

Town of Scarborough, Maine

## *Senior Centers Without Walls*

In Scarborough, Maine, a coastal community seven miles south of Portland, senior centers are a bit different than those typically found in many towns. In an effort to provide diverse programming for area seniors, Scarborough Community Services and the area's community volunteers have developed a *Senior Center Without Walls*.

It is a network of programs, services, and community partnerships that work to meet the varying needs of the 6,000 Scarborough residents age 50 and older. The *Senior Center Without Walls* offers activities, education, intergenerational programs, health and wellness, outreach, communications, funding, transportation, and facilities to meet the needs of the community. Current offerings include senior-focused exercise programs such as strength and core training and relaxation and balance.

The community has also improved five miles of walking trails and three miles of sidewalks to increase opportunities for physical activity among its older residents. And Scarborough redeveloped a former school site into affordable senior housing units in the town's community center. This excellent location provides older adults a greater sense of community and reduces reliance on motor vehicles.

In recognition of its exceptional efforts to address the needs of its aging population, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded the city one of five 2007 Commitment Award for Excellence in Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging. Scarborough was recognized for its efforts to encourage responsible development and healthy living for all of its 18,900 residents through its establishment of a *Future Land Use Plan*. The plan protects rural lands and open spaces, and focuses development near existing resources. The EPA award honors communities that are planning for, and beginning to use, smart growth and active aging principles. Active aging strives to promote strategies that engage older adults through structured and unstructured opportunities for physical activity.

Commenting on the housing project, Laurence W. Gross, Executive "The town's decision to support the construction of more than 200 units of affordable senior housing through flexible zoning and creative reuse of old schools provides an important resource for residents to age in place."

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About the Award

**2007 Commitment Award for Excellence in Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging**

The award honors the communities that are planning for, and beginning to use, smart growth and active aging. Active aging strives to promote strategies that engage older adults through structured and unstructured opportunities for physical activity. Active aging is supported by safe, walkable environments. Smart growth strives to minimize the impact of the built environment on both human health and the natural environment by integrating environmental considerations into development patterns. Using smart growth, communities create attractive, walkable neighborhoods that give people of all ages, income levels, and physical abilities a range of safe, affordable and convenient choices in where to live and how to get around.

For additional information, please visit the EPA's Aging Initiative Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/awards/index.htm>.