

How Age-Friendly is the Community of New Washington, Ohio?

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ABSTRACT

Being a senior citizen later in life is inevitable and getting older comes with changes that require adjustments. Where people live strongly impacts how they will be able to adjust to the changes that come with being a senior citizen. Age-friendly communities are important in making the aging process easier to cope with so individuals can live to their fullest potentials. The World Health Organization encourages communities to focus on six main criteria when thinking about making communities more age-friendly. These criteria include housing, outdoor spaces and built environment, transportation, social environment, community support, and health and wellness services. I will be assessing the town of New Washington, Ohio on these six criteria to see how age-friendly my community is. As I examine New Washington, I will be looking further into how the six aspects of an age-friendly community impact the older adults who live there.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Current mayor is 65+ so he understands this age population
- Older adults can work/volunteer at the New Washington library
- Older adults can play in the community band

HOUSING

- No retirement communities in New Washington
- Bucyrus, Ohio: Ridgewood Senior Villas: 14 miles away: adults 55+, attached garage, private entry, appliances included, emergency pull station, community room, exercise room, garden for each resident, pet friendly, 24-hour maintenance, on-site management, walking path, and activities
- Crestline, Ohio: Miller-Valentine Affordable Housing (MVAH) Faith Community Housing: 17 miles away: adults 55+, community events, pet friendly, attached garage, private porch, on-site management, stair-free living, walking paths, gardens, and safe community

TRANSPORTATION

- Crawford County Council on Aging Specialized Transportation: adults 60+ or individuals with disabilities, M-F 6am-5pm, door to door services for appointments, groceries, salons, etc., wheelchair lifts, trained drivers, out of county trips available, \$2-\$4 donation request as passengers board, but no required payment
- Seneca-Crawford Area Transportation: curb to curb service with driver assistance if necessary, wheelchair lifts, schedule 48 hours in advance for in county trip and 72 hours in advance for out of county trip, safe, reliable, and efficient system

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- Crawford County Council on Aging in Bucyrus, Ohio (15 miles): Activities including trivia, painting classes, pizza with movie nights, wood carving, crafts, bingo, chair yoga, blood pressure checks, card making, ice cream socials, etc., congregate meals served with requested but not necessary \$4 donation
- Golden Gem Senior Center in New Washington
- Dutchtown Dillies Red Hat Society in New Washington

OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Community pool, decent sidewalks throughout town, easy to cross streets, senior center, library, gazebo with benches for the town band to play, high school track open to community, and benches around town
- No age-friendly park and historical society museum is up a lot of steep stairs

HEALTH & WELLNESS SERVICES

- Young Chiropractic Inc.
- Brent Fissel DDS dentist office
- Mercy Health primary care doctor's office
- Avita Health family medicine doctor's office
- Nearest hospitals: Willard, Ohio Mercy Health Hospital (13 miles), Bucyrus, Ohio Avita Health System Hospital (14 miles)
- Small walking group at the high school indoor track
- Ambulance system out of Bucyrus, Ohio (14 miles)

CONCLUSION

After analyzing these six aspects of my community of New Washington, Ohio I would say that it is not the most age-friendly community. It is a very small town so older people would not have as much access to needed services. New Washington has some of the aspects met, but I do not feel that there are enough within the community. The surrounding communities have more age-friendly activities, environments, and healthcare settings that are beneficial to the elderly. As long as the older residents can access transportation then these could be possible to them. I also think that if the resident of New Washington grew up in an age-friendly home there, they would be safe and able to enjoy life as they age there. Overall, when looking at these aspects for my community, not all of them are met but I know of numerous older adults who live in New Washington who are able to live happily, safely, and healthily there.

REFERENCES

1. Jeste, D.V., Blazer, D.G., Buckwalter, K.C., Cassidy, K.K., Fishman, L., Gwyther, L.P., Levin, S.M., Phillipson, C., Rao, R.R., Schmeding, E., Vega, W.A., Avanzino, J.A., Glorioso, D.K., Feather, J. (2016). Age-friendly communities initiative: Public health approach to promoting successful aging. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry*, 24(12), pp. 1158-1170.
2. Other references available upon request.

