

# Metro Atlanta's Senior Housing Shortage

## THE CHALLENGE

There is not enough quality, affordable housing in metro Atlanta to meet the needs of the region's fast-growing population of older adults. 58% of metro Atlanta renters aged 65+ spend more than 30% of their income on housing.\*

## BACKGROUND

### Housing needs change over the course of a lifetime.

A home ideal for raising kids may be ill-suited and cost-prohibitive for living independently as we age. Downsizing and moving closer to services such as grocery stores and medical facilities are often necessary. Entrances with no steps and wider doorways may be needed to accommodate wheelchairs.

## 57%

Only 57% of existing homes have more than one "universal design feature," an adaptation such as a ramp or wider doorway that enables adults to live safely and independently at home.

**Metro Atlanta's housing market is already experiencing a shortage** in both the supply and variety of housing options for older adults. Without action, this shortage will only worsen over time as the 65+ population increases.

## 1.2 million

The population of older adults (65+) is forecast to more than double by 2040, to 1.2 million.

**A better range of housing options are needed** for older adults to age in their communities, especially rental properties that offer or are near basic services such as transportation, personal care, and meals.

## 70%

70% of older adults will eventually need help with activities such as eating, bathing, and dressing.

### Many older adults cannot afford available housing.

Most housing being built for older adults is geared towards higher-income buyers or renters. Faced with high housing costs, less affluent seniors often struggle to pay for expenses such as food and healthcare; some spend down their savings until they qualify for Medicaid services, shifting the cost to taxpayers.

## 51%

Only 51% of metro Atlantans 65+ say they would be able to pay for a \$400 emergency immediately by cash, check, or debit.

\*Housing is considered affordable if a person pays no more than 30 percent of their income on rent. To qualify for federal Housing and Urban Development's affordable senior housing program, eligible households must have at least one member who is 62 years or older and meet HUD's income limits for very-low income families.

## SOLUTIONS

Increasing housing options available to older adults in metro Atlanta requires action from state and local officials as well as the housing industry. Market forces alone cannot adequately address this issue.

Policies must be implemented that encourage the development of a mix of housing types within existing communities, at a variety of price points. Zoning regulations should be written to allow homes to be built in close proximity to the services that enable people to remain independent as they age.

## STATE-LEVEL SOLUTIONS

- » Help older adults afford home modifications through tax credits, grants, or forgivable loans
- » Develop programs to provide affordable and supportive senior housing through vouchers that subsidize rent
- » Increase Low-Income Housing Tax Credit set-asides in the Georgia Qualified Action Plan for housing that supports older adults
- » Link Medicaid funding to housing vouchers, enabling recipients to receive needed services

### SUCCESS STORY

The Vermont Support and Services at Home (SASH) program provides personalized care coordination for older adults to live safely at home by using both public funding (Medicaid/Medicare) and private resources. ([www.sashvt.org](http://www.sashvt.org))

## LOCAL SOLUTIONS

- » Provide incentives, such as tax breaks and fee-waivers, to encourage the development of affordable and supportive housing units
- » Enact zoning regulations to allow for increased housing types and options and to encourage “universal design elements” such as no step entries and wider doorways
- » Adopt age-friendly principles to foster Lifelong Communities, places where individuals of all ages and abilities can live throughout a lifetime

### SUCCESS STORY

Mableton, a community located in Cobb County, adopted a form-based code that encourages livable, welcoming communities that incorporate a range of building and housing types to support people of all ages and incomes and rejects isolated senior housing models.

#### Contact information

Mary Blumberg at **470.378.1668** or **[mblumberg@atlantaregional.org](mailto:mblumberg@atlantaregional.org)**  
For housing assistance: **404.463.3333** or **[empowerline.org](http://empowerline.org)**