US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging Awards 2010

AGING Initiative

Protecting the Health of Older Americans

About the Award

The principal goal of the Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging Award program is to raise awareness across the nation about healthy synergies that can be achieved when communities combine and implement the principles of smart growth with the concepts of active aging. Applicants are evaluated based on the overall effectiveness of their programs, level of community involvement and outreach, use of innovative approaches, and overall environmental and health benefits of the project.

There are two types of awards-the Achievement Award and the Commitment Award. The Achievement Award winners are public sector entities or neighborhood or non-government organizations that demonstrate excellence in building healthy communities for active aging. These recipients have implemented programs and policies that improve the health and well-being of the community and its citizens. The Commitment Award recognizes communities that are planning for and beginning to integrate smart growth and active aging.

Award recipients have developed programs and practices that reflect the best and most comprehensive implementation of smart growth and active aging at the neighborhood, municipal, tribal, county, and regional levels.

Cover Photo Credit: Bryce Hall, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Page 2 Photo Credit: Iowa City Senior Center

Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging

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Achievement Award Winner

City of Charlotte, North Carolina

"Charlotte understands the value of providing a community where its residents can stay active and healthy as they age. A walkable and livable city promotes a much higher quality of life that facilitates independent living. It is important for all of our residents to be in a city designed to encourage quality living."

- Debora Mitchell Sparks, Executive Director, Council on Aging

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The City of Charlotte (NC) is building for the future by integrating the principles of smart growth and active aging in its implementation of policies and practices to enhance the quality of life for older adults. In 2005, Mecklenburg County adopted the Status of Seniors Initiative (SOSI) which is a comprehensive set of recommendations to make Mecklenburg County more age-friendly by improvements to the built environment. Over the past five years, Charlotte has used this adopted policy to organize and guide growth and development for the city. New growth has been concentrated in several key corridors and activity centers have created higher densities, mixed use development and a more walkable community.

Whether you walk, use transit, ride your bicycle or drive your car, the City of Charlotte is making infrastructure improvements to accommodate all modes of transportation.

More than 5,000 new housing units have been constructed. Sixteen miles of greenways, 88 miles of bike facilities and 106 miles of sidewalks have been completed. By retrofitting dozens of streets and adding ADA ramps at intersections, the city has made improvements for pedestrians of all ages and abilities. Many communities look to Charlotte as a model for development that includes its Centers, Corridors and Wedges (growth strategy), Transportation Action Plan (policies and programs), and Urban Street Design Guidelines (complete streets guide).

Charlotte has incorporated senior-friendly design into street improvements, including increasing the size of its signage (for growing numbers of older drivers). Charlotte increased the number of crossing medians, provided longer and audible crossing areas, and continues to provide for pedestrian safety measures in project implementation. By focusing on the future of integrating transportation and land use, Charlotte will become a more sustainable, mixed-use city with a sense of community where elders can thrive.

Photo Credit: Charlotte Department of Transportation

Achievement Award Winner

The Brazos Valley Council of Governments (BVCOG) is the first Commitment award winner (2007) to receive the Achievement award. This seven-county regional planning association continues to be a driving force linking smart growth and active aging. Another partner is the Brazos Valley Obesity Prevention Network which has brought together individuals from health, government, nonprofit, and education sectors to improve community health and has served as a catalyst to implement walking trails with mile markers in Bryan's downtown. The following are examples of the BVCOG's work to engineer and program health and well-being into the lives of its residents.

The City of Bryan listened to its elders and installed attractive street lamps that use energy efficient bulbs at regular intervals to promote active and safe activity. Planter beds, bike racks and park benches have also been added, making it a great destination to be active and engaged.

Bryan residents' top priority during the participatory planning process was to revitalize downtown. Capital improvement projects and award programs such as facade improvements to historic buildings, including the International Harvester building, have helped make downtown a great place for people and businesses. Bryan also acquired a seven-block area adjacent to downtown and plans to extend the streetscape and infrastructure improvements to make it safer for biking and walking.

Photo Credit: Brazos Valley Area Agency on Aging

Wolf Pen Creek Park in College Station, TX.

College Station residents have found new reasons to walk. Central Park has created ten wellness stations, designed in collaboration with gerontology, kinesiology and recreation experts from Penn State University. In addition, they have completed a wheelchair accessible trail system at Wolf Pen Creek and a LifeTrail™, a fitness circuit designed to meet the needs of persons of all abilities.

Brazos Valley Council of Governments, Texas

"We are pleased to be part of the Brazos Valley Health Partnership and provide an aging voice for community decisions that will affect the growing population of older citizens in the Brazos Valley."

- Ronnie Gipson, Program Manager Brazos Valley Area Agency on Aging

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Commitment Award Winner

Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood & Community Services, Virginia

"The program gives older adults the opportunity to be vibrant, active, and more engaged in their community. As a result, the whole community is stronger."

- Cora Foley, Community Leader for Senior Center Without Walls

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Burke/West Springfield Senior Center Without Walls is an innovative public-private partnership among the residents of Burke, West Springfield, Fairfax Station, local businesses, places of worship and Fairfax County (VA) government. It was created to promote community engagement and active aging programs for adults 55 years of age and older.

Center Without Walls participants find their balance.

Photo Credit: Shelia Aram, Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood & Community Services

Planning for this cost-efficient model started in 2007 and operations began in 2009. The Center without Walls relies entirely on existing community resources to implement new programs for active aging. Prior to opening its virtual doors, there were few and disparate opportunities for elders living in the West Springfield/Burke area of Fairfax County. The program shifts the older-adult serving paradigm from senior center-based to community-based programs, using a shared site approach. Currently there are 10 programs serving more than 170 older adults all of whom reported increasing physical activity as a result of community programming.

The high level of individual and community-based organization engagement provides residents with a sense of ownership of the Center and the use of multiple locations exposes participants to new places and people. By using a variety of existing facilities, there wasn't a need to build a new senior center or create new public transportation routes or transportation infrastructure in an area already rampant with over development.

The same principles that make the Center a smart growth accomplishment have also led to its success in increasing physical activity among older adults. With a variety of programs, services, activities and opportunities offered at numerous locations – and unrestrained potential for expansion and growth – the Center encourages participation.

Commitment Award Winner

Philadelphia has the highest proportion of older persons (age 60+) of any of the ten largest cities in the United States. To meet the needs of Philadelphia's elders, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), the Area Agency on Aging, developed an integrated research, planning and policy agenda called Age-friendly Philadelphia, based on the U. S. EPA's Aging Initiative model. Researchers determined that the four EPA model principles (Staying Active connected and Engaged; Development and Housing; Transportation and Mobility; and Staying Healthy) were related to positive health and quality of life outcomes among older Philadelphians.

With this information in hand, a wide array of private, not-for-profit, and government agencies has committed to creating an Age-friendly Philadelphia focusing on five target areas: government policies that provide a high quality of life for persons of all ages; a built environment that facilitates safety and social connectedness; an aging network that considers the effect of the environment on the well-being of their consumers; universities that partner with the community to create cutting edge research; and emerging leaders from all fields who incorporate older adults in their work. Examples of collaborative projects include: the Age-friendly Parks Checklist, promoting accessory dwelling units in the new zoning code, developing age-friendly bus shelters, and increasing access to community gardens and urban farms.

Community gardens give elders the opportunity to grow their own food, exercise, share their own knowledge, and express creativity while spending time with others, both old and young.

Photo Credit: Nationalities Senior Center, Philadelphia

Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, Pennsylvania

"This is an exciting time in Philadelphia. Organizations that haven't usually worked together are finding common purpose around aging issues. I'm proud to be a part of this movement that addresses issues such as community planning and greening the urban environment, which support people of all ages."

- Skip Voluntad, age 80, Chair of the PCA Asian Advisory Committee

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BHCAA Winner Updates

County of San Mateo, Half Moon Bay Senior Campus Plan, California

"It's exciting to witness all that goes in to making our campus a reality. It's bricks and mortar next!"

- Lillian Neal Age 82

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The Half Moon Bay Senior Campus Plan was the result of a collaborative effort of local nonprofit organizations and the County of San Mateo. The plan involves the development of 250 units of affordable senior housing, a senior center, an adult day health care center, with a network of pedestrian walkways and open space tying the campus together.

Since receiving the 2009 Commitment Award, the Coastside Adult Community Center and Coastside Senior Housing Development were granted planning and environmental approvals by the City of Half Moon Bay to develop the senior center, adult day health center, and 40 units of affordable senior housing. This development represents Phase 1 of the Campus Plan. The success of the entitlement process was a culmination of the efforts by city staff, the development team, as well as an extensive community outreach process carried out by the partnership of the County of San Mateo, Senior Coastsiders, Coastside Adult Day Health Center, Mercy Housing, and Lesley Senior Communities.

In early 2011, the development team will begin the design development phase, and the process of refining the approved schematic design. The team has selected a general contractor who will provide valuable input to the design process, budgeting and scheduling for this first phase of the Campus. Concurrently, the Housing Authority of San Mateo owns six acres of the proposed campus area and has entered into a contract with Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition to develop Phase II of the campus.

Approved design of Phase I of Half Moon Bay Senior Campus Plan

Photo Credit: Zimmerman and Associates, Architects

BHCAA Winner Updates

Satellite Beach has continued its commitment to the Communities for a Lifetime Program by providing a safer walking environment and greater access to recreational opportunities at the beach.

Pedestrian Safety Workshops – Satellite Beach is presenting series of workshops, both in class and on local streets, to consider what older adults can do to increase safety while walking by evaluating driver behavior and the physical environment. The presentations also consider how traffic law enforcement can impact walking conditions.

The Hightower Beach Park renovation received Florida Redevelopment Association's award for Creative Organizational Development & Funding.

Hightower Beach Park Boardwalk – Satellite Beach entered into a public-private partnership to transform an 18-acre weathered beach access point-- with little parking and no facilities – into a pristine park with parking, facilities, and a 560 foot-long raised boardwalk traversing the natural dune setting and providing environmental education for both ocean and dune ecosystems. This park was designed to provide mobility and encourage individuals of all ages and abilities to enjoy the beach and native habitat.

A further outgrowth of the Satellite Beach initiative is the service of former Mayor Dr. Mark Brimer and Fire Chief Don Hughes on the Florida Department of Health and Florida Department of Elder Affairs Fall Prevention Coalition. As a result, many of the concepts established in Satellite Beach are now being shared at the statewide level. Additionally, Dr. Brimer has also been providing presentations to communities and groups within Florida regarding how to move forward similar initiatives as this established in Satellite Beach.

Photo Credit: John Fergus

Satellite Beach, Florida

"The physical improvements at Hightower (new restrooms, showers, boardwalk and ocean views) have transformed it from a surfers' park to a community park that promotes friendships. Every day, I see 15 or more familiar faces when I go out for our daily walk. They form a community of regulars-surfers (some dressed to surf and some wishing they could surf), moms with their tots, and others in their 50's, 60's, and up-whose connection is Hightower Beach Park."

- Patricia Van Vonderen, Satellite Beach Resident

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BHCAA Winner Updates

Carver County Public Health Division and Carver County Health Partnership, Minnesota

"[Our agency] has worked closely with Carver County and the Health Partnership in their cutting-edge work to develop and implement a countywide initiative to prepare for an older population. Their efforts have provided outstanding results."

- Dawn Simonson, Executive Director, Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging

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In 2007, the Carver County, Minnesota Board of Commissioners created the Office of Aging housed in Public Health to prepare the County for a dramatic increase in older residents. Most of these residents are baby boomers and have different experiences and expectations than today's elders for housing and services.

Aging Commissions located in six cities advise the city councils on issues related to their older residents. For example, CarFit conducts a quick, comprehensive check of how an older person and their vehicle work together and recommends car adjustments and adaptations. The Volunteer Speed Match event pairs up prospective volunteers with agencies. In 2011, these two programs will be extended to all cities in the county.

Members of the City of Victoria Senior Commission and other residents conduct a walking audit.

Universal design training sessions were held for planning staff and elected officials. Universal design applied to home modification and new construction allows persons of all abilities to age in place. Residents were also encouraged to learn about universal design through books purchased for each of the five county libraries.

"Book club" sessions with relevant resources related to the baby boomer population are held at the monthly Commission meetings. The Office on Aging strives to prepare Carver County's residents to "age in place."

Photo Credit: Carver County Public Health

What is Smart Growth?

The built environment—places where we live, work, and play—impacts people of all ages. Where and how we build our communities and our transportation networks shape our environment and have longstanding consequences on our daily lives and the quality of our environment. Communities use smart growth strategies to minimize the impacts of their built environments on both human health and the natural environment by integrating economic, environmental, and social considerations into development practices. Using smart growth techniques, communities create attractive, walkable neighborhoods that give people of varying ages, income levels, and physical abilities a range of safe, affordable, and convenient choices in where to live and how to get around.

Smart growth neighborhoods often have shops, businesses and recreation within walking distance from housing.

Growing smart helps to reduce our ecological footprint and preserve natural resources and open space. By investing in existing communities and valuing the unique assets found in rural, suburban and urban settings, communities are also finding ways to spur new economic development and opportunity.

For more information, please visit...
www.epa.gov/smartgrowth

Smart Growth Principles

Mix land uses.

Take advantage of compact building design.

Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.

Create walkable neighborhoods.

Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.

Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.

Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities.

Provide a variety of transportation choices.

Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.

Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Photo Credit: Project for Public Spaces, www.pps.org

What is Active Aging?

By 2030, the number of older persons in the United States is expected to double to more than 70 million. As our population ages, a growing number of us will be living with chronic conditions, placing increased pressure on our health care system. Only 20 percent of those over the age of 65 participate in regular activity, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many older adults live with at least one chronic condition. Research demonstrates that daily physical activity is vital for keeping fit and controlling chronic conditions. Creating a walkable community is one of the principles of smart growth that fosters active aging.

Gulf Shores Beach Intersection, Gulf Shores, Alabama

Active aging strives to promote strategies that engage older adults through a variety of structured and unstructured physical activities including walking and biking. Communities can promote active aging by implementing a diverse array of accessible physical-activity programs, increasing opportunities for self-directed physical activity for those 50 years of age or older, and providing a safe environment.

For more information on active aging, please visit...

Learning Network for Active Aging:
http://www.lnactiveaging.org/

National Council on Aging's Center for Healthy Aging:
www.healthyagingprograms.org/

National Blueprint Initiative:
www.agingblueprint.org/

Photo Credit: Dan Burden, WALC Institute

Connecting Smart Growth and Active Aging

By adopting smart growth principles, communities can design places that increase mobility and improve the quality of life for older adults. Neighborhoods that integrate homes, shops, and services, as well as parks and recreational facilities, allow residents, especially older adults, to pursue an interesting and active life without depending on a car.

Properly designed sidewalks and bikeways allow older residents to walk and bike to doctors' offices, businesses, and local shops. Transit provides access to places that are further away. These everyday activities promote physical fitness. Across the nation, the average transit rider walks or bikes 20 minutes a day as part of using transit, meeting two thirds of his or her daily needs for physical activity.

Bike Basics 101 offers seniors the opportunity to learn a new activity to promote a healthy lifestyle.

The benefits of building healthy communities for active aging are being realized in communities across the country. Smart land use planning that incorporates smart growth principles by modifying the built environment can lead to a supportive environment for active aging.

Photo Credit: Nelda Purcell, VA

Announcing the 2011 Awards for Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging

U. S. EPA's Aging Initiative announces the 4th annual **Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging Awards** program. The awards recognize outstanding community planning and strategies that support active aging. Winners will be announced in spring 2011. **Applications are due July 11, 2011.** Applications, award guidelines, and entry rules can be found at **www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/awards**.

Growing Smarter, Living Healthier: A Guide to Smart Growth and Active Aging

In this guide, we address the basic principles of neighborhood and town design. But it is also intended to help you understand why community design matters, and how becoming involved in your community's decisions about growth can make it a better place in which to grow old. You'll find suggestions for ideas to try, and links to resources to learn more about how to remake your neighborhoods to be easier to get around, whether you live in a city, suburb, or small town. We'll also give you a few ideas for getting involved and staying engaged, providing more housing options and gathering places, eating healthier, and making it easier to carry out your daily activities. After all, our age group spans decades, and some of us are very active, while others have limited mobility. The guidebook is located at **www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/guide/index.html**

For more information, please visit...

EPA Aging Initiative: www.epa.gov/aging
Please submit questions by E-mail to: aging.info@epa.gov

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www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/supporters.htm

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