

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities: An Introduction

AARP Livable Communities

As the U.S. population ages and people stay healthy and active longer, communities must adapt.

Well-designed, livable communities promote health and sustain economic growth, and they make for happier, healthier residents — of all ages.

What Membership Is and Isn't

Communities in the AARP age-friendly network are not retirement villages, gated developments, nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

Membership in the network does not mean that the community is, currently, "age-friendly" or a great place to retire.

Membership in the network is *not* an endorsement by AARP.

What membership *does* mean is that a community's elected leadership has made the commitment to actively work toward making their town, city or county a great place for people of *all* ages.

Background

The [AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities](#) is an affiliate of the [World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program](#), an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization. The program has participating communities in more than 20 nations, as well as 10 affiliates representing more than 1,000 communities.

AARP's Role

AARP's participation in the program advances efforts to help people live easily and comfortably in their homes and communities as they age. AARP's presence encourages older adults to take a more active role in their communities and have their voices heard. Initiatives focus on areas such as housing, caregiving, community engagement, volunteering, social inclusion and combating isolation among older citizens.

AARP works with local officials and partner organizations around the country to identify communities for membership in the Age-Friendly Network. (See the article [AARP Age-Friendly Communities Selection Criteria](#) for details.) AARP then facilitates the community's enrollment and guides its representatives through the network's implementation and assessment process.

Combined with the resources provided by AARP — either through [AARP.org/Livable](#) or the [AARP Public Policy Institute](#) — the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities program supports AARP's goal of being recognized by elected officials and others as a

leading resource for how to improve the livability of communities for people age 50+ and their families.

The program emphasizes both the built and the social environment, and helps refine what it means for AARP to have a community presence. The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities program is a tool that can be used by AARP staff and others to help local leaders prepare and ultimately change their communities to become great places for everyone to live.

The Benefits of Membership

Members of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities become part of a global network of communities that are committed to giving their older residents the opportunity to live rewarding, productive and safe lives.

The benefits of membership include:

- Access to a global network of participating communities, as well as aging and civil society experts
- Access to key information about the program, such as the latest news and information about best practices, events, results, challenges and new initiatives
- Opportunities for partnerships with other cities, both domestic and international
- Mentoring and peer-review evaluation by member cities
- Public recognition of the community's commitment to become more age-friendly
- Speaking engagements at conferences and events hosted by AARP and promotion through AARP's media channels

There is no fee to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.