

# Older Adult Housing Policies & Regulations in Fairfax County

**T**he **Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance** are among the tools used to guide land development in Fairfax County. The Comprehensive Plan includes several policies that support increasing the number and variety of housing opportunities available to older adults. Likewise, the Zoning Ordinance provides for use and location regulations for the various housing options available to older adults. A summary of a few of these policies and regulations is provided here to assist with planning and development of older adult housing in Fairfax County. More detailed information can be obtained from the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan and the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance.



**Greenspring Independent Living Facility in Fairfax County**  
Photo courtesy of Greenspring



**Age in Place Options**  
Photo courtesy of Fairfax County



**Universal Design Principles**  
Photo courtesy of Fairfax County

## Comprehensive Plan Policies

### Increasing Supply

- Increase the supply of housing available to older adults and other special populations in all areas of the County including transit-oriented developments (TODs).
- Provide for a range of housing opportunities by incorporating a mix of housing types and sizes for different income levels.
- Encourage universal design in the development of affordable and market rate housing to increase age-in-place options and facilitate optimal independent living.

### Location Guidelines for Multi-Family Older Adult Developments

- Public transportation and community services should be located within reasonable walking distance and should be accessible via paved, lighted and secure walkways. If neither public transportation nor community services are within a short walking distance, the development should provide shuttle bus service access to community services.
- The topography of the site and that between the site and nearby destinations should be considered when siting residential developments for older adults. Pedestrian facilities should not be located on slopes greater than 5-8% and such slopes should not be continuous for more than 75 feet.

### Develop Older Adult Day Health Centers

- Ensure programmatic integration by co-locating adult day health centers with senior centers and senior housing, where feasible.
- Locate centers in or near residential communities to minimize transportation requirements of families.

## Creating Places Where Older Adults Want to Live



**Floor Plan of an Assisted Living Unit at Braddock Glen**  
Photo Courtesy of Sunrise



**Olley Glen, an Independent Living Facility**  
Photo courtesy of Fairfax County



**Greenspring Independent Living Facility**  
Photo courtesy of Greenspring

## Zoning Ordinance Provisions

### Assisted Living Facility

- Private living quarters for persons unable to live independently
- Assistance with moderate activities of daily living.
- Facility size governed by FAR limits of the zoning district
- Reviewed by Health Care Advisory Board

### Independent Living Facility

- Dwelling units that are primarily age-restricted or limited to persons with disabilities
- Support services such as meals, personal emergency response systems, recreation and transportation services are provided
- Universal Design features incorporated such as, wider doorways, accessible bathrooms, lower light switches
- Minimum of 15% of the units shall be affordable units
- Density may be increased subject to a multiplier of 4 times the Comprehensive Plan recommended density in most instances
- May include assisted living and skilled nursing facilities designed solely for the residents as an accessory use
- Exempt from Per Unit Contributions to Schools

### Accessory Dwelling Unit

- Second dwelling unit subordinate to a single family detached dwelling unit
- Either the principal dwelling or the accessory dwelling must be occupied by a person 55 years or older or a person permanently or totally disabled
- Allowed with the approval of a Special Permit
- On lots 2 acres or larger, the accessory dwelling unit may be located in a freestanding accessory structure
- Accessory dwellings are limited to a maximum of 35% of the gross floor area of the principal dwelling
- Either the accessory dwelling unit or the principal dwelling unit must be owner occupied
- Accessory dwelling units are approved for a period not to exceed 5 years; extensions for succeeding 5 year periods may be requested

### Temporary Family Health Care Structures

- A transportable residential structure that is accessory to a single family detached dwelling and provides an environment that facilitates a caregiver's provision of care for a mentally or physically impaired person
- Structure is limited to 300 square feet in size and must be removed within 60 days of last occupancy by person requiring care
- Structures are administratively reviewed and approved by the Fairfax County Zoning Administrator

# Creating Places Where Older Adults Want to Live



**Locate Housing Convenient to Transit**  
Photo courtesy of Fairfax County



**Group Activities at an Independent Living Facility**  
Photo courtesy of Fairfax County



**Proximity to Transit Promotes Accessibility and an Active Lifestyle**  
Photo courtesy of WMATA

## Zoning Ordinance Provisions

### Congregate Living Facility

- Permanent or Temporary Housing and general care (training, treatment or special care) in supportive setting with on-site counselors
- May be in a single detached dwelling – subject to single family detached yard regulations

### Group Residential Facility

- A licensed home or facility where no more than 8 mentally ill, intellectually or developmentally disabled, persons reside with one or more counselors or staff
- A licensed home or facility where no more than 8 aged, infirmed or disabled persons reside with one or more resident counselors or staff
- A home or facility where 8 disabled persons, as defined by the Federal Fair Housing Amendment Act of 1988 reside with one or more counselors
- Any dwelling unit of any kind (single family detached, attached or multi-family) may be occupied by a group residential facility as a by-right use

### Group Housekeeping Unit

- Approval of a Special Permit by the Board of Zoning Appeals
- Allows an increase in the number of residents to 10 persons

### Medical Care Facility

- Institution, place, building or agency in which facilities are maintained furnished, conducted, or offered for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of human disease, pain, injury, deformity, or physical condition whether medical or surgical of:
  - 2 or more non-related mentally or physically sick or injured persons
  - 2 or more non-related persons requiring or receiving medical surgical or nursing attention or service as acute, chronic, convalescent, aged or physically disabled
- Requires review by Health Care Advisory Board in conjunction with any required Special Exception
- Use subject to FAR limitations of the zoning district



A Fairfax County, Virginia Publication  
Fairfax County Department of Planning & Zoning  
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 730  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/>