

ElderNet

HOUSING INFORMATION SERVICE

Apartments for Older People

If maintaining your present home is a burden, or if you have difficulty climbing stairs, moving to an apartment or condominium may be a good choice.

When considering an apartment, decide whether you prefer to live with people of all ages, or primarily with older people. If you want to live in a mixed-age building, check newspaper classified advertisements, or check with real estate agents.

If you prefer to live primarily with older people, you may find an apartment building that has attracted many older tenants, even though it's not designed for older people. These buildings are found mainly by word of mouth. Ask friends or family if they know of any buildings like this.

Some apartment complexes are designed and marketed for older people. The buildings are designed to be accessible and safe, and often provide social and recreational programs. The rents in some of these are directly subsidized by the government.

Residents may have to fit income and age specifications. In these apartments, rent is limited to 30 percent of a resident's monthly income and covers utility costs. To find out about rent-subsidized housing in your community, check with your city or county housing authority.

There are also privately owned apartment buildings constructed primarily for older tenants. They may offer services including group meals. Some have staff on hand to help with housekeeping and other personal support services.

Home support services

If you find a regular apartment appealing but need help with its upkeep, consider using home support services. Information on housing for the elderly and in-home services is available from your county or tribal aging office (see "Aging" under county or tribal government in your telephone directory). Services include modifications to make the apartment more accessible, housekeeping, telephone reassurance and home health care.

Inexpensive home-delivered meal programs can help ease housekeeping by bringing a hot meal a day right to your door. Group lunches at local senior centers or other gathering places are another meal option.

For people at risk of entering a nursing home, the Community Options Program may be able to help arrange these services and, depending on your income, pay for the service as well. Contact your county or tribal aging office for information.

What you need to know

Some questions to ask when searching for an apartment:

- How many stairs will you have to climb to get to your apartment? How many within the apartment?
- How easy is it to move around the apartment if you need a wheelchair or walker?
- Is the building security-locked?
- Do you feel safe in the neighborhood?
- Is it near stores or doctors' offices you will use often?
- Is it near public transportation or easily reached by other transportation services?
- Will furniture you already own fit in the apartment?
- Does the building have amenities you want, such as cable TV access or air conditioning?
- If you own a car, will parking be accessible to you? Is there an extra charge for parking?
- How much is the rent? When was the last rent increase?
- What utilities are included in the rent? What is the average monthly bill for utilities not included?
- What are the procedures for security deposits and moving out?

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- What type of lease does the landlord offer? For example, is it month-to-month or renewed yearly? Are there restrictions on terminating the lease?
- Are there restrictions in the lease that would prevent you from staying if you became disabled? From making physical adaptations to the apartment?
- If you're considering a building that provides support services, what services will be provided? What services are included in the rent? How much would extra services cost?
- If you need support services that are not provided, how easy will it be to get them in the building? Will the property owner or manager allow them?
- Does a resident manager live in the building? What is the manager's role?
- Are there opportunities to meet other residents? Is there a planned activity program?

Other ElderNet publications

- *Community Based Residential Facilities for Older People*
- *Continuing Care Retirement Communities*
- *Housing Alternatives for Older People*
- *Nursing Homes*

ElderNet data base

An ElderNet data base lists names, addresses and phone numbers of apartments for older adults, number of units, whether subsidies are available, and if a manager lives on site.

Contact your county extension office for ElderNet information (listed under county government in your telephone directory). Call ahead to be sure someone will be available to help you.

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