



The Health Issue: An Aging Population

Solution: Design Senior-Friendly Communities

Quick Facts

Fact: Over the next twenty years, our population will age dramatically as the Baby Boomers reach their senior years. It is estimated that by 2030, one out of every five residents in Santa Clara County will be over age 65.

Fact: In Europe where cities are denser and the pedestrian infrastructure is better, 50% of seniors walk or bike compared to 8% of American seniors.

Fact: Compared with older drivers, older non-drivers in the United States make: 15% fewer trips to the doctor; 59% fewer shopping trips and visits to restaurants; 65% fewer trips for social, family and religious activities.

Fact: In a recent AARP poll 40% of adults 50 years and older say they do not have adequate sidewalks in their neighborhoods. 47 % say they cannot cross their main roads safely.

Key Messages

Message: “We must plan and design our communities today to meet the needs of an aging population. Seniors thrive in neighborhoods that are walkable and inclusive, where everything they need is within a reasonable distance.”

Message: “As we envision San Jose in the year 2040, we must ask if we are preparing our city for an aging population. To ensure that seniors are able to enjoy their neighborhood and engage with their community, we must design safe streets with sidewalks and easy connections to shops, transit, and community centers.”

Policy Suggestions

- Inventory and assess existing senior services and create a plan for addressing the gaps in services. By determining where services and senior enclaves are, a community can plan ahead by redirecting transit routes to better serve areas where there are senior hot spots.
- Include senior housing in complete neighborhoods served by transit. Seniors thrive when they can reach essential services without a car.
- Ensure that the streets and sidewalks in these neighborhoods are of the highest quality so as to amplify seniors’ independence. Many of the policies related to complete streets lead to more senior-friendly neighborhoods.

Health Statistics for Seniors and Active Living

- Walking reduces costs to society. The CDC estimates that if 10 percent of adults began a regular walking program, \$56 billion in heart disease costs could be saved. (CDC 2003)
- Vehicle accidents with senior pedestrians are more likely to result in death. In 2007, older Americans made up 19% of all pedestrian fatalities although they only make up 13% of the total U.S. resident population.
- The Surgeon General recommends 30 minutes of moderate activity a day. For seniors, a one-mile trip is a thirty-minute walk if seniors go 2.8 ft/s.