

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

HOUSING

COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S SUMMIT ON AGING
DECEMBER 2015

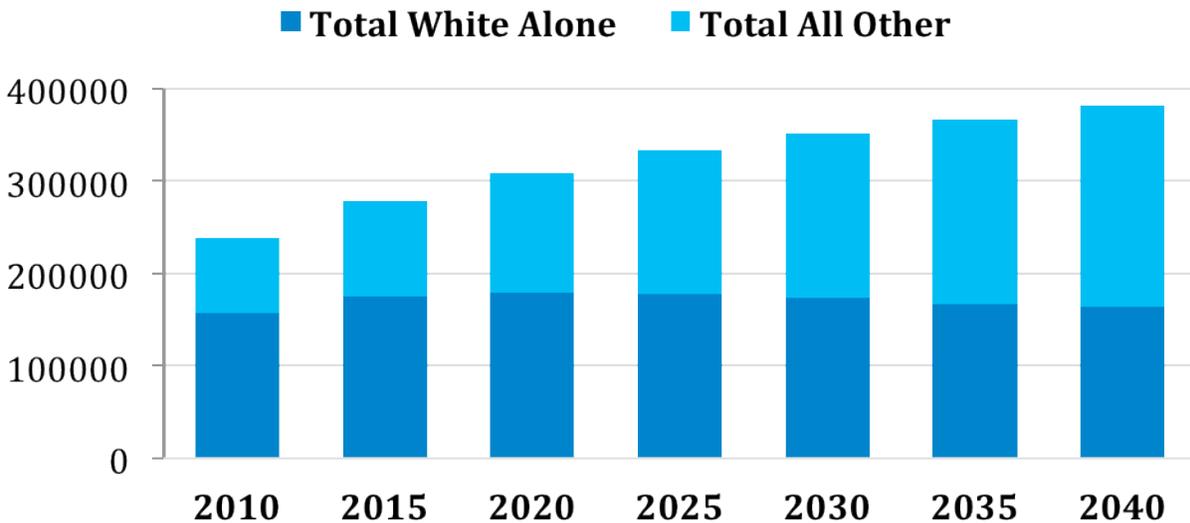
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HOUSING

BACKGROUND

Montgomery County is aging. By 2020 it is estimated that there will be 168,199 residents in Montgomery County who are 65 or older representing 16% of the population. By 2040, residents 65 and older will comprise 20% of the population. At the same time, the senior population will become increasingly diverse.

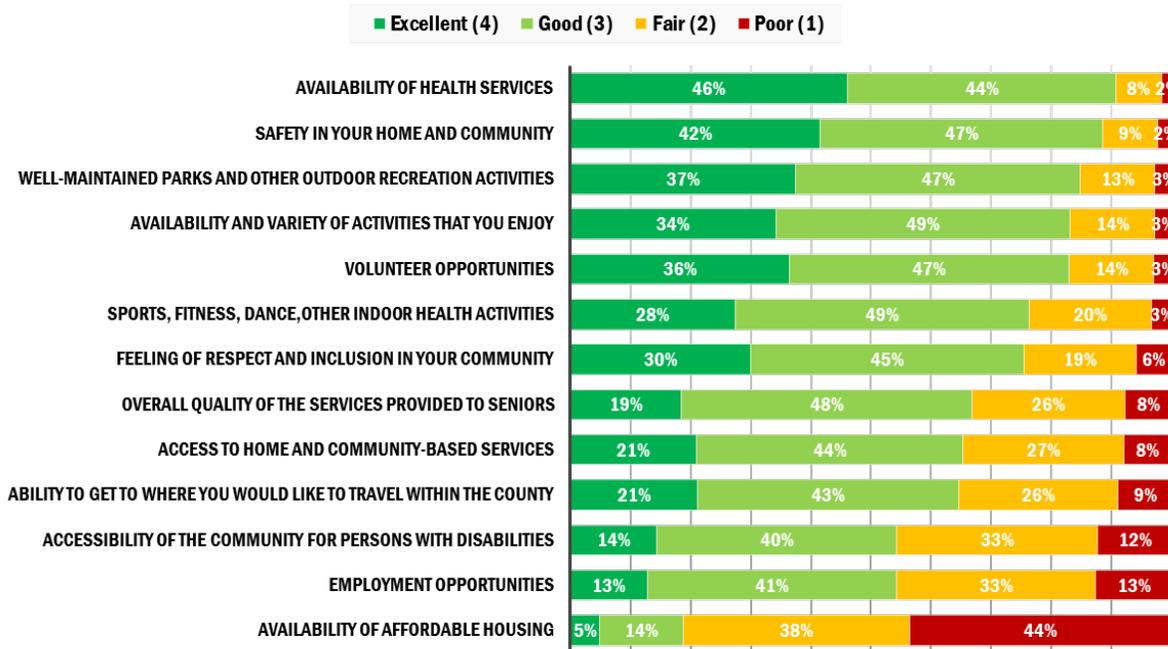


AARP national data reveals that more than four in five seniors age 65 or older wish to remain in their current home and age in place. In Montgomery County we face the task of ensuring that the homes seniors wish to grow old in are affordable and can accommodate their aging needs.

Respondents to the County’s 2015 Age Friendly Community Survey offer high marks for the County’s quality of life (90% good or excellent), yet a much smaller number (53%) probably or definitely would recommend Montgomery County as a place for retirement. The reason for this often is tied to the cost of living (particularly housing), taxes, and traffic. The general sense is that Montgomery County is a great place to retire—if you can afford it.

Respondents offered additional suggestions for housing improvement, including: 55+ senior detached homes, smaller groupings of senior housing, more “walkable” communities, and overall, a greater diversity of housing options.

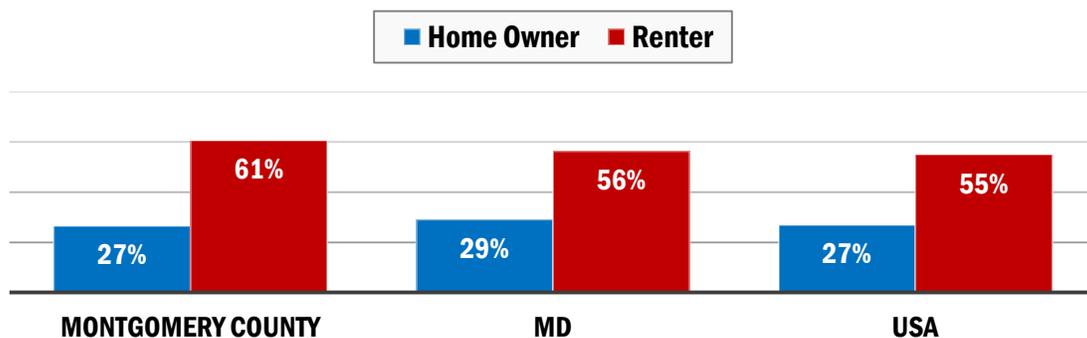
Rating for Community Characteristics



Lower cost HOC units offer one method of providing County residents with affordable housing options. However, demand vastly outstrips supply. Currently, there are 3,450 senior Heads of Household on the HOC waitlist, representing 13% of the total waitlist.

Overall, 6.5% of County residents age 65+ are classified as living below the poverty line. However, some populations are disproportionately affected: 17% of Hispanic elders, 13% of Asian elders and 10% of Black or African American elders are living in poverty. And, County residents age 65+ who are renters are more than twice as likely as homeowners to be paying more than 30% of their income for housing, i.e., “housing burdened.”

% of Residents, 65+ who are housing burdened (30%+ of income on housing)



Beyond affordability, another challenge for our housing situation is that people may experience sudden or gradual loss of mobility and their home may become inaccessible to them. Or, a senior’s own home may be accessible but the homes of friends and family may not be. Seven in ten survey respondents rate their housing stock as inaccessible for someone with a wheelchair or a physical disability.

How accessible is your home for someone with a wheelchair or physical disability?

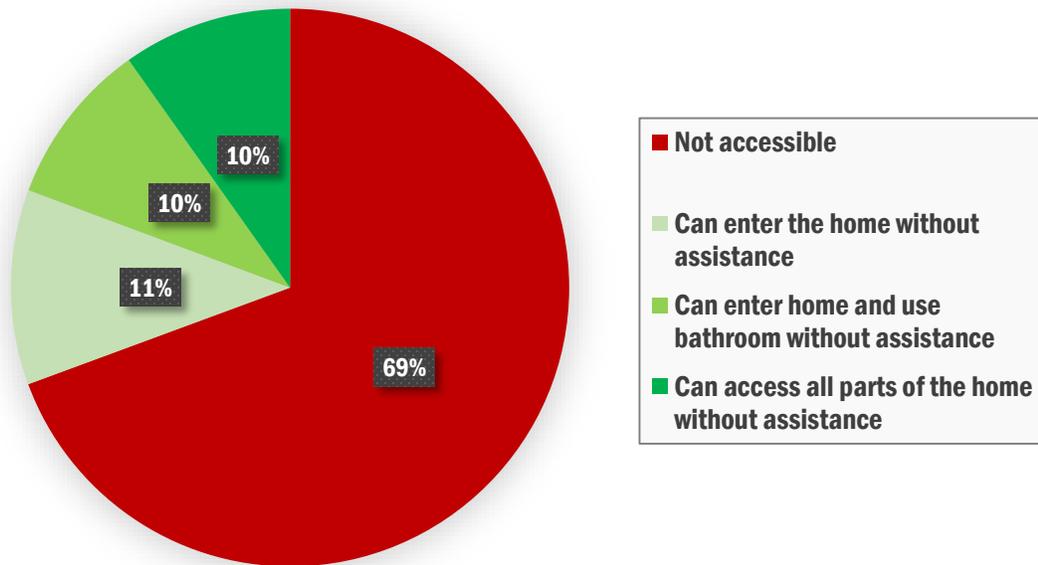


Figure 4

The challenge seems to be a growing number of seniors in the County, coupled with a housing stock that has affordability issues and is largely inaccessible to persons with certain disabilities. How can our county best meet the needs of its aging and diverse populations who wish to remain in their current neighborhoods, either in their existing homes or alternative affordable (and accessible) homes?

SELECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Protected Availability of Affordable Rental Housing

- **Preservation of Existing Units:** The County has created partnerships to acquire or preserve thousands of existing units of affordable housing. These include: Victory Forest (136 units) Silver Spring; Marian Assisted Living (9 units) Olney; Town Center Apartments (110 units) Rockville; Bauer Park Apartments (142 units) Rockville; Charter House (212 units) Silver Spring; Washington-McLaughlin Apartments (9 units) Takoma Park; Lakeview Apartments (152 units) Bethesda; Victory Court (86 units) Rockville; and Interfaith Group Home (9 units) Rockville.
- The County has partnered with private and non-profit developers to build new affordable housing for seniors. The following are either in the planning stage or under construction.
Aspen Hill (110 units); Churchill II (133 units) Germantown; The Bonifant (149 units) Silver Spring; White Oak (105 units); Silver Spring (75 units); Glenmont (110 units); East County (151 units); and White Flint (150 units)
- Continued partnering with the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) and Department of Health and Human Services to provide rental assistance to low-income seniors.

Expanded Property Tax Credits for Homeowners with Modest Assets

- Maintained the property tax credit for homeowners with limited assets, along with an additional such credit for seniors. This credit applies to those who fill out the application and qualify based on modest financial resources.
- In FY2015, over 2,900 seniors with limited assets received an estimated average of \$720 in Homeowners and Seniors property tax credits. Beginning in July 2015, Montgomery County doubled the rate of the Senior Tax Credit and expanded eligibility to include homeowners who are 65 to 70 years old (the credit, until this year, was limited to homeowners 70 years and over.) Next year, homeowners age 65-plus with limited savings can apply to receive an estimated average of \$870 per year in property tax credits.
- In total, such property tax credit support for older homeowners who have modest savings are estimated to grow from about \$2 million per year to approximately \$3 million per year. For residents age 70-plus, retroactive applications for this credit may be made for the prior three years.

- Shortened Timeframe for Homeowners Seeking Approval for Accessory Housing
 - In 2013, the County began offering homeowners a swifter approval process for accessory apartments, i.e., one way to expand affordable housing for seniors. Currently, 60 accessory apartments have been licensed and nearly four dozen are in the pipeline.

- Introduced Incentives for Home Owners and Builders to Install Accessible Housing Features:
 - Design for Life, managed by Department of Permitting Services, provides partial tax credits to property owners or homebuilders who install measures that improve accessibility, visit-ability and/or live-ability of residential homes.
 - This model program was initiated in Montgomery County to improve the ability of all residents to manage more successfully in homes, to improve people's ability to age in place and to make homes more accessible to visitors of all ages. The Design for Life program took effect July 2014. Since then, twenty such tax credits have been granted.

CHALLENGES

The County is confronted by a number of challenges in the coming years as it relates to ensuring that people have access to affordable housing that meets their needs. Challenges that need to be considered include, but are not limited to:

- Affordable Housing: One third of County seniors are housing burdened, i.e., pay more than 30% of income on housing costs. As overall housing prices continue to rise faster than general inflation, and the number of seniors continues to grow, County efforts to add affordable housing stock cannot keep up with growing needs for affordable housing units.

- Affordable Assisted Living: This topic was listed as the highest priority in the 2008 Senior Summit. The challenges of funding affordable assisted living remain significant. Some states use Medicaid Waivers in conjunction with tax credits and other housing funding sources to create affordable assisted living. In Maryland we have a challenge to identify funding and management sources to make affordable assisted living a reality.

- Accessible housing and Aging in Place: Survey respondents indicated that most County housing units servicing seniors are not accessible to persons with certain disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION STEPS

Opportunities available to Montgomery County Government to address challenges include, but are not limited to:

- Affordable Senior Rental Housing:
 - Housing options and alternatives will be part of the County planning efforts. Identification of partnerships to support the County's efforts to increase the supply and housing options to all seniors in the Montgomery County community.
- Affordable Housing, generally:
 - Build awareness of housing property tax credits for those with modest assets, as well as renter tax credits that will take effect next year. Also build awareness about legally sharing a home, with or without an accessory apartment.
- Affordable housing with affordable wrap around services:
 - One of the ways to help seniors stay in their own homes and age in place is to provide health services that support their needs as they age. A program called Nexus Montgomery is in the pilot stage: It connects caregivers, hospitals and health providers in a comprehensive program – initially, this program is targeting affordable senior housing communities.
- Accessible Housing Options: Explore options to promote more awareness and use of live-ability and visit-ability tax credits, to increase accessibility, especially of single family units.
- Aging in Place with affordable wrap around services.
 - Initiated an education program for county owners and landlords about the services available to seniors living in their buildings.
- Promote aging in place or community by assuring that villages have the resource they need to grow and succeed (see Civic Engagement)