



# AGING WELL IN READFIELD

Report and Recommendations to the Readfield Select Board  
by Readfield's Age-Friendly Committee  
2018

## **Readfield Age-Friendly Committee Members**

Romaine Turyn, Chair  
Marjorie Ellis  
Ann Mitchell  
John Moran  
Marianne Perry  
Bruce Bourgoine (Select Board liaison)

*This plan has been supported by a grant from the AARP Maine.*



## INTRODUCTION

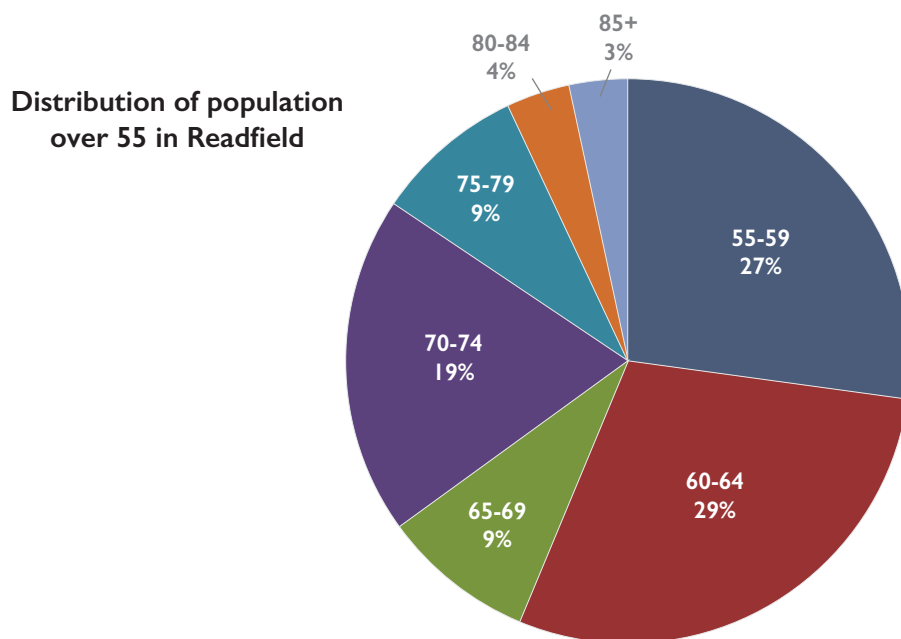
The Readfield Select Board established an Ad Hoc Age-Friendly Committee in January of 2016 and charged it with:

*“...creating an inventory of possible desirable resources and services, identifying best methods to communicate the preceding to older citizens in our community, recommending future courses of action they deem desirable, and pursuing in conjunction with the town manager any grant offerings that may be available...”*

The Committee organized its research and recommendations around eight key dimensions of aging that AARP recommends that communities should consider: outdoor space and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services. AARP Maine provided a grant to the Committee, which was used to hire a consultant (Frank O’Hara) to assist with the planning process. For purposes of this report, older residents are those 55 and over, though there is particular emphasis on residents 75 and older.

The Committee met every two weeks at first and is now meeting monthly; conducted a survey of Readfield residents over the age of 50; held presentations and discussions at a Community Meeting at the Town Office, met with the Library Board and with members of the Senior Café held at the Maranacook Community Middle School.

## READFIELD'S SENIORS BY THE NUMBERS – U.S. CENSUS AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (2010-2014)



One third (34%) of Readfield's population is age 55 or older. Of this group, over half are 55 to 64, the “baby boomers” – mostly healthy today, but who will have increasing service needs as they age.

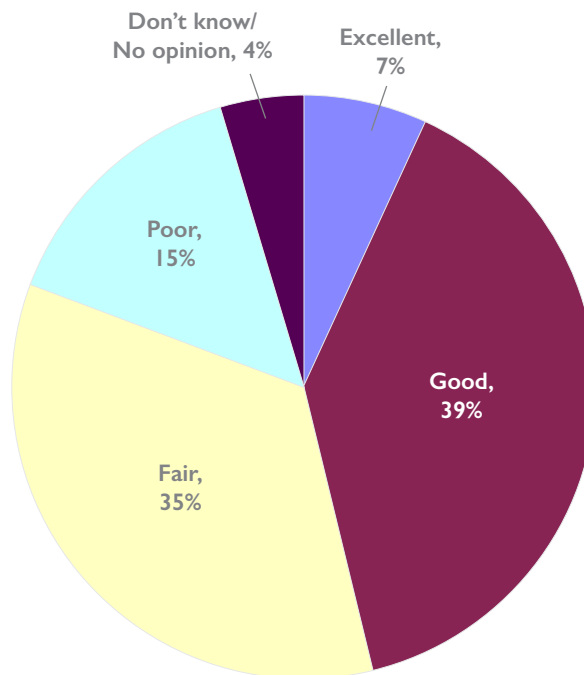
Of Readfield's 871 older resident, there are 380 residents age 65. They live in 230 housing units (1.7 persons per unit). Only 5% are living under poverty; but half have only moderate incomes, under \$50,000/year.

Two-thirds of 65+ households have lived in Readfield for at least 25 years. All own their own homes. About a quarter (24%) pay over a third of their incomes for housing-related expenses – mortgages, utilities, taxes. About a third (32%) have some kind of disability; among those 75 or over, the proportion rises to nearly half (48%).

The data above is from the United States Census American Community Survey (2010-2014). During the summer and fall of 2016, the committee surveyed Readfield's residents age 55 and over: 114 responded, 71 online, and 43 on a paper survey. The survey response rate (13.1%) is good for this type of survey. Responses are broadly representative by age, income, area of residence, and family size. In the following pages, the responses are provided, as well as the Committee's recommendations, organized according to the AARP's 8 dimensions of aging.

# READFIELD SENIORS GENERALLY LIKE LIVING HERE

**Aging in place is the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age, income or ability level. Generally, how would you rate Readfield as a place for older residents to age in place?**



## **MOST RESPONDENTS SEE READFIELD AS "GOOD" OR "FAIR" AS A PLACE TO AGE.**

Positive attributes include: trails, senior cafe, large senior population, history walks, natural beauty, low crime rate, good sense of community, having a Maine General satellite in Winthrop, activities at the Community School, adult ed, the library, two restaurants, the Post Office, and the lake.

Negative attributes include: high property taxes (raised by 11 of 36 commenters), lack of transportation (10 mentions), lack of housing options (7 mentions), lack of banks and drug stores and groceries (5 mentions), isolation and lack of gathering spots, no bike lanes on roads, and winter!

A number of people were happy the Town was conducting this research.

### **RESIDENT COMMENTS:**

- Great community but lack of transportation, no nearby pharmacies, grocery stores, hospitals are issues. Makes it difficult for the aging population to keep their homes.
- Affordable housing isn't available for older residents to downsize and to be able to still be with friends.
- The town is in a great central location relative to places in Maine that are fun to visit. However, the property taxes are too high!
- We could not be happier - ok, only if our grandkids were here, also!
- Thank you for providing the excellent survey!

## SENIORS ARE INVOLVED – BUT WOULD LIKE TO DO MORE!

Over half of respondents volunteer for organizations in Readfield, and many participate in the social activities available in Readfield, such as the Senior Café, adult education courses, town boards, and church activities. An even higher number would like to be involved in the future.

Most seniors in Readfield are in regular contact with family and friends. However, about 15% -- better than 1 in 7 – are fairly isolated; they are only in contact with friends and family once a month or less. Overall, there is a mixed response to social opportunities in Readfield. 43% think that there was “very good” or “good” availability of social activities; but 38% think that the availability is only “fair” or “poor.”

	Currently involved	Would like to be involved in the future	Not interested	Don't know/need more information
Senior Cafe	17	37	34	13
Guys and Gals	6	8	53	25
Cohen Center (Spectrum Generations)	6	31	39	20
Church activities	27	5	58	7
Library book club	12	37	37	9
Community/adult ed courses	24	44	21	9
Town boards and committees	37	16	37	7
Volunteer work	47	32	17	8

### IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Coordinate with the high school to coordinate a free afternoon opportunity to view the high school play. Perhaps the last dress rehearsal
- Coordinate with the Library Board to create programs at the library, support the Senior Café at the Middle School
- Continue and build on an annual recognition for volunteers

### LONG-TERM ACTIONS

- Expand art courses and music lessons in community education
- **Create a volunteer bank -- matching volunteers with needs**
- Use school buses to take seniors to special programs in the area
- Create a community center for seniors

### RESIDENT COMMENTS:

- I feel that there are activities available. I just don't attend as many as I would like due to my schedule and the schedule of the event.
- Neighbors and friends are the life blood of our small community.
- I'm on the wrong side of a very defined social and economic division in Readfield.
- It would be nice to have more of an informational clearinghouse of available volunteer duties. I serve on a town board which meets regularly and have tasks associated with that, but occasionally I'd like to help out on a one-time or infrequent basis -- but have no way of knowing what is needed. ex. Readfield Elementary school or Maranacook MS/HS, etc.

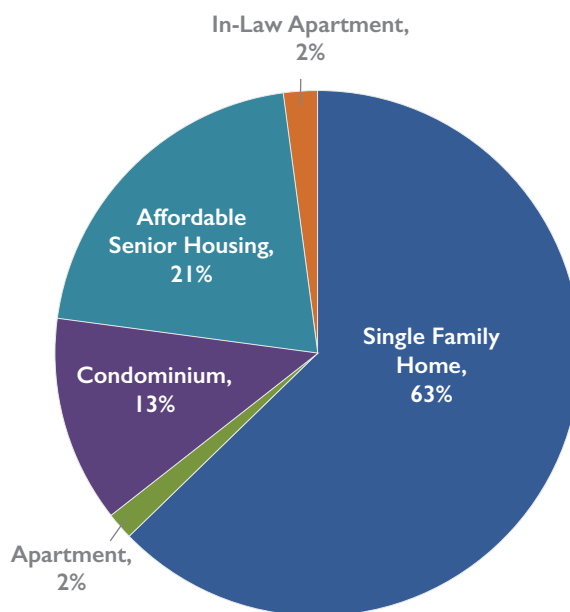
# LOOKING FOR HOUSING OPTIONS

Most Readfield seniors are satisfied with their housing. Almost 9 in 10 (of those answering) agree with the statement that “my housing is fine – no problems here.” 8 in 10 want to stay in their homes “as long as possible.” However, the cost of maintaining those houses is an issue. 22% report that their house is not energy-efficient, and that heating costs are a burden. 43% said that property taxes are difficult to afford.

Many respondents see themselves as living in different kinds of housing in the future. Of the current respondents, 98% (110 of 112) are living in single family homes. However, looking ahead, only 63% see themselves in single family homes. 21% see themselves affordable senior housing, 13% in condominiums, and others in private apartments.

Over half see a role for the Town in encouraging senior housing. Two-thirds support a home repair and home maintenance service for low-income seniors

Where would you prefer to live in the future?



## IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Inform residents of existing property tax relief programs
- Work with AARP to secure a volunteer to assist with resident income tax filings at Readfield Town Hall

## LONG-TERM ACTIONS

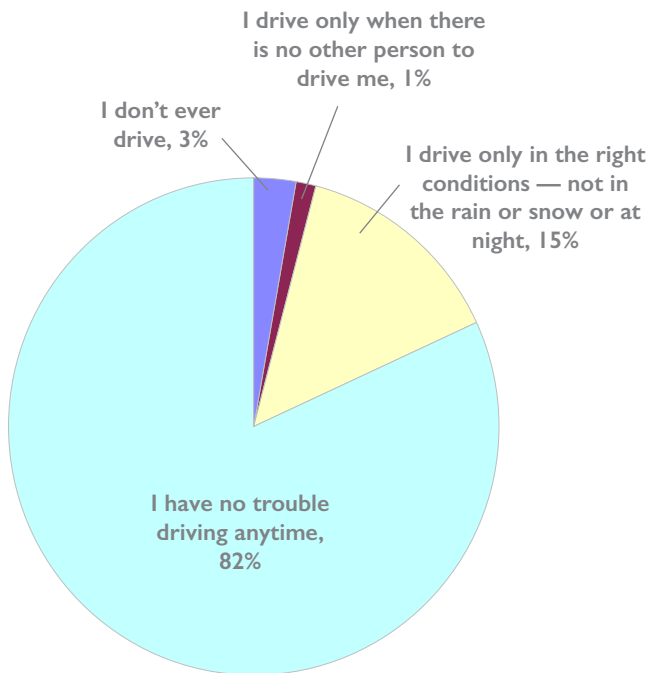
- **Develop a tax relief program for Readfield's oldest and lower income seniors so that they may remain in their home**
- Explore the possibility of elderly housing (options: Find town-owned land? Issue an RFQ? Build onto Balsam House?)
- Work with town office to distribute a list of reputable home repair contractors who are residents of Readfield

## RESIDENT COMMENTS:

- I love my home, but if at some point I am alone here, it would be too much for me to maintain.
- The house needs a new furnace, weatherization
- A condominium community geared toward seniors would be able to provide social and close friend activities
- We like to keep our home but are being forced to sell due to raising taxes in Readfield
- Would like to find a house that is one level

# MOST HAVE CARS, BUT MOVING ABOUT CAN BE A PROBLEM

About 1 in 5 over age 55 in Readfield has some driving issues – don't drive in snow or in rain, don't drive at night, rely on spouse or friends or neighbors. Most have a car – only 4 of 1,089 Readfield residents age 65 or over don't have a car, according to the Census.



When asked if they found themselves unable to go where they wanted, 3% of survey respondents say that this is a weekly occurrence, and 2% said that it occurs on a “seldom” basis. There is also concern about safety when walking or bicycling. 99% say it is very or somewhat important that the Town maintain “safe streets, intersections, and crosswalks for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists.” 94% like trails and sidewalks, though some are concerned that these are too expensive for taxpayers to develop and maintain.

Even though the survey did not indicate a great need, a majority of respondents feel that it is important for Readfield to recruit and coordinate a system of volunteer drivers for those who need it. Some say that they could drive OK now, but it might be an issue in the future.

### RESIDENT COMMENTS:

- If I didn't live alone, I would never drive
- I still drive after dark or in snow but am increasingly uncomfortable doing so.
- No limitations at this time, but again, as we age it will become an issue.
- Walk the roads daily and seemingly every day has its moments with motorized vehicles

### IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Work with AARP to assign a teacher for an Over 55 Driver safety program to be held in conjunction with Maranacook Community Education
- Safety of roads for walkers is a concern. Improved signage and crosswalk identification needed

### LONG-TERM ACTIONS

- Seek ways to develop a Neighbor Driving Neighbor Program with neighboring communities (Winthrop and Wayne) modeled after the program in Mount Vernon.
- Create a Bicycle share program
- Extend the Church Street sidewalk to Fairgrounds

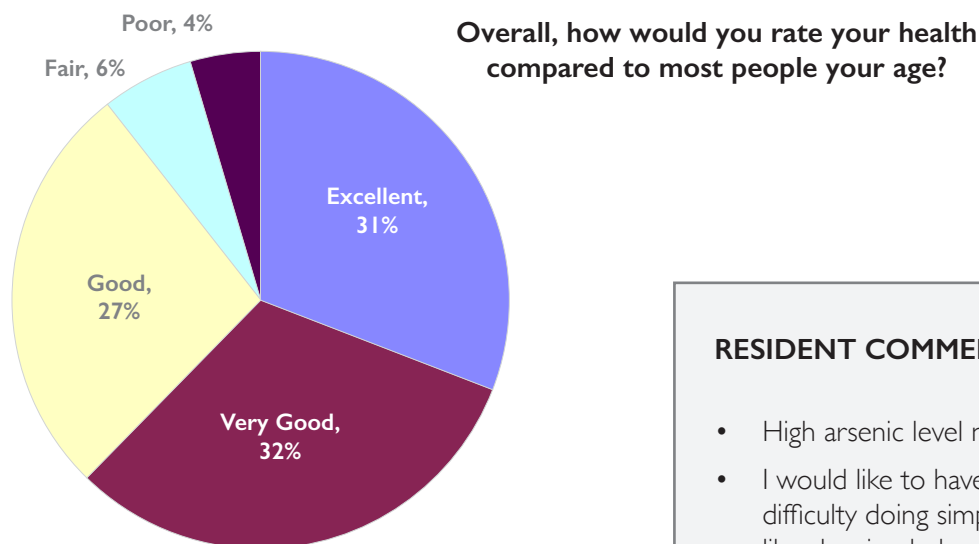
# HEALTHY, BUT SOME NEED MORE HELP IN THE HOME

Most two-thirds of seniors (63%) rate their health as “excellent” or “good.” Only 10% rate their health as “fair” or “poor.”

About 1 in 6 seniors is a primary caregiver for someone who needs care. Some are caring for parents (7%), some for children (4%), and some for spouses (4%).

Over 97% of seniors think that they have good access to health care services, medically necessary drugs, healthful food, clean water, heat, electricity, and the telephone.

However, 5-10% say that they lack sufficient access to exercise and health and wellness classes. Though few need in-home medical services, a third of those who did (32%) said that they did not have adequate access to the service. Two respondents are concerned about contaminants in their well water.



## RESIDENT COMMENTS:

- High arsenic level not fit for public use
- I would like to have in-home services when I have difficulty doing simple daily activities in the home, like cleaning, help with medical needs, cooking, home repair, yard work

## IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Communicate with Adult Ed to ensure courses and programs for seniors
- Invite Spectrum Generations to hold a town forum to discuss services available. Arrange for a benefits counselor to be available to assist residents explore what benefits they may be eligible to receive
- Arrange for a State Health Insurance Counselor to come to the Readfield Town Office to assist with health insurance during open enrollment next September
- Pet care - waive fee for pet rabies shots for seniors
- Coordinate with high school to identify service learning opportunities for students
- Explore getting more Farm shares vouchers for Readfield farmers and residents

## LONG-TERM ACTIONS

- Develop a program of seniors calling seniors
- Have a medical person available to do home visits

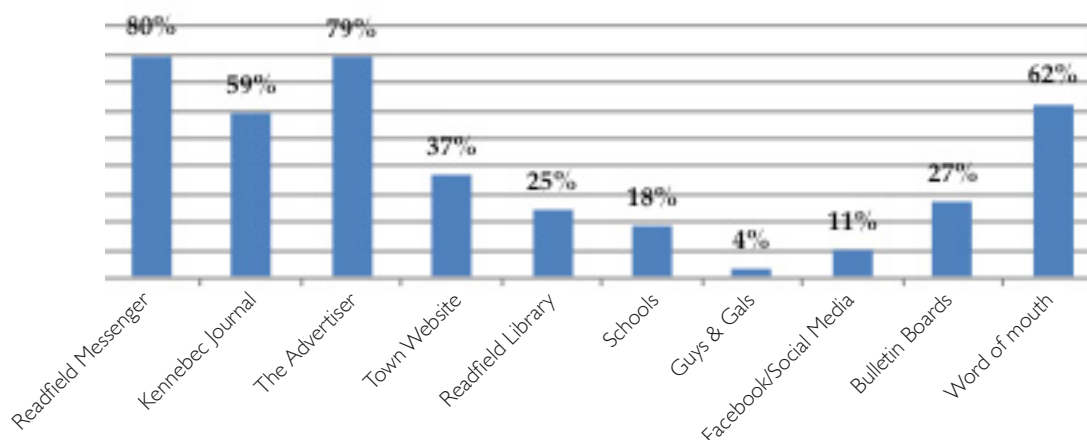


## MOST READFIELD SENIORS ARE “IN THE LOOP”

About 70% of Readfield seniors think that communication is “very good” or “good”; 30% rate it only “fair” or “poor.” Local newspapers -- the *Readfield Messenger and Advertiser* -- are the main sources of information, followed closely by word-of-mouth. Fewer than half of respondents get information about Readfield programs from the internet – Town website or social media. Yet most seniors use the internet. 85% regularly use the internet to get information, mostly at home (82%), but also at the library (3%). Of the remaining 15%, a third (5%) doesn’t know how to use the computer, and the remainder (10%) prefer to get information in other ways.

The Readfield Library is an important resource for seniors. Several questions on the survey related to new ideas for Library services, and the Library board is taking action on many of these suggestions

**Where do you usually get information about Readfield programs & events?**



	Use Program	Know, do not use	Interested in learning	Not interested
Regular Print Books	60%	27%	1%	12%
Inter-Library Loans	46%	34%	2%	18%
Movies	45%	32%	5%	18%
Magazines	35%	42%	4%	19%
Audio Books (on CD)	21%	48%	6%	25%
Volunteering	16%	50%	14%	20%
Book Groups	15%	52%	7%	26%
E Books/Audiobooks	15%	54%	9%	22%
Public Computers/Wi-Fi	13%	60%	3%	23%
Technology Help	9%	46%	24%	21%
Large Print Books	7%	61%	7%	25%
Ancestry Software	2%	43%	29%	26%

### IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

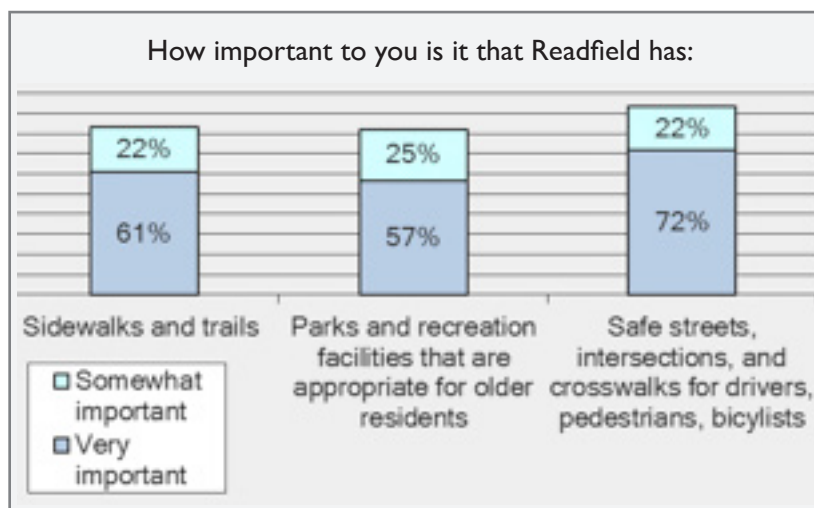
- Have an age-friendly technology training at the library; one on using email and Facebook, and one on using apps for telephone and iPad (“appy hour”)
- Library has already initiated a book delivery program to senior who cannot get to the library.

### RESIDENT COMMENTS:

- Links on the Readfield website just for seniors listing adult ed, activities, services, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- Could email be used? Sign up for notification of specific activities, such as, election/voting information, or special activities applicable to our age group
- I really love the Readfield Library, its Director, Nancy and the Library Board. All of these people work so hard to make the library a special and welcoming place. The library volunteers are amazing as is the head of the Library Board - Deb Peale. Nancy is always open to book requests/suggestions. Thank you for all that you do!

## READFIELD SENIORS LIKE TO STAY ACTIVE

Readfield seniors want to be outdoors walking, riding bicycles, going to parks. But traffic is increasingly a problem. And many would prefer that facilities for these purposes be provided voluntarily.



### IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Seek membership on the potential new Parks and Recreation Commission
- Construct a railing at the Town beach to ease in getting in and out of the water.

### LONG-TERM ACTIONS

- All programs offered an age appropriate component.
- Enhance community gardens: benches, edible garden

For more information on the senior survey and current activities of the Readfield Age-Friendly Committee, see [http://www.readfield.govoffice.com/index.asp?SEC=E808F9C9-DE08-4AF1-AD83-964ED818662F&Type=B\\_BASIC](http://www.readfield.govoffice.com/index.asp?SEC=E808F9C9-DE08-4AF1-AD83-964ED818662F&Type=B_BASIC)

To volunteer and help the activities for seniors, contact Eric Dyer at Readfield Hall at 685-3420.

Report Designed by Lia Prysunka, 2017

### RESIDENT COMMENTS:

- Seniors are best served by staying active. Thus sidewalks and trails (interconnected), fitness programs (even busing to Y) and ride programs are ALL necessary. Why can't seniors be treated same as schools??
- We do not need more parks!!! I am an avid walker and we already have an incredible amount of public lands and state parks available to us EVERYWHERE. What is very interesting to me is how many people want more but don't even use what we have. I think we need communication about the public lands already open to us, not more public lands
- Walk the roads daily and seemingly every day has its moments with motorized vehicles
- No tax dollars used --should be all volunteer labor. They are wonderful but the older generation have limited capabilities due to their mobility and can't afford taxes to support something they can't use. Thus, they should be voluntarily supported by those who are capable to use them and not TAX dollars.