



Senior Living

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5 Facts Falls Church Seniors Can't Afford to Ignore Now

By Falls Church News-Press

We like to think we know what retirement looks like — a pension, some travel, a steady routine. But in Falls Church, as across America, the truth about senior life in 2025 is far more complicated — and far more surprising. These aren't the "tips and tricks" you'll find in glossy brochures. These are the hard facts, the buried resources, and the realities every older resident in the Little City should know.

1. Falls Church Seniors Are Living Longer — But Not Always Healthier

The good news: life expectancy for today's seniors is higher than any previous generation. A child born in 1946 might have expected to live into their early 60s. Today, many Falls Church residents can expect to live well into their 80s or even 90s. By 2030, one in five Americans will be 65 or older, the highest proportion in U.S. history.

But here's the hidden challenge that longer life doesn't automatically mean healthier life. In Virginia, rates of Alzheimer's disease are projected to climb by 26 percent over the next decade, and cases of

diabetes and hypertension among adults 65+ are also rising. Seniors may be adding years, but many of those years come with chronic conditions that require daily management, multiple prescriptions, and careful coordination of care.

For Falls Church, this means more demand on local services like ElderLink and the Senior Center, and a greater need for seniors to use apps, telehealth, and preventive programs that keep them active. The victory of longevity can quickly turn into the struggle of complexity — and the difference often comes down to whether seniors take advantage of the resources already here.

2. One in Three Seniors Faces Social Isolation — and It's Deadly

The health risks of loneliness are shocking. According to the National Academies of Sciences, one in three adults over 60 is socially isolated. That raises the risk of heart disease by 29 percent, stroke by 32 percent, and dementia by as much as 50 percent. This isn't just "feeling lonely." It's as damaging as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. In Virginia, "frequent mental distress" among seniors nearly doubled

between 2015 and 2023 rising from 5.7 percent to 10 percent.

Here in Falls Church, the antidote often comes from community. The Falls Church Senior Center runs daily classes, arts programs, and trips. Fairfax County's Virtual Center for Active Adults streams exercise and social programs straight to tablets. These programs aren't fluff — they're medicine. They lower depression rates, extend independence, and, most importantly, keep people from fading out of civic life.

3. Cutting-Edge Clinical Trials Are Happening Right Here in Northern Virginia

Most families don't realize that some of the most advanced senior-focused medical trials are happening minutes from Falls Church. At Inova Schar Cancer Institute in Fairfax, researchers are enrolling patients in studies for lung cancer, breast cancer, and immunotherapy treatments that are reshaping oncology. Arlington's Virginia Hospital Center has partnered with academic institutions to run trials in cardiology, neurology, and age-related diseases, including Alzheimer's prevention and stroke recovery.

Nationally, the National Institute on Aging lists over 400 active Alzheimer's and dementia trials, but the secret is that Falls Church residents don't have to travel far to be part of groundbreaking work. These aren't abstract programs happening across the country — they're right here in our backyard. Many have little or no cost, and some even provide transportation stipends. Yet most seniors only hear about them if they ask their doctor directly.

If you or a loved one is facing cancer, memory concerns, or chronic conditions, check Inova's clinical trials page or Virginia Hospital Center's research listings. The future of medicine isn't just in Boston or Baltimore — it's unfolding in Northern Virginia, and Falls Church seniors can take part.

4. Health Apps Are Hugely Underused — But Can Change Everything

Nearly 28 percent of older adults use health apps, but the most powerful ones are still unknown. Only 9 percent track blood pressure digitally, 8 percent use meditation apps, and just 5 percent use tools for mental health. That's a missed chance, especially since Virginia

seniors report rising rates of stress and mental distress.

Apps like Pillboxie (a visual medication manager), I-Care (interactive memory support linked to caregivers), and Ten Percent Happier (daily meditation) aren't gimmicks — they're lifelines. Studies show that consistent use of medication management apps reduces hospitalizations and improves adherence. Mental wellness apps cut depression risk. And the surprise? 70 percent of seniors now own a smartphone, meaning the barrier isn't access — it's awareness. Falls Church libraries and community centers could be doing more "tech clinics" to connect older residents to these hidden gems.

5. Falls Church Seniors Hold the Loudest Voice in Civic Life

Here's a fact that rarely gets discussed. Seniors vote more than anyone else. In Falls Church elections, older residents turn out at rates that dwarf those of younger voters. That means seniors have an outsized influence on City Council races, school board decisions, zoning battles, and local taxes. And that civic weight has made City Hall listen.



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For questions, please email Kayla Hulbert at khulbert@kensingtonsl.com



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Medication Overload: The Silent Threat Facing Seniors

By Falls Church News-Press

For many older adults in Falls Church and across the country, daily life is measured not in meals or appointments, but in pills. Morning, noon, and night, the little plastic organizers fill with medications prescribed by different doctors for different conditions. For decades, medical advances have been hailed as a triumph of modern healthcare — longer lives, better treatments, new drugs that manage what once might have been deadly. But there’s a growing danger hidden in that success story: medication overload, or “polypharmacy,” the routine use of multiple prescriptions that interact in ways few patients and often few providers fully grasp.

Nearly two-thirds of adults over 65 take five or more prescription drugs every day. One in five now takes ten or more. Every additional pill increases the chance of drug interactions, side effects, or duplications. A 2020 report from the Lown Institute estimated that medication overload causes more than 275,000 hospitalizations and 25,000 deaths in older adults each year. That’s the equivalent of a plane crash killing 70 people every single day yet it rarely makes headlines.

The dangers aren’t hypothetical. Blood pressure pills can trigger dizziness. Diabetes drugs can crash blood sugar overnight. Opioid painkillers can slow breathing and dull cognition. Sleep medications like benzodiazepines are linked directly to falls, the number one cause of injury-related death among seniors. According to the CDC, more than 36 million older Americans fall each year, and medications are a major contributor.

It’s easy to see how overload builds. A senior with high blood pressure sees a primary care doctor. A cardiologist later prescribes a drug for heart rhythm. An endocrinologist adds medication for diabetes. A neurologist weighs in on sleep issues. None of these prescriptions are wrong in isolation. But together, they form a cocktail that can leave a patient groggy, confused, and dangerously unsteady. In hospitals, it is not uncommon for physicians to admit a patient for a fall only to realize the real culprit was the sheer number of medications the patient was taking.

Falls Church residents are not immune. With one of the highest concentrations of older homeowners in Northern Virginia, and proximity to multiple health systems that don’t always coordinate records, many seniors here juggle prescriptions from several specialists. Pharmacies may try to flag interactions, but patients often fill prescriptions at multiple locations. Supplements complicate things further from over-the-counter sleep aids to herbal remedies which can combine with prescriptions in dangerous ways.

The financial toll is just as dramatic. Adverse drug events tied to polypharmacy cost the U.S. healthcare system more than \$50

billion annually. For individuals, the expense of filling multiple prescriptions can eat into retirement savings, forcing some seniors to quietly skip doses to stretch their pills. This isn’t just a budgeting issue — taking blood pressure medication every other day, or halving a prescribed dose, can be life-threatening.

The cognitive side effects are another hidden crisis. Sedatives and anti-anxiety drugs are often mistaken for early dementia because they dull memory and focus. Families in Falls Church neighborhoods tell stories of older relatives who seemed to decline rapidly, only to regain clarity once their medication list was pared down. One study found that as many as 30 percent of older adults diagnosed with dementia were actually suffering from drug-induced cognitive impairment.

The medical community is slowly waking up to the problem. Experts now emphasize “deprescribing” a careful process of reviewing and tapering unnecessary drugs. Studies show that deprescribing can reduce falls, hospitalizations, and ER visits by as much as 20 percent. But it requires time, attention, and a willingness by providers to question long-standing prescriptions. Too often, it is easier and faster for a doctor to add a new pill than to untangle what may no longer be necessary.

Solutions exist. Annual “brown bag” medication reviews where patients bring in every pill they take, including over-the-counter and supplements can help pharmacists and doctors spot dangerous overlaps. Keeping a single updated medication list and using one pharmacy whenever possible improves oversight. And most importantly, patients and caregivers need to ask questions: Do I still need this? Is the dose right? What happens if I stop?

Medication overload is not glamorous, but it is deadly. It is the quiet culprit behind falls that shorten independence, behind confusion that leads to costly memory care placements, behind ER visits that could have been prevented. It kills tens of thousands of seniors every year, yet remains hidden behind the walls of hospitals, nursing homes, and family living rooms.

The danger is not just the pills themselves but the silence around them. Falls Church has always prided itself on being proactive and connected, and raising awareness here could mean the difference between a senior thriving at home or losing independence too soon. As the city’s population continues to gray, the challenge won’t be how to provide more medications but how to provide only the right ones.

Long lives should be celebrated. But longevity should not come at the cost of being overmedicated, overburdened, and overlooked. Seniors have earned the right not just to live longer, but to live well. Ensuring that means facing medication overload head-on in Falls Church and everywhere else.



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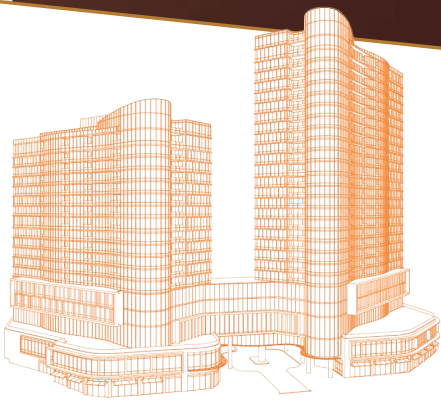
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The Growing Economic Power of an Aging Population

By Falls Church News-Press

When people talk about seniors in today’s economy, the conversation too often slips into one word: burden. Politicians wring their hands over Social Security costs, families stress about long-term care, and headlines frame aging as a looming crisis. What’s missing from that picture is a hard look at the other side of the ledger. The economic engine that older adults quietly represent. In Falls Church, across Northern Virginia, and nationwide, seniors are not just recipients of support but powerful drivers of local economies, community stability, and even workforce resilience.

According to AARP, adults over 50 contribute more than \$8 trillion annually to the U.S. economy. By 2030, that number is projected to climb to over \$12 trillion. Closer to home, that translates to seniors who shop at Broad Street businesses, dine in local restaurants, and hire local contractors for everything from roof repairs to lawn care. Unlike younger households saddled

with student loans or unpredictable job markets, many seniors have stable pensions, retirement accounts, or paid-off homes. That purchasing power keeps small businesses afloat in cities like Falls Church.

Service providers see this most clearly. From home health aides to plumbers, landscapers to financial planners, seniors are steady customers. When older residents choose to age in place, they create an ongoing stream of work for contractors, cleaners, and caregivers. In a town where small businesses thrive on word of mouth, seniors often become the bedrock of repeat clientele.

While “retirement” is still the goal for many, an increasing number of older adults are staying in the workforce, either by choice or necessity. In Virginia, roughly 27 percent of people over 65 are still employed. That might mean a retiree serving part-time at a local café, a semi-retired lawyer offering consulting services, or a teacher who returns to substitute in Falls Church classrooms. This trend

provides businesses with experienced workers in a tight labor market and helps address shortages in industries where reliability is in short supply. The stereotype of seniors withdrawing from economic life after 65 is badly outdated. Instead, they are redefining what “retirement” means and contributing valuable tax revenue along the way.

Perhaps the least recognized way seniors power local economies is through unpaid labor. Grandparents providing childcare save families thousands of dollars a year. A 2023 study estimated that if grandparents in the U.S. were paid for their childcare services, the economic value would exceed \$50 billion annually. In Falls Church, where daycare waitlists stretch for months and costs rival college tuition, grandparents stepping in makes it possible for younger parents to stay in the workforce.

Then there’s volunteering. Seniors staff church food pantries, serve on city boards, and show up for civic events. At

the Mary Riley Styles Public Library, older volunteers help run programs and keep operations smooth. At Meridian High School games, retirees sell tickets and hand out programs. None of this shows up in GDP calculations, but without it, many community functions would grind to a halt.

Another overlooked dimension is how seniors sustain entire industries. From local pharmacies to physical therapy clinics, the demand for healthcare services linked to aging creates jobs and stabilizes sectors. In Falls Church alone, dozens of small practices including dental, vision, audiology, and more depend on steady streams of older patients. While this is often framed negatively as “rising costs,” it’s also an economic ecosystem that supports thousands of workers in Northern Virginia.

The language we use matters. If seniors are constantly described as “dependent,” it obscures the reality that they’re also creating demand, stabiliz-

ing neighborhoods, and passing on wealth. Every time an older resident pays property taxes on a long-held Falls Church home, that revenue supports schools, roads, and public safety. Every time they pick up the check at a family dinner on Broad Street, they’re transferring financial security down the line. The truth is, seniors are an economic multiplier. They may not be leading tech startups in Tysons Corner, but they are fueling the everyday economy that keeps communities livable.

With Falls Church’s senior population expected to grow over the next two decades, the question isn’t whether they’ll matter to the economy? It’s whether the city and region will recognize that value. That means designing policies and programs that support older adults not as dependents but as partners in growth. Expanding transportation options, making housing more age-friendly, and investing in lifelong learning opportunities are not just social services, they’re economic investments.



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From Rocking Chairs to Power Players: Little City Aging

By Falls Church News-Press

The “golden years” used to sound like a postcard: quiet days, rocking chairs, grandkids on the weekends. But in 2025, the reality looks nothing like that. Seniors are living longer than any generation before them, spending in ways that shape the economy, and, more than ever, turning to technology and medical advances to keep their independence. Here in Falls Church, where the senior population is growing and civic leaders have made older residents a priority, this story is local as much as it is national. The apps they download, the programs they join, the trials they enroll in, and the policies City Hall protects are rewriting what it means to age in the “Little City.”

The numbers tell the truth — and they’re staggering. Baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, still control more than \$78 trillion in wealth, over half of all U.S. household assets. That’s twice what Gen X holds and nearly ten times what millennials have managed to build. But it’s not evenly spread. Forty percent of people over 55 have no retirement savings at all. None. They rely on Social Security checks averaging about \$1,900 a month. In Northern Virginia, where rent for a one-bedroom apart-

ment hovers around \$2,000, that math doesn’t work. In Falls Church, seniors who bought their homes in the 1970s for \$60,000 now sit on properties worth \$1 million or more. It looks golden, but for many, the wealth is locked in bricks and mortar while cash flow runs dry.

At the same time, affluent retirees are fueling billion-dollar industries. Boomers make up half of all RV owners, dominate the cruise market, and drive the so-called “shoulder season” travel economy by filling planes in September and May when school is in session. The contradiction is stark: one neighbor booking a European river cruise, another quietly working part-time at the farmers market to pay for prescriptions.

Technology is where seniors are quietly fighting back. Nearly three in ten Americans over 50 use a health app, but most stick to step counters or sleep logs. The real game-changers are apps that aren’t widely known. Pillboxie makes medication management visual and fool-proof — drag pills into morning, noon, or night slots and the phone reminds you when to take them. I-Care helps older adults with memory issues, connecting task lists to family members so nothing slips. Meditation apps like Ten Percent Happier deliver bite-sized lessons that ease stress and improve

sleep. Automatic reminiscence tools prompt conversations with photos and voice cues, helping those with cognitive decline stay connected. Yet nationally, only 9 percent of seniors use apps to track blood pressure, 8 percent for meditation, and 5 percent for mental health.

Those numbers hit harder when paired with another fact: in Virginia, “frequent mental distress” among adults 65 and older almost doubled in less than a decade, climbing from 5.7 percent in 2015 to 10 percent in 2023. Social isolation affects one in three seniors, and it doesn’t just make for lonely afternoons. The National Academies of Sciences says isolation increases the risk of heart disease by 29 percent, stroke by 32 percent, and dementia by up to 50%. In a city like Falls Church — where neighbors see each other at the farmers market or City Hall — the solution is often connection. Apps help, but so do local programs that make sure no one disappears behind closed doors.

The medical breakthroughs unfolding right now are just as dramatic. Seniors already account for nearly 60 percent of all U.S. healthcare spending, and science is sprinting to keep up. At UVA Health, researchers are testing Tarlatamab, a drug that’s showing survival improvements for patients with small-cell lung cancer, one of the deadliest cancers known. The same institution is exploring whether HIV drugs (NRTIs) can prevent Alzheimer’s, and brand-new research on a brain molecule called STING suggests that memory loss itself might one day be preventable. These aren’t abstract studies happening overseas. They’re taking place two hours from Falls Church. Nationally, the National Institute on Aging lists over 400 Alzheimer’s and dementia trials active right now — from drug therapies to caregiver programs and diagnostic tools. Seniors here could participate, but too often they don’t even hear about these options until it’s too late.

That’s where Falls Church leadership has stepped in. Unlike many cities that treat older adults as an afterthought, the Little City has embraced its senior community. The Aging Services division provides case management, counseling, and access to affordable assisted living and dental programs. The Falls Church Senior Center is more than a social club — it’s a hub for fitness, art classes, and trips that keep people engaged and active. Fairfax County’s Virtual Center for Active Adults streams programming straight to tablets and laptops, making participation possible even for those with mobility challenges. Through ElderLink, a partnership with Inova, seniors can access chronic disease self-management programs, fall-prevention services, and help navigating care.

The city’s commitment shows up everywhere. Budgets continue to prioritize Aging Services. Police and fire departments run safety checks for older residents. Zoning and development discussions now factor in senior housing and accessibility. Civic leaders defend funding for senior programming as part of what makes the Little City whole. And older residents themselves give back, powering nonprofits, volunteering in schools, and turning up in force on Election Day — Falls Church’s seniors vote at some of the highest rates in the community, shaping decisions that affect everyone.

So the question is less about whether the resources exist and more about whether seniors — and their families — know about them. Too many discover ElderLink after a fall, join the Senior Center after months of loneliness, or ask about clinical trials only after a diagnosis. That’s the old model: waiting for crisis. The new model is proactive — downloading the apps, signing up for the programs, asking the doctors about trials, getting connected before the problems hit.

And it’s not just about individual lives — Falls Church seniors are already steering the broader community. Older residents are among the most consistent volunteers in the city, logging thousands of hours with nonprofits, tutoring programs, and arts organizations. They’re the backbone of civic boards and neighborhood associations. And when elections come around, seniors in Falls Church turn out at rates younger voters don’t match. That civic weight has made City Hall listen, which is why aging services and accessibility aren’t just nice extras in the budget — they’re priorities. Seniors aren’t simply using technology and programs to adapt to their golden years; they’re using them to stay engaged, visible, and powerful in shaping the Little City’s future.

Seniors in Falls Church are among the best positioned in the country to thrive in this new model. This is an affluent, educated, resource-rich city with access to world-class healthcare and a government that has made older residents part of the blueprint for the future. The gap isn’t availability. The gap is awareness.

The golden years don’t have to be about decline. They can be about discovery — of new tools, new medical breakthroughs, new ways to stay connected to neighbors and family. Falls Church has already embraced its seniors. Now it’s time for every older resident to embrace the opportunities right in front of them. Because aging here doesn’t mean stepping aside. It means staying visible, staying connected, and yes, staying loud. And that’s the kind of future this city should be proud to lead.

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