

## **🏠 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT**

### **WE ENVISION...**

...a Boston in which older adults have access to work opportunities as well as to rewarding volunteer opportunities.

...a Boston where older residents are involved with making decisions in both public and private sectors and are regularly consulted by elected officials.

### **WE HEARD...**

- Older Boston residents want more work opportunities.
- Half of survey respondents disagree that there are adequate employment opportunities available to older adults in Boston.
- Older Boston residents need information about available volunteer opportunities that are close to where they live and fully utilize their skills and talents.



### **WE HEARD:**

***“I’m relatively healthy. I’m already 70, but I still want to keep working. I applied for at least 20 jobs, but nobody hired me.”***

**- BOSTON RESIDENT**

***“There are not adequate opportunities for seniors to get together to volunteer on a regular basis. This type of interaction could benefit the overall community and provide regular socialization for seniors.”***

**- BOSTON RESIDENT**

***“I am trying to figure out where to get information about volunteering. Specifically, I was thinking of some place on the web.”***

**- BOSTON RESIDENT**

- Residents' top recommendation for improving civic participation and employment was to improve the dissemination of information about available opportunities.
- Many older residents do not feel that their perspectives are heard by local policy makers or leaders.
- 36% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with the extent to which local policymakers take into account the interest and concerns of older residents.

## WE ARE...

### **Refocusing on Workforce Development**

In 2014, the City refocused its workforce development strategy through the creation of the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (OWD). OWD seeks to promote economic self-sufficiency and works to connect low-income residents with job training and employment opportunities and to promote lifelong literacy and educational pathways.

### **Enhancing and Aligning Civic Engagement**

In 2014, the City, recognizing the importance of Civic Engagement, elevated it to a cabinet level position. In 2017, Mayor Walsh launched Boston's first city service plan, Emerging Boston. In addition, a new volunteer unit was created at the Commission, aligning the senior volunteer programs and expanding volunteer management capacity. The Commission continues to recruit additional older adults who qualify for the [Property Tax Work-Off Program](#) after the City expanded the opportunity from a 50 person limit to 100 people. This increase in participation allows us to further develop opportunities for older adults to use their skills and expertise to further the work we do in City departments.

#### KEYWORDS:

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CABINET:** is the cabinet in City Hall that oversees the Elderly Commission, the Office of Neighborhood Services, 311 and others. The main goal of this cabinet is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of city services and create opportunities for constituents to be involved in local government.

#### PROPERTY TAX WORK-OFF PROGRAM:

Qualified senior homeowners get the opportunity to work-off up to \$1,000 on their property tax bill by volunteering for a City agency.

**AARP:** is a national interest group who support their age 50+ membership in living active, healthy and civically engaging lives.

## WE WILL...

### **Recommendation #1:**

Communicate the value of older workers.

- **Action Item A:** We will develop and implement a strategy for a public awareness campaign promoting the value of older workers and combating the stereotypes about aging.
- **Action Item B:** We will promote the value of older workers to Boston area businesses.

### **Recommendation #2:**

Better connect older adults to employment opportunities and resources.

- **Action Item A:** We will work to identify the barriers to employment for older adults in the city.
- **Action Item B:** We will create a comprehensive list of existing opportunities for training and skill development and connect residents with the information.
- **Action Item C:** We will consider ways to expand the most successful existing training programs.

### **Recommendation #3:**

Enhance and promote volunteer opportunities for older adults.

- **Action Item A:** We will explore ways for the City to recognize volunteers, such as developing a "Volunteer of the Year" award.
- **Action Item B:** We will identify City offices and departments that could benefit from additional volunteers, and publicize these opportunities to older adults who may be interested.

- **Action Item C:** We will establish the Emerging Boston portal, a web-based tool that will connect residents to volunteer opportunities within the City and link to other Boston-based volunteer organizations.

### **Recommendation #4:**

Ensure the perspectives and needs of older adults are included in all City planning and policies.

- **Action Item A:** We will explore strategies for older adults to be more deeply involved in policy making and advocacy. We will work in collaboration with community partners and older adults for effective solutions.
- **Action Item B:** We will incorporate the voice of Boston's older residents by ensuring that an older resident or representative of the Elderly Commission serve on relevant internal working groups or task forces.