

AOTA's Societal Statement *on* Livable Communities

The demographic profile of the United States is rapidly changing with an increasing number of older adults and persons with disabilities who desire to remain in their homes and communities as they grow older, a concept referred to as *aging-in-place*. According to the United Nations (2007), persons with disabilities have the same right as all other members of society to live in the community with opportunities to choose their place of residence, and to have equal access to support services that promote full participation in all aspects of community living. To support these rights, society must create communities that enable all residents to live, work, play, and participate in locations of their choice (National Council on Disability, 2004; AARP, 2005). “A livable community is one that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features and services, and adequate mobility options, which together facilitate personal independence and engagement of the residents in civic and social life” (AARP, 2005, p. 4).

The American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA's) *Core Values and Attitudes of Occupational Therapy Practice and Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics* support equality for all individuals (AOTA, 1993, 2005), and are congruent with the goals of livable communities. Occupational therapy practitioners plan and implement strategies that promote their client's participation in community life by creating opportunities to establish, restore, or maintain the skills used in activities of daily living and other meaningful occupations, and by supporting clients' who are advocating for their own and others' rights. Further, occupational therapy practitioners advocate for universal design and environmental modifications that remove barriers in homes and communities to ensure access to supportive community services, including transportation, personal care, health care, education, employment, and other services, and to facilitate engagement in social and civic activities. Occupational therapy promotes public health and civic engagement by advocating for and assisting in the creation of more livable communities through effective partnerships with individuals, private organizations, and government agencies. Supporting health and participation through active engagement in meaningful activities in the home and community contributes to health, wellness, and quality of life for all individuals (AOTA Ad Hoc Committee on Health and Wellness, 2006).

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