

Age Friendly Housing Report

December 5, 2022

Affordability

As noted in recent surveys, Los Altos is one of the most expensive cities, both nationally and in the State of California, in which to live. This skews the affordability picture for seniors as home prices and rents are extremely high. While Los Altos does not have public housing per se, rent assistance based on income has been available through the County of Santa Clara. This program, however, is impacted and is currently closed to new applications. Newly approved multi-family developments do require below-market-rate accommodation.

Essential Services

Basic utilities, gas/electric/water are required for all residences and are reliable and available by providers, PG&E and Cal Water Services. For owners or renters with lower income, reduced rates for these utilities are available. While some of our older homes do not have air conditioning, our senior facilities can serve as cooling centers as needed.

Design

Rigorous standards of construction are required by the City of Los Altos for any new construction and/or remodeling. The permitting and inspection processes insure that high standards are maintained.

Modifications / Maintenance

The city maintains and publicizes a list of resources or service providers to help seniors maintain or rehabilitate their homes. (Policy 6.2.2, 2015 City Housing Element)

While the City does not directly fund these upgrades, some grants/loans for this purpose are also available through agencies such as the US Dept of Housing and Urban Development and the Red Cross. Additional assistance is available through volunteer organizations within the County.

Recommendations

1. As noted in the 2015 City of Los Altos Housing Element, “It is likely that many of the extremely low-income households in Los Altos are senior residents who own their homes but who have extremely low fixed incomes.” This category also includes seniors who are renters.

We recommend that the City of Los Altos provide funds to assist low income seniors for home maintenance, repairs and necessary adaptive modifications to their living spaces as they age in place.

2. As new multifamily construction is approved in the City of Los Altos, in addition to providing affordable rents for low income people, “low income seniors” should be included in the categories of eligible tenants.

3. We do not have enough data on our low income seniors, home owners or renters, who are most likely to need services.

To better pro actively serve our most needy seniors with respect to the above recommendations, we need to obtain this kind of information.

Note: The city of Los Altos is currently in the process of updating its Housing Element which may result in additions or revisions to this report.