Recommendations—Housing

Home Design and Modification

Goal 1

Promote the design and modification of homes to meet the physical needs of individuals as they age.

Objectives

- Encourage partnerships to explore new and innovative approaches to housing development, design and modification (e.g., Brighton Development Corp in Minneapolis, Gramercy Management intergenerational cooperatives in Rochester, MN.)
- Provide training to organizations which provide home repair and related services on home modification options to meet the needs of individuals as they age, as well as key principles in working with an aging population.
- Promote universal design and visitability principles in new home development

Housing Options

Goal 2

Increase the range of housing options in all parts of Kent County—from community-based intergenerational options to age-segregated congregate facilities—that are available to individuals as they age.

Objectives

- Review local plans and zoning ordinances to ensure the availability of diverse options— single story townhouses, apartments and condos, accessory housing units, shared housing and integration of commercial and residential properties—within single family zones.
- Provide information, resources, and education to older adults, homeowners, landlords, and developers about alternative housing options such as accessory housing units, shared housing, congregate housing, etc.
- Raise public awareness about the benefits of mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Employ GIS mapping to identify naturally occurring retirement communities in Kent County and develop a plan for supporting them.
- Develop incentives for senior developments to be located close to transit, retail, and services (e.g., explore corridor and transit-related housing strategies).
- Explore public/private partnerships to develop a continuing care retirement community (e.g. the Lapham Park Venture in Milwaukee, WI) and/or supportive housing (e.g., Woodstock Hotel, NYC) options for low-income seniors.

Affordability

Goal 3

Increase older adults' access to an array of affordable housing options.

Objectives

- Develop an array of financial supports and services to enable older adults to obtain the kind of housing they choose as they age (e.g., rent/income assistance; Section 202 housing assistance; energy assistance; home heating credits; weatherization programs; employment options; financial literacy opportunities; MiChoice waiver; property tax exemptions, caps and deferrals; tax credits, etc.)
- Expand funding options for older adults seeking to modify their homes or landlords making modifications to suit the needs of older adults (e.g., subsidies, reverse mortgages, etc.).
- Increase outreach and education about fraud and predatory lending practices.

Support and Services

Goal 3

Establish an infrastructure for providing the necessary information and services to enable older adults to take advantage of an array of housing options.

Objectives

- Develop interdisciplinary teams to assess housing and health-service needs and provide the appropriate level of information and services to older adults. (e.g., Baltimore's "Safe at Home" program).
- Increase access to a diverse array of community- and home-based services along the continuum of care.
- Expand the capacity of community services that provide information about financing options, contractors, and architectural options.
- Simplify the process by which older adults can access financial support and housing related services.

Work Group

CCFL housing recommendations are based on national research on best practices and the work of the Vision to End Homelessness (VTEH) in Kent County, an initiative of the Grand Rapids Housing Continuum of Care (www.grahcoc.org). During 2003- 2005, the Vision to End Homelessness planning process involved hundreds of people from all sectors of the community in a VTEH Summit, data gathering and analysis, and eight project teams that created action recommendations on housing issues ranging from the needs of economically disadvantaged populations to development of a new housing infrastructure.