engaged in efforts to ensure its workforce and services are more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

- **Watertown Staffing and Human Resources.** The City of Watertown reviewed its human resources functions in 2023, and as an outgrowth that effort, is reviewing and updating City personnel regulations, improving recruitment and retention processes, and developing staff training programs centered on organizational development and culture, including DEI. One recommendation included in that review called for partnering with professional organizations that focus on employing diverse populations.⁶²
- **Human Rights Commission.** Watertown launched a Human Rights Commission in 2023. The Commission was established to ensure that all people enjoy equal opportunities to participate in local affairs, including those related to housing, employment, education, public accommodation, and access to City services regardless of race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship, age, religion, disability, health status, marital or familial status, military or veteran status, socioeconomic status, ex-offender status, genetic and/or protected class status. The commission seeks to promote human rights in Watertown through outreach, dialogue, educational forums, and development of an action plan. It serves as a resource to people with concerns about discrimination within the City, recommending policies or resolutions for adoption by the City Council, City Manager or other City departments, boards, councils or commissions. The commission will provide an annual written report to the City Council and City Manager and hosts an annual public forum.
- **Disability Resources.** As noted previously, the City of Watertown employs a full-time staff member who serves as both the Veterans Service Coordinator and the ADA Coordinator. Watertown's Commission on Disability has been meeting since 1994 and assists City officials in ensuring compliance with state and federal laws pertaining to people with disabilities.
- **Watertown Public Schools.** Watertown Public Schools employs a Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. The position was approved by the School Committee in 2020 and leads the district's effort to ensure equity for students in the Watertown schools.



Opportunities

Though the City has taken steps to advance DEI initiatives, residents and community partners indicate that more opportunity exists to further develop and invest in Watertown's ongoing DEI efforts. It was noted that the City of Watertown does not have a DEI Director or Coordinator similar to those in some other communities. For example, the City of Arlington has a DEI division that includes a Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator and the City's ADA Coordinator. Larger area communities also have established DEI-specific divisions such as Cambridge's Office of Equity and Inclusion, Somerville's Department of Racial and Social Justice, and Boston's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. A designated DEI officer within the City of Watertown could serve as focal point of organization around policies, services, and community outreach regarding racism, discrimination, language access, disability barriers, and LGBTQIA+ needs.

Other opportunities to advance Watertown's DEI efforts include developing an official statement in support of inclusion to reinforce a commitment to acceptance, equal treatment, and safety for everyone; building out data collection and analysis systems to ensure that the City is making evidence-informed decisions that improve access to opportunity for all; and establishing an equity and social justice strategic plan to embed pro-equity and anti-racist priorities in Watertown's decision making, policies, operations, services, community outreach, and workplace culture.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW

This section reviews the operation of the various health and human functions within the City of Watertown and includes a summary of the present state of these efforts, the staffing and functions, and management and organizational structure. As part of this component of the assessment, this section also summarizes best practices related to the provision, management, and evaluation of health and human services in cities and towns that are comparable to Watertown.

City of Watertown

Organization. Health and human services fall under the shared purview of multiple City departments in Watertown, principally Senior Services, Veterans Services, Disability Services, and the Health Department. LWW, the community's healthy community initiative, is housed within the Department of Community Development and Planning. The Health Department oversees the City of Watertown's contract with Wayside for Social Service Resource Specialists. Other departments that either provide health and human services or are key partners include the Police Department, the Watertown Free Public Library, and the Recreation Department. Watertown's Housing Authority, an independent public body that reports to a Board of Commissioners, operates public housing facilities and manages the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Leadership. Watertown's City Manager is the Chief Administrative Officer of the City and is responsible to the City Council for the proper administration of all City affairs. Among other direct reporting relationships, Watertown's City Manager has direct oversight responsibility over the Senior Services Director, the VSO/ADA Coordinator, and the Public Health Director.

Referral Resources. The City of Watertown funds a variety of health and human service referral and case management activities across several departments, including:

- Senior Services Case Worker: 1.0 FTE
- Veterans Services Officer/ADA Coordinator: 1.0 FTE
- SSRS Clinicians: Funded through a Health Department contract with Wayside Multi-Service Center; 40 hours per month are funded by the City of Watertown and an additional 40 hours per month are funded by ARPA monies through December 2026
- Watertown Police Department Jail Diversion Program Clinician: 1.0 FTE grant funded
- Watertown Public Schools: 2.0 FTE Community Outreach Counselors

Communication. Watertown has a dedicated team actively working to enhance and expand the information and resources available to all residents in an effort to better inform them about the health and human services available to them. Watertown’s Communication Team includes a full-time Community Engagement Specialist. Watertown’s website lacks a single resource page dedicated to health and human services, so users must navigate to the City department or resource page that they believe best meets their needs. Watertown launched the 311 Service Center in June 2024 with the support of a full-time Constituent Services Director. This center serves as a resource for nonemergency inquiries, allowing residents to report issues and request information about town services. Residents can access 311 by phone or through an online request through a “Report It” feature.

Budget

Table 1. Watertown Health and Human Services Budget (FY 2025)⁶³

Division	Budget (FY2024)	FTEs (Town Budget)	Other Funding	FTEs (Other Funding)
Senior Services	\$463,997	5.25	\$117,306	1.0
Veterans Services	\$245,529	1.0	\$0	0.0
Health	\$961,348	8.0	\$6,000	0.0
Live Well Watertown	\$164,461	2.0	\$50,000	0.37
ADA Coordinator	\$12,000	0.0	\$0	0.0
Police Jail Diversion Program	\$45,000	0.5	\$79,000	0.5
Total	\$1,892,335	16.75	\$252,306	2.0

Comparable Communities

As part of the overall assessment, this report includes a scan of best practices related to the provision, management, and evaluation of health and human services in cities and towns comparable with Watertown. To create a sample of similar communities, HMA began with a list of 20 cities that the City of Watertown identified based on 11 indicators, such as total population, per capita income, population density, total budget, state aid, and total assessed value. (The Community Comparison Report from the Division of Local Services of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue was the data source for these criteria.⁶⁴) The City narrowed down the 20 communities by applying a factor of four to each variable, meaning it allowed for communities that are one-quarter the size of Watertown’s number on the relevant data point up to communities that are four times the size of Watertown’s data point.

HMA then collected US Census data on five additional health and human services (HHS)-sensitive measures across all 20 communities to identify communities with similar characteristics. Though no single community is identical to Watertown across every measure, the analysis pointed to four communities that were of similar size, demographic profile, and geographic proximity to central Boston. Table 2 summarizes each community across key measures in the analysis.

Table 2. Comparable Communities for HHS Assessment

Measure	Watertown	Arlington	Medford	Natick	Woburn
Population (2021)	35,149	45,617	62,098	36,426	41,056
Population Density	8,809	8,858	7,666	2,437	3,248
Per Capita Income (2020)	\$54,414	\$74,842	\$44,898	\$69,429	\$49,289
Total Budget (FY 2023)	\$188.4m	\$198.9m	\$190.6m	\$180.2m	\$180.7m
Median Age	39.0	39.7	34.7	42.3	39.7
% White Non-Hispanic	72.5%	72.9%	68.4%	76.9%	76.0%
% with College Degree	65.7%	74.2%	58.4%	68.3%	46.4%
% Foreign Born	24.7%	19.2%	22.4%	19.8%	18.7%
% Children in Poverty	6%	2%	3%	4%	8%

The following sections summarize the organization, leadership structure, referral resources, communication capabilities, and budget of each municipality's health and human services. **Note that each City or town defines what is included within the health and human services it provides, and there are material differences.** For example, some towns include libraries, recreation, and/or parks under the health and human services umbrella, and others do not. Arlington operates a unique licensed youth counseling center. Moreover, some municipalities publicly report expenditures from grant and third-party sources, whereas do not. Given these limitations, budget information presented herein is based on how each municipality publicly reports the data, so any direct comparisons warrant caution. Appendix 1.13 summarizes budget information across the comparable communities.

Arlington

Organization. Arlington's Department of HHS is dedicated to protecting the health of the public and assisting residents who need access to essential services. This department encompasses several divisions and programs, including the Health Department, Council on Aging, Veterans Services, DEI, and the AYCC—a community-based mental health counseling center serving Arlington youth (ages 3–21) and their families and is funded through reimbursement from most major health insurance plans, grants, and other sources. In addition, the Department of HHS coordinates various entities such as the Board of Youth Services, Council on Aging, Human Rights Commission, LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission, Disability Commission, Board of Health, Youth Health and Safety Coalition, HHS Charitable Corporation, and Heating Assistance Program.

Leadership. Arlington's Director of HHS reports to the Town Administrator and oversees the Health Department, Council on Aging, DEI, AYCC, and Veterans Services. While different divisions of the department support the operations of various town boards and commissions, all division directors report to the Director of HHS. The director plays an important convening function within the community and provides leadership to the town's Health and Human Services Network, a coalition of public and private HHS agencies that meets monthly. The director also helps lead Arlington's efforts to identify and capture external sources of funding, including grants and philanthropic donations to Arlington's HHS Charitable Corporation, an external nonprofit organization with 501(c)(3) status.

Referral Resources. Arlington funds three FTEs who provide social service referral and case management activities, two of whom are dedicated to residents age 60+ and one who supports residents younger than 60 years old. The DEI Division also has a Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator and an ADA Coordinator. Residents may be referred to these supports through a network of public and private health and human services organizations or by contacting the departments directly via telephone.

Communication. The town’s website includes a page (navigable through several clicks on the main page) dedicated to listing available federal, state, and local public assistance programs with brochures in English and five other languages. Arlington does not operate a 311 telephone service to provide access to nonemergency services.

Budget. Arlington’s HHS budget is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Town of Arlington Health and Human Services Budget (FY2024)⁶⁵

Division	Town Budget (FY2024)	FTEs (Town Budget)	Other Funding	FTEs (Other Funding)
HHS Executive Office, including Health Department	\$894,641	8.0	N/A	N/A
Council on Aging	\$479,630	6.6	\$127,549	0.8
Arlington Youth Counseling Center	N/A	N/A	\$1,355,382	15.45
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	\$259,628	3.0	N/A	N/A
Veterans Services	\$327,753	1.0	N/A	N/A
Total	\$1,961,652	18.6	\$1,482,931	16.3

Medford

Organization. The City of Medford does not have a dedicated HHS department. The following departments are identified in Medford’s annual budget as providing health and human services: Health Department, Council on Aging, Veterans, Library, and Recreation.

Leadership. Each department that provides health and human services is led by a director who reports to Medford’s mayor. Department leaders are responsible for having an awareness of grant and external funding opportunities and applying for funding.

Referral Resources. Medford’s Office of Prevention and Outreach, housed in the Health Department, established the Medford Multilingual Resource Line to answer questions, provide support, and make connections to services. Staff assist with connections to services or resources such as SNAP and other food access resources, mental health services and support, housing resources and questions, educational supports, and more. The Resource Line is funded by time-limited grant dollars, and the City of Medford is seeking new funding sources to support ongoing operation of the service. City staff indicated that many of the resources that serve Medford residents are based in surrounding communities. For example, Medford refers individuals and families who need homeless support services to Eliot Community Human Services, which is based in Lexington but serves many metro and eastern Massachusetts communities, including Boston.

Communication. Information about Medford’s services are posted on the City’s website. Website users can navigate to specific City departments (e.g., Health Department) and call staff listed on each department’s webpage for assistance. Using an internet search engine, users can find pages on Medford’s website that contain links to referral resources such as housing, utility assistance, and food resources. Medford does not operate a 311 telephone number to provide access to nonemergency municipal services; however, it does operate a See-Click-Fix digital web tool that allows citizens to report nonemergency neighborhood issues.

Budget. Medford’s HHS budget is summarized in Table 4. City officials indicate that a number of programs are funded through external grant funding, which are not described in Medford’s annual budget document.

Table 4. Town of Medford Health and Human Services Budget (FY2024)⁶⁶

Division	Town Budget (FY2024)	FTEs (Town Budget)	Other Funding	FTEs (Other Funding)
Board of Health	\$776,510	9.0	Not available	Not available
Council on Aging	\$267,545	4.0	Not available	Not available
Veterans’ Services	\$435,703	2.0	Not available	Not available
Library	\$2,012,177	17.0	Not available	Not available
Recreation	\$608,535	4.0	Not available	Not available
Total	\$4,100,470	35.0	Not available	Not available

Natick

Organization. Natick's HHS are organized under two agencies—the Department of Community Services and the Department of Health. The Department of Community Services comprises the Council on Aging and Human Services, Veteran's Services, the Natick Community Organic Farm, and Recreation & Parks. The Natick Health Department provides public health and prevention-oriented services, including a multitude of facility inspections, vaccinations, communicable disease investigations, educational materials, training opportunities, emergency preparedness and staff assistance. The Health Department includes a Substance Use Prevention and Outreach Office (Natick 180), serves as the principal community-based coalition for inclusive and culturally responsive addiction education, prevention, and recovery. The town is collaborating with researchers at UMass Boston to gather input from the community on the future of human services.

Leadership. Natick's Department of Community Services is led by the Director of Community Services who reports to the Town Administrator. The Health Department is led by the Director of Public Health, who reports to Natick's Board of Health.

Referral Resources. Natick's Council on Aging and Human Services (a division with the Department of Community Services) operates an Information and Referral Line. According to the Town Administrator's proposed 2025 Budget, an increase in the number of phone calls to the Information and Referral Line prompted Natick to hire an Outreach Coordinator. The budget document stated, "the increase in our Information and Referral Line calls this past year indicate ongoing needs in our community, specifically with higher electricity and gas costs that require more elderly people needing access to government benefits, such as fuel assistance or SNAP, housing, and other services."⁶⁷

Communication. Natick's website lists town departments and an "I Want To..." link to webpages that link to various external resources and websites. One page is dedicated to Natick Community Links & Resources such as CHAPA, "Looking for Housing," the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, etc. Another page links to the Natick Service Council, a nonprofit that helps Natick residents with its food pantry, eviction/utility shut-off prevention, case management, and referral services. Users may otherwise navigate to specific City departments (e.g., Human Services) and call identified staff listed on each department's webpage for assistance. Natick does not operate a 311 telephone number to provide access to nonemergency municipal services. The Town does operate a See-Click-Fix digital tool that allows citizens to report nonemergency neighborhood issues.

Budget. Natick's HHS budget is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Town of Natick HHS Budget (FY2024)⁶⁸

Division	Town Budget (FY2024)	FTEs (Town Budget)	Other Funding	FTEs (Other Funding)
Community Services Admin	\$327,829	4.0*	Not available	Not available
Council on Aging	\$605,252	10.0*	Not available	Not available
Veterans Services	\$456,306	3.0	Not available	Not available
Community Organic Farm	\$208,645	5.0*	Not available	Not available
Recreation and Parks	\$613,691	8.75	Not available	Not available
Board of Health	\$712,949	12.0	Not available	Not available
Total	\$2,924,672	42.75*	Not available	Not available

Woburn

Organization. The City of Woburn lacks a dedicated HHS department. The following departments are identified in Woburn’s annual budget as providing health and human services: the Health Department, Council on Aging, Veterans, Library, Parks, and Recreation.

Leadership. Each department that provides health and human services, including the Council on Aging, Senior Center, and Public Schools reports directly to Woburn’s mayor. Select departments also must receive approval from Board of Commissioner’s tasked with oversight. Department leaders are responsible for staying aware of grant and external funding opportunities and applying for funding.

Referral Resources. The City of Woburn collaborates with nonprofit organizations to provide health and human service referrals, though it lacks a formalized referral process. Instead, each department is responsible for offering referral resources as needed. For instance, the Senior Center assists aging residents with housing and food support. With the help of opioid settlement funds, Woburn has employed a Substance Use and Mental Health Coordinator to manage service coordination and support referrals for residents. The City uses social media and community events to connect residents with available services.

Communication. Information about Woburn’s services is available on the City’s website. Users can navigate to specific departments, such as the Health Department, to find detailed information and resources. Using an internet search engine, users can also locate information on services like veterans’ support and financial assistance. Each department’s webpage includes the latest news and relevant quick links. Though Woburn is without 311 telephone service for nonemergency inquiries, it does offer a digital Action Center where citizens can report nonemergency neighborhood issues or concerns.

Budget. Woburn’s health and human services budget is summarized in Table 6. City officials indicate that several programs are funded through external grants, which are not described in Woburn’s annual budget document.

Table 6. City of Woburn’s HHS Budget (FY2024)⁶⁹

Division	Town Budget (FY2024)	FTEs (Town Budget)	Other Funding	FTEs (Other Funding)
Board of Health	\$533,624.18	9.0	Not available	Not available
Council on Aging	\$345,749.68	8.5	Not available	Not available
Veterans Benefits	\$364,749.68	1.5	\$17,000	Not available
Public Library	\$1,786,264.97	19.5	Not available	Not available
Recreation	\$373,167.03	2.5	Not available	Not available
Parks	\$571,796.62	5.0	Not available	Not available
Total	\$3,975,352.16	46.0	\$17,000	Not available

RECOMMENDATIONS

Informed by the HHS gap assessment and the organization review described above, this section offers recommendations to the City of Watertown for organizational and program efficiencies and enhancements, along with a timeline for implementation of the recommendations. These recommendations are offered in the context of the assessment's overall key objectives:

- Ensure comprehensive, data-driven services to make Watertown a healthy and vibrant community for all residents
- Promote collaboration among and between the existing network of City departments and community providers
- Advocate so that Watertown receives the full benefit of state and federal health and human service resources

Recommendation 1: Create a Watertown Human Services Director Position

The City of Watertown's departmental and staffing infrastructure includes designated leadership positions responsible for Public Health, Senior Services, Veterans Affairs, and ADA coordination. A key gap, however, exists in providing designated leadership to address Watertown residents' human service needs, in particular those related to coordinating and championing services that address housing insecurity, food insecurity, and migrant supports.

Under the direction of the City Manager, Watertown should create a Director of Human Services position. This individual would be responsible for leading a newly created Human Services Department that would oversee the planning, direction, management, and operation of Watertown's human services programs and referral pathways, including services that address housing, food, and economic insecurity, as well as migrant supports. Responsibilities would include strategic planning, interdepartmental and intergovernmental coordination, community engagement, pursuance of grant opportunities, and ensuring compliance with state and local laws. Essential functions would include:

- **Developing and Implementing a Human Services Strategic Plan:** Collaborate with other Watertown department leaders to create a strategic plan that addresses human service needs. Routinely evaluate progress toward meeting the plan's objectives to ensure effectiveness and adaptability.
- **Oversee Policy and Workflow Development.** Manage the creation of policies, procedures, and workflows that support Watertown's no-wrong-door approach. Ensure residents can access the full scope of state, federal, and local human service programs for which they are eligible. Develop and continuously enhance both digital and physical front door access to these services in partnership with other departments, 311, and CBOs.

- **Lead Community Outreach.** Drive efforts to promote Watertown’s services, raise public awareness about human service issues, and build relationships with community groups, service providers, and other partners.
- **Administer and Manage Partnerships with CBOs.** Oversee Watertown’s partnership with Wayside, including the SSRS program. Ensure the program is appropriately staffed, tracks need, and effectively meets residents’ needs. Identify and establish partnerships with Wayside and other CBOs to address evolving human service needs. Leverage these partnerships to enhance and innovate programs.
- **Advance Housing Insecurity Interventions.** Identify and recommend ongoing interventions and opportunities to address housing insecurity among residents in collaboration with CBOs, the WHA, and the Department of Community Development and Planning.
- **Administer and Champion Food Security Programs.** Oversee and coordinate Watertown’s initiatives to combat food insecurity, ensuring effective program management and resource utilization. Provide oversight for the Watertown Food Pantry and promote SNAP and other food assistance programs.
- **Implement Data-Driven Approaches to Understanding Community Needs.** Use data analysis and community engagement to identify ongoing needs and develop initiatives that improve human service offerings and outcomes. Develop systems to improve and monitor data related to human services. Ensure data accuracy and reliability to better inform decision making, track progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and interventions.
- **Manage Grant and Philanthropic Opportunities.** Identify, apply for, and manage grants and other philanthropic resources to support Watertown’s human service initiatives. Coordinate with local grant-making organizations to maximize the impact of these resources.
- **Oversee Budget Planning and Allocation.** Manage the human services budget, ensuring efficient use of resources and fiscal accountability. Monitor expenditures and allocations to maintain financial integrity.
- **Enhance Interdepartmental Coordination.** Foster collaboration across departments to improve service delivery and address human service challenges effectively.
- **Develop and Advocate for Supportive Policies.** Create and advocate for policies that support Watertown’s human services objectives. Stay informed about local, state, and federal legislative changes, and adjust department strategies as needed.
- **Convene the HHS Cabinet.** Organize and lead cabinet meetings, including developing agendas, charters, and administrative guidelines to ensure effective governance and oversight.

During the community feedback process on the draft version of this report, a variety of community members expressed concerns that too few resources would be dedicated to addressing housing insecurity. A key task for the incoming Human Services Director will be prioritizing housing supports as a central focus of the role and assessing the need for additional staff in the future.

Recommendation 2: Establish a Watertown HHS Cabinet

As Watertown navigates a rapidly evolving landscape of community health and human service needs, a dedicated, cross-functional HHS Cabinet could significantly enhance resident well-being through a comprehensive and coordinated approach to health and social services. The cabinet should include key participants, such as the Human Services Director, Public Health Director, Senior Services Director, VA/ADA Officer, Community Wellness Program Manager, Housing Authority representative, Recreation Director, Free Public Library representative, Schools Liaison, Police Liaison, Department of Public Works representative, and organizations contracted to provide key services to the City. The cabinet should establish a meeting structure, communications plan, cadence, and charter. The cabinet would play a pivotal role in supporting the following key areas:

- **Integrated Approach to Community Health.** Foster a holistic strategy that unifies efforts across various public and private sectors to address health and social needs comprehensively.
- **Improved Efficiency and Resource Management.** Streamline processes and optimize resource allocation to enhance service delivery and reduce duplicative efforts.
- **Enhanced Collaboration and Partnerships.** Build stronger networks and partnerships among City departments and outside agencies to facilitate coordinated responses and shared objectives.
- **Ongoing Community Engagement.** Develop ongoing community engagement mechanisms to collect regular feedback on Watertown's efforts to provide health and human services. Examples include advisory groups, surveys, and community forums that elevate the voices and perspectives of people who use health and human services.
- **Proactive Response to Emerging Needs.** Identify and address emerging health and social service needs before they escalate, ensuring timely and effective interventions.
- **Increased Accountability and Transparency.** Establish clear accountability mechanisms and transparent practices to build trust and ensure that efforts are aligned with community needs.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making.** Support the development and collection of data metrics across departments. Use data and analytics to inform decisions, measure outcomes, and refine strategies for continuous improvement.

- **Grant Funding Strategies.** Identify grant funding opportunities and submit grant proposals that are aligned with Watertown's needs. Maximize opportunities to blend and braid public and private funding.

This cabinet will enable Watertown to create a more integrated, responsive, and effective system for meeting the diverse needs of its residents. In addition to the establishment of a Health and Human Service Cabinet, an inventory, and evaluation of current task forces is recommended to avert any gaps in communication.

Recommendation 3: Improve Digital Front Door Awareness and Access to Watertown's Health and Human Services

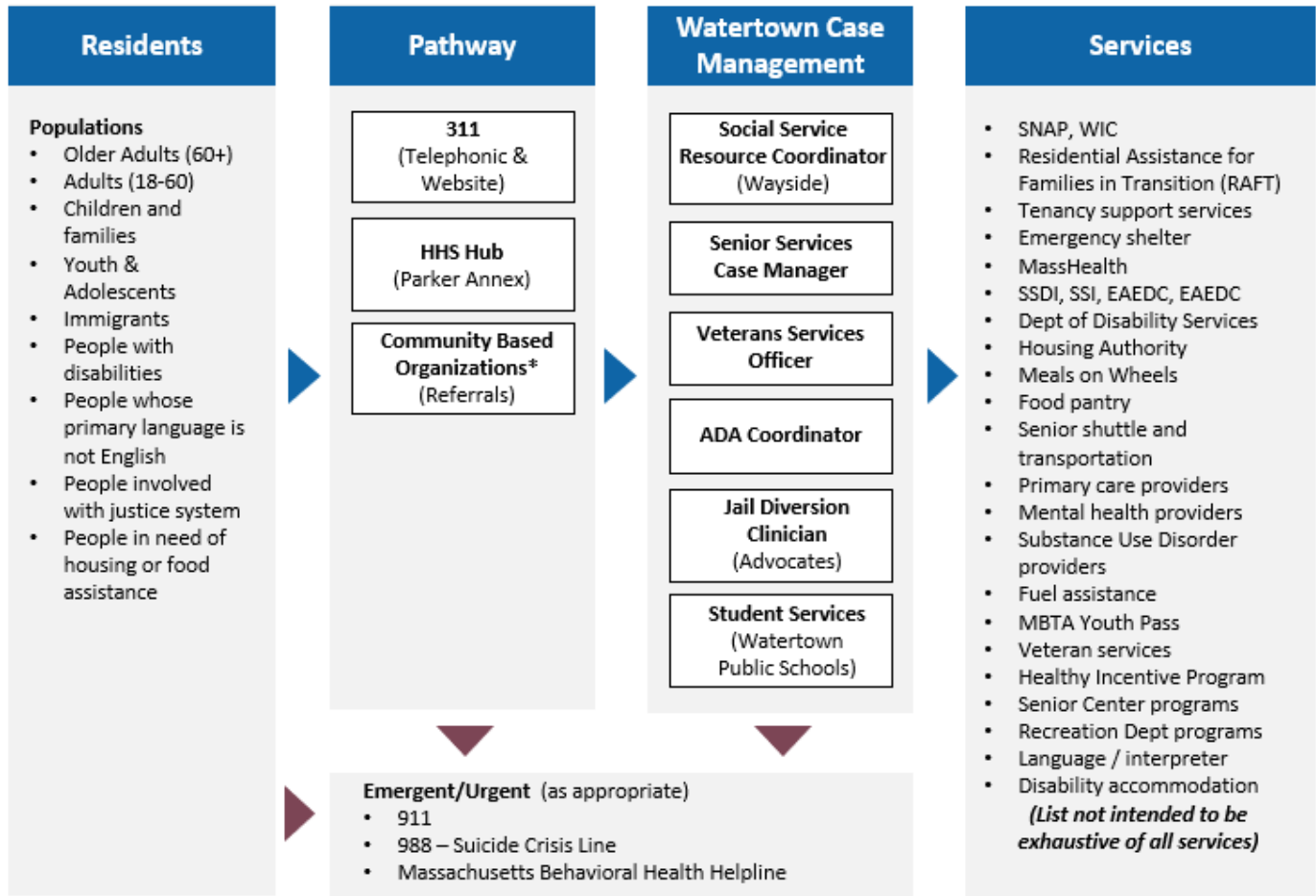
To improve digital front door awareness and access to Watertown HHS, the City should focus on four key strategies.

- **Website Modifications.** Enhance the user experience of Watertown's website by increasing the visibility and utility of HHS. By making modifications to the website that make health and human services more prominent, centralized, and easier to navigate, residents will have more intuitive access to critical resources.
- **Leverage 311 Infrastructure as an Information Source to Connect Residents with Resources.** The City of Watertown's 311 infrastructure for managing telephonic and web-based inquiries and requests can be leveraged to provide residents with information and connect individuals to case management and referral supports offered by Wayside SSRS clinicians, Senior Services, the ADA Coordinator, VSO, or Watertown Public Schools. This approach would provide an additional route for residents to request help and ensure that people are referred to resources that can respond in a timely manner. A present, the 311 service is branded as a "Report It" opportunity to inform the City of nonemergency issues that residents encounter, such as potholes, downed tree limbs, or water leaks. By working with City departments and other HHS organizations to document clear and consensus-driven referral workflows, the 311 infrastructure can be leveraged to connect residents to the resources that can best meet their needs. Use of Watertown's 311 infrastructure can provide a high-visibility first-stop for people who may be unsure where to turn for help. It would also provide a mechanism to log health and human services-related requests over time and enable data analysis to gain insights about Watertown's changing needs. (See Figure 1. Watertown Health and Human Service Referral Pathways.)
- **Welcome Packet.** To enhance awareness and accessibility of services, Watertown should develop a Welcome Packet that can be featured on the City's website. This packet would provide a comprehensive guide for both new and existing residents, featuring an up-to-date and detailed list of available health and human services. This valuable resource will facilitate easier navigation of local support systems and promote greater awareness of available services.

Integrating the Welcome Packet into the City website ensures that this crucial information is readily accessible, demonstrating Watertown's commitment to effectively supporting its community. The City of Watertown's Communications Team, in collaboration with the HHS Cabinet and other departments, could lead the development of and regular (i.e., annual) updates to Welcome Packet.

- **Email and Mail Campaigns.** Send regular emails and print newsletters to update subscribers on health programs, upcoming events, and important health tips. Personalize content to address the needs and interests of different audiences.

Figure 1. Watertown Health and Human Service Referral Pathways



*Community Based Organizations: Includes broad continuum of public, private, and non-profit organizations that serve the needs of Watertown residents and provide formal and informal referral and supportive services (e.g., Wayside Multiservice Center, schools, Watertown Police Department, health providers, churches, etc.)—all of which provide an important referral pathway into health and human services

Recommendation 4: Establish Physical Front Door to Watertown's HHS

To enhance access and streamline navigation, Watertown should establish a physical front door location to HHS. This hub would serve as a single, physical point of contact where residents can obtain information, receive assistance, and access a range of health and human services. A central front desk window or office could be staffed to connect residents to services they need or for referral to other supports available in the community. Co-location of a health and human service department would also support better communication and coordination.

As a City-owned building, the Parker Annex Building should be ADA-compliant. The City of Watertown is reviewing the need for any improvements necessary to ensure the Parker Annex Building complies with the ADA. Through the community feedback process, some individuals expressed concern about the location and accessibility of the Parker Annex Building. It will be important to evaluate proximity to bus stops and public transportation routes to ensure ease of access for all residents. The hub should include:

- **Information and Referrals.** Provide support staff who can give clear, up-to-date information about available services and assist residents in connecting with the appropriate resources.
- **Resource Center.** Include brochures, application forms, and other materials related to health and human services in one location.
- **Education Campaign.** Launch a targeted education campaign to raise awareness about the services available through the location. This campaign should be sensitive to cultural and age diversity, using a variety of channels, such as social media, local media, and community events, to reach diverse populations and ensure broad understanding of the services offered.
- **Representation from Key Organizations.** Incorporate routine on-site presence from key health and human service organizations, such as Wayside Multi-Service Center and the WHA, to provide specialized support and ensure a comprehensive range of services. On a pilot basis, determine whether part-time presence (e.g., “swing offices”) facilitates more effective coordination and delivery of services, addressing specific needs in the community.

Recommendation 5: Establish Relationships with CBOs for Key Programs and Services

Feedback from the community engagement process highlighted the need for Watertown to develop long-term partnerships with local CBOs for the provision of key programs and services. At present, residents can receive case management and referral supports through the City of Watertown and other organizations. Case managers routinely meet to problem solve and brainstorm solutions as the community's needs evolve. Nonetheless, opportunities exist to deepen existing

relationships or formally establish new affiliations with local CBOs to provide needed services such as tenancy navigation and support (i.e., landlord-tenant counseling and mediation, legal support, and financial aid) and support for migrants.

In developing these partnerships, Watertown can work with organizations to build a more robust foundation of data to understand the community's needs and underlying service gaps. For example, an enhanced and coordinated effort to collect more granular data about people and families at risk of eviction (including age, income, family size, etc.), those requesting assistance through multiple channels (i.e., Wayside, Housing Authority, Senior Services, 311, Watertown Public Schools, etc.), and those experiencing homelessness could help determine the type and magnitude of support needs in Watertown and guide future decision making and budgeting centered on housing.

- **Develop Partnerships for Housing Supports.** Partner with CBOs that specialize in tenancy support, eviction prevention, and landlord dispute resolution. Advertise these partnerships on the website with contact information available. These organizations can provide critical assistance to residents facing housing instability by offering mediation services, legal support, and financial aid to prevent evictions. Collaborate with CBOs and local agencies to create a unified approach to addressing housing issues. This collaboration will ensure that residents receive comprehensive support and that resources are allocated effectively to mitigate housing instability.
- **Strengthen Referral Pathways for Eligible Services.** Develop and deepen relationships with CBOs that offer specialized services. Implement referral pathways to connect these individuals with essential services such as supports for immigrants who need legal assistance, language training, employment support, and renters' assistance.
- **Promote Cultural Competency.** Partner with CBOs that provide services to immigrants and refugees to ensure cultural competency and address the unique challenges facing these populations. Collaborate with CBOs on trainings and resources that better serve diverse communities.
- **Implement Regular Updates and Information Sharing.** Establish a system of regular communication and updates between the City of Watertown and CBOs in priority areas. For example, develop a regular meeting schedule, newsletters, or an online platform to share information and coordinate activities.
- **Coordinate with Funders to Avoid Duplication.** Engage with organizations and entities that provide supplemental funding to ensure that efforts are not duplicative and are aligned with the City's overall health and human service priorities. Share updates on program activities and funding allocations to promote transparency and maximize the impact of financial resources. By strengthening these relationships and enhancing communication, Watertown

can more effectively address key community needs, prevent duplicative efforts, and ensure that resources are used efficiently to support residents.

Recommendation 6: Improve Access to Food Supports

Watertown's nutrition supports have been instrumental in addressing food insecurity in the community. As referenced above, residents use the available food supports, highlighting their importance in meeting essential needs. Essential food resources like SNAP have played a crucial role in supporting residents in need, but there are opportunities to further enhance their effectiveness. Watertown can improve access to food supports through the following actions:

- **Relocate and Expand Food Pantry Services.** Relocate the Watertown Food Pantry to a more central and accessible location, such as the Parker Annex Building. Expand the food pantry's hours of operation to accommodate a broader range of schedules (i.e., evening and weekend hours to serve individuals who may be unavailable during standard hours). In addition, focus on expanding the availability of fresh produce and high-quality food items. Conduct surveys in multiple languages or hold community meetings to better understand the food preferences and dietary needs of residents and use this feedback to meet diverse cultural and personal preferences.
- **Food Pantry Oversight.** In recognition of the Food Pantry's role in supporting the diversity of Watertown's residents and families, move oversight and administration of Watertown's Food Pantry from the Senior Services Department to the new Human Services Department.
- **Expand Awareness of Food Insecurity Programs.** Under the oversight of the Director of Human Services, coordinate Watertown's initiatives to combat food insecurity and maximize resident access to SNAP and other food assistance programs.
- **Simplify Messaging for Food Assistance Programs.** Incorporate easy-to-understand visuals, such as infographics and step-by-step guides, to convey information quickly and clearly. As noted previously, many residents have expressed a lack of awareness about available food assistance programs, particularly among people most in need.



KATHY CUNNINGHAM,
Watertown Food Pantry
Coordinator

“When I first began here, we were doing 40 families a week. And then it graduated up to probably 70 families, and then, once the pandemic hit, we were running approximately 200 families every single day that we were open.... Now we're averaging between 140 to 160 each

Recommendation 7: Develop DEI Approach

To foster a more inclusive and equitable community, Watertown should establish a comprehensive DEI strategy. This assessment found that surrounding towns have begun to establish formal DEI positions and/or commissions. This approach should comprise the following components:

- **Establish a DEI Director.** Establish a DEI Director who will be responsible for overseeing and coordinating related initiatives. This individual will serve as the leader on DEI-related matters and ensure that Watertown's efforts are effectively implemented and monitored.
- **Integrate DEI into Municipal Strategic Planning.** Embed DEI principles in the municipal strategic planning process. Ensure that DEI goals and objectives are incorporated into the broader strategic framework to guide policies, programs, and decision making.
- **Develop an Official Statement on Inclusion.** Create an official statement that affirms the City's commitment to inclusion, underscoring its dedication to acceptance, equal treatment, and the safety of all individuals. This statement should clearly communicate the City's values and principles, emphasizing its unwavering support for creating an environment in which everyone is respected, receives fair treatment, and feels secure.
- **Promote Inclusion.** Develop and implement programs, materials, and signage to promote awareness and education around inclusion, with a focus on race, ethnicity, age, language, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and equitable access and representation across City initiatives.
- **Engage with the Community on DEI Issues.** Actively involve the community in discussions and activities related to DEI. Facilitate forums, workshops, and surveys to gather input, address concerns, and ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in shaping DEI strategies.
- **Train Staff on DEI.** In collaboration with Watertown's Department of Human Resources, develop and provide regular training for all staff on DEI principles, including topics such as unconscious bias, cultural competency, and inclusive practices. This training will help staff members understand and apply DEI concepts in their daily work and interactions.
- **Transition ADA Coordination Functions to DEI Director.** Transition the ADA Coordinator's functions to the DEI Director. This alignment will ensure that ADA compliance is integrated and emphasized within the broader DEI framework, enhancing support for people with disabilities and promoting a more inclusive environment. As part of this transition, it will be important to further develop a more integrated approach to addressing accessibility and inclusion, ensuring that the needs of individuals with disabilities are met with greater attention and resources. One community member from the feedback process suggested the position be called the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Director.

- **Promote Language Access.** The DEI Director can lead Watertown’s efforts to develop and update policies and supports to ensure equal access to Watertown’s programs and services for people with limited English proficiency. The director can lead the development and periodic revision of the City’s LAP.

Recommendation 8: Establish a Language Access Program

To address the growing need for effective language access services, Watertown should establish a language access program either through a vendor, dedicated language access coordinator, or a relationship with one or more CBO(s). This approach could provide a centralized resource for managing and coordinating language access services. There is opportunity to collaborate regionally and create a shared resource that can serve multiple jurisdictions. Potential services include:

- **Assist with Staff Communication.** Provide staff with tools and training to facilitate effective communication with people who speak languages other than English; such individuals can serve as translators and interpret cultural nuances.
- **Collaborate with City Staff for Dynamic Public Engagement.** Partner with City staff to ensure inclusive and effective public engagement strategies, using diverse communication methods to reach all community members.
- **Make Documents Available in a Variety of Languages.** Ensure that essential documents and materials are translated into the primary languages spoken in the community to improve accessibility and understanding.
- **CART (Communication Access Real-Time Translation).** Make CART services available for both in-person and virtual meetings to provide real-time text transcriptions to enhance accessibility for people with hearing impairments or language barriers.
- **Interpretation in Meetings.** Offer interpretation services during meetings to facilitate clear communication between speakers of different languages and ensure that all participants can contribute effectively.
- **Over the Phone Interpretation.** Provide interpretation services via phone to assist with real-time communication for individuals who need immediate language support.
- **Video-Relay Interpretation.** Ensure that video-relay interpretation services are available both in-person and over the phone to support communication needs for people who are deaf or hearing impaired.
- **Auto-Generated Captioning.** Use auto-generated captioning in all City-hosted Zoom meetings to provide real-time text support and improve accessibility for participants with hearing impairments or language barriers.

Recommendation 9: Prioritize Health Promotion and Wellness

Watertown offers a range of services to support the health and human service needs of its residents. To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of these services, Watertown should foster more integrated and direct collaboration between the Health Department, the proposed Human Services Director, and LWW. This approach will support the prioritization of health promotion and wellness by ensuring that resources and efforts are aligned toward preventive and proactive care. By creating a cohesive network between these key partners, Watertown can streamline service delivery, improve coordination, and focus on comprehensive health initiatives. This collaboration will not only address immediate needs, but also advance long-term wellness goals, ultimately leading to a healthier and more resilient community.

- **Develop a Health Promotion and Wellness Strategic Plan.** Create a comprehensive Health Promotion and Wellness Strategic Plan that outlines key initiatives for improving community health and wellness. This plan should serve as a guide post for internal use as well as effective engagement with CBOs. It should include specific goals, strategies, and actions that address various health issues, promote wellness, and facilitate collaboration with CBOs to ensure a cohesive approach to community health improvement. Additionally, use the strategic plan to support funding decisions by identifying financial needs and priorities based on the plan's objectives. Allocate resources effectively and actively seek grant opportunities to support implementation of key initiatives. By integrating these elements, the plan will enhance internal operations, foster robust external partnerships, and maximize the impact of health and wellness efforts in the community.
- **Explicitly Include SUD Awareness, Support, and Prevention.** Ensure the strategic plan robustly addresses SUD by incorporating targeted awareness campaigns and comprehensive support services for both youth and adults and informed by people with lived experience. This campaign should include initiatives to increase community education about SUD, reduce stigma, and provide accessible resources for prevention, intervention, and recovery. Additionally, use opioid settlement funds to enhance SUD prevention efforts and support services. Actively seek grant funding to further support and expand prevention work within the community. By integrating SUD awareness, leveraging available funds, and pursuing additional financial resources, Watertown can create a more informed and supportive environment, promote early intervention, and improve treatment options, ultimately enhancing outcomes for individuals affected by SUD across all age groups.
- **Integrate Live Well Wellness into Human Services.** Position Live Well Wellness within the Human Services Department to enhance coordination and focus on wellness programs. Achieving these goals will requires a strong

partnership between the Human Services Director and the Public Health Department. Because these issues are cross-cutting, they must be aligned and integrated to ensure effective coordination and a unified approach to addressing community health needs. This collaboration is crucial for seamless implementation of the strategic plan and for fostering a comprehensive approach to health promotion and wellness.

As part of the community feedback process from draft version of this report, LWW participants in the community highlighted the significant value and contributions LWW brings to Watertown and expressed concerns about the prioritization and visibility of the program. Based on this input, HMA recommends that the incoming Human Services Director prioritize strategic planning and alignment of programs and resources with LWW.

Implementation Timeline

#	Recommendations	Timeline
1	Create a Watertown Human Services Director Position	January 2025
2	Establish a Watertown HHS Cabinet	January 2025
3	Improve Digital Front Door Awareness and Access to Watertown’s Health and Human Services	March 2025 – June 2026
4	Establish Physical Front Door to Watertown’s HHS (Parker Annex Building)	January – March 2025
5	Establish Deeper Relationships with CBOs for Key Programs and Services (e.g., tenancy navigation and support)	July 2025 – ongoing
6	Improve Access to Food Supports (under leadership of Human Services Director)	July 2025 – ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocate Food Pantry 	November 2025
7	Establish a Comprehensive DEI Strategy	December 2025 – June 2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a DEI Director Position 	July 2026
8	Establish a Language Access Program	November 2024
9	Develop a Health Promotion and Wellness Strategic Plan	July 2025 – June 2026

Appendices

Appendix 1.1. Participant Engagement Activities

Date	Engagement	Attendee(s)
11/28/23	Interview	Lydia McCoy, Watertown Director of Senior Services
11/28/23	Interview	Patrick George, Watertown Veteran's Services Officer, ADA Coordinator, Liaison to Commission on Disability
12/5/23, 5/22/24, 6/14/24	Interviews	Stephanie Venizelos, Watertown Community Wellness Program Manager, Live Well Watertown (LWW)
12/5/23	Interview	Anthony Palomba, Watertown City Council, Councilor-at-Large; HHS Committee Chair
12/6/23, 7/23/24	Interview	Abbey Meyers, Watertown Public Health Director
12/7/23	Interview	Caroline Bays, Watertown City Council, Councilor-at-Large; HHS Committee member
1/29/24	Community Forum	Approximately 50 participants in-person and others participating remotely
3/11/24	Focus Group	Elizabeth Brouillard, Clinical Director, Advocates CBHC Mary DeCoursey, Community Health Director, Mt. Auburn Hospital
3/29/24	Focus Group	Ernie Thebado, Assistant Recreation Director, Watertown Recreation Department Chief Ryan Nicholson, Chief of Watertown Fire Department Dr. Deanne Galdston, Superintendent, Watertown Public Schools Jesse Tang, Denver Remote Elementary Principal, Watertown Public Schools Stephanie Venizelos, Watertown Community Wellness Programs Manager Olivia Fields, Director of Resident Services, WHA Lydia McCoy, Watertown Director of Senior Services Patrick George, Watertown Veteran's Services Officer, ADA Coordinator, Liaison to Commission on Disability Abbey Myers, Watertown Public Health Director Kim Hewitt, Library Director, Watertown Free Public Library Rachel Kay, Member of Watertown School Committee and Commission on Disability

Date	Engagement	Attendee(s)
3/29/24	Focus Group	Trish Smith, CEO, Springwell Roberta Brown, Chair, Helen Robinson Wright Fund at the First Parish Charlyn Bethell, Board Member, Helen Robinson Wright Fund at the First Parish David Leo, Co-President, Marshall Home Fund Gary Beatty, Executive Director, Watertown Boys & Girls Club Athelia "Tia" Tilson, Executive Director, Watertown Community Foundation Captain Daniel Unsworth, Watertown Police Department
4/1/24	Interview	Laura Kurman, Senior Program Manager, Wayside Multi-Service Center Sophia Suarez-Friedman, Wayside Multi-Service Center Social Service Resource Specialist Clinician and Program Coordinator Maysa Ramos, Wayside Multi-Service Center Social Service Resource Specialist Clinician
4/10/24	Interview	Sophia Suarez-Friedman, Wayside Multi-Service Center Social Service Resource Specialist Clinician and Program Coordinator Olivia Fields, Director of Resident Services, WHA Patrick George, Watertown Veteran's Services Officer, ADA Coordinator, Liaison to Commission on Disability Stephanie Toyias, Community Outreach Counselor, Watertown Public Schools Jaimie Leonard, School Counselor, Watertown Public Schools Maysa Ramos, Wayside Multi-Service Center Social Service Resource Specialist Clinician Sheri Melenciano, Watertown Senior Case Manager Eli Miller, Jail Diversion Program Clinician, Watertown Police Department Lydia McCoy, Watertown Director of Senior Services Jill Fleteau, Watertown Jail Diversion Program Clinician
4/17/24	Interview	Laura Kurman, Senior Program Manager, Wayside Multi-Service Center Stephanie Sunderland-Ramsey, Watertown Youth Coalition Program Coordinator
4/24/24	Interview	Colleen Leger, Director of HHS, Town of Arlington
4/25/24	Interview	Michael Boudreau, Director of Public Health, Town of Natick
4/29/24	Interview	MaryAnn O'Conner, Director of Public Health, City of Medford Nina Nazarian, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office, City of Medford
5/2/24	Focus Group	8 veterans, 4 of whom were Watertown residents Patrick George, Watertown Veteran's Services Officer, ADA Coordinator
5/7/24	Interview	Samantha Stone, Woburn Assistant to the Mayor for Community Outreach and Communication

Date	Engagement	Attendee(s)
5/8/24	Focus Group	Five Watertown residents older than the age of 60 Lydia McCoy, Watertown Director of Senior Services
5/15/24	Focus Group	Watertown Commission on Disability Kim Charlson (Chair) John Hawes, Jr. (Commission Member) Cindy Wentz (Commission Member) Naomi Ridge (Commission Member) Rachel Kay (Commission Member) Carol Menton (Commission Member) Carol Wilson-Braun (Commission Member) Patrick George (ADA Coordinator)
5/20/24	Focus Groups	WHA Residents
5/30/24	Focus Group	Watertown Project Literacy
5/31/24	Interview	Olivia Fields, Director of Resident Services, WHA
6/3/24	Interview	Christina Lupica, Youth Engagement Specialist, Wayside Multi-Service Center
6/13/24	Interview	Laura Kurman, Senior Program Manager, Wayside Multi-Service Center
6/24/24	Interview	Sophia Suarez-Friedman, Watertown SSRS, Wayside Multi-Service Center
6/24/24	Interview	Tia Tilson, Executive Director, Watertown Community Foundation

Appendix 1.2. Community Forum Feedback Summary

On January 29, 2024, the City of Watertown, in collaboration with HMA, hosted a Community Forum for Watertown residents to attend at the Watertown Free Public Library. The event was attended by more than 50 individuals and included remote involvement from individuals who participated through video conferencing. Watertown residents and community partners shared their perspectives and concerns regarding the health and human services landscape in Watertown. Key themes and discussion points from the Community Forum are summarized below.

Housing Security

- Community members recognized poverty and housing conditions are underlying issues for discussion during the forum.
- It was noted that unlike Boston and Cambridge, Watertown lacks a homeless shelter, and individuals who need a place to stay must travel to other communities to receive the service.
- A participant expressed interest in seeing the process for accessing rent support (i.e., public housing, Section 8 vouchers) expedited.
- One participant suggested Watertown brainstorm how to incentivize landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers and to exceed regulatory requirements for Area Median Income (AMI) levels.
- Improving the sense of community among Housing Authority-owned properties was identified as a strategy to improve quality of life.
- The Marshall Home Fund was identified as a helpful resource for housing support. (Established in 2005, the fund is dedicated to preserving the social, physical, and emotional well-being of older adults in Watertown by awarding grants to local social service agencies and other nonprofit organizations.)

Food Security

- Several participants expressed that the food support programs run through the City of Watertown's Community Wellness Program are highly favorable and valuable to the community, particularly the Farmers' Market.
- Some community members noted that the Farmers' Market is seasonal, and there is community interest in accessing healthy, local foods year-round.
- SNAP and the Watertown Healthy Incentives Program support residents with access to fresh food.

- Participants expressed that Watertown’s Farmers’ Market can be elevated by addressing the price of food; improving awareness that food stamps are net-doubled; promoting the Healthy Incentives Program; reviewing transportation routes to ensure the Farmers’ Market is publicly accessible.

Service Awareness and Coordination

- The City of Watertown’s new Community Engagement Specialist and two Social Services Resource Specialists (funded at Wayside) were identified as key resources for sharing information and referring community members to health and human support services. There is a desire to enhance this and better understand how to do so.
- Several community members spoke favorably about the Free Public Library, particularly Project Literacy, a program located within the facility that offers free services to adults who are learning to read, write, and speak in English.
- One resident mentioned WHA has a resident services department that can provide space and facilitate collaboration among community members.
- The exercise classes offered at the Senior Center were identified as an asset to the community.
- The Watertown Community Foundation is a gathering point for many CBOs. The Watertown Community Foundation has connected organizations for 10 years, but greater awareness and community investment will help sustain the organization’s work.
- Participants expressed interest in having one central body/place to learn about Watertown services and resources.
- A participant suggested strengthening relationships with local programs and agencies, such as Perkins School for the Blind, to maximize opportunities to reach community members who have been historically underrepresented.
- One community member noted the benefits of LWW, a healthy community initiative.
- One resident shared they would like more people to be aware of the services provided by the Police and Fire Departments.
- Several participants said they would like to see an Office of Community Health and Social Services, or a Division within the Health Department.
- Project Literacy has made several referrals to Wayside, the Housing Authority, and the Boys and Girls Club.

- The City of Watertown is launching a 311 citizens' hotline in May 2024 and has been preparing for the launch by studying and learning from other City 311 programs (i.e., Boston has a 24/7 311 Call Center).
- One participant said they would be able to access more in-person events if Watertown provided daytime care during community programming.
- One resident expressed a desire to feel more empowered about knowing where to access health and receive services.
- Community members would like to see Watertown ensure consistency in access supports, (i.e., revolving doors) throughout the City, and to exceed ADA building code requirements.
- People who live on the outskirts of town would like community programming to occur in community spaces throughout the City and to expand beyond only at centralized locations.
- One resident would like the ice rink to be available for longer hours.

Communication

- The City of Watertown's new Community Engagement Specialist was identified as a key resource for sharing information about health and human support services.
- Social media (campaigns) were identified as a successful means of promoting information.
- Participants expressed the need for greater awareness and communication regarding the available at different locations in Watertown.
- One participant indicated a need for clearer expectations and accountability around the timeframes for when City departments follow through on requests.
- It was noted that public schools have liaisons to communicate with families and other relevant community partners.
- There was mention of language lines being used in other communities, and the desire for language lines to be available for the City Hall and Health Department in Watertown.
- One community member mentioned the need for more publicly available data to better understand the community's needs.
- Watertown Community Conversations was identified as a civic organization that helps facilitate dialogue. The group hosts "kitchen table conversations" in partnerships with elected officials or leaders in City government.

Employment Supports

- Participants expressed interest in Watertown providing more support for people seeking employment opportunities.
- One community member shared a desire for Watertown to help connect students to internships with life science organizations.
- One individual stated that they would like more employer training to help them better understand how to create available spaces and recruit and retain individuals with disabilities for jobs.
- Participants expressed interest in rebuilding relationships with vocational agencies now that COVID-19 public health emergency restrictions have been lifted.

Mobility and Transportation

- Several participants stated public transportation is a community strength and can be expanded to cover more territory. For example, transportation to Cambridge is great, but community members without cars would like to be able to access Watertown Square, the Post Office, and neighboring towns via public transit.
- A Transportation Needs Assessment will take place in the next few months, funded by AARP.
- One community member commented that they like living near CVS, Atrius Health, Target, and Best Buy locations.
- One individual identified a desire for easier access to restaurants and the Post Office.
- Several participants noted they would like attention to be given to improving the quality of sidewalks.

Safety

- One resident expressed a safety concern about walking at night because of the City's overnight parking restrictions.
- The Watertown Cambridge Greenway would benefit from more lighting.
- To ease concerns and fears about public safety, community members expressed a desire to be alerted when neighborhood crimes occur and undergo follow up with until the neighborhood is safe.
- One community member stated that street flooding is a problem and suggested that Watertown invest in storm water management.

- One community member voiced concerns about the accessibility challenges in relation to their living arrangements. For instance, individuals sometimes find themselves stuck on the second floor because of accessibility issues.
- A participant noted they would feel safer if better signage was placed along the Charles River for pedestrians and bikers.
- One resident identified overhead wires as a potential safety risk that should be addressed.

Other Needs

- One community member said Watertown would benefit from having a Community Health Center and more medical care providers.
- A participant stated that a Human Rights Commission has been newly established, but the services provided are unclear.

Brainstorming: Improvements and Investments

- Community members agreed that it would be helpful for new residents to receive a Watertown Welcome Packet with a list of health and human services.
- One participant expressed the desire for public composting.
- Participants expressed interest in more nature programs and quiet green space throughout the City.
- Some residents would like to see quicker development of community and connections, particularly more programs and dedicated spaces for teens.
- A participant indicated interest in Watertown having a public pool.
- One participant stated the quality of the tennis courts could be improved.
- One participant mentioned that more zoning regulations can help combat the loud outside noises and blares.
- The Watertown Pathway significantly enhances quality of life in Watertown. Its value will be further increased by facilitating boating activities and addressing congestion issues caused by multiple modes of transportation.
- Participants suggested encouraging social workers to hold office hours regularly at the Watertown Free Public Library.
- An individual suggested that Watertown offer free CPR classes.

Quality of Life

- Many community members said walking or biking along the Charles River promotes quality of life.
- Watertown boasts a multitude of citizen organizations and committees, reflecting residents' strong sense of community and engagement.
- Several participants stated Watertown Community Gardens promote quality of life.
- The Watertown Faire on the Square is a pleasurable local event that contributes to wellness.
- One participant said after school programs offered at Watertown Public Schools are a benefit of town life.

Appendix 1.3. Focus Group Feedback Summary – Community-Based Health Agencies

On March 11, 2024, HMA convened a focus group composed of representatives from CBOs that provide health services.

Attendees included the following individuals.

- Mary DeCoursey, Director of Community Health, Mt. Auburn Hospital
- Liz Brouillard, Clinical Director, Waltham Advocates CBHC
- Tyler Cote, Watertown Community Engagement Specialist
- Muriel Kramer, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
- Nicole Lovitch, Research Associate, Health Management Associates

Key discussion questions and responses from the focus group are summarized below.

Housing Security

What gaps or barriers do you see that make it difficult for your patients to obtain housing support services in Watertown?

- Patients lack an understanding of the process to apply for HHS support services (i.e., where and how to access forms, eligibility requirements, and language barriers).
- Advocates connect patients with shelters and housing applications.
- When completing a needs form, a participant indicated they are expelled from the system if an incorrect box is selected.
- Keeping up with housing costs affects peoples' health.
- During the pandemic, ED staff lacked the skills needed to help patients with housing issues. It was difficult to discharge patients from the ED knowing they have SDOH challenges (i.e., homelessness, recent eviction, limited affordable housing).
- Participants noted that the application process is overwhelming, and they are uncertain about the details involved in long-term follow up.

What was follow up occurred, if any?

- Metro Housing Boston assists patients in navigating resources and completing their applications. Although the hospital occasionally has social work interns conduct follow up, patients often fall through the cracks. To address this issue, the hospital is working to enhance the collection of follow-up data.

What might help address those gaps?

- These gaps can be addressed by having on-site coordinators, as the City of Waltham does.
- Navigational support and additional funding (i.e., state or federal programs to help increase household income, via SNAP or other subsidies) could help address these gaps.

Are there strengths in the system you have found?

- Smaller organizations succeed when Housing Specialist roles are in place.
- Metro Housing Boston also has on-site Housing Specialists at Mt. Auburn, which is a helpful resource.
- Without adequate funding, a hospital's impact is limited. People need protective, preventive resources.

Key Takeaways: Considerations on Housing Security

- Short-term housing supports may include: A housing referral source; information available at the Watertown Free Public Library and on Watertown's website; Potentially the ability for Watertown to have a Post Office box that people can use to follow up with their housing support applications (i.e., people who lose their job, move, and risk losing the connection to their application).
- Further explore Metro Housing Boston's role and partnership with the City of Watertown, specifically, how Watertown connects and leverages this resource.
- Best practice is to have a dedicated navigator for outreach with agencies and individuals.
- Outreach is more likely to be efficient when there is a connection to a resource that has navigators (i.e., Metro Housing Boston).
- The first step to strengthening a health service organization's system is to hire a dedicated resource person or compile a comprehensive resource repository. This information should be easily accessible via Watertown's website and potentially in-person at the Free Public Library, such as through a bulletin board or resource corner, as well as on the library's webpage.

Communication

Does your organization work with the City of Watertown to help your patients connect with health and human services?

- One participant was aware of the City's Community-Based Health Clinic and the Mobile Crisis Intervention Team that works with Watertown schools to educate students about accessing EMS.
- This was the first engagement Waltham Advocates had with Watertown. Advocates in Waltham covers 17 communities, and likes it when communities reach out to learn how to better help their residents.
- Patient portals are used to push information to patients.
- Social media channels are occasionally used to promote local events if they meet criteria. Sharing resources and communicating information to the community is a challenge.
- Mt. Auburn has community meetings in which social workers from Waltham Human Service agencies share resources and information, which is then shared with the hospital staff.
- The hospital also has a Human Service Residency Group for newly arrived immigrants to get connected with HHS services.
- One participant is involved in the SUD task force, specific to Watertown.
- A CBO representative said she was unaware of Watertown Community Conversations. This finding is meaningful because she was aware of similar services available in other local communities.

Is there a way that the City of Watertown could better communicate with your organization?

- Participants encourage the Watertown HHS City Department to start a conversation about the people they both see.
- Mt. Auburn has a Community Benefit Advisory Committee that meets quarterly to review community health, programming, and what other local communities are doing to help residents (i.e., information sharing).
- The community organization encourages Watertown's new City Health Director to connect.

Where do you go for information when you need to connect your patients to services in Watertown?

- One participant did not have a point of contact within Watertown.

Key Takeaways: Considerations on Communication

- Watertown's Community Engagement Specialist has an opportunity to conduct introduction meetings to demonstrate how social media are used to promote information.
- As an intermediate step, HMA suggests the key players continuously engage in conversations to learn from one another.
- HMA suggests including CBO resources in a Watertown HHS Resource Repository (ex. The Human Service Residency Group for newly arrived immigrants to get connected to HHS services).

Service Coordination

How might the City of Watertown more effectively and efficiently help your patients and families access health and human services? (i.e., 311 launch, co-location of services, coordination between case workers, website improvements).

- It is helpful to hold weekly social worker hours at the public library.
- Helpful resources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Active Watch are posted to Facebook pages in other communities. It gets people excited to see publicly accessible resources (i.e., posted online, printed to a bulletin board, distributed to therapists, etc.).
- Offer access points outside of a government agency.
- It is helpful when communities have a Resource Specialist under the HHS Department to work with the Council on Aging/Senior Center's Resource Specialist.

What are the resources you most often need for your patients?

- Food, housing, health insurance. The hospital has financial counselors.

Do you provide transportation supports?

- Advocacy organization provides transportation support to MassHealth beneficiaries.
- Mt. Auburn has a process in place to support transportation when it is a barrier for accessing medical care.

Key Takeaways: Considerations for Service Coordination

- It is imperative to have a single point of contact between Watertown and community-based health and human service organizations. This person should be responsive and well connected within Watertown to develop a larger system of needed support services.
- It is important to consider how in-person, virtual, and hybrid service coordination supports could present differently (i.e., language accessibility on social media posts, staffing for in-person office hours, etc.).

Food Security

Are you aware of partnerships between the City of Watertown and CBOs that provide food assistance services?

- One community organization is unaware of any existing partnerships.
- Another community organization partners with the City of Watertown to promote awareness about SNAP benefits and food vouchers.

How can the City of Watertown help your health organization help patients access food support services?

- Watertown can help promote the various supports offered by Advocates, including eligibility for different benefits and locations where people can use their food stamps outside of grocery stores or access health services. This information should be made available at food pantries and other sites where people use their benefits.
- A considerable gap exists between people who are eligible for SNAP and the Healthy Incentives Program and those who either are ineligible or do not know they are eligible. The City of Watertown provides support with this (i.e., help completing applications).
- The Waltham Fields Community Farm does work centered on providing food to residents.
- Hospitals are beginning to screen patients for SDOH needs and add this information to patient medical records. Providers can access these records and refer patients to available services through an internal posing process.

Key Takeaways: Considerations for Food Security

- Two-way communication will be important to ensure food assistance services are available, accessible, and delivered effectively.
- Finding out what questions are being asked by CBOs can inform Watertown's approach.

Employment Supports

Are you aware of Watertown employment support service opportunities promoted at your organization? If so, which ones?

- One CBO is unaware of this possibility because it rarely deals with employment support requests.
- One participant liked the idea of offering additional training opportunities for patients who might be interested in pursuing a career opportunity, but they are unsure if they meet all the requirements.
- One participant was unfamiliar with Watertown employment support services. However, the Workforce Development Team has identified many openings.
- Paid training programs are available, such as a feeder program for entry-level positions.
- One organization is also open to exploring resuming pre-pandemic opportunities, like hospital tours and rotations for high school students.

Are there initiatives at your agencies/ opportunities to outreach with Watertown/synergies to advance workforce development ideas?

- This is done through Advocates Corporate, located in Framingham.
- One participant would be able to inform Watertown about opportunities at Mt. Auburn. The hospital is also open to partnering with Watertown.

Key Takeaways: Considerations for Employment Supports

- Opportunities exist in other communities because they have established partnerships between CBOs and City Departments. Watertown may benefit from these opportunities by engaging with the CBOs.

Wrap Up

Is there a known community health and human service need that we have not touched on today?

- Many patients have varying immigration statuses and may be uninsured or have restricted coverage through the MassHealth Limited Plan.
- Language barriers, insurance barriers, and exposure to trauma hinder equitable access to services among community members.
- EMS services are insurance-agnostic, but the clinic is not. Advocates offer eight free therapy sessions to initiate access to mental health support services.
- There is a significant need for behavioral and mental health services.
- Because limited services are available, hospitals often discharge people knowing they are unable to go home safely. More help is needed to navigate access to services.
- The participants will connect offline to learn more about what the CBO is doing to help patients access health and human services.

Key Takeaways

- Watertown's homeless population is at risk of being removed from housing waitlists if their mailing addresses are inconsistent. These individuals often discharged from EDs directly to the streets. The Free Public Library could serve as a consistent mailing address and provide a viable solution.
- Watertown Public Library could be a leverage point for communications.
- Watertown's Community Wellness Program has established a rapport with CBOs, Watertown residents, and HHS leadership. There may be opportunities to expand the activities associated with the role and do more broadly.
- Mt. Auburn developed a SDOH survey as a tool to collect data. Watertown might want to learn what is included in the survey and adopt a similar or aligned strategy.
- Watertown should consider establishing an electronic or physical bulletin board and a resource document (in hand or online).
- Navigation support could include a list of available services, and navigation complex systems (i.e., transportation issue to farmer's market).

Appendix 1.4. Focus Group Feedback Summary – City of Watertown HHS Departments

On March 29, 2024, HMA convened a focus group comprised of representatives from the City of Watertown. Attendees included staff who intersect with health and human services broadly.

Attendees included the following individuals.

- Abbey Myers, Director of Public Health, Watertown Health Department
- Dr. Deanne Galdston, Superintendent, Watertown Public Schools
- Jesse Tang, Denver Remote Elementary Principal, Watertown Public Schools
- Ryan Nicholson, Chief of Watertown Fire Department
- Olivia Fields, Director of Resident Services, WHA
- Patrick George, VSO and ADA Coordinator
- Lydia McCoy, Director of Senior Services and Watertown’s Food Pantry
- Rachel Kay, Watertown Commission on Disabilities and School Committee member
- Kim Hewitt, Library Director, Watertown Free Public Library
- Ernie Thebado, Assistant Recreation Director, Recreation
- Stephanie Venizelos, Community Wellness Program Manager, Wellness Programs
- Muriel Kramer, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
- Tara Kelly, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
- Nicole Lovitch, Research Associate, Health Management Associates

Key discussion questions and responses from the focus group are summarized below.

Housing Security

Are you aware of gaps or barriers that prevent residents from obtaining housing support services in the community?

- One participant mentioned that residents face long waitlists and that retirees are being pushed out of Watertown because of affordability issues. They suggested exploring affordable housing trusts and accessory dwelling units, emphasizing that this is “the hardest problem we have to solve.”
- One participant said that to qualify for Housing Authority support services, residents must meet area median income eligibility requirements. This

expectation creates a gap for families who are ineligible for WHA support but cannot afford their own housing. As a result, residents are pushed out of Watertown, often to the Greater Boston area, despite wanting to stay in Watertown. The participant stated that lobbying for a state version of federal programs might minimize the affordable housing gap for Watertown residents.

What would you do to improve housing support services for City residents? What would that look like, recognizing it may take years, even decades, to achieve this result? Who do we need to engage and reach, and where?

- One participant proposed increasing navigators to support housing issues. They could help keep people from becoming homeless.
- One participant described the process of obtaining financial support as being pushed off a cliff and then having to beg for a hand to pull them up. They noted that residents face numerous obstacles and bureaucratic hurdles, as they must travel from Watertown, where their support systems are based, to Cambridge or Boston to access these essential services.
- Another participant emphasized that both individuals and families living "on the edge" and those without stable housing could greatly benefit from the support of Social Service Resource Specialists. They also mentioned that though the Senior Center plays a crucial role in stabilizing residents, it operates with limited funding.
- One participant highlighted the need for a homeless shelter in Watertown, noting that many homeless people frequently visit the library due to a lack of awareness about available resources. This individual also noted the stigma surrounding seeking homelessness support services.

Given the Watertown's strengths, what would be a constructive next step? What is the first step Watertown could take to build foundational resources?

- Location was identified as a potential starting point because people come to events at the library but avoid those at the center of town.
- One suggestion was to merge the programming from the West End's Lexington Garden Learning Center with the Learning Center under redevelopment in the East End and integrating the programming in the City. The facilities are used three days per week. The Family Center offers music engagement classes, and Wayside does afterschool programming at both Learning Center locations.

Key Takeaways: Considerations on Housing Supports

- HHS department leaders described affordable housing as a priority and an underlying cause of other community needs.
- HHS department leaders also expressed concern for residents who are ineligible for Watertown housing support services but cannot afford housing without this assistance. As a result, they are pushed out of Watertown, where their support systems are and where they want to live.

Communication

How does your department promote its services to the community? Are there other ways you would like to improve communication with the community about your department's services?

- A participant explained that updates about Senior Center activities are communicated through various channels, including weekly emails, monthly newsletters, flyers, posters, and active social media pages, such as the Food Pantry's and Senior Center's Facebook pages.
- A participant identified the Watertown website and the Watertown calendar as a central location for Watertown departments to share information. It is managed by Watertown's Communications Team. If one department receives a communication, it will be shared to all departments through a centralized resource, such as the City calendar.
- One participant said the social services section is buried on the website and is difficult to access.
- A participant shares resources with a City Councilor with the hopes that updates are made to the website, such as improved interactivity (i.e., Q&As, feedback).
- One participant added that all departments have a Facebook page and social media that the City of Watertown shares. The participant likes Facebook because it is a place to reach active seniors in the community, and said they are still learning how to use social media as a learning tool to bridge communication.
- One participant said a Watertown Parents group is on Facebook.
- One participant reported that 311 is adding language to help residents navigate where to access information.
- The group raised 311 as a topic of discussion. The goal is for the 311 program to become the go-to point for service coordination across City departments and community organizations. One participant triages phone calls to the City's main line because he is the first point of contact.

- The group identified how other communities have a community service button on their website or phone number to call.
- Watertown HHS Department leaders believe adding directionality for accessing services would be helpful for new residents and people who may not have previously experienced food insecurity, for example.
- One department leader stated that the website is difficult to navigate and suggested: (1) hiring human service navigators to point people in the right direction, and (2) hiring a user experience person to restructure the City's website with user-friendly language.
- Similarly, another participant shared they want the Public Schools to become more integrated with the City of Watertown HHS. They believe the school's website is challenging, and it is difficult to find a list of teachers.
- Department leaders highlighted the importance of considering the increasing population of people for whom English is a secondary language. One participant said City employees who speak the same language as residents can translate conversations while the City works on a proposal to add language services.
- The WHA prepared a Language Access Plan (LAP) to assist the agency in ensuring meaningful access to individuals with limited English proficiency in relation to its housing programs. The WHA has a contract with Bay State Interpreters, which provides services as requested. These services are funded through the Housing Authority's budget, which differs from the City's. Translation services are a significant barrier to receiving information and gaining awareness of services other departments provide.

Key Takeaways: Considerations on Communication

- Common sources of information sharing include social media, particularly Facebook, Watertown's website, the City's calendar, and the Free Public Library.
- The group would like the City website to be updated to become more user-friendly.
- 311 ideally will become the go-to contact for residents who need support with navigating City and community services.
- Translation services and navigation services were identified as areas for enhancement.

Service Coordination

How might implementing a no-wrong-door approach to an intake and referral system look? What opportunities exist to think differently about programmatic silos and how services are delivered?

- One participant stated that everyone knows each other through meetings. For example, the City of Watertown's HHS staff meet monthly to share resources and discuss how departments can collaborate, which makes it possible to have warm handoffs that facilitate a seamless transition.
- The Community Foundation hosts hybrid meetings every two months as a touchpoint for people to come together, share information, and build their networks. The Community Foundation funds services across the City, so turnout is large.
- One person identified food access and interpreter services as priority needs, whereas Watertown Public Schools called for wraparound services and a centralized process to identify needs and connect people with appropriate services.

Key Takeaways: Considerations for Service Coordination

- City department leaders have relationships with one another to facilitate warm handoffs for residents seeking support services. In-person meetings help maintain these connections.
- Language barriers can be addressed by investing in more translation services so residents with limited English proficiency can access all services, not just the ones that have translators.

Food Security

How can the Watertown's food support programs be enhanced and expanded to increase their impact on community health?

- A participant mentioned that though the goal is to provide free food year-round, the resources are seasonal. Residents have expressed a desire for more farmers markets, but challenges such as limited space for a winter market and a constrained workforce make this fulfilling this need difficult. These programs are state funded.
- The library helps with outreach, so this space is frequently used to host Teaching Kitchen, Food Is Medicine, and other nutrition programs.
- A participant said that Watertown collaborates with Project Bread and WIC. An opportunity is available to build out the infrastructure of existing programs, such as creating a food access working group.
- Communities that have done well with Metropolitan Area Planning Council technical assistance include Lynn, Somerville, Cambridge, and Arlington.
- A participant said the schools have worked with the Greater Boston Food Bank to offer weekly food banks in schools for families, seniors, and all residents to

attend. It is an opportunity to form partnerships. The participant also mentioned the School Gardens as another partnership program between the City and the Public Schools.

Key Takeaways: Considerations for Food Security

- Opportunities exist to strengthen partnerships within and across Watertown to optimize resources that address building space and workforce gaps.
- Learn and leverage the success of food wellness and support programs in other communities to enhance Watertown's current efforts.

Employment Supports

Are you aware of Watertown employment support service opportunities promoted at your organization? If so, which ones?

- One participant described hybrid and flexible schedules that increase opportunities for working individuals with disabilities, especially during the pandemic.
- One participant said some work requires commuting or performing tasks in-person, so remote work is not always an option.
- One participant noted a list of local employers that hire people with disabilities is available.
- A participant proposed promoting opportunities in high-traffic areas, such as central locations that people frequently pass by, like one-stop shops in the heart of town.
- One participant recognized that for low-income families, connections between the City and the WHA are critical pathways to access support services. Local agencies become a point of contact and the impact of securing a job has a positive, wide impact (i.e., rent stabilization, affordable housing, food access).
- A participant explained that the schools offer many opportunities for students beyond the college route, including: career technical education pathways, Chapter 74 programs, vocational, engineering, culinary, radio broadcasting, construction, etc.

How are these opportunities communicated to Watertown residents?

- Watertown residents hear about opportunities through word of mouth.
- The group said the website is updated to reflect available opportunities.
- Opportunities outside of the schools should be explored, but translators or interpreter services may be needed to support students with limited English proficiency.

Key Takeaways: Considerations for Employment Supports

- The schools promote various pathways for students to explore career opportunities, and there is consensus to explore additional opportunities to promote employment and student internships outside of schools.
- Consider the target population, where they are most likely to be reached, and what they may need to succeed in their roles (i.e., consider leveraging translator services, in-person posters at the library, etc.)

Wrap Up

What might you do better in Watertown?

- One participant suggested strengthening communications and navigator services, creating physical space for what the City of Watertown does not have space for and tapping into new opportunities outside of the public sector.
- One participant explained that while the City cannot alter the legal definition of affordable housing, it can offer alternative incentives to attract new residents to Watertown. This person noted that many people dream of living in Massachusetts cities but are forced to move out of state because of high housing costs. Additionally, developers often lack incentives to keep housing rates affordable in the current market.
- One participant wants to see coordination for the regulatory side to inform referral pathways (i.e., Wayside or the WHA) and a centralized database to refer people to services. This participant also said that the City of Watertown tries to coordinate with the private sector but indicates a better job could be done to share resources and information. This participant identified the greatest needs are housing, medical care, and vaccinations.
- One participant proposed hiring a physician assistant or similar professional to administer vaccinations in schools. The goal is for schools to provide in-house vaccinations rather than relying on external agencies.

- LWW offers free educational programs and resources to residents of all ages through its partner network. LWW's gardening program is widely attended, and the organization is seeking to establish more collaborative partnerships. It is working on a community service club program where students use the food pantry to prepare meals for seniors at the Senior Center.
- One person suggested strengthening communication with medical organizations by adding a list of local agencies to the City's website.
- Mt. Auburn is opening a site later this year, which may be used as a primary care or urgent care center, providing an outreach opportunity.
- The Parker was mentioned as a space to house and expand human services, and be a hub for the City, like the Senior Center. WIC, HeadStart, and the Family Center also are located in the Parker.

Key Takeaways

- A gap is present between residents who meet eligibility requirements for support services and those who do not. Likewise, there is an opportunity to increase education about available supports.
- There are improvement opportunities to more efficiently and effectively communicate information, such as upgrading the City website to improve the user experience, providing more widely available translation services to communicate with at-risk families, and developing a centralized data-sharing resource for referrals.

Appendix 1.5. Focus Group Feedback Summary – Community-Based Human Services Agencies

On March 29, 2024, HMA convened a focus group composed of representatives from CBOs that provide human services.

Attendees included the following individuals.

- Trish Smith, CEO, Springwell
- Gary Beatty, Executive Director, Watertown Boys and Girls Club
- Tia Tilson, Executive Director, Watertown Community Foundation
- Roberta Brown, Chair, Helen Robinson Wright Foundation
- Charlyn Bethell, Helen Robinson Wright Charitable Fund
- David Leon, Co-President, Marshall Home Fund
- Captain Daniel Unsworth, Captain of the Watertown Police Department
- Muriel Kramer, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
- Tara Kelly, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
- Nicole Lovitch, Research Associate, Health Management Associates

Key discussion questions and responses from the focus group are summarized below.

Housing Security

Are you aware of gaps or barriers that prevent residents from obtaining housing support services in the community?

- One community organization highlighted the gap in support services for immigrant families moving to Watertown and their significant need for assistance.
- One participant noted that attitudes toward community changes vary based on residents' age and background. They explained that younger residents, including children of immigrants, often have different perspectives than lifelong residents, who may be more resistant to changes in their community.

What would you do to improve housing support services for City residents? What would that look like, recognizing it may take years, even decades, to achieve this result(s)? Who do we need to engage and reach, and where?

- One participant said data should be collected to inform gaps and define the needs. She explained that the City is looking to create policy intervention to support long-term housing availability regarding changes to zoning regulations. Furthermore, this individual said accessory dwelling units can increase the supply of housing.
- To deal with short-term issues, a participant noted that people call asking how to use their housing vouchers. Aside from directing them to Metro West Housing Development, this individual mentioned an opportunity to explore direct cash payments or places to use rental vouchers beyond what Metro West currently offers.
- A participant mentioned a resource that provides close to \$600 per month in direct cash payments. Impact statements explain how community members used the funds, such as to pay their rent. Although COVID-19 funds have been used to supply of direct cash payments, this money will eventually be depleted.
- A CBO representative described the need for emergency assistance to people in need of housing. Despite an increase in funds to match higher costs of living, this individual described a need for more funding to sustain the duration of support services offered.
- One participant called for mindfulness and consideration that people can find themselves in a bad situation for a variety of reasons. They identified challenges for new immigrant families and related to mental health conditions and substance use disorders.
- One participant explained that residents are connected to services through the City department's clinicians. If the clinicians are unavailable, a Social Service Resource Specialist from Wayside will take over. For example, a clinician might work with a resident dealing with SUD for several months. If it becomes apparent that the individual is struggling to find housing because of past justice involvement, the department will address this issue by navigating loopholes to help the person secure housing. Additionally, the clinician will follow up to ensure a smooth transition and that the resident is adjusting and getting along with neighbors.
- A participant identified a need for accessible housing for older adults who are ready to reenter the community but need help finding appropriate housing.
- A representative of another community organization followed up by suggesting that what we think of as affordable may differ from the market rate and legal definition.

- One participant would like to see short-term support services around inclusionary zoning, calling for a robust program or service to provide landlord-tenant counseling, support cost-burdened families at risk of eviction, navigation services, etc.
- Rent control was discussed, and philanthropy organizations want to understand their role in addressing rent control and support services.

Key Takeaways: Considerations on Housing Security

- There is a community need to better understand and address what affordable housing is, what supports are available and how to access them, and what supports can be added or enhanced to support people on the cusp of qualifying for assistance.
- Legal counseling and education for short-term support services could benefit families in need.
- It may be beneficial to assess the community's attitudes toward immigrant families to ensure that all residents feel welcomed, supported, and empowered to access available resources.

Communication

Does your organization work with the City of Watertown to help your clients connect to health and human services?

- There was mention of wanting a citywide calendar that includes City Council meetings, monthly meetings of philanthropic and community human service organizations, etc.
- One participant said older adults may have a limited access to online communications and suggested that they be reached via the Council on Aging paper newsletter, postal mail, and word of mouth.
- Another participant said central posting would be helpful in spreading awareness of the services available and of new organizations.

Is there a way that the City of Watertown could communicate with your organization and your clients better?

- The library was identified as a central service hub.
- Several participants said their list of contacts is horrible, so a resource indicating who to call when you need support would be helpful.
- A participant mentioned that she would like the opportunity to opt out from communications, instead of opting in, regarding the car excise tax bill, acknowledging this will have diminishing returns.

- One participant suggested packaging resources or using welcome wagons to inform new residents of services offered in Watertown.
- Another person suggested adding messaging to bus stops, the bank's ticker tape and a rolling feed for Watertown's Cable Access channel.

Key Takeaways: Considerations on Communication

- Ensure websites are user-friendly and create a mechanism to connect people to the right services based on the key players within a space or hub.
- There is a desire to form new partnerships and collaborate but limited knowledge of who to contact.
- Invite more organizations to add meetings and events to the City calendar.

Service Coordination

How might the City of Watertown more effectively and efficiently help your patients and families access health and human services (i.e., 311 launch, co-location of services, coordination between case workers, website improvements)? How do service coordination staff (i.e., Senior Services Case Manager, Veteran Services Officer, SSRS, etc.) collaborate to provide services to residents?

- The group said block grants are given to Springwell, Wayside, and Marshall Home Fund, but they want a more efficient way to coordinate than knocking on each other's doors.
- A representative of a CBO shared that Wayside's Social Service Resource Specialists know how to connect people, and this service should be more heavily advertised so people know this exists.
- One community leader mentioned that the food pantry is accessible to everyone, and the Community Fridge operates several locations throughout the Greater Boston area; however, resources deplete quickly, so the shelves are not always stocked. Two families from the church dedicate a few hours to restocking, but the supplies are often exhausted soon thereafter.
- A participant suggested that money from the opioid class action lawsuits will be leveraged for the next 20 years, and the goal is to communicate resources to community members. A task force was formed, and funding will be used to fill a gap by hiring a recovery coach or outreach worker.
- One participant said the police, social services, and clinicians help people during a crisis, but follow up is difficult because of competing emergencies.
- Another participant noted that specific guidelines govern the use of the funds.

Key Takeaways: Considerations for Service Coordination

- Follow up with philanthropies to learn more about how funds are sourced and allocated.
- Research best practices to strategize how to optimize spending incoming funds, including services, staffing, and promotional pathways.
- Consider ways to leverage Watertown's strengths, such as sense of community, to ensure historically marginalized populations are empowered to access appropriate services.

Food Security

What are the biggest issues?

- Food insecurity was also highlighted because, though it may be less prominent, it has a significant impact.
- The Community Foundation provides funds to the Boys and Girls Club to provide health snacks during the afterschool program and a summer camp program. Other clubs have a functioning kitchen, but Watertown's does not.
- The Boys and Girls Club has been tapped to provide resources to families, increase family engagement, address language barriers (specifically, hire someone who speaks Portuguese) and/or offer citywide interpreter services. There was a call for mindfulness around legal restrictions and sensitivities around this topic.
- The public school provides lunches with state funding.
- A request was voiced to have the food pantry open more days per week.

What spaces are available?

- The Parker was identified as a fully renovated space where the City could move social services offices.
- A participant mentioned that space is not currently an issue for their organization, as a church provides ample accommodations. Additionally, the City is in the process of relocating and consolidating City spaces at a partner school.
- The City will be bringing in food support services and closer connections with the wellness coordinator to improve access, programming, and space for these services. There was also a suggestion to add a soup kitchen.
- A participant said the Methodist Church would love to offer a Community Kitchen, but community willingness and support would be required.
- A participant said Sacred Heart Church offers a soup kitchen on Thursdays and the City food pantry on Tuesdays, but both programs struggle to keep shelves

stocked and neither keeps track of demographics. As a result, people who may qualify for support are ineligible to receive assistance without this information.

- The food block grant would support food pantries that can verify their population meets the threshold to receive support.
- The City's intent was to avert administrative barriers or personal questions that might prevent people from accessing food supports.

What can be done to make the impact greater?

- The group agreed that collecting data is important to make the case to funders.
- Another suggestion was to consider options that are not based on income, allowing people in need to receive assistance without eligibility restrictions.
- A participant called out that there has been a shift in thinking over the years, alluding to a story about a homeless person asking for money, and giving it to them to allow them to meet their needs as they see fit.

Key Takeaways: Considerations for Food Security

- Offering food during school-related programming helps close this gap, but it is a sensitive topic, and more resources can be provided to families that are navigating food insecurity challenges.
- For example, citywide interpreter services could bridge a communication gap, and, in turn, connect people with food supports.
- Collect data on event programming, learn about ways the data can be leveraged to receive more funding, and strategize to most efficiently apply the money to improve community health outcomes.

Wrap Up

What do you think is a possible first step?

- There were suggestions to start with food support services, convene a task force to decide, educate the community and vulnerable populations, address levers for change and political barriers, and initiate zoning changes.
- The group identified substance use and mental health as the biggest issues. They specified how school-age children are impacted by mental health challenges and are behind on education.

Key Takeaways

- Consider how to increase awareness around affordable housing, available supports, and strategies to ensure no one who needs help is excluded from receiving aid.

- Examples include legal counseling, affordable housing educational campaigns, and hiring navigators to help connect people to appropriate resources.
- Translation services can reach part of the Watertown communities who experience challenges but are not plugged into supports. Addressing one barrier (i.e., communication) can help people learn about other services available to address other needs.
- Leverage community relationships and discuss opportunities to collaborate to maximize limited resources and reach diverse audiences (i.e., hosting a meeting in a similar organization's space and inviting both groups to attend).
- Collect service utilization data to justify budget needs.

Appendix 1.6. Focus Group Feedback Summary – Veterans

On May 2, 2024, HMA convened a focus group composed of armed services veterans. The focus group met at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 1105 located at 215 Mt. Auburn Street.

Attendees included:

- A total of eight participants, four of whom were Watertown residents
- Patrick George, Watertown Veteran’s Services Officer, ADA Coordinator, and Liaison to the Commission on Disability
- Tara Kelly, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
- Kirsten Bryan, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates

Key discussion topics are summarized below.

Discussion

What would this focus group like to see more of regarding HHS?

- Inventory of all classrooms to check that all the flags are properly displayed
- Invite veterans to speak with the classes

How do veterans groups interact with other organizations?

- Veterans speak with high school and middle school students on Memorial Day
- One member mentioned that the town has 113 classrooms without a flag displayed. Veterans mentioned interested seeing this changed.

Where do veterans go when you need help accessing services and benefits for veterans? Who helps you access veterans’ services?

- US Department of Veterans Affairs. VA centers are located in West Roxbury, Bedford, and Boston.
- Services are accessed through Watertown Veteran’s Services Officer and include support with processing administrative documents, benefits for injuries sustained during active duty and more. Services are dependent on status (e.g., recently discharged, retired).
- Other members of the VFW have been critical in educating returning veterans about their benefits. Peers have played an important role in helping veterans access services.

What has been your experience using or accessing veterans' services?

- No problems cited in Watertown. The Watertown Veterans Services Officer comes to meetings and is easily accessed.

Have you used Watertown's veterans' services? If so, for what?

- One participant answered yes and needed to process a DD-214 form to access education benefits, and the representative was able to assist.
- One participant answered yes and needed support with unemployment. The representative help find jobs and make recommendations.

Do you need help accessing veterans' benefits and/or services?

- This group has been well-educated by each other.

Are there any services that you wish were offered that are not currently available (through Watertown)?

- Several participants expressed a desire for tax breaks for all veterans, not just those who are disabled. They suggested implementing tax benefits for everyone who served or age-related tax reductions for veterans.

Do you know of any other towns that do this?

- Like Watertown, Marlboro provides real estate tax incentives to veterans.
- Watertown provides a tax abatement matching program and utilizes the veteran disability rating through the VA to determine property tax abatement value.

How does Watertown conduct outreach and find veterans (e.g., if someone is being discharged in the area)

- Watertown Veterans Services Officer said that Watertown does not receive notices from Massachusetts directly but does get the information when a veteran fills out the City census. The Veteran's Services Officer also mentioned they conduct outreach through Memorial and Veterans Day event, and other ad hoc events. They provide up-to-date information on the website for events, and services such as Watertown veterans-related benefits.

What has been your experiencing accessing other health and human services in Watertown? Which services have you tried to access?

- One participant stated he is using VA directly and has not needed to access services through Watertown.

Is there a dedicated resource that helps Watertown's Veteran's Services Officer apply for grants (e.g., state funding)

- There is not a designated resource that helps; however, the City of Watertown is contemplating hiring a grant writer.

Do you have a go-to community resource or contact to get information on available services? Is it offered through the City of Watertown?

- Watertown's Veteran's Services Officer
- Online
- Direct outreach to the City Councilors

What would help you become more aware of the services available?

- Overall, participants felt informed about available services, but expressed concerns that younger, returning veterans might need additional guidance on where to go and whom to contact for assistance.
- Participants highlighted the efforts of the Veteran's Services Officer to conduct outreach.

Are there any services that are unavailable to you that you would like access?

- Tax breaks for veterans.
- If someone wants a flag, they can just get one and there is funding.
- Affordable housing and tax breaks.

Are you familiar with Wayside and the services they offer?

- Some participants were unfamiliar with Wayside.

Other feedback received

- One participant expressed disappointment that a pool was not installed in the new high school, despite the tax increase. The veteran noted that children would benefit from learning swimming skills, which were valuable in their military service.
- A participant stated that several nonprofits run different programs through the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Disabilities, but shortfalls have occurred in the past.
- One participant said that the Watertown Library has been positive and welcoming and runs a program on disabilities once a month. The Farmers' Market is very nice, and the Senior Center offers good programming.
- One participant stated that he thinks that veterans are treated well in Watertown and that the City has strong, active veterans' groups.

- A participant stated that finding affordable housing for people with disabilities was a challenge for a family member. This individual said that projects are years down the line, and there is a critical need for affordable housing. Participants said they have not heard anything about affordable housing/resources. One participant talked about offering special set-asides for people with disabilities (number of units, etc.). Participants mentioned that people in other communities have been able to get grants and zoning concessions to make it work.
- A participant would like to see the budget increased for grants awarded to veterans' service organizations. Grants would help improve the post (e.g., install ramps for people with special needs or who use wheelchairs to solve an access challenge).

Appendix 1.7. Focus Group Feedback Summary – Older Adults

On May 8, 2024, HMA convened a focus group composed of Watertown older residents at the Watertown Senior Center.

Attendees included:

- Five Senior Center participants
- Lydia McCoy, Watertown Director of Senior Services
- Tara Kelly, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
- Kirsten Bryan, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates

Key discussion questions and responses are summarized below.

Discussion

Where do you go when you need help accessing services and benefits?

- All participants noted that the Senior Center is their main point of entry to access services and benefits.
- Participants shared examples of the support they have received from the Senior Center, including assistance with moving to Massachusetts, help with health insurance, and access to community activities.
- Participants noted that they were well connected to the Senior Center and knew to reach out based on previous experience, but they highlighted that not all seniors living in Watertown may be familiar with the available services.
- All participants noted that staff are readily available to support and have a broad range of information because of excellent cross training, so they can always support on site.

Who helps you access services? Do you need help accessing benefits and/or services? Do you have a go-to community resource or contact to get information on available services?

- Participants noted that many residents do not know you can reach out to the Senior Center for many types of support.
- Gap: Many seniors in the town do not come to the Senior Center, and the group felt that more may need to be done to engage people who have difficulty leaving their homes.

- Recommendation: The monthly Senior Center newsletter should be widely distributed because it contains a lot of helpful information. Currently it is available at various locations in town including City Hall, the library, local banks, faith-based groups, assisted living centers, the Post Office, and online.
- The group noted the benefit of the weekly email that Senior Center staff sends to highlight programs taking place the following week.

Transportation for Seniors

- Need for more accessible transportation. Many seniors are uncomfortable with the current options, including GoGo Senior Pilot.
- Many do not qualify for the Ride.
- Accessing the bus stop (due to proximity) is challenging.
- Participants requested a resource to help seniors recycle furniture and other household items.
- Participants request different types of groups to help seniors socialize, including a men's health dinners or men's discussion groups.
- Participants requested tax support for seniors.

Appendix 1.8. Focus Group Feedback Summary – Watertown Commission on Disability

On May 15, 2024, HMA participated in a meeting of the Watertown Commission on Disability.

Attendees included the following individuals.

- Kim Charlson, Commission Chairperson
- John Hawes, Jr., Commission Member
- Cindy Wentz, Commission Member
- Naomi Ridge, Commission Member
- Rachel Kay, Commission Member
- Carol Menton, Commission Member
- Carol Wilson-Braun, Commission Member
- Patrick George, Watertown Veteran's Services Officer, ADA Coordinator, Liaison to Commission on Disability
- Rob Buchanan, Associate Principal, Health Management Associates
- Kirsten Bryan, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates

Key discussion questions and responses from the focus group are summarized below.

Discussion

Where do Watertown residents go when they need help accessing services?

- People working in the disability field noted limited direct collaboration with the City. Instead, many state agencies and nonprofits are more focused on specific issues related to disabilities.

Which organizations are you referencing?

- Watertown has four disability-focused organizations: Perkins School has been in existence for 200 years and present in Watertown for 110 years; DEAF, Inc., established in Watertown one year ago; United Cerebral Palsy; and the Alzheimer's Association.

- The nonprofits and state agencies that have a presence in Watertown: MassAbility (formerly Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission); Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living (includes new neighbor DEAF, Inc.). This commission is the point of reference that people would know to contact through outreach to the ADA Coordinator.

Where do we think of when we are thinking of who helps with human service needs?

- Watertown has contributed to a fund that will expand staffing at the multi-service center for human services. This contribution has allowed a previously part-time position to become full-time, continuing through the multi-service agency (Wayside).

Are you aware of gaps or barriers that prevent residents from obtaining support services in the community (supportive of people and families of individuals with disabilities)

- Participants know who to contact via state agency.
- One participant observed that though many services are available for children and older adults with disabilities, there appears to be a gap for middle-aged individuals. They noted that this age group, which often is still caring for others, lacks adequate support services.
- Another participant highlighted the difficulty in finding mental health support. They mentioned that if they were starting from scratch, they wouldn't know who to contact for help.

What has been your experience accessing other HHS services in Watertown? Which services?

- One participant mentioned that they now know where to go for help, but it took years to build this knowledge. They noted that someone who recently developed a disability or newcomers to town likely would have difficulty locating assistance.
- People with disabilities encounter many barriers, including low awareness of services, limited web accessibility, or lack of familiarity with whom to call. Not everyone can go on the web and browse and find answers, visit the library, etc.
- Perkins's Braille and Talking Book Library has been an accessible resource.
- One member said people who are new to the town who might have limited English proficiency and have a disability may be unable to speak for themselves.

Some cities and towns will have an LAP. Do any cities and towns have a disability access plan that speaks to some of the points raised?

- Champion for reasonable accommodation across agencies.
- Trying to work on a reasonable accommodation statement.
- Interested in pursuing more education for leadership of the town.
- For example, if [an individual with a disability] wants to attend an event but needs an interpreter or if the event is held in a place that is inaccessible (no audio description or guides for people who have blindness), the lack of accommodation is a significant barrier in so many ways. If someone needs mental health counseling and is deaf, an interpreter needs to be provided. Support is needed in screenings to identify these challenges and provide solutions.
- The library has a book delivery service for people with disabilities, but it is hard to find that information.
- The City of Boston and City of Cambridge may have more language accessibility plans, as they have paid staff and directors.
- The concept of universal design and access can be a game changer in intentionally designing access instead of retrofitting. Universal design would be a wonderful objective and shining goal.

Final Comments

- The group noted that four surrounding towns model best practices, including (1) Newton, (2) Boston, (3) Cambridge, and (4) Somerville. Watertown wants to be #5 on this list. All four towns have ADA Coordinators dedicated to the role, and Boston has a fully staffed Commission on Disabilities.
- So many resources are available. Watertown wants to ensure people have access to these resources.

Appendix 1.9.I Focus Group Feedback Summary – Housing Authority Residents

On May 20, 2024, HMA participated in a meeting of residents of the Watertown Housing Authority.

Attendees included:

- 10 Watertown residents from Joyce Munger Apartments
- One resident and the Vice President of the Local Tenant Organization
- Olivia Fields, Director of Resident Services, WHA
- Tara Kelly, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
- Nicole Lovitch, Research Associate, Health Management Associates

Key discussion questions and responses are summarized below.

Discussion

Where do you go when you need help accessing services and benefits?

- One participant mentioned contacting the health insurance company to check which medications were approved.
- Participants described Ms. Fields from the Housing Authority as a valuable resource for mental health support, venting, and social engagement.
- Many participants rely on and trust word-of-mouth recommendations.
- Participants indicated that the Senior Center offers arts and crafts activities, bus services for food shopping, trips to the Burlington Mall, and the Farmers' Market.
 - Many people thought free produce would be available at the Farmers' Market, but it mainly promotes SNAP benefits.
 - CSA bags are a HIP benefit but sometimes contain unwanted items.
 - Prices at the market are often too high.
 - There are recurring vendors, and one is particularly kind.
- GoGo Grandparent provides two free round trips and offers assistance from a person (not a computer) to book rides. The fee is flexible based on income.
- One resident shared that her family goes to the VA when issues arise.

Who helps you access services? Do you need help accessing benefits and/or services?

- Limited advertising is directed at new residents, leaving many families unsure of where to turn.

What has been your experience accessing other health and human services in Watertown? Which services?

- When dealing with issues like domestic violence or substance and alcohol use, police and first responders often lack training in de-escalation and may intervene in ways that exacerbate the situation, such as making arrests. This can negatively impact the person's health and lead to further complications within the justice system.
- One participant enjoys the benefits of the Farmers' Market and the Senior Center.
- The library offers free movies on Monday nights.
- One participant prefers walking for health with a friend and has a Senior Pass for \$30, so she finds the GoGo app unnecessary.
- Food pantries often have long lines, but their efforts to be accommodating are greatly appreciated.
- Parker School may be less accessible than the church. It has daytime care but lacks a parking lot. Additionally, the food provided through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is less than ideal; it includes pasta, sauce, junk food, rice, and bread but no fresh produce.
- Accessing services can be challenging, including getting connected to WiFi. One participant suggested switching to Verizon, noting the presence of Verizon cell towers. Transportation options also need to be considered, such as bus routes and Ubers. It would be helpful to know what services are available to better identify what assistance is needed.

Do you have a go-to community resource or contact to get information on available services?

- Several participants mentioned that their primary source for help and information is Ms. Fields at the WHA.
- Participants expressed a willingness to use the Watertown website but need guidance on navigating it.
- Although the library offers tech classes, participants prefer one-on-one assistance. They need someone to demonstrate and allow practice to ensure they are grasping all the steps involved.
- Monthly flyers and drop-off notices are used to promote resources and events.
- Watertown News is available as a digital platform for computers.
- A participant recalled using the Boys and Girls Club when their children were younger.

- Much of the town's information is shared on social media (e.g., Facebook), while the Housing Authority uses postal mail, phone calls, and social media.
- One participant prefers traditional methods of communication and feel that modern social media updates aren't as relevant to me. I'm accustomed to how things were when I was growing up and feel that my input may not align with current preferences.

What would help you become more aware of the services available?

- Participants want insights to help boost attendance at the TLO.
- There is a need for a user-friendly Watertown website where organizations and departments can post updates, similar to an online newsletter.

Are there any services you wish were offered that are not currently available?

- More training focused on post-9/11 veterans is needed, as current services are often geared towards Vietnam veterans. Young soldiers returning home with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) face different challenges, and though the VFW offers camaraderie, the experiences and ages of members vary. Some posts have closed due to declining participation.
- It would be beneficial to have a board to promote materials, especially near the new apartments on Main Street, including job postings and community events.
- New residents are supposed to receive a Welcome Packet, but it is unclear whether this actually happens, and many newcomers are unaware of the available services.
- The Affordable Connectivity Program ended last month. One participant indicated \$250 per month goes toward phone, internet, and cable service. UnitedHealthcare Senior Options offers \$120 per month for food, medicine, rent, or utilities. Residents of Joyce Munger Apartments do not pay for utilities. Recently, RCN reduced Affordable Connectivity Program benefits, leading to a \$120 in savings, but there is no option to bundle internet and phone services.

Are there any services that are unavailable to you that you would like access?

- Expensive TVs greatly enhance quality of life, so I'd like to see more advocacy for programs that benefit elderly individuals with disabilities.
- Upcoming changes to the Watertown Square bus routes will relocate stops to a potentially dangerous intersection, raising safety concerns among residents. Additionally, a large tree may be removed, and new buildings could rise to five stories, which might be less desirable for those who prefer low-rise structures.
- A dedicated mental health department or service is needed. When someone reports a crisis, it is essential that not only is a response team dispatched, but also that follow through occurs to ensure proper support.
- A board to promote information, such as job postings and community events, would be beneficial, especially near the new apartments on Main Street.

Key Takeaways

- A divide between longtime residents and newcomers is apparent in their engagement with the community and HHS. New residents require more support and outreach upon arrival. In contrast, existing and returning residents are less interested in participating in formal programming and prefer to avoid structured engagement.
- Residents seem to want more mental health and wellness resources to ensure they feel heard and supported.
- There is a gap in residents' understanding of local events and services. Watertown has an opportunity to improve the clarity of its messaging or to have a staff member assist residents in navigating the services available to them.
- Wayside serves residents ages 55 and younger, while the Senior Center caters to people who are 60 and older. The 55–60 age group needs more support for their unique needs.

Appendix 1.10. Focus Group Feedback Summary – Project Literacy

On May 30, 2024, HMA participated in a meeting of Project Literacy.

Attendees included:

- Muriel Kramer, Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
- Nicole Lovitch, Research Associate, Health Management Associates
- Janet Saied, Project Literacy Program Director
- Two Project Literacy Volunteers
- One Family Participant

Key discussion questions and responses are summarized below.

Discussion

Where do you go when you need help accessing services and benefits?

- Residents said they go to the Watertown Public Library because it houses many services through Project Literacy (PL), and staff are very kind and helpful.
- Another participant said the Greater Boston Legal Services provides free legal help for immigration-related issues; however, this service only helps with seeking asylum, and the individual did not ask for a referral to another free service.
- Another participant said residents come to PL for help finding assistance. PL refers them to Wayside for social service support services and to the Parks and Recreation Department for camp scholarships.

Who helps you access services? Do you need help accessing benefits and/or services?

- A PL volunteer stated that 250 volunteers at Project Literacy lead classes and provide 1:1 tutoring year-round.
- One participant explained that housing is often difficult to for newcomers because providing a source of income and obtaining a guarantor are required to apply for housing; many places do not accept cosigners, which makes it challenging to access services.
- The same participant also experienced language barriers when first arriving in Watertown. For example, he found it very difficult and overwhelming to determine which medical care provider is the best fit. Friends who speak English help with navigating different types of systems and procedures, the resident shared, but stated it takes time to build relationships.

What has been your experience accessing other health and human services in Watertown? Which services?

- One resident uses the internet or word-of-mouth referrals to access services, but it took a long time to figure out. This individual relied on a friend to be a cosigner and help the family find accommodations.
- A resident explained that MassHealth covers eligible children, but as an adult, he and his wife were ineligible for MassHealth and have limited insurance coverage.
- One family could not afford to send their son to private kindergarten, which costs \$3,000 per month in tuition, and the Watertown Public School system requires children to be five years old by September 1 to become a student.
- Another resident mentioned that Watertown Public Schools recently began a pilot pre-K program.
- One participant said teachers spend more than half their paychecks on rent and housing costs. They called for more vouchers (i.e., the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program), especially for residents who do not qualify for low-income housing.
- People no longer qualify for WHA units but can't afford private housing. The City can offer vouchers to people in transition.
- Affordable housing trusts that are funded through real estate taxes are available, but funds must be included in the budget to be sustained.

Do you have a go-to community resource or contact to get information on available services?

- The Watertown Public Library front desk helps residents with many kinds of needs. They even helped a resident find a screwdriver.
- One resident said they ask their friends and community members for help, but it took time to establish relationships (i.e., English tutor, library front desk).
- No residents referred to the Town Hall website, were aware a website existed, nor did they have any contacts at Town Hall.
- A member of Watertown Housing for All shared that Watertown just passed a new budget to contract out some language translation services specific to the website because it has received many complaints. This service will become part of the City's full budget but will take time to implement.

Key Considerations for Watertown

- There is an opportunity to support new families, especially those with limited English proficiency, by making them aware of available services and points of contact who can help them access supports and services.
- The Watertown Public Library front desk is a valuable community resource that goes beyond help accessing health and human services.
- There is an opportunity to support immigrants with educational and vocational equivalency exams.

Appendix 1.11. Community Survey (English version)

Dear City of Watertown Resident and Interested Persons,

The City of Watertown is undertaking a health and human services (HHS) assessment to better understand our community's needs and identify opportunities to serve you better. Health and human services include a variety of programs and services that address needs such as housing, food, financial security, employment, education, social and emotional wellness, and healthcare. Many people in our community are served by these programs including families and children, youth and teenagers, older adults, individuals with disabilities, veterans, immigrants, and more.

As part of the assessment process, the City of Watertown is outreaching and engaging members of the community. One way to share your perspective is through the following short survey, which takes approximately 5-8 minutes to complete. We will compile the feedback and ideas of all members of the community to inform the overall assessment. Please note that all questions are optional and that all responses are anonymous unless you choose to provide your contact information at the end of the survey. We appreciate your participation.

Part 1: Community Forum Attendance

Were you able to attend or watch the Community Forum on Monday, January 29, 2024?

- Yes, in person.
- Yes, I joined via Zoom.
- Yes, I watched using cable broadcast.
- No.

Part 2: Feedback on Watertown's Health and Human Services

In the context of this survey, "health and human services" refers to programs and services that address: housing, food, and financial security; social and emotional wellness promotion; employment and education; disability supports; older adult supports; communications and language access; physical and mental healthcare substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery; and much more...

Please provide feedback about Watertown's health and human services as it relates to the three categories below.

- **Wellness & Quality of Life.** How does living in Watertown impact health, quality of life, and wellness for you and/or someone you know? Are there services you or someone you know need yet aren't readily available in Watertown?

- **Awareness of Services.** Which HHS programs/services impact your daily well-being? And how? Do you feel adequately informed of services available? How could you be better informed?
- **Access to Services.** What barriers exist in accessing Watertown's health and human services? What else could be done in increasing access to services for those individuals in need?

Part 3: Demographic Information

Are you a Watertown resident?

- Yes
- No

What is your age range?

- Under 12
- 13-18
- 19-25
- 36-50
- 51-64
- 65+

What is your race?

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other Race
- Prefer not to answer.

What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic or Latine
- Not Hispanic or Latine
- Prefer not to answer

Part 4: Contact Information (optional)

If you would like to receive communications related to this assessment, please fill out the following information.

- Full Name
- Email Address
- Organization (for representatives/staff members of CBOs)

Appendix 1.12. Community Survey – Summary of Results

Introduction

The community survey was distributed to Watertown residents and interested persons on January 31, 2024, through Facebook, Instagram, and the City of Watertown's website, following a Community Forum on January 29, 2024. The survey was open through March 15, 2024. A total of 53 individuals responded, with two indicating they were not Watertown residents, while the remaining respondents confirmed their residency in the City.

Among the 53 respondents, the age distribution was as follows: 12 percent were between 25–35 years old, 21 percent between ages 36–50, 23 percent between 51–64, and 44 percent were 65 or older. In terms of race and ethnicity, 75 percent identified as White, 2 percent as Asian, and 33 percent preferred not to answer. Additionally, 4 percent identified as Hispanic or Latine, 71 percent as non-Hispanic or Latine, and 25 percent preferred not to disclose their ethnicity.

Wellness & Quality of Life

Residents of Watertown appreciate the convenience and positive impact of living in the City. Respondents noted the following contribute to positive impact:

- Accessible public transportation, grocery stores, and healthcare services
- The Charles River walking trails and the proximity to nature

Residents of Watertown did, however, indicate significant concerns regarding:

- High cost of housing
- Lack of affordable options
- Limited services for certain populations, including seniors and individuals with mental health needs

Residents of Watertown also highlighted several needs and desires including:

- Better infrastructure, including safer streets, more green spaces, and improved public amenities
- More community services, such as affordable gyms, accessible public transportation, and support for the elderly.

Overall, the quality of life is good, but some improvements could be made to better support all residents.

Awareness of Services

The comments from participants highlight a mix of satisfaction and areas needing improvement regarding the wellness programs and services Watertown provides. Here are the main points:

- **Wellness Programs:** Many appreciate the wellness programs, farmers' market, and Senior Center activities, noting these have enriched their lives. The library is valued not only for access to books and computers, but also for its diverse programs.
- **Communication:** A common theme is the need for better communication about available services. Suggestions include a monthly newsletter, better website navigation, and regular updates via texts or emails. Some find current notifications fragmented across various platforms (email, texts, phone calls).
- **Awareness and Accessibility:** Levels of awareness regarding available services are mixed. Some residents are well-informed, primarily through the City's listserv or their professional roles, while others feel uninformed and unsure how to access services, particularly for seniors and people with disabilities.
- **Digital and Print Communication:** Several residents emphasized the need for a more organized and comprehensive communication strategy. Ideas include an electronic bulletin board, better digital marketing, and physical ads in community spaces.
- **Website Usability:** Many residents find the City's website difficult to navigate and not user-friendly, suggesting it needs significant improvement to help users find information more easily.
- **Local Infrastructure and Services:** Feedback on the local infrastructure is mixed. Some appreciate improvements like bike lanes and better sidewalks, while others are concerned about overdevelopment, inadequate trash receptacles, and lack of vocational education services.
- **Senior and Disabled Services:** There is a call for more targeted outreach to disabled individuals and seniors. Suggestions include creating a liaison to visit these communities regularly and collaborate with local organizations to provide better support.
- **Miscellaneous Services and Feedback:** Residents value services like the Fire Department's prevention tips, the Farmers' Market, and various community organizations (e.g., WHA, PL). However, some people expressed concerns about the impact of development on the community, including gentrification and rising rat populations.

Overall, while residents appreciate existing programs, they need more effective communication, better website functionality, and enhanced outreach to ensure all community members are aware of and can access the services they need.

Access to Services

Participants highlighted several key concerns and suggestions for improved access to services:

- **Transportation and Accessibility:** While older residents appreciate the Senior Center's shuttle service, they need more accessible and affordable public transportation options, including a micro-transit system similar to those in other cities.
- **Communication and Information:** Residents lack awareness about available services and suggested a well-publicized, centralized point of reference for information on health and human services that is accessible both online and offline.
- **HHS:** Increasing staffing for community outreach and centralizing various human services within the Health Department is recommended. A separate Health & Human Services Division could better address community needs.
- **Childcare and Financial Barriers:** High childcare costs are a major concern, with calls for expanding public pre-K to alleviate financial burdens and support working parents.
- **Outreach and Inclusivity:** Enhanced outreach efforts, especially for non-English speakers, seniors, and disabled individuals, are necessary. Improved website navigation, multilingual resources, and in-person engagement are key to increasing service accessibility.
- **Housing and Infrastructure:** The lack of affordable housing and a shelter for unhoused residents are critical issues. Better recreational facilities and more inclusive public spaces also are needed.
- **Senior Services and Isolation:** Seniors face isolation and transportation challenges. More localized services and in-person engagement are needed to address these issues.

Overall, while there are positive aspects of existing services, the main themes revolve around improving communication, enhancing outreach efforts, increasing accessibility, and addressing financial barriers.

Appendix 1.13: Health and Human Service Budget and FTE Information – Comparable Communities

The following table summarizes annual budget and FTE information across Watertown and comparable communities. Note that each City or town defines what is included within its health and human services, and material differences are evident. Additionally, some municipalities publicly report expenditures from grant and third-party sources, whereas others do not. Given these limitations, budget information presented herein is based on how each municipality publicly reports the data, so any direct comparisons warrant caution.

Health and Human Services	Watertown	Arlington	Medford	Natick	Woburn
Public Health/ Board of Health					
• Budget	\$961,348	\$894,641	\$776,510	\$712,949	\$533,624
• FTEs	8.0	8.0	9.0	12.0	9.0
• Other Funding	\$6,000	N/A	Not available	Not available	Not available
• FTEs (Other Funding)	0.0	N/A	Not available	Not available	Not available
Senior Services/ Council on Aging					
• Budget	\$463,997	\$479,630	\$267,545	\$605,252	\$345,750
• FTEs	5.25	6.6	4.0	10.0*	8.5
• Other Funding	\$117,306	\$127,549	Not available	Not available	Not available
• FTEs (Other Funding)	1.0	0.8	Not available	Not available	Not available
Veterans' Services					
• Budget	\$245,529	\$327,753	\$435,703	\$456,306	\$364,750

• FTEs	1.0	1.0	2.0	3.0	1.5
• Other Funding	\$0	N/A	Not available	Not available	\$17,000
• FTEs (Other Funding)	0.0	N/A	Not available	Not available	Not available

Library

• Budget	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	\$2,012,177	Not included in HHS	\$1,786,265
• FTEs	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	17.0	Not included in HHS	19.5
• Other Funding	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	Not available	Not included in HHS	Not available
• FTEs (Other Funding)	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	Not available	Not included in HHS	Not available

Recreation

• Budget	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	\$608,535	\$613,691	\$373,167
• FTEs	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	4.0	8.75	2.5
• Other Funding	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	Not available	Not available	Not available
• FTEs (Other Funding)	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	Not available	Not available	Not available

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

• Budget	Not included in HHS	\$259,628	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS
• FTEs	Not included in HHS	3.0	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS
• Other Funding	Not included in HHS	N/A	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS
• FTEs (Other Funding)	Not included in HHS	N/A	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS	Not included in HHS
Grand Total					
• Budget	\$1,794,180	\$1,829,573	\$2,088,293	\$2,388,198	\$1,634,291

Appendix 1.14: Watertown Community Meeting Regarding HHS Assessment

To coincide with the release of this report, the City of Watertown hosted a presentation to the community on Monday, October 21, 2024, to share the recommendations and findings. Residents and interested parties were encouraged to join, ask questions, and comment on the report. Key points raised during the meeting are summarized below.

- **Community Forum Demographics and Engagement:** Participants expressed concerns about representation, noting that mostly middle-aged, White residents attended. To reach broader demographics, Watertown representatives and HMA stressed the need for developing ongoing efforts and capacity to build inclusive and varied outreach efforts.
- **Staffing for New Initiatives:** The proposed addition of two full-time roles—a Human Services Director and a DEI—was discussed. Funds have already been reserved, and participants noted that additional staffing might be required for effective implementation in the future.
- **Specific Community Needs:** Speakers identified gaps in services for veterans, people with disabilities, and residents who need affordable housing. They suggested including ADA-specific roles, ensuring accessibility to City facilities, and enhancing public transit access to key locations like the food pantry. There was a call for the City to address issues such as walkability and proximity to parks for improved health outcomes.
- **Data and Strategic Planning:** There was strong support for data collection to better understand residents' needs and inform future budget planning.
- **Housing Services Focus:** Some participants advocated for a dedicated housing services role within the Human Services Department, emphasizing that housing insecurity is a critical issue that requires specialized attention beyond what a director might provide.
- **Implementation of Language Access and Service Accessibility:** It was noted that the City has made progress in language access, with services like 311 providing translation support. However, further efforts were encouraged to ensure accessible information and resources for non-English-speaking residents.

Overall, the meeting underscored the importance of diverse community engagement, strategic planning, and addressing accessibility and housing needs, while recognizing challenges in achieving these goals.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ City of Watertown. Watertown Comprehensive Plan, p. 1. 2015. Available at: https://cms4files.revize.com/watertownwi/document_center/Watertown%20Amended%20Comp%20Plan%20-%202012.15.15.pdf.
- ² Ciurczak P. Mass. Migration: An Analysis of Outmigration from Massachusetts Over the Last Two Decades. Boston Indicators. April 4, 2024. Available at: <https://www.bostonindicators.org/article-pages/2024/april/domestic-migration>
- ³ US Census Bureau. Quick Facts: Watertown, Massachusetts. July 1, 2023. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/watertowntowncitymassachusetts/PST045223>.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ US Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2005-2009: Age and Sex, Watertown, Massachusetts. Revised February 6, 2024. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/data/developers/datasets/acs-5year/2009.html>.
- ⁷ US Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2012-2016: Age and Sex, Watertown, Massachusetts. Revised October 8, 2021. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/table-and-geography-changes/2016/5-year.html>.
- ⁸ [Quick Facts: Watertown, Massachusetts.](#)
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ [American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2012-2016: Age and Sex, Watertown, Massachusetts.](#)
- ¹¹ [Quick Facts: Watertown, Massachusetts.](#)
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Gellerman B. Remembering The Armenian Genocide 100 Years Ago Holds Special Significance in Watertown. WBUR. April 24, 2015. Available at: <https://www.wbur.org/news/2015/04/24/remembering-armenian-genocide-100-watertown>.
- ¹⁴ [Quick Facts: Watertown, Massachusetts.](#)
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Watertown Public Schools English as a Second Language Program. Accessed August 1, 2024. Available at: https://www.watertown.k12.ma.us/72101_3#:~:text=The%20ESL%20program%20in%20Watertown,with%20ESL%20teachers%20when%20needed.
- ¹⁷ [Quick Facts: Watertown, Massachusetts.](#)
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Shook A. Town by Town Massachusetts Emergency Shelters, by the Numbers.. WWLP-22 News. May 8, 2024. Available at: <https://www.wwlp.com/news/state-politics/town-by-town-massachusetts-emergency-shelters-by-the-numbers/>.
- ²² Sue-Ellen Hershman-Tcherepnin. Personal Communication WITH?????. August 20, 2024.
- ²³ UMass Amherst. Toplines University of Massachusetts Amherst/WCVB Massachusetts Poll. May 2024. Available at: <https://htv-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/files/stateofstatehousingtoplinesmay2024-665d880ed0caf.pdf>.
- ²⁴ ApartmentAdvisor. National Rent Report. June 2024. Available at: <https://www.apartmentadvisor.com/market-reports>.

- ²⁵ Lee K. Rents Grow Faster Than Wages Across the US. StreetEasy.com. May 7, 2024.. Available at: <https://streeteasy.com/blog/rents-grow-faster-than-wages-across-us-nyc/>.
- ²⁶ Office of the Town Manager. Watertown Housing Plan. Approved March 23, 2021. Available at: <https://ma-watertown4.civicplus.pro/asset/c02b0c49-17c0-4781-94c9-6a34e5ae3311>
- ²⁷ Watertown Massachusetts. Housing. . Available at: <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/217/Housing>.
- ²⁸ Watertown Housing Plan, p. 28.
- ²⁹ Watertown City Council and Planning Board. Watertown Square Area Plan. August 2024. Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59e50be849fc2b3fd20a30cb/t/66ce4f027a87f76f20ceea69/1724796676229/Watertown+Square+Area+Plan_Final+Report+-+website.pdf.
- ³⁰ Wayside Youth & Family Support Network. Watertown Social Services Resource Specialist (SSRS) Program. 2023 Annual Report.
- ³¹ Suarez-Friedman S. Personal Correspondence with Tara Kelly. August 22, 2024.
- ³² Breitrose C. Watertown's Hidden Problem: Food Insecurity Among Us. *Watertown News*. December 11, 2023. Available at: <https://www.watertownmanews.com/2023/12/11/watertowns-hidden-problem-food-insecurity-among-us-first-part-of-a-series/>.
- ³³ Feeding America. State-by-State Resource: The Impact of Coronavirus on Food Insecurity. Available at: <https://feedingamericaaction.org/resources/state-by-state-resource-the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-food-insecurity>.
- ³⁴ Watertown's Hidden Problem: Food Insecurity Among Us.
- ³⁵ Health Leads. SNAP Gap and Social Vulnerability Index Who's Losing Out on Federal Nutrition Benefits and How Do We Close the SNAP Gap? Available at: https://healthleadsusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SNAP_Gap_Data_Brief.pdf.
- ³⁶ Wayside Youth & Family Support Network. Watertown Social Services Resource Specialist (SSRS) Program 2023 Annual Report.
- ³⁷ Watertown's Hidden Problem: Food Insecurity Among Us.
- ³⁸ The Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Cambridge Food Action Plan. Cambridge Food and Fitness Policy Council. January 2022. Available at: <https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Cambridge-Food-Action-Plan.pdf>.
- ³⁹ Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. Healey-Driscoll Administration Announces Over \$200,000 in Grants to Support Farmers Markets. March 13, 2024. Available at: <https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-announces-over-200000-in-grants-to-support-farmers-markets>.
- ⁴⁰ World Health Organization. Constitution of the World Health Organization: Principles. Available at: <https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution>.
- ⁴¹ Venizelos S. Live Well Wellness Presentation. Community Wellness Program. September 29, 2023.
- ⁴² Venizelos S. Personal Correspondence with Tara Kelly. June 26, 2024.
- ⁴³ Venizelos S. Live Well Wellness Presentation. Community Wellness Program. September 29, 2023.
- ⁴⁴ Venizelos S. Personal Correspondence with Tara Kelly. June 26, 2024.
- ⁴⁵ Venizelos S. Live Well Wellness Presentation. Community Wellness Program. September 29, 2023.
- ⁴⁶ Harkin T. The ADA Legacy: A Vision for the Future. National Council on Disability. 2014.
- ⁴⁷ Binette J, Farago F. Where We Live, Where We Age: Trends in Home and Community Preferences. AARP. November 18, 2021. Available at: <https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/livable-communities/housing/2021-home-community-preferences/>.
- ⁴⁸ Quick Facts: Watertown, Massachusetts.
- ⁴⁹ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2012-2016: Age and Sex, Watertown, Massachusetts.

- ⁵⁰ Gramlich J. Migrant Encounters at the U.S.-Mexico Border Hit a Record High at the End of 2023. Pew Research Center. February 15, 2024. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/02/15/migrant-encounters-at-the-us-mexico-border-hit-a-record-high-at-the-end-of-2023/>
- ⁵¹ [Town by Town Massachusetts Emergency Shelters, by the Numbers.](#)
- ⁵² Watertown Refugee Support Group. Discussion on Immigrant Data in Watertown. Received by Tara Kelly, August 21, 2024.
- ⁵³ Martinez-Beltran S. Illegal Crossings Hit Biden-Era Low as Migrants Wait Longer for Entry. National Public Radio. July 30, 2024. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2024/07/30/nx-s1-5051615/border-migrant-crossings-mexico-us-illegal-cbpone>.
- ⁵⁴ Scalese R, Rios S, Wuthmann W. Healey Places New Limits on Emergency Family Shelter Program. WBUR. July 23, 2024. Available at: <https://www.wbur.org/news/2024/07/23/massachusetts-homeless-shelter-waitlist-changes>.
- ⁵⁵ Watertown Refugee Support Group. Discussion on Immigrant Data in Watertown. Received by Tara Kelly. August 21, 2024.
- ⁵⁶ [QuickFacts: Watertown, Massachusetts.](#)
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Anders G. Who's Vaulting into the C-Suite? Trends Changed Fast in 2022. LinkedIn Workforce Insights. February 1, 2023. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/whos-vaulting-c-suite-trends-changed-fast-2022-george-anders/>.
- ⁵⁹ Brown JS, Ellsworth D, Katen-Narvell A, Mao D. It's (Past) Time to Get Strategic about DEI. May 10, 2023. McKinsey & Company. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/its-past-time-to-get-strategic-about-dei>
- ⁶⁰ Massachusetts Municipal Association. DEI Strategic Plan for Municipalities Nears Completion. April 9, 2024. Available at: <https://www.mma.org/dei-strategic-plan-for-municipalities-nears-completion/>.
- ⁶¹ Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources for Local Governments. Available at: <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/engagement/inclusion/diversity-equity-inclusion>.
- ⁶² Raffelis. City of Watertown Personnel Department Study. July 2023. Available at: <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=86197&repo=r-5ece5628>.
- ⁶³ Town of Arlington. FY2024 Town Manager's Annual Budget & Financial Plan. Available at: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/town-manager/town-manager-s-annual-budget-financial-report/fy2024>.
- ⁶⁴ Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services. Community Comparison Report. Available at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/division-of-local-services-municipal-databank>
- ⁶⁵ Town of Arlington. FY2024 Town Manager's Annual Budget & Financial Plan. Available at: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/town-manager/town-manager-s-annual-budget-financial-report/fy2024>.
- ⁶⁶ City of Medford FY2024 Proposed Budget. Available at <https://city-medford-ma-budget-book.cleargov.com/16061/cover/city-of-medford-fiscal-year-2022-proposed-budget>
- ⁶⁷ Town of Natick. FY 2024 Town Administrator's Amended Budget, p 124. Available at: <https://www.natickma.gov/2078/FY-2024-Budget>.
- ⁶⁸ Town of Natick. FY 2024 Town Administrator's Amended Budget. Available at: <https://www.natickma.gov/2078/FY-2024-Budget>.
- ⁶⁹ City of Woburn. Operating Budget Summary FY24. Available at <https://woburnma.gov/government/auditor/budgets/>.