

Communities Fall Short on Livability for Seniors

Yes, an age-friendly house is the first step in aging in place. But another crucial and often overlooked component that allows for aging in place is the community at large.

Livable neighborhoods are age-friendly spots that provide things like safety, affordable housing, transit options, access to quality health care, healthy water and air quality, proximity to destinations, and opportunities for seniors engage with their communities.

Yet many communities fall short, and many older Americans are not living in places that provide the qualities necessary for a good life.

Those are some findings from a new report, “Which Older Adults Have Access to America’s Most Livable Neighborhoods? An Analysis of AARP’s Livability Index,” by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University and the AARP Policy Institute.

AARP’s Public Policy Institute (PPI) developed the “Livability Index: Great Neighborhoods for All Ages” (Index), an online, interactive resource providing livability scores (<https://bit.ly/3f53ptp>) for neighborhoods across the United States.

AARP and the Joint Center evaluated (<https://bit.ly/2UBniyM>) whether access to livable communities is evenly distributed across the older adult population and how different groups of older adults might have access to different

sets of livability features. They also tried to understand the characteristics that contributed to higher-scoring communities.

Among the findings:

There is a disconnect between what people have and what they need in communities to age in place.

Researchers found that more people over the age of 50 live in neighborhoods that score lower on the Index than in areas with the highest scores.

Not all livable communities are alike. Some with high scores may have good transportation and lack affordable housing options. Some may do well in providing opportunities for engagement but have not such great transit. Even neighborhoods that are considered highly livable have room for improvement.

People of color, those with disabilities, and people with lower incomes may miss out on amenities and services to help them age well.

Also, communities with higher Index scores tend to have higher housing costs, which creates obstacles to accessing benefits that livable communities can provide.

AARP’s tool allows you to type in a zip code and see just how well a given community ranks on

livability in the various categories. It's especially useful if you want to compare the livability of several communities and see side-by-side results.

Learn more about the "Livability Index: Great Neighborhoods for All Ages" at the SRES blog.

Is yours a 15-minute city?

You may be familiar with Walk Score (<https://bit.ly/3f6SH60>), the site that lets you type in an address to see how walkable a prospective house or condo is.

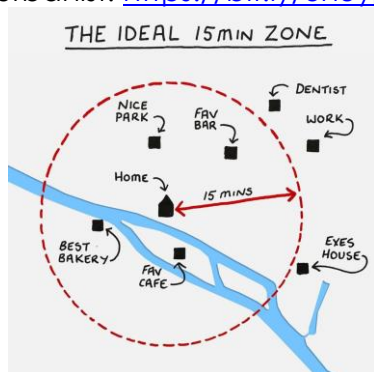
A newer tool, the 15-minute city app (<https://bit.ly/35G94U1>) by digital mapping company Here Technologies, shows you what's accessible to an address within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.

Type in a U.S. address to discover the medical care, grocery stores, cultural attractions, transit stops, education facilities, and leisure spots situated within a 15-minute walk or bike ride of a given address.

The app can be useful when you're researching new cities, especially if you have given up your car and want to be sure that you'll be able to lead a full life in your next city without wheels.

The 15-minute city concept also has broader implications for city planning, transit, and climate health. Read more:

- Next City: <https://bit.ly/3IEoBch>
- StreetsBlog: <https://bit.ly/3f3gUfE> and <https://bit.ly/36JSxNM>
- The Urbanist: <https://bit.ly/3nuypGu>



Keeping seniors safe behind the wheel

Giving up the car is a significant and sad event that can drastically reduce seniors' freedom.

And when seniors live in inaccessible, unwalkable areas, surrendering the car also often forces them to move, even if they would prefer to age in place.

Sometimes, seniors' driving life can be extended by refreshing their driving skills and modifying cars with adaptive technology.

Learn more about keeping seniors safe behind the wheel by checking out the resources from Older Driver Safety Awareness Week (<https://bit.ly/3fbZmf1>).

Between December 7 and 11, 2020, the American Occupational Therapy Association will address improving senior drivers' safety, provide insight on how best to have the giving-up-driving conversation with a loved one, and ways seniors can remain active once they do surrender the car keys.

Each day AOTA will cover a different topic. They are:

- Monday: "Anticipating Changes That Can Affect Driving"
- Tuesday: "Family Conversations"
- Wednesday: "Screening and Evaluations with an Occupational Therapist"
- Thursday: "Interventions That Can Empower Drivers and Families"
- Friday: "Staying Engaged in the Community with or Without a Car"

Additional information:

CarFit (<https://bit.ly/35BrVPZ>) promotes safe driving among older drivers through in-person and virtual events that show seniors how to improve safety and comfort behind the wheel by making their cars "fit" them. That includes appropriately adjusting mirrors, seats, and so forth.

- SeniorDriving (<https://bit.ly/2IjhpK>) offers resources to help seniors drive as long as possible

What is a Pocket Neighborhood?



Pocket neighborhoods are planned communities that are intentionally small in scale. Typically, 15 to 50 units of single-family homes or duplexes are clustered together in areas designed to encourage community while also respecting privacy and independence.



Targeted for the Middle Market

These developments aim to provide housing for the much needed “middle-income market.” In a senior-oriented pocket neighborhood, homes typically range in size from 800 to 1,500 square feet.

Smaller homes built on small lots help keep costs down, plus they’re less expensive to maintain, heat, or cool.

Residents may share common green spaces, gardens, a pavilion, or a community center. However, such amenities are nominal compared to those found in large master plan communities.



Prioritizing Social Interaction and Wellness

Typically, residents must walk through common areas to reach their front door. This encourages neighbor interactions and helps build a stronger sense of community.

In a senior-oriented pocket neighborhood, the close arrangement of homes makes it easier and more economical for service providers to park and visit multiple clients. In this way, residents might be able to negotiate lower rates on everything from household cleaning to home health and physical therapy services.



More Locations

The term pocket neighborhood is primarily associated with Ross Chapin of Ross Chapin Architects in Langley, Washington. The concept, however, has taken off in numerous other markets. Today, you can find pocket neighborhoods on both U.S. coasts and dotted throughout the country’s interior.

Land that is not well suited for large, sprawling senior campuses may work well for a pocket neighborhood. Therefore, additional locations in diverse areas could be available for this type of development.

Currently, not-for-profit entities are the primary developers of pocket neighborhoods. However, if the trend continues to gain traction among seniors expect more for-profit entities to join the movement.



Striking an Ideal Balance

For many seniors, pocket neighborhoods check all the boxes, providing affordable housing and a priceless sense of community while also respecting privacy and social distancing, when necessary.

Ask your Seniors Real Estate Specialist® about pocket neighborhoods in your area and other housing options.

Count on an SRES® to guide you through the process of buying or selling your home, making the transaction less stressful and more successful.

The Seniors Real Estate Specialist® (SRES®) designation is awarded by the SRES® Council, a subsidiary of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR).

To learn more about SRES® and access various consumer resources, please visit seniorsresource.realtor.

