

Aging Within the Context of Your Community

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What is a community? It is not only a place but also its residents. It is you and those around you who live in the same immediate area. It is that particular place you call home. It is your neighborhood. It includes an environmental geography as well as local services and a local government. Its boundaries are often defined not only in terms of geography, but also social, economic, political, and cultural milieu. The idea of community can be as simple or as complex as construed by each individual.

Characteristics of place incorporate both physical and human physiognomies. Physical geographic features are used to describe the natural environment. This would include features such as landforms and bodies of water; weather and climate; soil and minerals; vegetation and animal life. Human features and characteristics include human activities and population patterns, language, religion, economic and political systems. It also includes those man-made structures such as buildings, roads and bridges, monuments, tunnels, dams, and railroad tracks.

Aging in place within the context of your community can mean your longstanding home residence where you raised children, flourished in your career, passed the mantle to the next generation and retired to volunteer for worthy community causes and leisurely enjoy long desired but delayed pursuits. Community living should be about social connections and conviviality. Clean air and ample greenspace offer opportunities for pleasant contact with nature and the possibility of walking as a way to enjoy the outdoors and get beneficial exercise.

Examine your community. What are some of the features you enjoy? What are some of the features you dislike? Is the community walkable with practical street connectivity? Are the houses and buildings in the area well kept? Where are the community spaces for recreation and social interactions located? Are the local shops and services easily accessible? How is the outdoor air quality and sanitation service? The elderly are particularly vulnerable with a greater risk for certain respiratory illnesses. What other nearby local amenities does your neighborhood have (hospital and/or medical clinic, drug store, parks, churches, community center, banks, library, museum, etc.)? Or do you have to travel quite a distance?

How are you able to get around your neighborhood? How would you rate your community in terms of safety? As an aging person, does your community support your overall well-being? What can you do to make your community more livable?

For additional information on aging and community living:

Administration for Community Living www.acl.gov or
http://www.acl.gov/Get_Help/Help_Older_Adults/Index.aspx

To find aging resources specific to your area (by city/state or zipcode) visit the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging at <http://www.n4a.org/>