

## Messaging Guide: SENIORS

### *How to use this messaging guide*

*This messaging guide can be used to talk about the importance of housing issues within Prince George's County. It summarizes key points about why housing matters and unique housing needs or preferences among key populations. At the end of this guide, there are three discussion questions to jumpstart conversation and help collect additional feedback on the ideas presented in it.*

*Your thoughts can be shared directly with Prince George's County Department of Housing and Community Development staff via email:*

[chs@co.pg.md.us](mailto:chs@co.pg.md.us).

*Your input will shape the ideas in the County's Comprehensive Housing Strategy, which will outline an actionable set of solutions to help guide future housing investments in Prince George's County.*

**Seniors aged 65 years or older are becoming a much larger share of the total U.S. population.** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, residents aged 65 years or older grew from 35.0 million in 2000 to 49.2 million in 2016, accounting for a larger share of the United States' total population.<sup>i</sup> The Joint Center for Housing Studies estimates that by 2035, more than 31 million senior households will have at least one person with a disability affecting their mobility and ability to care for themselves, or complete basic household activities.<sup>ii</sup>



**This national trend is also apparent in local population growth trends, where seniors increased in Prince George's County since 2000.** While the County's population grew by 3 percent since 2000, its senior population increased by 11 percent. Today, more than 61,000 seniors call Prince George's County home.

**These trends create unique challenges for seniors,** including accessibility and affordability of their home and access to health services (through access to transportation or through on-site services), to name a few.

**Within Prince George's County, seniors would like to see a range of housing choices as they continue to age.** For instance, some want to stay in their home; some want to stay in their community (but in a smaller or different living situation); and some want to move altogether.

**Many seniors in Prince George's County would like to stay in their current homes as they age (or "age in place").** They recognize that their current homes will need modifications to live there long-term, especially as their mobility becomes more limited. While many seniors anticipate they will need these modifications, some older residents are not sure they can afford them. Some units are already being marketed as accessible, but local seniors agree that the County can do more to ensure that seniors (or other persons with disabilities) can live comfortably in these units.

**Some seniors in the County are interested in "downsizing" or moving to senior communities.** Prince George's County can support these residents by encouraging development of smaller units (like one-bedrooms) and senior housing developments, which can serve seniors living on fixed incomes.

**The location of these units is important, too: Even if many seniors want or need to move out of their home, they often want to remain close to their loved ones and community institutions, like community centers and houses of worship.** And they often need accessible healthcare services and transportation. The cost and availability of these healthcare services are also important issues to seniors. For many older County residents, access to healthcare services, either in their homes or in a facility, is one of the greatest concerns as they age.

**Existing seniors in Prince George's County, particularly homeowners, are already struggling with their current housing costs.** Seventeen (17%) of seniors experience housing insecurity, meaning they are both low-income and paying more than half of their income on housing costs. High taxes are also a concern among seniors. Many see taxes as an impediment to the County's growth and its ability to attract new residents.

**The County wants to ensure it can meet the wide-ranging needs and desires of its growing senior population.** A few actions the County can take to assist seniors are:

- Support accessibility and other aging-in-place modifications.
- Encourage development of senior housing, especially in areas with public transit or health services, or consider integration of health services with housing developments.
- Increase participation of seniors in local and state tax relief program

## Topics for discussion



- *What issues or concerns would you add?*
- *What other solutions would you suggest?*
- *What is the most important thing the County can do to address current housing needs or attract new residents?*

### **Don't forget to share your thoughts!**

*Your thoughts and input can be shared with Prince George's County Department of Housing and Community Development staff via this email: [chs@co.pg.md.us](mailto:chs@co.pg.md.us).*

<sup>i</sup> [www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2017/cb17-100.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2017/cb17-100.html)

<sup>ii</sup> [www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-112017.html](http://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-112017.html)