

**COMMISSION ON AGING SUMMER STUDY ON HOUSING  
MINUTES FROM August 9, 2011 MEETING**

In Attendance:

Leslie Marks, Chair, Commission on Aging  
Elaine Binder, Chair Commission on Aging  
Jennifer Wise, MNCPPC  
Susan Smith, HOC  
Morton Davis, Commission on Aging  
Ken Montgomery, Commission on Aging  
Miriam Kelty, Commission on Aging  
Jack Sprague, Commission on Aging  
Stephanie Killian, Department of Housing & Community Affairs  
Vivien Hsueh, Commission on Aging  
Chuck Kaufman, Commission on Aging  
Grace Whipple, Commission on Aging  
Odile Saddi, Staff, Commission on Aging

**Final Study Committee Goals:** To determine potential recommendations and actions by the summer study committee and to make recommendations to the entire Commission on Aging with regard to Accessory Apartments and VisitAble and Livable Housing.

**Accessory Apartments:**

The Study Committee recommends that the COA supports the following motion: That the COA supports changes in the zoning code that expedite the process which affects the desire by seniors/caregivers to create accessory apartments, thereby alleviating burden and current barriers.

Background:

1. Definition of an Accessory Apartment: A second dwelling unit that is part of a one-family detached dwelling, or is located in a separate accessory structure on the same lot as the main dwelling, with provision within the accessory apartment for cooking, eating, sanitation and sleeping. Such a dwelling unit is subordinate to the main dwelling.
2. Currently the zoning code approval process for accessory apartments can take as long as 1 year and cost upwards of \$75,000 in legal fees.
3. Accessory apartments become another housing tool to allow seniors to remain in the community.
4. Current approval for an Accessory Apartment is by Special Exception. The Special Exception process does not go with the house it goes with the petitioners of the house, a new owner needs a new special exception.

5. In the current zoning re-write process, there is a proposal to make Accessory Apartments a zone of right in specific residential zones. In addition to making Accessory Apartments a zone of right, certain regulations are being considered such as: number of parking spaces required, the number of people that can live in an Accessory Apartment, size limitations, and the number of Accessory Apartments allowed in any one neighborhood.

#### VisitAble & Livable Apartments & Design for Life

The Housing Study Committee recommends that the COA supports the following Motion:

1. That the COA continue to support the Voluntary Design for Life program.
2. That policies be developed to significantly increase the number of VisitAble and Livable housing in Montgomery County.
3. That the Commission be represented and participate on the Design for Life Committee.
4. That the Design for Life Committee ensure that there be an education component of the program in their action recommendations.

#### Background:

1. VisitAbility: To configure a home so that someone with a mobility impairment can visit your home. The following are three criteria necessary for creating a VisitAble Home:
  - a. No step entry somewhere in the house
  - b. 32 inch wide clearance in doorways
  - c. Access to first floor powder room by wheel chair user
2. Accessibility: All new housing units of 4 or more units must be accessible to people with disabilities by Federal Law. The Federal Accessibility laws do not apply to single family or townhouse homes.
3. Livable Communities: In addition to the requirements for a VisitAble home, a livable home provides access to mobility impaired persons to the kitchen, bedroom and bathroom.
1. Design for Life: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/designforlifemontgomery](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/designforlifemontgomery)
  - a. Homes that meet criteria of livable and visitable are certified by the Office of Permit Services in Montgomery County
  - b. The program is a voluntary program for builders to provide as an option to purchasers, a home that provides the following:
    - i. No step entry into the first floor of house
    - ii. 32 inch wide doorways
    - iii. Access to bathrooms on first floor
    - iv. Access to master bedroom
    - v. Access to kitchen
2. Maryland has passed voluntary legislation that requires builders of 11 units or more to offer livable/visitable features as options

Addition Recommendations to the Commission on Aging:

1. The CoA examine the full spectrum of housing available to seniors that include: housing types, prices, rental units, multi-generational housing as a tool for affordable senior housing and other affordable housing options.
2. The CoA support walkable communities as a senior friendly living environment.
3. The CoA encourage partnerships between for profit and non profit housing builder/developers in community planning that will result in affordable housing for seniors particularly in new master planned communities.
4. The Committee suggests that the Aging in Place Committee take on housing as a year long project and priority.

Respectfully Submitted by Leslie Marks, Housing Summer Study Committee  
Chair