

Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging

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Background: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in partnership with the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Council on Aging, the National Blueprint, and Active for Life® developed an initiative to encourage the creation of healthy communities for active aging. In addition, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through Active for Life® supports a Learning Network for participating communities and tribes.

Objectives: The initiative assists communities to excel in promoting the health and wellbeing of older adults through smart growth and active aging. The project goal is to raise public awareness of the interconnectedness and importance of these two areas to the aging population. This poster reviews the development of this collaborative initiative and describes the process, including the self-assessment questionnaire that communities can use to participate in this initiative.

Methods: Fifty experts representing local communities, the aging network, Smart Growth communities and relevant agencies such as parks and recreation, federal agencies, and non-profit organizations met in May 2005 to discuss strategies to increase communities' commitment to improve public health through policies and programs combining Smart Growth principles with Active Aging programming. A steering committee was established to develop a 20-item self-assessment tool that community officials, in collaboration with aging network leaders, can use to evaluate their communities. This tool will enable communities to rate themselves on the extent to which they have adopted smart growth and active aging principles in their core missions; engaged in strategic planning; implemented model programs and expanded those throughout their communities. In addition, the online questionnaire will include links to helpful Web-based information and available resources to help communities improve implementation of smart growth and active aging principles. Also envisioned are other interactive e-communications including Webinars and Web-based discussion groups.

Results: The 20 item questionnaire was pre-tested with nine communities. The project was launched September 26, 2006 with rollouts planned across the country. The Steering Committee plans to showcase this effort at major professional meetings in the next year.

Conclusion: This initiative is designed to develop healthier citizens and healthier communities. Specific benefits include increased physical activity for residents, recognition at the national level by leaders in Smart Growth and Active Aging, and image improvement to help communities attract and retain citizens of all ages.

Help Shape the Future for Communities and Older Adults



What is Smart Growth?

Smart Growth is characterized by development patterns that create attractive, distinctive, walkable communities that give people of varying ages, wealth, and physical abilities a range of safe, affordable, convenient choices in where they live and how they get around. Smart Growth ensures that existing resources are used efficiently and that lands and buildings that shape communities are preserved.

What is Active Aging?

Active Aging takes place when older adults regularly participate in a variety of structured and unstructured physical activities.

ASSESSMENT

1. Our community has defined goals or a mission for advancing or applying Smart Growth principles.

Not at all Partially Completed Fully Completed

2. Our community's governing body has conducted or commissioned a community assessment for applying Smart Growth principles.

Not at all Partially Completed Fully Completed

3. Our community has defined goals or a mission for increasing older adult participation in Active Aging/physical activity.

Not at all Partially Completed Fully Completed

4. Our community's governing body has conducted or commissioned a community assessment of older adult participation in Active Aging/physical programs or opportunities.

Not at all Partially Completed Fully Completed

For full assessment questionnaire and information visit <http://www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/bhcaa.pdf>



The Steering Committee

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NATIONAL BLUEPRINT:
Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults Aged 50 and Older