



Senior Rental Housing Pilot Design Standards

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Chapter 1 – Overview

1.01 Background

The number of Minnesotans age 62 and older is expected to nearly double in the next 25 years. In an effort to enhance affordable housing opportunities for seniors, Minnesota Housing's 2016 Affordable Housing Plan outlines an action to create a pilot to fund senior rental developments (Senior Housing Pilot), which may become a replicable model. The Senior Rental Housing Pilot may involve either new construction or conversion of an existing building, which provides residential housing for seniors that is decent, safe and sanitary. Housing must be designed to promote aging-in-place and have a services component. Refer to the [Senior Rental Housing Pilot](#) webpage and the [2016 Consolidated RFP web page](#) for more information regarding the services component, targeted household, market need and capacity.

Since a senior person's environment plays an increasingly critical role in determining his/her ability to remain independent and carry out daily activities, Minnesota Housing developed Senior Rental Housing Pilot Design Standards. These standards are only applicable to the Senior Rental Housing Pilot project(s) and are in addition to other applicable design and construction requirements found in Minnesota Housing's Rental Housing Design/Construction Standards (RHD/CS).

Other senior housing projects not in the Senior Rental Housing Pilot program are not required to meet these standards.

1.02 Purpose

The purpose of these standards is to ensure the design of any development funded via the Senior Housing Pilot provides an environment that is suitable for senior residents, serves residents' needs, enables residents to remain in their home as long as possible (aka age-in-place) and provide specialized services, which may involve specialized programing or licensing.

Chapter 2 – Definitions

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|------------------------------------|---|
| Accessible Route | A continuous, unobstructed path that complies with the Minnesota Accessibility Code (current version). |
| Age(ing)-in-place | Aging-in-place is a term used to describe a person living in the residence of their choice as they age. This may involve physical modifications to dwelling units and common space, as well as increased services (or other support) over time as their needs change. |
| Senior Rental Housing Pilot | A Minnesota Housing pilot initiative to fund with deferred-loan resources up to one senior rental development with a services component. |
| Type A Accessible Unit | Is a dwelling unit with accessibility features per Section 1003 of the Minnesota Accessibility Code (current version) |

Chapter 3 – Requirements

The following design features **are required** and must be incorporated (unless specifically noted as encouraged) into the design of any senior rental housing development funded by [Minnesota Housing's Senior Rental Housing Pilot](#).

3.01 Site Design

- A. Select sites that offer safe walkability to nearby services and resources.
- B. Provide safe outdoor areas that are on an accessible route. They should be separate from adjacent properties or roads. Space must be provided for both active and passive activities.
- C. Provide outdoor walking and sitting areas. Two person benches with a backrest are encouraged. Covered seating under a front porch or as part of a covered drop off area is encouraged.
- D. Parking spaces for residents must be located close to the entrance of the building. Additional accessible parking (beyond code) or parking that can easily be made accessible is encouraged.

3.02 Building Design

- A. Provide a covered drop-off at the main entrance large enough to completely shelter at least one standard, mid-size automobile.
- B. A lobby and waiting area for 15 percent of the residents must be located near the main entrance, elevator(s) and main drop-off/pickup area. Chairs or benches with backrest must be furnished for people waiting for rides and/or observing passers-by.
- C. Provide a coat storage area or room. It must be near or within the lobby area or community room. Size the coat storage based upon 1:1 ratio of the community room occupancy.
- D. Provide an accessible drinking fountain near the main community space(s) or entrance lobby. Bottled water cooler with cups is an acceptable substitution.
- E. Provide sufficient office space for the tenant services program coordinator and providers.
- F. All corridors must be sufficiently wide with a minimum of 6 feet required to facilitate circulation of both ambulatory and wheelchair bound residents. Eight foot wide corridors encouraged.
- G. Provide a handrail on one side of all common area corridors. Provide a handrail on both sides of all stairways and ramps.

3.03 Building Amenity Spaces

- A. Provide a community room, or similar multipurpose or activity room, that can seat all of the residents at one time.
- B. Provide a large community kitchen, serving kitchen, or commercial kitchen with dining facility. This may be incorporated into the community room if adequate space is provided.
- C. Provide a community laundry room with some integral seating, adjacent seating, or near a lounge area. Seating must have backrests. Exception: community laundry room not required if all dwelling units have in-unit washer and dryer.
- D. The following spaces are encouraged and deemed appropriate:
 - 1. Nurse area and clinic room with a secure place for medicine storage
 - 2. Salon area
 - 3. Sunroom
 - 4. Therapy area
 - 5. Craft or fitness area that can be used as multipurpose
 - 6. Conference room(s) for smaller group meetings.
 - 7. Seating alcoves throughout the building and at each level.
- E. Provide access to an outdoor activity area by way of an accessible route with side hinged, swinging, 36 inch minimum width door.
- F. Provide separate, adequate, public/common area use toilet rooms for each sex.
- G. Provide a minimum of one tub (spa) room. If three stories or more, provide at least one tub room on each alternating floor. Side-access type tubs encouraged at the tub room(s). Exception: facilities limited to independent living are not required to include a tub room.
- H. Provide garbage and recycling collection area/ room at each level.
- I. Provide a janitor's closet at each level.

3.04 Dwelling Units

- A. Unit entrance:
 - 1. Must be secured and lockable.
 - 2. Must be easily identifiable. Recessed is preferred.
 - 3. Zero step entrance. Avoid floor threshold at unit entrance. Provide low-profile threshold, if required.
 - 4. Provide tactile apartment numbers in bold, contrasting colors.

5. Provide door knocker with viewer and name plate mounted at 5 feet above finished floor and a secondary viewer for a person in a wheelchair.
- B. Main living room or living area window sill height must not exceed 36 inches, lower sill heights are encouraged,
 - C. Provide designated dining area.
 - D. Design features must promote age-in-place living.
 - E. Room size(s) must provide adequate maneuvering space for people using walkers or wheelchairs.
 - F. Unit kitchens must include the following minimum features:
 1. Base cabinets with pull out shelves or large drawers in lieu of fixed shelves. Include Lazy-Susans at inside corners.
 2. Easy to grasp hardware (C-pulls instead of knobs) at all cabinetry.
 3. Upper cabinets or upper shelves must be provided with task lighting under the cabinets.
 4. Minimum 24 inch wide range with front controls.
 5. Side-by-side (or top-bottom type) refrigerator/freezer. Minimum combined 7 cubic feet in size.
 6. At least a single bowl sink with at least 12 inches of counter on each side. Double bowl sink encouraged.
 7. Although not required, a microwave or space for a microwave is encouraged. Space for a microwave may be on the kitchen counter or self-contained microwave cart. Avoid a combination microwave and range hood over the range.
 8. At a minimum a recirculating range hood must be included. Direct-vent range exhaust is encouraged.
 9. Refrigerator and range shall not be adjacent to each other. There must be a minimum of 12" counter space between all kitchen appliances. At least one side of the refrigerator and the range must have at least 12" of adjacent counter space (latch/handle side of refrigerator).
 - G. Unit bathrooms must include the following features:
 1. Accessible from a hallway. Access cannot be through an intervening room (e.g., bedroom, walk-in closet or kitchen). Close proximity to bedroom is encouraged.
 2. Five foot clear turning diameter. Vanity/ Lavatory may encroach within this clear diameter if open below.
 3. Showers or tub with:
 - a. Low threshold (at shower).

- b. Hand-held, adjustable showerhead with 24 inch mounting bar and 72 inch flexible hose or similar design.
 - c. Portable (or attached flip-up) shower seat in 36 inch by 36 inch showers. For larger shower stalls, provide a fixed seat.
 - 4. Grab bars at water closet and shower/ tub locations must meet Type A Accessible unit guidelines. (in lieu of grab bar installation, it is acceptable to only install blocking at time of construction to allow future grab bar installation)
 - 5. Wall mounted robe hook set at 54 inch maximum height.
 - 6. Vanity/ Lavatory equipped with lever faucet and faucet mixer and with anti-scald valve.
 - 7. Vanity with counter space is preferred and encouraged rather than wall hung wall hung lavatory.
 - 8. Non-slip flooring.
- H. Emergency call system must be available to residents to summon emergency personnel in the event of an accident or illness.

3.05 Elevators

- A. The minimum capacity for elevator service must be:
 - 1. Buildings 2-7 stories with 16 or less dwelling units per floor; provide one elevator.
 - 2. Buildings 2-7 stories with more than 16 dwelling units per floor; provide two elevators.
 - 3. Buildings more than 7 stories high; provide two elevators.
- B. Handrails must be provided around the inside of the elevator.
- C. Doors should open and close slowly, and the reopening sensor should respond quickly.
- D. Areas next to the elevator must be well-marked, indicating the floor and directions to the units.
- E. Regardless of number of stories, if an elevator(s) is provided, at least one must be large enough to accommodate a 24 inch by 84 inch ambulance stretcher.
- F. Providing seating at or near elevator lobbies at each level is encouraged.

3.06 Building Materials and Components

- A. Provide carpeting without padding in the corridors and community spaces.
- B. Provide durable base materials in all corridors and common spaces.

- C. Provide corner guards at major circulation spaces. Required at common corridors, hallways, etc. Optional within dwelling units.
- D. Provide 36 inch wide doors and lever handles throughout, including common area doors and all dwelling unit doors. This excludes doors not typically used by residents such as mechanical rooms, janitorial or supply rooms, etc. Include offset hinges at any door openings with narrow approaches or other similar challenges.
- E. Minimum lighting requirements:
 - 1. Increased general and task lighting.
 - 2. Install light switches at 42 inches.
 - 3. Provide luminous switches in bedrooms, baths and hallways.