

# Seven Characteristics of Village Model

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The purpose of a Village is to create a community that connects its members to what they need and desire to remain living in their own homes, apartments, and condos for as long as they want.

1. Villages are grassroots, membership organizations, designed using some common building blocks and ideas, but always with their own local flavor. Some include people 50 and over; some concentrate on those who are 65 and up; and some enroll those of any age. Villages do not just emphasize service to those who are frail. Social and educational programs are a mainstay because connection fosters good health.
2. Most are self-governing and have working boards. They draw board members from the community. These boards set policies and manage the organization's finances; they, or another structure—like a steering committee—make decisions about programs, services, events, and activities. Taken together, individuals who participate in Village governance and planning reflect the characteristics and desires of the residents of neighborhoods served by the village.
3. Villages are self-supporting, non-profits. They are typically sustained by membership fees, donations and sponsorships from individuals and organizations in their geographic service area, and foundation grants.
4. Villages *consolidate* services, using resources already present in the community. Many of these are just a phone call away. A village, in effect, creates for each of its members a highly-personalized referral system. Village members need only call a single number to access a world of information about high quality volunteer or professional services. Many villages are able to negotiate discounts for paid services.
5. Villages care for the whole person and have few bureaucratic barriers. They honor every request for service and are completely consumer/member-driven. No policies restrict the number of requests or define need.
6. Villages have strategic partners drawn from sympathetic, aligned, collaborating institutions or other organizations that help them extend resources by their support.
7. Villages are driven by community volunteers. This makes the membership fees affordable and allows people of lower incomes to also participate at reduced fees. Most villages have a “volunteer first” approach; that is, that is the first place to look to see if a request can be fulfilled. While members are often among the volunteers, it isn't necessary to volunteer in order to join.