

Senior Living



More Seniors Aging in Place

A growing number of seniors are choosing to “age in place” rather than move into assisted living or retirement communities.

Many older adults value the comfort, familiarity and independence of remaining in their own homes as the age.

Seventy-five percent of adults age 50 and over want to age in place, according to AARP’s 2024 Home and Community Preferences Survey.

The trend is driven by high housing costs and frustration with the housing options available, says Rodney Harrell, Ph.D., AARP vice president of family, home, and community.

“Many of our communities don’t have the housing that many aging adults can afford, with features that support them, in locations where they want to live,” Harrell said.

Here’s a look at how seniors are making their own homes more livable as they age.

HOME MODIFICATIONS

In order to move around their homes with comfort, seniors are hiring local contractors to install aids such as grab bars, handrails, walk-in showers, stair lifts, improved lighting, non-slip flooring and more. These improvements reduce falls and can improve seniors’ confidence at home.

MEAL DELIVERY AND NUTRITION HELP

Proper nutrition supports health, energy and recovery. Meal delivery services can help seniors maintain healthy diets and independence.

Seniors are increasingly turning to services such as Meals on Wheels programs, grocery delivery and meal kit

delivery in order to stay in their homes longer.

A survey conducted by the International Food Information Council Foundation and AARP Foundation found that 16% of adults age 50 and older had used grocery delivery services, 17% had used prepared meal delivery services, and 10% had purchased meal kits.

TRANSPORTATION AND DAILY ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Transportation programs help seniors stay independent as they attend appointments, shop and remain socially active, while reducing stress on family caregivers.

These services can include senior shuttle programs,

volunteer driver services and ride-share assistance. In addition, many pharmacies now offer prescription delivery, which can help eliminate trips.

Seniors might also hire private cleaning and household assistance services to reduce physical strain and help maintain safe living environments.



Dining and Entertainment

Local businesses and attractions are creating welcoming experiences for older adults.

Seniors represent an important and growing segment of the community. According to AARP, most adults age 50 and older want to remain active, connected and engaged as they age. As a result, businesses and attractions are adapting their services to better meet these expectations.

From offering online ticket purchasing assistance and accessible technology to creating social events specifically for seniors, local venues are finding new ways to foster inclusion. These efforts not only enhance quality of life for older adults but also strengthen community connections and support the local economy through increased participation and patronage.

DINING OUT

Dining out supports social interaction and allows seniors to continue supporting local businesses.

Restaurants are appealing to seniors by offering easy parking and accessible entrances, comfortable seating and quieter environments, early dining specials or senior discounts, smaller portions or healthy menu options, good lighting and easy-to-read menus.

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

Participating in arts and en-



© ADOBE STOCK

tertainment contributes to emotional well-being and allows seniors to stay active.

Theaters, music venues and cinemas are increasingly offering features designed for older adults. These can include matinee performances, discount ticket programs, accessible seating, hearing assistance devices or closed captioning showings, senior-focused performances or classic film nights.

Some venues might even of-

fer organized transportation from local senior centers and retirement communities or partnerships with local transit agencies.

Check to see if your local theater offers a senior movie club, with discounted tickets and social gatherings before or after screenings.

At many venues, you can also expect to find help with using technology, such as navigating a theater's app or using a QR code as an admission ticket.

ATTRACTIONS

Staying active while exploring local attractions benefits physical and mental health.

Museums, botanical gardens, parks, historical sites and other community attractions are increasingly appealing to older adults with senior-friendly access and programming.

Look for guided tours, walking paths with seating areas, educational programs, dedicated senior activity days, accessible restrooms and easy transporta-

tion access.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Look for services in your community that are specifically targeted to seniors. Park district programs such as concerts in the park, nature walks and outdoor movie nights make for enjoyable outings with friends, or opportunities to meet new people. Local libraries might offer book clubs, author talks, technology workshops and cultural presentations.

Healthy Eating, Healthy Aging

The foods seniors eat provide the fuel needed to stay active, maintain strength and recover from exercise or daily activities.

Without proper nutrition, energy levels can decline, making it more difficult to participate in activities that support healthy aging.

Healthy eating can become more challenging for seniors due to changing appetites, dietary restrictions, fixed incomes or the adjustment to cooking for smaller households.

Local businesses and community resources can make healthy eating easier, more affordable, and more enjoyable.

WHY NUTRITION MATTERS MORE WITH AGE

Nutritional needs change as people get older. Seniors need specific nutrients to help maintain muscle mass, bone health, heart health and hydration, as well as to help manage chronic conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

Seniors often need more protein, fiber, calcium, Vitamin D and potassium. Consult with a local nutritionist, dietitian or health care provider about the diet that's right for you.

LOCAL RESOURCES SUPPORTING HEALTHY EATING

Look to local farmers markets for fresh produce. Local grocery stores might offer senior discounts or delivery. You can even grow your own produce in a community garden.

Senior center lunch programs and Meals on Wheels programs also help seniors access healthy food.

COOKING FOR ONE OR TWO WITHOUT WASTE

Many seniors face challenges when cooking smaller portions, as they may be used to cooking for a large family.

Cooking and freezing meals in batches can be helpful. Get into the habit of buying smaller portions, and choose simple, nutritious recipes to avoid wasting ingredients.

You can use meal prep containers to portion out meals for several days from a larger batch. Consider using a vacuum sealer to keep produce or meats fresh longer.

MANAGING DIETARY RESTRICTIONS WHILE STAYING ACTIVE

Many older adults live with chronic

health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease or osteoporosis, making nutrition an important part of managing their health.

Because many seniors take medications that can affect appetite, digestion or nutrient absorption, it is important to discuss dietary changes with a health care provider or registered dietitian.



© ADOBE STOCK

Get Comfortable with Technology

Seniors are increasingly using technology in their day-to-day lives.

The AARP's 2025 technology survey put the trend into focus. Smartphone ownership among seniors soared from 55% in 2016 to 90% in 2025. Texting is now the lead communication method among adults age 50-plus; nine in 10 use social media, and eight in 10 stream video weekly.

Today's seniors were born before the age of digital natives. While they might not have grown up with today's advanced electronics and might feel overwhelmed or intimidated, that doesn't mean they can't harness the power of technology, which has become an essential part of everyday life.

Seniors are gaining digital literacy to use technology for everything from communicating with family to managing healthcare appointments and finances to learning new hobbies.

WHY IT MATTERS

Technology helps seniors maintain independence and social connection, reduces isolation and improves access to essential services.

This can include video calls with family, online banking and shopping, telehealth appointments, prescription management, accessing community information, educa-



© ADOBE STOCK

tion and more.

WHERE TO LEARN

A growing number of local businesses, libraries and community organizations offer support designed specifically to help older adults confidently use smartphones, tablets, computers and online services.

In your community, look for technology workshops at your

local library or senior center, community college or local tech repair and support businesses.

Look for patient, hands-on instruction tailored to beginners, as well as a focus on the importance of protecting personal information online.

SKILLS TO MASTER

Seniors should aim to master a handful of basic skills to

help them feel more comfortable with technology. This includes password management, smartphone settings, online scam and phishing prevention, video conferencing, downloading apps, understanding updates and using notifications.

USING TECHNOLOGY EVERY DAY

Once you've mastered basic

skills, it's time to apply what you've learned in your daily life.

To get started, practice using telehealth services, setting medication reminders, operating smart home devices such as lighting and security and scheduling grocery and prescription deliveries.

Before long, you'll find that digital life will be part of your daily life.

Volunteerism After Retirement

Retirement no longer means slowing down for many older adults. Many view retirement as an opportunity to give back to their communities through volunteering.

Older adults continue to play an important role in strengthening local organizations and mentoring younger generations, while staying active, connected and purposeful.

A wide variety of local organizations — including schools, hospitals, nonprofits, churches, and civic groups — rely on older volunteers and value the experience and stability they bring.

WHY VOLUNTEER

The personal benefits of volunteering after retirement can include feeling a sense of purpose, staying connected socially, mental stimulation, improved emotional well-being and physical activity.

Retirement can be a time of reinvention. Volunteering allows seniors to explore new interests.

In addition, volunteerism helps strengthen community connections across generations, as you share lifelong skills and knowledge with younger people.



© ADOBE STOCK

Volunteer roles often offer flexible schedules and allow you to meet new friends who share similar interests.

WHERE TO DONATE YOUR TIME

No matter what talents and experience you have to share, you will find an opportunity to volunteer. Because seniors are typically reliable volun-

teers who offer patience and professional experience, many community organizations actively recruit retirees for leadership and volunteer roles.

Check with local schools and libraries for opportunities to read with students. Non-profit mentoring programs often depend on older adults to help shape young minds. If

you're interested in caregiving, consider volunteer at a local hospital.

Food pantries are always looking for assistance, and church outreach programs can allow you to share your faith.

Museum docents can share their love for history, culture, science or art. Pass on your love of animals by

volunteering at an animal shelter, or help fellow veterans through veterans organizations. Community theaters, historical societies and environmental groups are other places to offer your services.

Retirement today is increasingly defined not by stepping away from community life, but by finding meaningful new ways to stay involved.



© ADOBE STOCK

The New Face of Senior Living

Today's retirees are looking for active, engaging lifestyles rather than simply care and maintenance.

Modern retirement and assisted living communities now emphasize independence, wellness, learning and social connection. In addition, residents maintain independence and quality of life.

Here's a look at how today's seniors are reshaping expectations for retirement living.

RESORT-STYLE AMENITIES

Modern senior living communities now feature amenities once associated with resorts or upscale apartments. Examples include fitness centers, walking trails, pools and spas, fine dining options, coffee shops and lounges, beauty salons or barbershops and transportation services.

WELLNESS PROGRAMS

Rather than just traditional medical care, senior living is increasingly centered around preventive wellness. At modern senior living communities, you'll find yoga and stretching classes, water aerobics, nutrition counseling, mental health support, on-site health care partnerships and fall prevention and mobility programs.

These programs help seniors remain active longer and improve social engagement.

Maintaining cognitive health is a growing priority for older adults. According to McKnights Senior Living, Alzheimer's disease is the fifth-leading cause of death among Americans age

65 and older. In response, many senior living communities are placing greater emphasis on brain-health programs, memory-enhancing activities and wellness initiatives designed to support cognitive function and help residents remain mentally engaged.

LIFELONG LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY

Learning helps seniors stay mentally engaged and socially connected, and technology support helps residents stay connected with family and health care providers.

Many senior living communities now offer educational opportunities and enrichment programs for residents. Seniors can expect to find guest lectures, art and music classes, book clubs, technology workshops and online learning opportunities.

Facilities sometimes partner with

local colleges, libraries, museums or community organizations for even more programs.

If your center doesn't have an education program you'd like to see, just ask. Senior living communities are eager to attract and retain residents with diverse offerings.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Senior living communities are putting a growing emphasis on creating places where residents build friendships and remain active participants in local life. Keeping a busy social calendar helps seniors combat loneliness and improve their emotional well-being.

Activities can include group outings, volunteer opportunities, game nights, gardening clubs, travel groups, holiday events and themed dinners.

Transportation Solutions

Many seniors eventually reduce or stop driving for health, vision or safety reasons.

While losing the ability to drive can feel like losing independence and social connection, seniors don't have to stay put. A growing number of transportation resources help older adults remain active, attend appointments, shop locally and stay connected to their communities without relying solely on family members.

SENIOR SHUTTLE AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

Many senior living communities, churches and recreation centers offer scheduled transportation to community destinations and events.

Local senior shuttle services and community transportation programs designed specifically for older adults can help reduce isolation and support independent living.

Common features of these services include scheduled medical transportation, grocery and pharmacy trips and door-to-door assistance. These services are typically offered at low or no cost.

RIDE-SHARE SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE

Services such as Uber and



© ADOBE STOCK

Lyft are becoming more common transportation options for seniors.

Some providers even offer specialized ride-share programs focused on seniors or non-emergency medical transportation.

If you are facing challenges

with using smartphone apps and navigating digital scheduling, look for phone scheduling options.

You can also look to libraries or community organizations for help learning how to use ride-share technology safely.

PUBLIC TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY

Accessible transportation allows seniors to remain involved in community activities, appointments and social events. Accordingly, local public transportation systems are adapting to better serve aging

populations.

Keep an eye out for discounted fares, priority seating, ADA-accessible buses and vans, paratransit services and route planning assistance.

VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAMS AND LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT

Volunteer driver programs offered through churches, non-profits and civic organizations can help fill the gap.

Volunteers help seniors attend appointments, social activities and errands.

One way to address transportation challenges is to eliminate the need for some errands. Consider using grocery and pharmacy delivery services and mobile health care services. These options help seniors maintain independence and reduce reliance on family caregivers.

MEDICAL-SPECIFIC TRANSPORTATION

Some health insurance plans, including certain Medicare Advantage plans and Medicaid programs, provide transportation benefits for doctor visits and medical treatments. Check with your health plan to see which options are available.

FAMILY AND FRIEND NETWORKS

Creating a transportation calendar with adult children, relatives, neighbors and friends can help spread driving responsibilities among multiple people rather than relying on one caregiver.