

Is Versailles, OH an Age-Friendly Community?

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ABSTRACT

Aging and becoming part of the older generation is a fact of life. Most people also chose to settle in a particular community and do not want to have to move as they age. These age-friendly communities allow an older adult to live in the community that they chose much earlier in their life. The World Health Organization (WHO) has listed six criteria that allow geriatricians to quantify their observations to determine if a community is truly age friendly. These criteria are as follows: housing, outdoor spaces and built environment, transportation, social environment, community support, and health and wellness services. I will look at my own community of Versailles, Ohio to see if it classifies as an age friendly community.

HOUSING

In Versailles there are two places designed for the older adult population to live. There is a nursing home, Versailles Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center, as well as an apartment complex across the street. The Birchwood Garden Apartments is a small apartment community that allows for older adults to remain independent. The apartments are designed for residents 62 and over or the handicap/disabled. The apartments are a one-bedroom garden-style located in town. The cost for a unit is \$575 per month and the utilities are equal to 30% of the tenant's income, but they must pay a minimum of \$25. Included in the unit is a community, laundry room, 24-hr emergency maintenance, pet friendly, and air conditioning. There is no place to park a car though and do not have much road access depending on which unit the older adult obtains. There is also a Visiting Angels location roughly 25 minutes away that allows for seniors to live on their own, but still get the limited help that they require.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

There are not many public transportation services available for residents of Versailles, OH. There is a public bus available for residents of Greenville, roughly 15 minutes away. This bus system does not offer transportation to Versailles residents, but will provide transportation around Greenville. Spirit medical transport does offer transportation services to doctor's appointments and the hospital for either emergency or non-emergency transportation. They are a private service so if insurance does not cover the cost, they are very expensive. The only reliable way to travel in and around Versailles would be for the older adult to have their own vehicle or trust a family member to drive them wherever they need to go.

OUTDOOR SPACES

In Versailles, OH there are two parks. The first park, Ward, has a pool area as well as numerous walking paths. These paths wind through the park and allow the older adult to walk around enjoying nature and seeing children playing on playground equipment. The park also has several handicap accessible swings that allow people of all ages and disabilities to swing. There is also a tennis court, basketball court, as well as three softball diamonds. The second park is Heritage and offers a quieter park experience. There are several loops around the park that offer different ideas of scenery as well as a small pond that can be used for catch-and-release fishing. In the main center of town there are plenty of sidewalks and crosswalks available, but some of the more residential parts of town lack one if not both aspects. There are no true cycle paths so either an older person should ride on the sidewalk or in the road. There is a small museum located opposite of the nursing home, that shows an in-depth history of Versailles. There is also a library that has a small outdoor gazebo and koi fountain that older people can enjoy well within walking distance of the nursing home and the apartment complex. There is also a golf course outside of Versailles, but to access it the older adult must be a member as well as have transportation since it is not within walking

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

There are several clubs and organizations for older adults in Versailles, OH. There is the local Knights of Columbus branch as well as an Eagles branch located in Versailles. There is also a YMCA that allows for residents to better get involved both physically and with people of different generations. There is also a program that high school organizations do with the local nursing home. Versailles High School clubs have the opportunity of 'adopt' a nursing home resident that often does not get many visitors. This adoption gets high school students involved with the nursing home resident with visits and giving gifts during the Christmas season. There is also a Senior Citizens

HEALTH AND

WELLNESS SERVICES

For a small-town Versailles offers a large variety of health services in town. Located in the nursing home there is a rehabilitation section that offers physical and occupational therapy. There is also second physical therapy place within a short five-minute drive from town. There is a dentist office on Main Street as well as two doctors' offices, one on each side of town. Having these offices spread out allows for the older population to have easy access to a doctor's office no matter what side of town they live on. There is also an optometrist across the street from one of doctor's office and is on the same block as the nursing home. Within the same block is also a chiropractic service. There is also a pharmacy on main street well within walking distance of most residences. While Versailles has lots to offer in the health care field there is not a hospital in town. The closest hospital is 15 minutes away, but only has 19 beds in their emergency wing with an average stay of 2.5 hours. The hospital has mixed reviews on whether the hospital gives quality care or not. The closest level one trauma center is 45 minutes away in Dayton, OH. Unless someone were to call an ambulance, get medical transport, have family drive them, or drive themselves the hospital(s) are not within an achievable walking distance. There is also not an urgent care in Versailles, the closest being 30 to 45 minutes away by car.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion it is very difficult to determine if Versailles, OH is an age-friendly community. There are many aspects that Versailles is lacking in, such as many clubs, or organizations for the older population to participate in or having a reputable hospital/trauma center in short distance. For a small-town atmosphere, Versailles is better off than other small towns when it comes to most amenities, but still lacks. If the older adult does not own a car/have a family member available for transportation, they will often, be stuck at home or must walk to wherever they wish to go. Overall, Versailles, OH has well-developed outdoor spaces, and many health and wellness services. Versailles is lacking in transportation services and the town could improve their social environment. There is plenty of room for growth for Versailles to be even more age-friendly, but overall, it does not fit the ideal of age-friendliness from a community standpoint.

REFERENCES

Jeste, D et al (2016). Age-Friendly Communities Initiative: Public Health Approach to Promoting Successful Aging. *American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry*.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jagp.2016.07.021>

All other references available via email upon request.