

AFFORDABLE ASSISTED LIVING

MSHDA 2020/2021 QUALIFIED ALLOCATION PLAN CONSIDERATION

As MSHDA contemplates a new two-year Qualified Allocation Plan, I want to remind and encourage staff and planners to consider the housing and care needs of older, extremely low income—and often homeless—adults. I understand there has not been a project presented to MSHDA in response to some recognition in the present QAP of dedicated points for an AAL project. That is not because there is not a need for such a project. Unfortunately, I think it is because of the difficulty and complexity of putting an AAL project together.

I think everyone is aware of the growing numbers of older adults in our nation. This is growing at the rate of 12,000 new adults turning 65 every day. What makes it doubly urgent for Michigan, however, is that we are leading the nation in this aspect. A study conducted last year by Wayne State University found that, whereas the nation is set to experience more persons over 65 than under 17 by the year 2035, Michigan will experience this phenomenon by 2025—ten years earlier. And, Michigan has recently achieved the status of being the first state in the nation having the most counties with people over 65 than under 17.

Demographers have also concluded that the homeless population is aging faster than the general population in the US. Over the past two decades, the average age of homeless single adults has gone from 37 years in 1990 to over 50 years in 2010. One-third of homeless single adults are over 50. Many of these will need better and unique housing as they age into their 70s and 80s.

With these statistics facing Michigan, it is more urgent than ever that MSHDA continue its effort to encourage communities to find new ways to offer affordable housing for the low income and needy older adults that will be there in increasing numbers. This effort should be renewed emphasis on the AAL concept—where supports can be offered along with specialized housing.

Although there has been minimal recent effort toward AAL development, there are at least two successful projects in the state that can serve as models and descriptors of the benefits gained for our State and social service agencies. The Genesis Heron Manor Assisted Living Facility in Grand Rapids has operated successfully for over ten years, and is serving the needs of 25 extremely low-income seniors in a setting that allows them to age-in-place without need for high-cost institutionalization. This concept combines the resident's eligibility for Medicaid Home and Community Supports (for their care needs) with HUD Housing vouchers (for living needs) to offer successful aging-in-place living for frail, low-income, and often homeless seniors.

I would encourage MSHDA to continue, and perhaps expand, the point system for developers to consider AAL projects. Rather than only 5 points, perhaps 10 points should be assigned to allow a more competitive scoring project. And, perhaps MSHDA should partner with DHHS and the Aging and Older Adults Services Administration to provide a Developers Forum that could explore this concept as a way to meet the future housing needs for Michigan seniors.

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