

**United States**

**Livable communities and aging in place : an unprecedented demand on health, social services, and housing accommodations**

Mis en ligne le 16/08/2005

**As the baby-boom population continues to age, the United States must become aware of the challenges that await such a demographic. This unprecedented demand on health, social services, and housing accommodations is a unique opportunity that we must recognize and begin to address. US policy-makers and practitioners can also learn much from policy innovation and practices taking place in countries facing similar demographic challenges, according to Robert H. McNulty, President, Partners for Livable Communities, USA.**

**Housing :**

There are many reasons for encouraging older people to remain in their own homes. Mainly because they wish to grow old in their homes and communities. Additionally, providing home and community services that enable older adults to age in place has shown to be the most cost-effective model for aging.

**Transportation :**

The separation of home and the public realm also produces problems regarding flexible transportation options and fulfilling daily needs.

While many urban and metropolitan areas have a variety of public transportation options, the majority of their public systems are not fully integrated or have significant gaps in service and access.

Many government and advocacy group policies and programs focus on keeping seniors actively behind the wheel.

**Recreational opportunities :**

They have a profound effect on the elders' physical, mental and emotional state. Community centers and gyms that have catered to an older population have had great success. Group classes like meditation, yoga, water aerobics, weight lifting, biking, and dancing allow seniors to get their heart rate up, make friends and commit to a healthy lifestyle.

**Social, Cultural, and Educational Enhancement :**

1. Social opportunities

As daily interactions begin to taper off with old age, many seniors do not make an effort to find alternative sources of social interaction. Studies have shown people who experience social isolation have been linked to declines in their physical and mental well-being.

It is important for a community of non-government organizations, health and

social services and private industry to help foster a social network for seniors in a community.

2. Cultural opportunities

As cultural opportunities for the elderly expand, there will be a great need to highlight the uniqueness of culture within each community.

Bi-lingual events may prove to be an essential aspect of cultural opportunities. Organizations should view diversity within the aging population as an important way for seniors to share cultural differences with each other.

3. Educational opportunities

There are several benefits to allowing the elderly to have educational opportunities.

Scientists have found that intellectually challenging work boosts cognitive skills in older people even more than in younger people. Mental workouts, reading, classes, jobs, travel can stimulate brain cells.