

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. 56.7% of metro Atlanta renters, aged 65+, spend more than 30% of their income on housing¹. 77%² of older adults want to remain in their communities, so senior housing cannot just encompass age-segregated options.

BACKGROUND

Housing needs change over the course of a lifetime.

An ideal home for raising kids may be ill-suited and cost-prohibitive for living independently as we age. It is often necessary to downsize and/or move closer to services such as grocery stores and medical facilities. Entrances with no steps and wider doorways may be needed to accommodate wheelchairs.

49.3%

49.3% of all multi-unit housing buildings in the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) require using steps to access the residence³.

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

1.3 million

The population of older adults (65+) is forecast to more than double by 2040, to 1.3 million⁴.

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

41,000+

Over 41,000 older adults in metro Atlanta need help with activities such as bathing and dressing⁵.

Many older adults cannot afford available housing.

Most housing being built for older adults is geared toward 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-funded nursing home services, shifting the cost to taxpayers.

49.1%

Only 49.1% of metro Atlantans 65+ say they would be able to pay for a \$400 emergency immediately by cash, check, or debit⁶.

¹ Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, S0103

² Source: 2021 American Housing Survey, Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell GA MSA, General Housing Data, All Occupied Units

³ Source: 2021 American Housing Survey, Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell GA MSA, General Housing Data, All Occupied Units

⁴ Source: ARC Series 17 Forecast

⁵ Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, B18106

⁶ Source: 2023 Metro Atlanta Speaks Survey

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SOLUTIONS

Increasing housing options suitable for many 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 can be implemented that encourage the development of a mix of housing types within existing communities, at a variety of price points. Zoning regulations could be written to allow homes to be built in close proximity to 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.
- » **Expand housing voucher programs**, enabling qualifying older adults to find affordable housing options within their communities.

SUCCESS STORY

One example of a successful state program is Vermont's Support and Services at Home (SASH) program which provides personalized care coordination for older adults to live safely at home by using both public funding (Medicaid/Medicare) and private resources.

LOCAL SOLUTIONS

- » **Provide incentives for developers**, 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.

Explore more strategies to address senior housing shortages at the [Metro Atlanta Housing Strategies](#).

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