

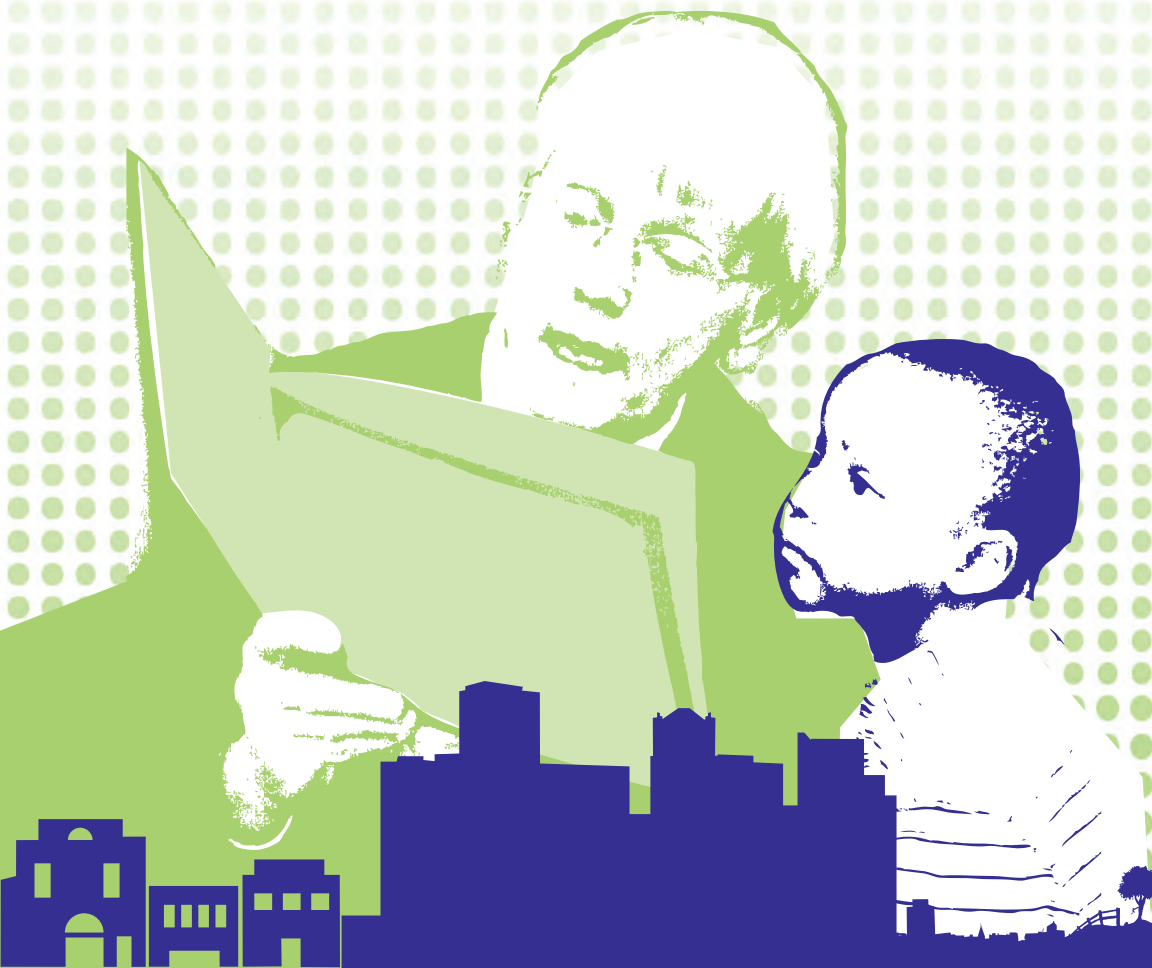
MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM:

MetLife Foundation



LIVABLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL AGES

When Older Adults Age in Place, Everyone Benefits



By 2030, older adults will make up 20 percent of our population.

PARTNERS FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES wants to help communities meet the needs of their aging population and harness the experience and talent of their older citizens.



Older Adults Can Help Solve Civic Problems



Many government and civic leaders are already moving in the direction of harnessing the experience and talents of their older citizens. Creating a win-win strategy for all citizens requires a shift from seeing older adults as a burden on the community to the reality of seeing them as community assets and civic allies.

As the Baby Boom generation—born between 1946 and 1964—reaches retirement age, the number of Americans over the age of 65 is expected to double to more than 70 million by 2030—twice what their number was in 2000. At that point,

1 out of every 5 people in the nation will be an older adult.


Contrary to popular belief, most older Americans do not move to warmer climates upon retirement, nor reside in retirement complexes or nursing homes. Instead, 82 percent of Americans choose to age in place, within the same communities where they have lived. Every community, from rural areas to suburbs to cities, will include significant numbers of older adults.

The aging of the population will pose new challenges for the delivery of local services, such as health care, recreation, housing, transportation, public safety, employment, and education. An additional challenge is that many older adults are low-income or physically vulnerable. But the aging of America will also present many opportunities, as the nation's communities realize the largest population of educated and skilled older adults in its history.

Q Why would a community want to be “elder-friendly”?

A Because responding to the maturing of America makes communities more livable places for all ages.





Responding to the maturing of America offers local governments, community stakeholders, businesses, nonprofits, philanthropists, and the local media the opportunity to make their communities more livable places for all ages—good places to grow up and to grow old.

CASE STUDY #1

Richmond, VA, has found that through a new older adult livability program:

- Older adults who remain engaged in the community continue to contribute to community life.
- Older adults who remain engaged are healthier, reducing the demands on and costs of local health care.
- The community attracts new resources—for example, businesses and infrastructure—that are a good match for its older members.
- An elder-friendly community builds capacity by developing leadership, relationships, and knowledge that are useful in creating desired change in other areas.

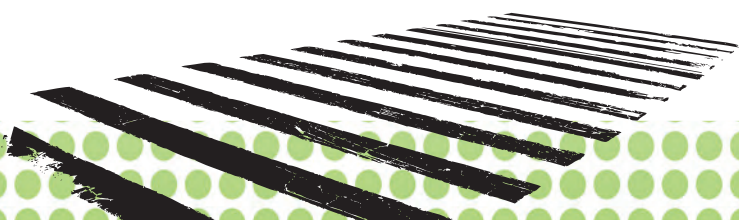
Let's consider the benefits conferred on residents of all ages by senior livability adaptations in just four areas:

1 Housing

2 Transportation

3 Workforce Development

4 Civic and Cultural Engagement / Lifelong Learning



1 Housing. Older adults want to live at home.

Older adults want to stay in their homes. Communities can help older adults age in place. “Universal Design” is the practice of making minor changes to the design of a home that can have a major impact on its livability. Universally adapted homes appeal to homebuyers of all ages who may, for example, have a temporary disability or have older family members living with them.



CASE STUDY #2

Santa Cruz, CA, has revised its zoning ordinances to arrive at an exemplary housing solution for older adults—the ADU or accessory dwelling unit. These are private and complete housing units either in or adjacent to single family homes. Older homeowners can supplement their monthly income by renting out an ADU or themselves become ADU tenants in order to remain in their neighborhoods.

These generally intergenerational living arrangements can:

- Provide more affordable housing options without government subsidies.
- Increase property values for entire neighborhoods.
- Enhance safety by having known tenants nearby.



2 Transportation.

By 2030, one quarter of licensed drivers in the United States will be over the age of 65.

When older adults need to limit or stop driving, they can experience a drastic decline in mobility. Reduced mobility can put an older person at higher risk of poor health, isolation, and loneliness.

CASE STUDY #3

In [Wichita, KS](#), volunteers provide free or low-cost rides to older adults through the Independent Transportation Network (ITN), while at the same time earning credits for free rides that they can use in the future or donate to family or friends. The program has an intergenerational component since most volunteers are younger drivers.

ITN has since grown into ITN America, the first and only national nonprofit transportation system for older adults in America. In 2009, the ITN America national network provided nearly 26,000 rides.



3 Workforce Development.

For many, retirement is no longer the single goal of later life.

Retirement as we have known it is being displaced as the central institution of the second half of life. How do older adults really want to spend their time, knowledge, and experience? How can communities leverage the talent and experience of older Americans? Many older adults are looking for meaningful paid and unpaid work.

CASE STUDY #4

In [Arizona](#), Gateway Community College's workforce transition program has found that:

- Baby boomers and older adults can head off workforce shortages by being re-careered into key industries (for instance, health care, education, social services).
- Community investment organizations and nonprofit organizations, in particular, can help provide the meaningful work opportunities sought by older adults.

Also in Arizona, the Executive Service Corps (ESC) offers a network of experienced former executives who volunteer their time and talents to provide low-cost consulting services to nonprofit organizations. The ESC Affiliate Network has chapters in more than 30 U.S. cities.

Experience Corps, a national service program for older Americans, mobilizes adults to work as tutors, mentors, and classroom assistants in elementary schools that serve predominantly low-income families. Today there are more than 2,000 Experience Corps members in 19 U.S. cities.



4 Civic and Cultural Engagement/Lifelong Learning. More Community Dividends.

“Senior academies” teach older adults how to effect needed change in their communities through greater civic involvement. Sometimes these programs take the form of leadership academies. Often the programs instill a better understanding of local policy-making processes (for example, through attendance at a county board meeting).

Older adults can participate in “asset mapping,” which can systematically “map” both what the community needs—for example, ways to integrate older adults into its mainstream—and what “assets,” including individuals of all ages, associations, businesses, and institutions, exist in the community to meet such needs. Older adults can both help with the research required to identify these assets and play key roles in implementing the solutions proposed.

Lifelong learning and participation in cultural and recreational activities are important both for older adults’ health and for communities’ quality of life and economic competitiveness. Older adults are among the most generous and impassioned patrons of arts programs. They increasingly participate in lifelong learning programs and bring a lifetime of experience to intergenerational programs.

CASE STUDY #5

- The Polk Arts Alliance in the [Tampa, FL](#), area has forged a partnership between arts organizations, libraries, historians, and civic groups to foster the recording of oral histories of local older adults by economically disadvantaged neighborhood youth.

Communities can use cultural institutions, such as public libraries and local colleges, to provide lifelong learning opportunities. These opportunities may take many forms, and include computer literacy and financial basics classes, “Ask a Lawyer” workshops, cultural outings, nature walks, and exercise classes. Providing these opportunities can in turn build a powerful advocacy voice in the community, for example, for more funding for libraries, parks, theatres, and schools.



For additional information on how to make your community more livable for all, contact Partners for Livable Communities. Partners has been a leader in the livability field since 1977, long before the field became fashionable. Since 2006 and with support from the MetLife Foundation, the organization has focused on quality-of-life and livability issues for older adults, brokering programs between a multitude of local governments, community institutions, and nonprofits through livability guides, community workshops, jumpstart grants, and reports.

In addition to the ideas about housing, transportation, workforce development, and civic and cultural engagement put forward here, Partners can provide information, resources, and suggested solutions for older adult livability issues in the areas of community planning, public/private partnerships, health and human services, policies/guidelines, and many more topics. With additional funding from the MetLife Foundation, the organization is developing an electronic resource hub focused on Aging in Place and livability for all ages where government and community best practices, national case studies, and other materials will all be available.

Partners for Livable Communities

1429 21st Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036

Ph 202-887-5990

www.livable.org/AgingInPlace