



Recommendations for Development of Affordable Housing Throughout the County of Marin

(Marin County Board of Supervisors policy approval on March 16, 2010 for advocacy
by the Commission on Aging)

Background:

The California Department of Finance 2007 projections state that by 2010 one in every four residents in Marin, or 25% of the county's total population, will be 60 years or older. Affordable housing in this document means housing for people with low and very low incomes and below, including older adults, disabled individuals and the homeless.

Recognition of the following needs of older and disabled adults should be taken into consideration in any affordable housing review:

1. Older and disabled adults may choose to 'age in place' in their longtime homes or to move into smaller units with access to services. These smaller units could be included as part of a "senior village", a co-housing project, shared housing with unrelated individuals or in a 'second unit' owned by someone else.
2. Whether they live alone or in a residential setting with others, as people age they will likely need assistance and/or services to remain living independently. Ideally, the workforce delivering the assistance and services should live close by in housing they can afford.
3. It is important for older and disabled adults to live where they can move about without cars and access vital services such as shopping, medical facilities, government centers, libraries, educational programs and recreational activities. In addition, those who cannot or choose not to drive should have access to a full range of transportation choices including public transit as well as pedestrian and bicycle pathways.
4. There is a need for both existing and new large housing developments which serve older adults and individuals with disabilities to include appropriate on-site services that support independent living and aging in place. Overall development standards are needed that include universal design principles such as wheel chair accessibility, wheel/walk-in showers, etc. It is desirable to have several levels of care at one site.

In recognizing these identified needs, the Marin County Commission on Aging recommends adoption of General Plan Housing Element considerations, as well as consideration of specific tools and approaches in the development of affordable housing that may assist in addressing these issues.

Housing Elements Considerations:

The Marin County Commission on Aging urges that where possible and appropriate the following be taken into consideration when the County of Marin and/or its cities and towns review and update the “housing elements” of their respective General Plans:

1. The critical need for affordable housing, protection of the existing supply of modest homes and second units, and creation of policies that make it easier to construct new modest sized homes and second units.
2. The fact that many older and disabled adults live on limited fixed incomes; therefore policies and procedures should be pursued to maintain and increase rental housing and second units
3. A needs assessment, if feasible, to determine the number and kind of older and disabled adult housing units that are needed. It is important to implement outreach to the older and disabled adults in an effort to incorporate their input in the identification of their community’s housing needs.

Development of Affordable Housing:

The Marin County Commission on Aging also recommends that, where possible and appropriate, the following tools and approaches be considered in developing affordable housing:

1. Reservation of at least 20% of any new development as ‘below market rate’ with a potential alternative of ‘in lieu fees’ or off-site land donations. In the opinion of the Commission on Aging, increased density and reduced parking requirements may be suitable for some older and disabled adults thereby raising the possibility of a reduction in the cost to build such facilities.
2. Use of a density bonus program as a tool to encourage and enable construction of needed affordable housing. For example, setting a minimum density on a suitable property could allow the planning process to proceed more smoothly.
3. Adoption of a policy to encourage or require appropriate developments to incorporate energy and water conservation measures along with green building practices.
4. Incorporation of Universal Design principles where practicable.
5. Adoption of parking standards that take into consideration local data from the 2009 Marin County, Health & Human Services Department, Division of Aging and Adult Services; and Marin County Commission on Aging study, *Transportation Patterns and Needs Survey of Older Adults Living in Selected Facilities in Marin County*.