

EIGHT DOMAINS OF LIVABILITY



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Accessible, inviting parks and public buildings affect the independence and quality of life of residents of all ages, but especially older adults. They are also good for property values. Homes close to newly developed parks increase in value by about 5%. Some Maine communities have increased the width of paths and added accessible benches. Others have increased the number of designated parking spaces near key services, promoted age-friendly businesses, and added accessible features to municipal buildings.



Transportation

Age-friendly transportation makes it easy for people to get the places they want to go whether they prefer to walk, bike, roll, or drive. Safe streets are good for the economy. A one-point increase in walk score increases home values by up to \$3,000. When it is easy and convenient to shop locally, retail sales go up. Age-Friendly Maine communities have created safer crosswalks, advocated for bike lanes, increased awareness of local transportation options, and developed volunteer transportation programs.



Housing

Safe and affordable housing conveniently located near amenities promotes health and well-being. Some communities have developed building and zoning codes that encourage lifelong housing or advocated for affordable housing options for different life stages. Voluntary organizations and age-friendly teams have partnered to offer free or no-cost home repair and modification programs. These approaches help people age in their community and attract new residents. One new job is created for every 1.8 new retirees who move to a community and they add about \$59,000 into the local economy during their first year in town.



Social Participation

Connecting with friends and neighbors is good for your health, no matter what your age. Socially isolated children have poorer health in middle-age than their connected peers. Lacking social ties in adulthood is as bad as smoking 15 cigarettes/day. Some cities have started a community center. Others have partnered with local organizations, such as an art center or library, to increase social opportunities for all ages.



Respect and Social Inclusion

Older people who feel welcomed and respected for their contribution are more likely to remain actively engaged in the economic, social and civic life of the community than those who do not feel included. Maine communities have partnered with schools and other organizations to provide intergenerational activities. One group of older women teach sewing to young people at the Boys and Girls Club; in another town the school service club delivers sand buckets to older residents and helps with outdoor chores.



Civic Participation and Employment

Older people do not stop contributing to their community when they turn 65 or 85 or 105. The local economy benefits when employers hire and retain workers who want or need to work past traditional retirement age. Mobilizing older volunteers to share their skills strengthens the community. Age-Friendly cities and towns have hosted job fairs to encourage older people, if they choose, to work for pay and have increased awareness of opportunities to engage in a variety of meaningful volunteer activities.



Communication and Information

Staying connected with activities, resources, and people is key to active, engaged aging. Age-friendly cities and towns in Maine have developed information portals on their town website, designed Facebook pages, or created age-friendly resource manuals that make it easy for people to find information about local activities, services, and programs. Not everyone has a smartphone or Internet access; some towns offer paper copies of monthly calendars or newsletters or write a recurring column in their local paper.



Community Support and Health Services

At some point, everyone gets hurt, becomes ill, or needs a bit of help. While it's important that care be available nearby, it's crucial that residents can access and afford needed services. Maine's age-friendly communities have emphasized food security, increased awareness of elder abuse prevention, and focused on disaster preparedness. Some communities have developed transportation programs to increase access or have partnered with the Area Agency on Aging to make evidence-based programs available locally.