



Fairbanks North Star Borough

DEPARTMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY
Division of Boards and Commissions

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December 17, 2021

Mayor Bryce Ward
Juanita Helms Administration Center
907 Terminal St.
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Subject: Recommendation to Modify the FNSB Community Research Quarterly Rental Housing Survey

Dear Mayor Ward,

Affordable and accessible housing is an ongoing senior concern, according to the [FNSB Senior Needs Assessment](#) (pp 43-46), for people who are capable of living on their own but whose current housing no longer works for them due to costly maintenance while living on a fixed income and/or deemed unsafe for an older person with mobility limitations. According to the FNSB Senior Needs Assessment, an additional 149 senior accessible units are needed by 2025 in order to keep pace with current utilization trends.

During our October 21, 2021 meeting, the Senior Citizens Advisory Commission heard a presentation from the Senior Community Health Improvement Project (CHIP) workgroup, sponsored by Foundation Health Partners, regarding senior needs identified in the Borough. One area of concern discussed is the need for more affordable independent living rental housing options for seniors who are able to live on their own but require accessible housing accommodations in order to continue living safely at home. Efforts to develop new housing projects have been unsuccessful due to costs however, improving access to state grants would help to offset some of the capital and operating costs of projects designed to be affordable senior housing. Applying for grants to build new affordable and accessible senior housing requires data that demonstrates the need. While the FNSB completes rental unit vacancy surveys on a quarterly basis, the survey used does not ask the landlord if their vacant unit is accessible and could accommodate someone with disabilities. This data would be valuable to perspective developers, in addition to nonprofit organizations applying for grants, as it would provide a more accurate assessment of vacant rental housing available for an older person and others with mobility impairments that could be used to document the need for accessible rental housing in our community.



Because of changing Borough demographics, and the fact that many seniors are choosing to remain in Fairbanks during their retirement years, the need for ADA or universal design housing has and will continue to increase. Anecdotally, the rental complexes that have ADA-style housing appropriate for seniors have long waiting lists. There is a lack of good information regarding what portion of FNSB's rental housing stock is suitable for seniors and others with mobility limitations. For developers considering whether to pursue projects in Fairbanks, or for social service agencies considering applying for grants to help offset the costs of project development, it would be helpful to have data regarding (1) what portion of FNSB's stock is ADA appropriate and of that stock, (2) what are the average vacancy rates. We recommend that the Community Research Quarterly's rental survey be modified to ask these two questions.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please let me know if you would like further information.

Sincerely,

Denise Daniello

Denise Daniello (Dec 17, 2021 09:01 AKST)

Denise Daniello
Senior Citizens Advisory Commission Chairperson