

How Age Friendly is Flemington, NJ

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ABSTRACT

With the ageing population growing at 16% since 2019, it is important to make age friendly communities for the ageing generation. Having access to an age friendly environment means looking at things like housing, outdoor spaces, transportation, social environments, and community support to grade whether an area is truly an age friendly environment. I will be looking at the positive and negative aspects of Flemington, NJ and seeing what Flemington is truly doing to become an age friendly environment for ageing adults to live in.

Housing

Appropriate housing options for an age friendly is based on the location of a community, their access to transportation, the ability to get to things like grocery stores and retail stores. Another factor would be having an appropriate house design, affordability, access to maintenance and the safety of the environment. Another main factor of an age friendly community is access to social services. So just how age friendly is housing in Flemington, NJ?

Flemington contains one 55 and older community that is 2 miles from downtown and all major shopping, such as ShopRite, pharmacies, Walmart, and Lowes. Hunterdon Creekside is 3.5 miles from the nearest hospital and they also are 60 minutes from New York City and Philadelphia. Hunterdon Creekside contains 2-3-bedroom, 1.5-3 bath houses with a 2-car garage. The houses are 2 levels, but all levels open to a ground floor (basements open to the backyard). The 55+ community also has tennis courts and an in-ground pool. Unfortunately, the cost is a bit high for these houses at \$400-500,000.

There are also 7 nursing homes/assisted living facilities in Flemington, NJ and one assisted living facility that is located behind BJ's Wholesales and a CVS. The Independence Manor Assisted Living Facility is also across the street from the Hunterdon Medical Center Hospital.

Outdoor Spaces & Built Environment

Another factor of a town's age friendliness is their walkability, cleanliness, access to bathrooms and places to rest. These towns will need to have crosswalks and walkable areas. Some other things an age friendly town will need is leisure opportunities and senior centers.

Flemington does a good job of having parks that are walkable. They have 22 parks in Flemington and 17 additional parks in surrounding towns with paved walking paths and are relatively flat. There are a few that are a bit more difficult with hills and steps, but for the most part all the parks are age friendly. There are also a few outdoor shopping centers where people can walk between the stores with crosswalks and sidewalks throughout the downtown area. Flemington, NJ also has a senior center which offers health and wellness classes.

Community Support

Community support in an age friendly community would be communities that encourage the ageing population through offering volunteering and career opportunities in a community. Community support can also be learning opportunities and entrepreneurial opportunities.

In Flemington, NJ there is a Hunterdon County volunteer page that lists some of the local volunteer opportunities in the Flemington area. The Hunterdon County website also has a Human Resources page that mentions some job opportunities in the community that are open to everyone but could be a good fit for some older adults depending on the jobs available. In addition to volunteer and career opportunities, the senior center offers classes on how-to use different aspects of the computer, online ASL classes and virtual cooking classes.

Transportation

Transportation in Flemington, NJ is a must. According to Jeste, et al, an age friendly community needs to have reliable and affordable transportation that is both safe and comfortable that travels to necessary locations (Jeste, 2016). While having your own car is the most ideal situation for people living in Flemington, NJ there are a few other options to aid the aging population in getting around.

One option would be using Lyft which costs about \$1.06 per mile or Uber which will generally cost about \$1-2 per mile and are both forms of reliable transportation. Then there is also the Latino Taxi in Flemington which gets a 1-star rating and has the wrong phone number posted online.

Another option for transportation would be the LINK which allows people to call and set a pickup location and then pick one of the numerous routes throughout Flemington and a few major nearby towns. The LINK cost around \$2-4 a day depending on how far you are going and what route you choose. The Link goes to all the major shopping centers but has a 2.5/5 stars rating on google and can be 40-60 minutes late.

In addition to those travel options there is also Park & Rides which allows people to park their car for free at a bus station so they can get a bus to NYC, Newark, JFK airport or Lehigh Valley, Doylestown, New Hope, Pennsylvania, Clinton, and Phillipsburg. The buses are ADA compliant and cost about \$20-60 for a one-way ticket and \$60-100 for a round trip ticket. Overall Park & Ride receives a 3.7/5 rating on google.

Social Environment

An age friendly social environment would be a community with age friendly services and access to meaningful connection with neighbors, family, and friends. The community should also offer community engagement and information technology.

In Flemington, the senior center offers virtual cooking classes, how-to computer classes which includes how to use Microsoft programs and social media. There are also online and in person exercise classes, ASL classes, scatttergories, virtual bingo and wellness lectures. These classes all work to help ageing adults to relate to people through the computer. The classes and games can be a good way for ageing adults to socialize with neighbors and friends. As well as hanging out at local parks and restaurants.

Health & Wellness Services

Health and wellness services that make a community an age friendly environment is contingent on what services are offered and how close the services are. In Flemington, there is one hospital, an urgent care, 15 chiropractors, 16 family doctors and 18 dentists.

Flemington also has a lot of health options between the YMCA which offers senior swim hours, aquatic fitness programs and wellness programs to promote good health. There is also the Senior center which works to provide wellness classes, and multiple exercise classes that are dedicated to creating low impact exercises such as Zumba, low impact aerobics, ballet and tap dancing.

CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the following factors of housing, outdoor space, transportation, social environment, community support and health & wellness services I think I have found that Flemington, NJ is a relatively age friendly community. My conclusion is that Flemington, NJ does a good job offering safe ample outdoor spaces by having good walking areas and safe environments. The available transportation in town is acceptable. The community seems to work well with community support and Health and wellness options. Flemington needs improvement with better, more affordable housing that does not force someone to move into a nursing home or assisted living facility if they need or want help. Another thing Flemington needs to improve is the reliability of their transportation. Overall, I think Flemington is age friendly, but needs some improvements. So, I would rate Flemington's age friendliness as an 8/10.

REFERENCES

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*Additional references available upon request