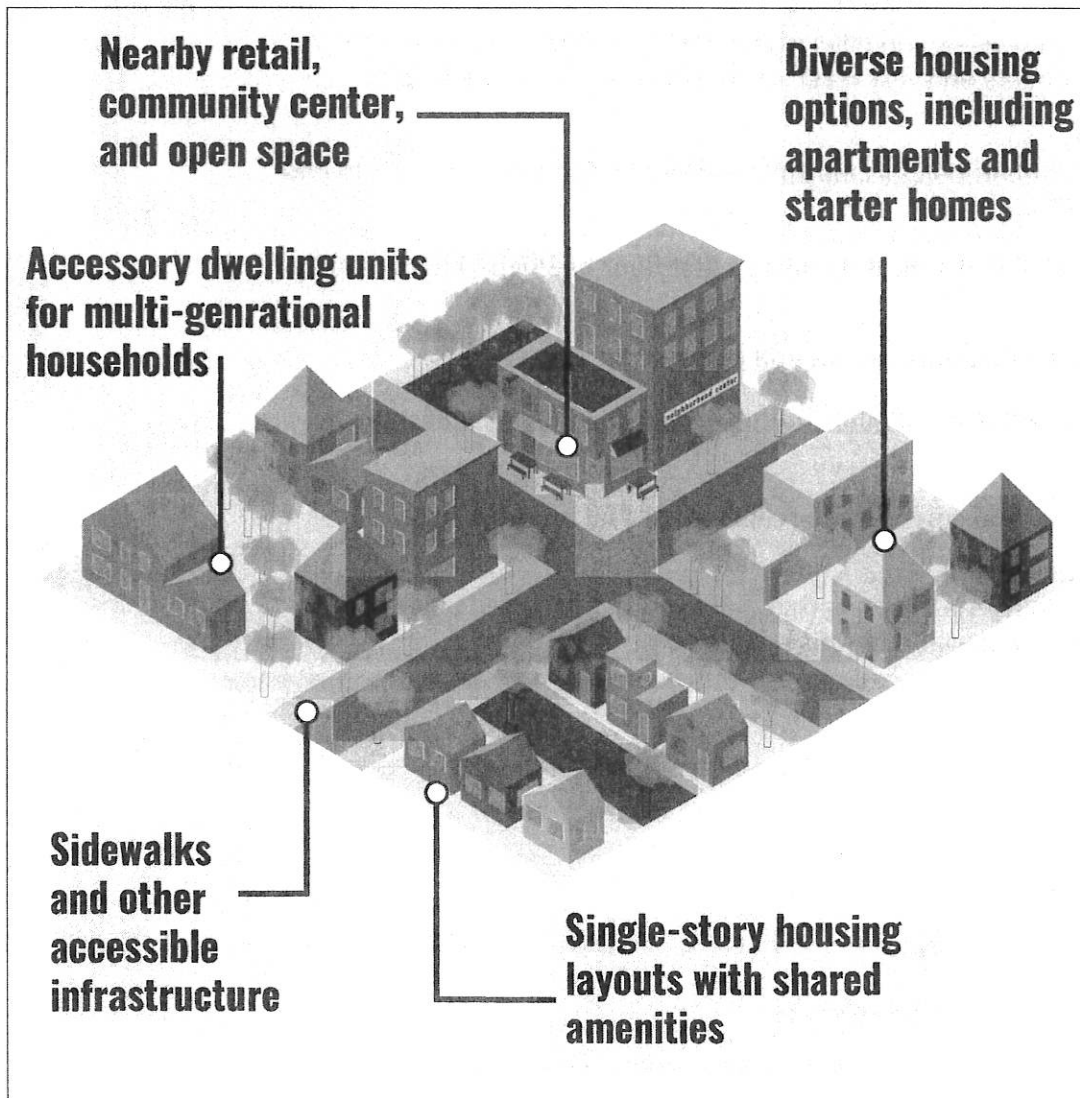


# Age-Friendly Neighborhoods





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## What is it?

Age-friendly neighborhoods are places that address the needs of younger and older adults that may move away from their community due to a lack of housing that fits their needs. Typically, younger adults that hope to buy their first home and older adults that want to downsize are looking for similar housing essentials: smaller and easier-to-maintain homes that are affordable. Older adults in particular may also want single-level living arrangements.

Communities who answer yes to the following questions may want this tool:

- Are long time residents leaving your community because there are no options available for them to downsize or age in place?
- Are young adults who grew up and want to stay in the community unable to find local, affordable starter homes?
- Are existing residents finding their two-story homes burdensome and are looking for one-story homes?
- Are the businesses, agencies, and educational institutions in your community unable to attract workers on every level due to the lack of housing in your community?
- An age-friendly neighborhood has multiple attributes that attracts younger and older adults, including:
  - Accessible single-level living options such as first floor bed/bath, kitchen and living space.
  - Smaller and easier-to-maintain homes and yards.
  - Homes that are accessible for all abilities (incorporating universal design elements).
  - Shared infrastructure and amenities to reduce costs and increase social engagement.
  - Homes that offer quality-of-life essentials such as a nearby library, parks and recreation programs, and walking trails or sidewalks.

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## How can it help?

Age-friendly neighborhoods can

- Enable residents to age-in-place.
- Retain young people in their hometowns.
- Prevent economic losses due to workers leaving their community in search of adequate housing.



- Create housing that meets the needs of residents of all ages and abilities.
- Provide zoning-based incentives to build smaller, more affordable, low-maintenance homes.
- Maintain or increase local tax revenue by maintaining demand for housing.

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## Getting Started

1. Assess your community's changing demographics through data analysis and public engagement. Identify whether your community's lack of housing options is causing age cohorts to move away (especially young people and seniors).
2. Assess existing subdivision regulations and residential zoning rules. Identify any rules that are preventing the development of housing that meets the community's needs or provisions (such as cluster and open space housing districts) that could be easily adapted to create more age-friendly communities.
3. Assess the infrastructure associated with age-friendly neighborhoods, such as sidewalks, open spaces, outdoor furniture like benches, playgrounds, snow plowing capacity (for streets and sidewalks), and more. Identify any areas in your community that are particularly well-served or underserved with these infrastructures.
4. Create zoning rules for existing and/or new neighborhood developments that incentivize (through density bonuses) or require age-friendly housing. Some key components that might be required or incentivized include:
  - a. First-floor main bedrooms and bathrooms
  - b. Maximum building square footages and/or bedroom counts
  - c. Accessible (no-step) thresholds
  - d. Universal design requirements
  - e. Shared amenities (community spaces, playgrounds)
  - f. Sidewalks and other age-friendly infrastructures required.

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## Considerations

- A specific element of age-friendly neighborhoods can be incorporated into any type of residential building, specifically requiring units (or a minimum percentage) be built to universal design standards. Universal design standards are typically standards that ensure accessibility to the home regardless of ability, including provisions for people in wheelchairs or using walkers, low-vision and blind people, and people with hearing difficulties. Universal design



features include:

- No step entry
- Wide doorways and wide hallways
- Walk-in showers with grab bars and/or benches
- Thresholds flush with floors throughout
- Kitchen layouts and appliances that accommodate wheelchair use
- Easy access light switches and other components

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## Resources

- AARP, “Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities,” <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>
- Grantmakers in Aging, “Aging Power Tools: A Curated Selection of Resources to Promote Stronger, Age-friendly Communities,” [https://www.giaging.org/documents/130402\\_GIA\\_AFC\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://www.giaging.org/documents/130402_GIA_AFC_Toolkit.pdf)
- Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association, “Age Restricted Active Adult Housing in Massachusetts,” [https://www.chapa.org/sites/default/files/f122952789640\\_BUpdateDec2008\\_4.pdf](https://www.chapa.org/sites/default/files/f122952789640_BUpdateDec2008_4.pdf)

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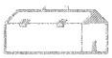
## Issues Addressed

Housing Costs, Housing Options, Multigenerational

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## Related Tools

Missing Middle Housing Types, Cluster Housing, Village Plan Alternative, Housing Opportunity Zone, PUD, Workforce Housing Ordinance, Inclusionary Zoning



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## Case Studies

### Chester, NH

Chester's age-friendly subdivision law grew from a public outreach campaign that identified a lack of housing options for young people and downsizing seniors. These age-friendly neighborhoods are envisioned to consist of smaller, affordable, low-maintenance homes for all people regardless of age, ability, or disability. The ordinance allows single-family and duplex developments on lots of at least 12 acres. Density is based on 1.75 acres per single-family home and 2.5 acres per duplex, with a maximum of 10 units in each subdivision. These rules are significantly more permissive and consume less land than Chester's conventional subdivision rules. Housing must meet universal design standards for accessibility, and each unit can have no more than two bedrooms.

- Chester's Zoning Ordinance, [https://www.chesternh.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif2941/f/uploads/50\\_zoning\\_ordinance\\_03-14-22.pdf](https://www.chesternh.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif2941/f/uploads/50_zoning_ordinance_03-14-22.pdf)

### Stow, MA

Stow, Massachusetts' zoning laws include provisions for an Active Adult Neighborhood Overlay District, which emphasizes design elements to promote aging in place, such as ADA accessibility, clustering of buildings, and the provision of community gathering spaces. Active Adult Neighborhoods are subdivisions on at least 25 acres of land, allowing single-family homes, cottages, duplexes, triplexes and four-plexes. At least 30% of units must be less than 1,800 square feet in size, and at least half of those must be detached single-family dwellings. The maximum density is three units per acre. At least 15% of units must be affordable to low-income households. Both the homes and public realm must be accessible to people with disabilities, and the development must include shared community spaces for residents.

- Stow's Active Adult Neighborhood Special Permit Rules and Regulations, [https://www.stow-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif1286/f/uploads/2021\\_aan\\_rules\\_and\\_regulations.pdf](https://www.stow-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif1286/f/uploads/2021_aan_rules_and_regulations.pdf)

