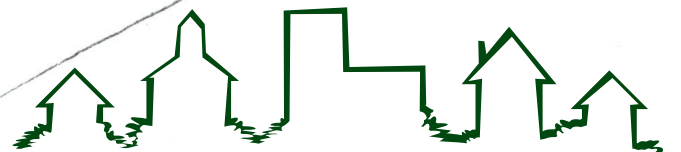




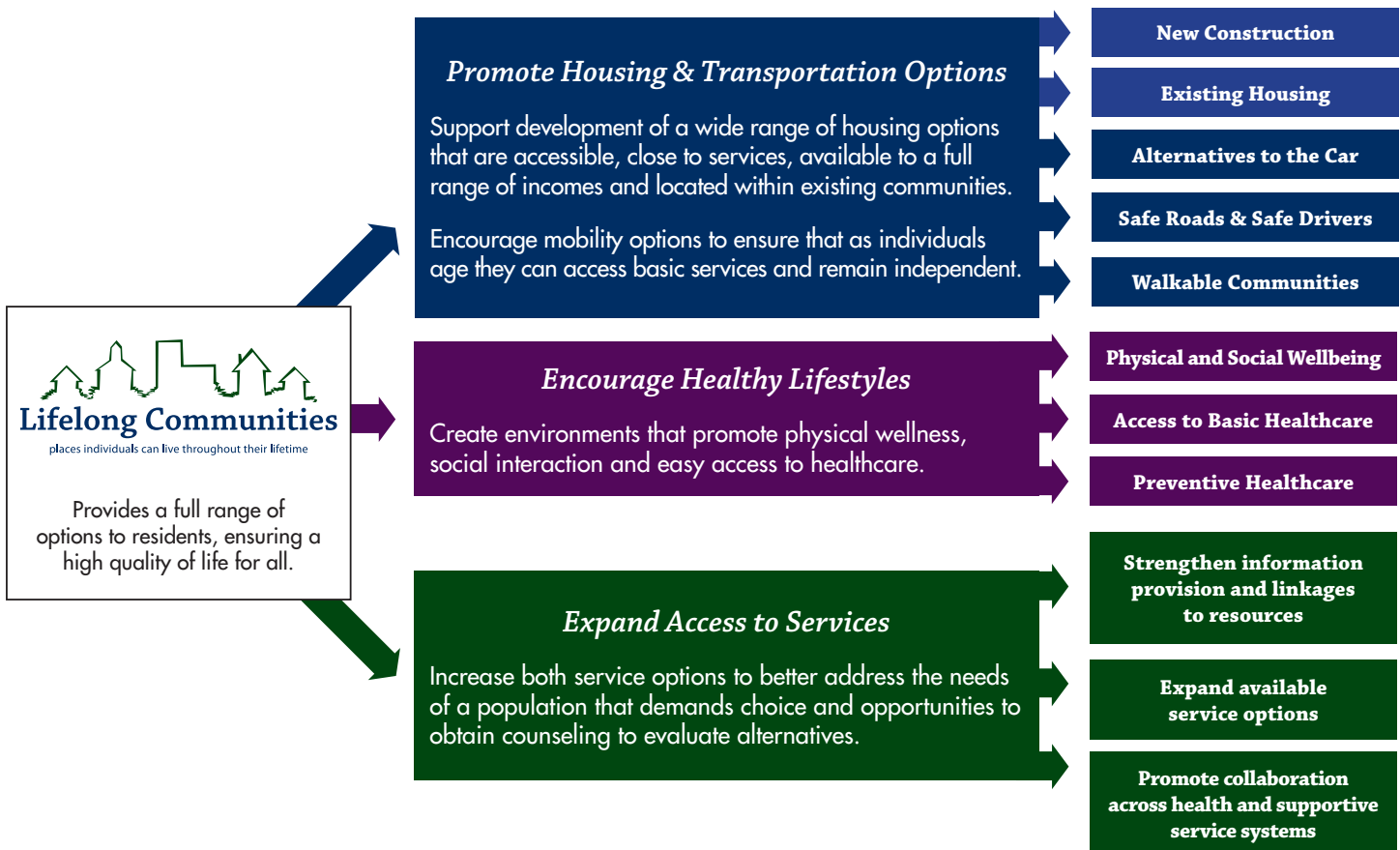
An element of the Atlanta Regional Commission Regional Plan

Lifelong Communities Handbook: Creating Opportunities for Lifelong Living



Lifelong Communities

places individuals can live throughout their lifetime



This handbook serves as a reference to ensure development and community design adhere to the Lifelong Communities Principles, resulting in communities and neighborhoods that are designed to promote healthy living, deliver comprehensive accessibility from inside the dwelling, down the street and into the restaurant, theater or store and offer targeted programming that meets the new reality of increasing life expectancies, varying levels of abilities and the needs of all ages.

The handbook is organized around the core lifelong community principles of connectivity, pedestrian access and transit, neighborhood retail and services, social interaction, diversity of dwelling types, environmentally friendly and healthy living and consideration for existing residents.

The handbook is designed to show the principles are applied at four levels - the building, the street, the community and the region.

Visit Atlanta Regional Commission's Lifelong Community's website at www.atlantaregional.com/llc



Lifelong Communities Design Handbook

Communities should be places where people of all ages and abilities can live as long as they'd like, but all too often, individuals find that the community in which they have lived for years no longer meets their needs. The Atlanta Regional Commission supports the following principles and design standards through its comprehensive regional plan. Lifelong Communities provide an array of housing types that appeal to individuals both young and old, opportunities for healthy living with ways to get around that meet the needs of individuals who do not drive, safe sidewalks and interesting places to walk, and convenient access to shopping and basic services. Those features are summed up in the three goals of a Lifelong Community:

1. Provide housing and transportation options,
2. Encourage healthy lifestyles, and
3. Expand access to services.

Lifelong Communities incorporate seven principles:

- **Connectivity** – Providing the most options for getting from one place to another, reducing traffic and creating a viable street network for multiple modes of transportation
- **Pedestrian Access and Transit** – Creating a vibrant streetscape, destinations worth walking to, connected and safe sidewalks and transit, both within the community and to regional hubs
- **Neighborhood Retail and Services** – Permitted within walking distances of housing to reduce auto travel, increase walkability and provide for sustainable community hubs
- **Social Interaction** – Resulting from the provision of adequate green space, community centers, neighborhood gardens and more
- **Diversity of Dwelling Types** – Allowing individuals to remain within the community as their needs and preferences change
- **Healthy Living** – Growing out of an environment that promotes physical activity (trails and bike paths), neighborhood-scale groceries offering fresh fruits and vegetables and health clinics and medical offices within walking distance
- **Consideration for Existing Residents** – Providing options for existing residents to remain in the community as redevelopment occurs

These principles are tools to help community leaders, planners, developers and citizens create communities that meet the goals of a Lifelong Community.

Lifelong Mobility and Accessibility

Lifelong Mobility and Accessibility provides access and transportation to people of all ages and abilities. Real mobility begins inside the individual unit or house and carries throughout the entire built environment.

Building Scale

- New energy-efficient construction that at a minimum incorporates potential for accessibility retrofit and ideally offers universal design and ADA elements such as blocking in the bathroom walls for installation of grab bars
- Adequate, energy-efficient lighting in critical areas such as walkways and entrances

Street Scale

- Plans to ensure that all land use patterns, transportation routes and community facilities meet the needs of people of all ages
- Streets that are welcoming and unthreatening with a level of business and commercial activity
- Traffic calming strategies that make the environment feel safe including raised medians, bulb-outs at intersections, road diets, slip roads and roundabouts
- Xericape plantings and fencing positioned to reduce traffic noise
- Engaging frontages that include diverse urban and building form that vary in style, color and material
- Walkable sidewalks, wide-enough to accommodate two people and barrier-free to reduce potential for falls
- Sidewalks that are closely managed during any construction and repair to avoid barriers to access in the pedestrian environment
- Sidewalks that are closely managed over time to avoid cluttering of pedestrian environment with vending machines, newspaper stands, signage and other street furniture
- Grade level changes that are clearly marked and well-lit
- Handrails installed where appropriate
- Curb cuts at all intersections
- Sidewalk paving that:
 - Is non-reflective
 - Has textural contrast to walls
 - Has flat, permeable, porous paving to assist with water runoff and reduces potential for falls
- Trees for shade

Lifelong Mobility and Accessibility

- Sensory cues at decision points, such as junctions or grade changes
- Adequate pedestrian lighting
- Crossable streets
 - Crosswalk markings that are appropriate and well maintained
 - Traffic signals mounted at the sidewalk rather than suspended
 - Cross walks at signalized intersections as appropriate
 - Signal timing suitable for slower walking speeds (3 ft/sec. or lower)
 - Countdown crossing signals
 - Refuge islands for more than 2 lanes of traffic
- Accommodation for specialized vehicles (power chairs, golf carts, etc.) and strollers
- Sitting arrangements to provide respite and facilitate social interaction
- Sturdy seating with arm and back rests, made of appropriate materials
- Covered bus stops with seating
- Areas of sun and shade considered in the design of the street
- Gates and doors requiring no more than 5 pounds of pressure to open and having lever handles

Community Scale

- Consideration given to vegetative buffers that may create barriers to pedestrian access
- Consideration given to parking requirements that limit pedestrian access
- Centralized transit waiting areas
- Transit stops that provide protection from rain, wind and sun
- Smart transit technology that alerts riders to bus/shuttle's arrival time
- Smart transit technology alerts bus drivers to riders waiting in covered or sheltered waiting areas
- Stops for shuttles, jitneys, buses and light rail

Regional Scale

- Older driver safety education classes
- Neighborhood center transit stops

- Provision of bus rapid transit and light rail
- Disability-friendly public transit
- Transit training for previous non-riders
- Transit/shuttle driver training to accommodate needs of older riders
- Flex routing during off-peak hours to provide door-to-door or curb-to-curb service
- Alternative transportation such as volunteer drive programs and voucher programs

Lifelong Dwellings

Lifelong Dwellings incorporate elements that allow the building to change with its inhabitants rather than inhabitants having to constantly find new dwellings as their needs change. Outside of individual units, a community must contain a full range of housing types including varying housing sizes, products, supportive housing and even skilled nursing care to ensure that those who have invested in a place's social and civic infrastructure can remain there as their needs change. The dwelling should incorporate green building strategies to ensure environmentally friendly, durable and healthy living, work and social environments for the occupants.

Building Scale

- Flexible housing accommodations that provide options for caregivers, older family members or adult children
- Adequate high-efficiency lighting
- Smaller lots and smaller front setbacks for neighbor interaction
- A zero step entry
- Full bath and living on main floor
- Wider doorways and hallways on main floor, with at least 32" clear passage
- Adherence to sustainable and energy-efficient building practices

Community Scale

- Zoning requirements, subdivision regulations or building codes that promote/support other flexible housing options (e.g. shared housing, accessory apartments)
- Incentives for green building practices
- Diversity of housing (varying sizes, products) such as condos, apartments, duplexes, quadraplexes, accessory dwellings, etc.
- Accessibility of housing products that at least meet ADA guidelines and visitability standards

- Incentives for universal design
- Workforce housing
- Range of supportive housing types
- Range of specialized housing types (cohousing, models that address dementia or other disabilities)
- Accessible spaces as appropriate based on community accessibility standards
- Home maintenance/repair assistance programs
- A supply of affordable housing options available to seniors
- Specialized training for frail elderly
- Cooperative policing

Lifelong Social Interaction

Social interaction is critical at all ages and stages of life, but particularly as one grows older. Isolation can dramatically increase physical, mental health, and isolation problems. It is critical that the built environment facilitate significant social interaction and the creation of a supportive community at every opportunity. The following items foster social interaction.

Building Scale

- Sitting areas provided on the main entrances
- Common rooms and shared dining areas
- Out-buildings (e.g. workshop or garage)
- Small-scale activity spaces, including card rooms, TV rooms, reading rooms
- Flexible space for emerging interests and activities

Street Scale

- Front yard gardens, porches and stoops
- Reinforcement of gathering places such as town squares, parklets, public art displays

Community Scale

- Community rooms (large enough for exercise classes, meetings, movies)
- Opportunities for meaningful volunteer activities (e.g. after-school tutoring, community gardens)
- Opportunities for harnessing the talent, wisdom and experience of older adults to contribute to the community of large

- Cultural opportunities that reflect ethnic demographic
- Functioning neighborhood/civic organizations
- Active and passive open space such as:
 - ❑ Dog parks
 - ❑ Age-integrated activity space including playgrounds and schoolyards
 - ❑ Community gardens
- Third-places such as:
 - ❑ Parks and recreation
 - ❑ Barber shops, beauty salons
 - ❑ Coffee shops, bars
 - ❑ Community centers, senior centers, intergenerational programming

Regional Scale

- Access to cultural activities, educational and entertainment venues

Lifelong Healthy Living

Living longer is the great benefit of living in this century, but getting and staying healthy is essential to maintaining a high quality of life. Community design must facilitate access to basic and preventive healthcare and encourage physical activity. The following items support healthy living.

Building Scale

- Fall-safe environment
- Infrastructure to support adaptive medical technology and monitoring
- Accessible and visitable spaces as appropriate, based on community accessibility standards

Street Scale

- Daily needs met within safe and inviting walking distance
- Fall-safe environment
- Wayfinding signage to community health centers, parks and recreational facilities

- Shorter block sizes
- Walkable destinations that promote social engagement

Community Scale

- Free, accessible and diverse programs to support healthy lifestyles (nutrition, education, smoking cessation)
- Designated walking loop or access to tracks
- Free or low- cost exercise and recreation venues and classes (e.g. bocce, dancing, tennis, yoga, tai chi)
- Swimming pool
- Accessible health services, both preventative and acute care
- Community concierge and case management such as those in the Village concept
- Neighborhood access to healthy, locally grown foods
- Free or affordable preventative screenings (blood pressure, mammograms, immunizations)

Regional Scale

- Transit or shuttle connection to major medical centers and hospitals
- Volunteer driver programs to medical appointments

Lifelong Access to Services

Lifelong Communities must provide access to a full range of basic and supportive services. Services should range from basic daily needs to more specialized skilled care.

Building Scale

- Range of in home services (medical, support and social services)

Street Scale

- Community bulletin boards
- Wayfinding signage to local amenities and services

Community Scale

- Community must have local access to ordinary daily needs which may include a location-appropriate mix of some of the following programs:
 - Groceries offering fresh local fruits and vegetables
 - Dry cleaner

- ATM/Bank
- Drugstore
- Beauty/ barber shops, nail salons
- Post office
- Restaurants
- Bakery
- Hardware store
- Physician offices (including vision and dental services)
- In-home medical and supportive services
- Facilities with skilled nursing care
- Lifelong learning opportunities
- Childcare and adult day care
- Community concierge (which can include case management for older adults)
- Library system

Regional Scale

- Hospitals
- Entertainment, educational and cultural venues
- Major and specialized shopping outlets
- Job retraining opportunities and networking resources for the unemployed
- Job banks for older adults
- Employers that offer flexible work solutions and teleworking
- Readily available information about meal and nutrition options

Other Resources

Livable Centers Initiative encourages local jurisdictions to plan and implement strategies that link transportation improvements with land use development strategies to create sustainable, livable communities consistent with regional development policies.

www.atlantaregional.com/land-use/livable-centers-initiative

Community Choices is a quality growth initiative that offers local governments tools, technical assistance and resources to help them create communities that best suit their unique visions.

www.atlantaregional.com/local-government/local-planning

Lifelong Communities Initiative

www.atlantaregional.com/lc

AARP

www.aarp.org/states/ga

SRTS

www.saferoutesinfo.org

Green Communities

<http://www.atlantaregional.com/environment/green-communities>

AgeWise Connection

www.agewiseconnection.com



Atlanta Regional Commission, Area Agency on Aging
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