

Healthy Aging and Housing

January 2023

Partnering with older adults

- **Housing is often developed *for* older adults rather than *with* them.**
 - **Nothing about us without us.**
 - **Are elders' opinions and voices included?**
-

Factors that impact housing

- Finances
- Maintenance
 - Housekeeping, repairs, shoveling, gutters
 - Communication of resources
- Mobility and accessibility
 - Non-medical transportation
 - Distance to bus stops
 - Buses aren't frequent enough
 - "Public transportation is great, but only when it's safe."

Homelessness

People who are unhoused in Ramsey County

2023

| Received housing services through Ramsey County | | | | |
|---|------|-------|---------------------|----------------|
| Total | 3922 | | | |
| 55+ | 283 | 7.20% | 198 - single adults | 43 adults only |
| 65+ | 87 | 3.85% | | |

Housing's impacts

Housing is a social determinant of health

- Mental health, including control over their lives
Familiar spaces, friends, stores, belongings.
 - Feeling useful
 - Engagement – social and civic
 - Disconnection and loneliness
 - Feeling useless
 - Healthy food - access to groceries
 - Housekeeping, personal care
-

Ramsey County

Housing Stability Department

Created in 2021 to reduce barriers, eliminate racial disparities and maximize key housing functions that create pathways to long-term, affordable housing.

Healthy Aging Coordinator [Ramseycounty.us/healthyaging](https://www.ramseycounty.us/healthyaging)

[Preventing and Ending Homelessness](#)

[Heading Home Ramsey](#)

[Community and Economic Development](#)

Heading Home Ramsey

Heading Home Ramsey is Ramsey County's regional [Continuum of Care](#) program for those experiencing homelessness in our community:

- Coordinate and facilitate access to services and benefits as people move through the shelter process to permanent housing.
- Support and guide the development of programming, shelter and housing in Ramsey County.
- Address specific needs of sub-populations experiencing homeless - such as veterans, victims of domestic violence and the mentally ill.

Challenge: Housing Assistance

- Eligibility for state Rapid Rehousing services is based on “long-term homelessness”.
 - Older adults often don’t fall into that category.
 - Change the prioritization based on “high need” and add 65+ as one criterion.
 - Today, systems are designed to disqualify people rather than to qualify them.
-

Future housing needs in Ramsey County

- Metropolitan Council suggests that Ramsey County will need more than 3,800 additional affordable units in by 2040.
 - This doesn't include people who are cost burdened.
 - When including people who are cost burdened, the need goes up to about 15,000 – 20,000.
-

Aging in Community

Aging in community vs. aging in place

The vast majority of older adults want to live in their homes for as long as possible. Nearly 90 percent of adults over 65 want to remain in their current homes as they grow older. (AARP)

Aging at Home

To prevent homelessness among older adults, there's an increasing need for:

Meal delivery

Safe transportation and infrastructure

In-home services, like the Block Nurse/Living at Home networks.

Living at Home / Block Nurse Programs

- Options to find help and support, offerings that make it easier to maintain life at home, and ways to stay involved in community life.
- Support for family and friend caregivers, household chores, and intergenerational activities.
- Identify risk factors / concerns
- Information about housing, food resources, etc.
- Social connection and companionship visits
- Activities and services: exercise, health education, home safety checks, blood pressure checks.
- Transportation by volunteer drivers to grocery shopping, medical appointments, etc.

Design

Common features don't take height and mobility into account.

- Are things like cabinets and the shower rod low enough to reach without using a stool or ladder?
- Placement of appliances – is the microwave on a counter or above the stove?
- Are the built in features easy to navigate with a walker or wheelchair?
- Older people may need elevator doors to stay open longer.
- How affordable is it ADA compliant housing to build?
- ADA is the *minimum*

Responding to concerns

Information is de-identified then passed along to

- The developer
 - Minnesota Housing
 - The city the housing is in to check for compliance issues
-
- The housing department is instituting a new step. When the county decides to provide funds to developments, developers will be asked to consider feedback provided and to ask elders for their input.
-

Contact

Julia Wolfe, M.Ed., M.S

Healthy Aging Initiative

Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health

Julia.wolfe@ramseycounty.us

(651) 443-0984

She, her

www.RamseyCounty.us/HealthyAging