

Date: March 22, 2023

To: The Honorable Jared Polis
Governor State of Colorado
Colorado State Capitol
200 E. Colfax Ave., Room 136
Denver, Colorado 80203

From: Colorado Center for Aging Board of Directors
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Dear Governor Polis:

The Colorado Center for Aging (CCA) has taken note of the reports regarding a land use/housing/transportation bill your office has been developing over recent months and announced today.

Colorado's housing supply, especially for older adults, has not kept up with the state's demographic shifts. While there is a daunting shortage of supply generally, Colorado was the fastest growing state in the nation for older adults over the past decade and the state's housing supply for older adults wanting to downsize to buy or rent a smaller home has not kept up. The supply shortage has had increasingly detrimental effects on older Coloradans' health and economic conditions and overall quality of life.

As a volunteer organization with an over forty-year history of advocating for and raising the voices of older Coloradans to educate and inform the public, community leaders and elected officials on issues that impact the health and well-being of older Coloradans, **we urge you to explicitly incorporate consideration of the housing needs of older adults and the gaps in state programs and services** as the bill moves forward. Specifically, we urge you to consider these "Principles for Age-Friendly and Equitable Housing and Land Use" that we provide below.

Principles for Age-Friendly Equitable Housing and Land Use

- We strongly support the principle that all upcoming housing and land use proposals promote the well-being of Coloradans of all ages, incomes, and abilities.
- Increase housing choice, affordability, accessibility, and attainability for older adults by providing more community centered residential housing options (rental and ownership) of various sizes and configurations that provide options for them to "age in place", that is, to live in a community setting and participate in the life of the broader community that is age friendly by design.
- More housing should be made available in locations that provide convenient and affordable access to multimodal transportation options, food, health care, services and other community engagement activities.

- Preserve existing affordable housing for older households with lower incomes and those living with disabilities by preventing gentrification and displacement, and particularly by expanding existing property tax reduction programs and creating new programs and services to support community living options.
- Save money for older adults and all Coloradans by keeping them in their homes in the community and out of much more expensive institutional care. Focus the state's limited resources on more cost-effective at-home services and other supports for aging in place.

Specific Options that Should be Incorporated in your Proposal

- Require all new construction and remodeling of residences for older adults 55+ to build in livability and physical access, commonly known as Universal Design.
- Prioritize Transit Oriented Development (TOD) but ensure such developments include senior-friendly housing options located near transit with safe and convenient access. Reduce or eliminate parking requirements for 55+ communities located near transit.
- Expand existing state programs and services for older adults wanting to age in place, including vouchers, home modification, rental assistance, housing counseling, grants such as the PTC Rebate, and community-based programs and services such as those administered by the State Unit on Aging and implemented by the Area Agencies on Aging with their community partners.
- Encourage construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) through a statewide zoning provision allowing them on residential lots and provide state tax credits to help offset construction costs as well as subsequent rental income for older adults.
- Provide state incentives for home share programs where older adults share homes with either another older adult or someone from another generation.
- Incentivize the repurposing of unused public and private buildings for older adult housing, including transitional housing for older homeless, and overnight shelters specifically for older homeless, many more of whom are projected to lose their homes in the coming decade due to rising costs and property taxes that SSI payments cannot support.
- Conduct state and regional older adults housing needs assessments to include consideration of the ongoing needs/gaps that should be addressed for older adult housing, especially for those on fixed incomes and those with health issues needing accessible units and easy access to health care services. This is necessary to prepare for the projections by the state demographer's office that more than half of all the additional housing units in the coming decade will need to be for adults 65+ and that even as 81% of Coloradans 65+ currently own their homes, many will consider downsizing over the coming decade to live in a more accessible residence, own a smaller home or live in a rental property.
- Include older adults in decision making processes about housing and land use planning statewide, regionally, and locally as they often are the most impacted by those decisions.

We thank you for taking bold leadership on this issue of great importance to all Coloradans, especially older adults across the state who face housing challenges, and we look forward to participating in future dialogues about housing and land use this legislative session and beyond.

Respectfully,

The Colorado Center for Aging Board of Directors

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