

HCCA TESTIMONY ON CB7-2017, AMENDING THE LIVABLE HOMES TAX CREDIT

PAUL VERCHINSKI, TESTIFYING ON BEHALF OF THE HOWARD COUNTY CITIZENS ASSOCIATION (HCCA). WE STRONGLY SUPPORT THIS LEGISLATION.

WE HAVE SOME SUGGESTIONS ON WHAT YOU MIGHT ALSO CONSIDER:

1. OLDER RESIDENTS DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW. AS A PRE-CONDITION FOR DOING THESE IMPROVEMNTS, AN AGE FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT DONE BY A CERTIFIED AGING IN PLACE SPECIALIST SHOULD BE DONE AND NOT EXCEED \$100 AS AN ELIGIBLE COST.

2. HOWARD COUNTY ENCOURAGES THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW 55+ AGE-RESTRICTED ADULT HOUSING COMMUNITIES. IF A BUILDER INSTALLS ITEMS THAT ARE NOT REQUIRED BUT ARE OPTIONAL OR DESIRABLE UNDER THE 2002 "URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR AGE-RESTRICTED ADULT HOUSING IN HOWARD COUNTY" , A BUYER WOULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE LIVEABLE HOMES TAX CREDIT. EXAMPLES INCLUDE; LEVER HANDLES ON KITCHEN AND BATHROOM SINKS, PLUS SHOWER, CLOSET RODS ADJUSTABLE FROM 3 FEET TO 5 FEET 6 INCHES, ETC. THESE COSTS SHOULD BE LESS WHEN INSTALLED AS PART OF THE NEW BUILDING. THE BUILDER WOULD HAVE TO CERTIFY THE COSTS.

HCCA APPRECIATES THAT THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE HAS BEEN PROACTIVE ON AMENDING THE LIVABLE HOMES TAX CREDIT, BUT WE ALSO ASK THAT YOU AND THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE UPDATE THE 2002 URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES PER OUR LETTER TO YOU DATED OCTOBER 27, 2016 WHICH WE HAVE ATTACHED.



HCCA

Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961...

The Voice Of The People of Howard County

Date: October 27, 2016

Subject: Legislative Update of "Universal Design Guidelines for Age-Restricted Adult Housing in Howard County" (UDG)

To: Chairman Dr Calvin Ball, Howard County Council
Jen Terresa, Howard County Council


Paul Verchinski of the Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA) Board met with you on September 6th regarding the above referenced subject. The UDG has not been updated since 2002 and new Age-Restricted Housing (ARH) is exempted from the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance. The HCCA Board unanimously endorsed his suggestions that were made to you at our Board meeting on October 18.

We recommend that developers/builders of ARH should be providing substantially updated UDG to allow the Howard County older adults to age in place. Attached is the identical mark up of changes. The existing UDG requirements were brought to our attention because of a proposed ARH development - Bethany Glen. This ARH proposal along Bethany Lane and astride I-70 is an isolated land parcel not walkable to US40 nor is there any transit service. We are therefore recommending that ALL ARH be "either on an existing transit route or the builder shall provide a three year subsidy for a new transit route after 75% building occupancy is reached". We are also recommending that a number of former UDG "Desirable" items now be "Required" as noted in the Attachment.

"Planning for the Growth of the Older Adult Population in Howard County" was issued by the Howard County Department of Citizen Services in 2015 where six priorities were identified. A housing related priority stated "Ensure that diverse housing options are available for Howard County residents to age in the community and to function as independently as possible." Updating the ARH UDG would be beneficial to fulfill this priority.

If you desire, HCCA would assist you in developing this needed legislation.

Sincerely,


for
Stu Kohn
HCCA, President

cc: County Council - Greg Fox, Jon Weinstein, Mary Kay Sigaty
County Executive Allan Kittleman
Attachment (1)

Source HoPoDLIP

Requirements

UNIVERSAL DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR AGE-RESTRICTED ADULT HOUSING IN HOWARD COUNTY

The Howard County Zoning Regulations allow for "active adult housing" as either a conditional use in residential zoning districts or as a permitted use in the Planned Senior Community, Planned Office Research, Community Center Transition, and Residential Institutional zoning districts. Active adult developments must be appropriately designed for adults at least 55 years of age. Site improvements must ensure accessible routes between parking, dwelling units and common areas. Individual dwellings must incorporate universal design features to be adaptable for residents with mobility and functional limitations that often result from aging.

Design standards for site accessibility and usable common areas have been established for multi-family housing by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act of 1988. While recognized standards for individual units for older adults have not been established, Universal Design® is a relatively new, evolving concept that provides some guidance.

Accordingly, the Department of Planning and Zoning met with several senior housing developers, representatives of the Homes for Life Coalition of Howard County, and the Department of Inspections, Licenses, and Permits to discuss minimum requirements. Divergent views were expressed regarding what features should be required vs. optional. Features vary considerably in cost, relevance for different users, and adaptability to different sites and project types. Developers chief concerns were that the current market doesn't perceive a need for most universal design features since the oldest boomers are still relatively young and aren't focused on how their needs may change over time. Concern was also expressed about increasing the cost of senior housing if many universal design features are required rather than optional.

These guidelines reflect a middle position focusing on requiring those features that are relatively inexpensive if part of initial construction, but would require major renovation to retrofit in the future. Items that are either relatively less expensive to retrofit in the future are listed as desirable or optional.

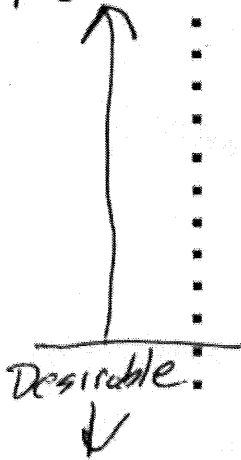
Required

- for multi-family apartment or condo developments, an accessible path between parking, dwelling units, and common areas that meets ADA standards
- for single family detached and attached developments, a no-step access to the front entrance to the community building and all dwellings (~~a no-step entrance is desirable, but not required at other entrances~~)
- 36" wide front door with exterior lighting of the entrance
- all interior doorways at least 32" wide (36" is preferable)
- hallways at least 36" wide, (40-42" is preferable)
- complete living area including master bedroom & bath on first floor (or elevator access if multi-story rental/condo apartments)
- lever handles on interior and exterior doors
- ~~blocking for~~ grab bars in ~~rooms~~ in bathroom ~~with~~ near toilet and shower

o Either on an existing transit route or builder provides a three year subsidy after 75% occupancy is reached for a new route

Required

~~Desirable~~



- low maintenance exterior materials
- covered main entry
- entry door approach with 18"-24" of clearance at side adjacent to handle
- smooth transitions between rooms (vertical threshold of 2" or less)
- slip resistant flooring
- maximize accessible path between main living rooms (preferably 38-42")
- lever handles on kitchen and bathroom sinks, plus shower
- anti scald devices on all plumbing fixtures
- 5' turning radius or T turn in kitchen and first floor bathroom
- parallel and forward approach maneuvering space in front of appliances and plumbing fixtures
- main electrical breaker box located on the first floor
- Switches, doorbells, thermostats, and breaker boxes should be located no more than 48" above the floor; electrical receptacles should be at least 15" above the floor

Custom Options

- security system
- visual ID of visitors
- visual smoke detectors
- ✓ handrails on both sides of exterior and interior stairs
- ✓ task lighting in kitchen, bath and other work spaces
- rocker light switches
- lighting in closets and pantry
- closet rods adjustable from 3' to 5'6"
- ✓ slip resistant flooring in kitchen and bath
- multi-level or adjustable kitchen countertops and work spaces
- pull-out shelves for kitchen base cabinets
- ✓ front mounted controls on stove
- ✓ installation of grab bars in bathroom
- hand held showerhead in shower
- ✓ curbless shower
- ✓ low kitchen overhead cabinets

✓ Denotes required

Testimony on Livable Homes Tax Credit CB 7-2017

My name is Angela Boyter, 3914 MacAlpine Road, Ellicott City 21042. I am a member of the Howard County Commission on Aging, which unanimously approved the proposal to expand the livable homes tax credit, but I am speaking tonight for myself.

I became aware of the need for this expansion when a friend fell down my front steps, prompting me and my husband to install the front step railings we have said we needed for the past 49 years. We were surprised to find that railings are not included in the existing program and, when I looked further, were disappointed at the very limited number of home improvements that are included. I very much like the idea of giving the credit for essentially anything that a builder would be required to provide for a 55+ community. After all, if the county is going to require such features in a senior community, why not help me install them so that I can stay where I have lived for the past 50 years?

However, I recommend that features eligible for the credit be exactly the same as the features listed in requirements for 55+ communities, which is what the Commission on Aging had recommended. The proposed legislation excludes two items: lever door handles and anti-scald devices, using the rationale that these are relatively inexpensive. I priced the most basic interior and exterior lever handles at Home Depot. They are \$27 and about \$50 respectively. I have 14 interior and 5 exterior doors in my home, which is a very typical Ellicott City home. It would cost me \$628 for the materials themselves plus the installation labor.

I also strongly recommend making the legislation more flexible by saying simply that the eligible features shall be the same ones required for 55+ communities rather than listing each individually. This will allow the program to be updated automatically if the 55+ requirements are changed in the future.

My other strong recommendation is that the requirement to get a building permit even for items that would not otherwise require a building permit be omitted. It is added bureaucracy and expense for the citizen and added administration for the county. If the county thinks it is important to assure the work was done properly, then anyone doing that remodeling should be required to have a permit. If not, then a permit should not be required for the tax credit. A receipt for the work done should be sufficient; I do not think the instances of fraud would be high enough to require the permit simply for that reason.

I strongly support this program and thank Ms. Terrasa for initiating it several years ago. I would note, though, that a limit of \$100,000 would cover only 40 \$2500 credits. The current program is not well-known and is for only half, rather than 100% of the expense. Given the attractiveness of the program as proposed and the increasing number of aging citizens in the county, if it is well publicized I can easily imagine a need to increase the funding in future years.