



10 VISIONS TO CHANGE BALTIMORE

(FOR THE BETTER!)

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RETIREMENT

*USING THE POWER OF NETWORKING TO
KEEP SENIORS IN THEIR OWN HOMES*

STATUS: UNDERWAY

You're getting on in years, and little things—driving, shopping, housecleaning—are increasingly challenging. Even changing a lightbulb can be a stretch. But you don't want to leave the home you've lived in for decades. The new answer for thousands, including those with disabilities, is an aging-at-home concept called "the village," a network of services that is finally in Baltimore.

Modeled after a program started by residents in Boston's upscale Beacon Hill neighborhood, the nonprofit Village at Home serves as an alternative to nursing homes or assisted-living centers. After three years of planning, the nation's 67th such village started offering services last November. Its volunteers provide dues-paying members free and low-cost services that include transportation, help with bill-paying and paperwork, errands, home and garden maintenance, meal delivery, and social and cultural activities—even help with e-mail and electronics.

How much demand is there? Time will tell, but when *The New York Times* wrote a story about the fledgling Beacon Hill program five years ago, the nonprofit was overwhelmed with 3,000 phone calls.

Serving neighborhoods stretching from Cedarcroft west to Mt. Washington and from Tuscany-Canterbury to Ruxton, Baltimore's village is overseen by a high-powered board that includes a physician, a retired foreign service officer, and former Schmoke-administration housing commissioner Robert Hearn.

"In these difficult economic times, Village at Home is a wonderfully cost-effective alternative to a retirement community," says member Joan Bromberg, 82, who lives in Mt. Washington. "It's a god-send to me, helping me live at home and still feel connected." —*Ken Iglehart*