

# Greater Boston has the pieces to lead the longevity economy but lacks one thing

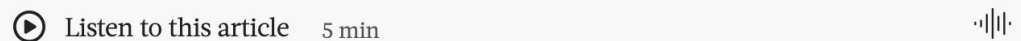


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By Richard B. Schenkel – Phoenix3 Collective and Restaura Hospitality

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## Story Highlights i

- Greater Boston possesses research institutions, capital, and healthcare networks to lead the longevity economy.
- Senior living communities are redesigning for 'healthspan' to reduce hospitalizations and ease healthcare system pressure.
- The region needs a formal Longevity Innovation Council to coordinate cross-sector strategy and investment.

Kendall Square was not always one of the most concentrated innovation districts in the world. It became that way through deliberate alignment of world-class research from nearby institutions, venture capital willing to fund early breakthroughs, developers who reimaged underutilized space, and public policy that made it easier to build and scale. The private sector did not follow the ecosystem; it helped create it. What emerged was not just a collection of labs, but a coordinated engine of innovation, talent and economic growth.

Aging presents a similar opportunity for the region. Nearly one in four residents across Greater Boston is already over the age of 60, and by 2030, one in five Americans will be 65 or older which is a demographic shift that will reshape every sector of the economy. There is growing recognition that Greater Boston could become a global hub for what is often called the “longevity economy.” Research institutions, policymakers, and private sector leaders are increasingly framing aging not just as a demographic trend, but as a catalyst for innovation, investment, and job creation.

Across Greater Boston, the pieces are already in place. Longevity research at institutions such as the MIT AgeLab, led by Dr. Joseph Coughlin, has helped reframe aging as a design, technology, and consumer-driven opportunity. Public leadership, including Boston’s Age Strong Commission under Emily Shea, continues to advance age-friendly policy and urban design.

The private sector is also mobilizing, from financial services firms rethinking retirement and longevity planning, to technology companies investing in wearables and predictive health, to real estate and service providers reimaging how environments support longer, healthier lives. Combined with world-class healthcare networks, sophisticated capital markets, and a highly skilled workforce, Greater Boston has the infrastructure to lead.

What is missing is coordination.

Consider healthspan, not just lifespan, as the defining opportunity. The goal is not simply to live longer, but to live better, longer. The most forward-thinking senior living communities in Greater Boston are moving beyond care delivery and into health creation. They’re designing environments that encourage movement and engagement, and elevating nutrition through more personalized, whole-food-based approaches. These changes are producing measurable outcomes that not only enhance quality of life for individuals and their families, but also reduce reliance on acute care, lower preventable hospitalizations, and ease pressure on already strained healthcare and social service systems.

This is where the longevity economy becomes tangible. It spans how communities are designed, how food is sourced and prepared, how technology supports behavior, how financial products are structured, and how services are delivered. It is inherently cross-sector and that is precisely why it requires intentional alignment.

The workforce implications are equally significant. Aging is not just about physicians and nurses. It requires a new generation of professionals across technology, design, operations, and hospitality, all contributing to environments that support health, independence, and quality of life. These are high-skill, durable jobs that will not be replaced by AI.

Regions across the country and globally are actively positioning themselves as hubs for aging innovation by aligning policy and development plans to attract companies and talent. If Greater Boston wants to avoid missed economic opportunities and lead, several steps are clear:

- First, designate longevity as a formal economic cluster that spans housing, healthspan research, consumer innovation, and workforce development.
- Second, align zoning and development incentives to support mixed-use, age-integrated communities that promote mobility, access, and engagement.
- Third, invest in workforce pipelines that prepare professionals across industries to operate in a longevity-driven economy.
- Finally, convene a Longevity Innovation Council to bring together researchers, private sector leaders, capital providers, and civic leadership to coordinate strategy rather than disperse it.

Greater Boston knows how to build industries. The question is whether we apply the same intentional ecosystem-building that transformed Kendall Square to aging or allow innovation, investment, and long-term job growth to consolidate elsewhere.

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