

Lifelong Housing: Homes for All Ages Panel - February 16, 2017

A public panel on *Lifelong Housing: Homes for All Ages* was held by the League of Women Voters on February 16, 2017. Co-sponsored by Age Friendly Fayetteville, the City of Fayetteville and AARP Arkansas, the program drew attention to the pressing need for additional housing to support elders who wish to remain in their homes as they age and delay or avoid altogether moving to nursing care. Over eighty-five people participated, making this one of the best attended League events ever.

Lifelong housing modifications provide more choice to seniors to remain fully participating members of their community, where they contribute valuable skills, experience and connections to life-long personal networks. It also combats senior isolation and depression, which are high risk factors for our seniors. Appropriate home modifications reduce falls and other injuries, and together with helping seniors stay out of nursing care they save the state and federal government millions of dollars in preventable health care costs.

Jennifer Webb, UA faculty member in interior design and also a gerontologist, presented demographic trends in aging at the national, state and local levels. Alishia Ferguson and Jean Henry, UA faculty members leading the Age Friendly Fayetteville initiative (see <https://agefriendlyfayetteville.uark.edu>), shared results from a recent survey they conducted of Fayetteville residents exploring their preferences for housing as they age and other amenities they would like to see to make Fayetteville more age friendly.

Lou Tobian of AARP AR introduced features of a fully equipped age-friendly bathroom. A model of a complete bathroom will be available for touring at the upcoming Home Show March 3-5, 2017 at the Washington County Fairgrounds (<http://www.nwahomeshow.com/>).

Connie Saldana of the Rogue Valley, Oregon, Council of Governments provided the keynote, sharing information on the first in the nation Lifelong Housing Certification program. AARP Arkansas provided funding to bring Ms. Saldana to Fayetteville.

According to their website (http://rvcog.org/mn.asp?pg=SDS_Lifelong_Housing):

The Rogue Valley Council of Government's Lifelong Housing Certification Project is a voluntary certification process for evaluating the accessibility and/or adaptability of homes. Developed in partnership with AARP Oregon, the project is designed to help meet the growing market demand for accessible housing in our region and to enable older adults and people with disabilities to age in place safely and independently.

The program encompasses three levels of certification:

Level 1) *Visitable* - The home includes basic accessibility and/or adaptability of architectural features on the ground floor and is “visitable” for guests with disabilities. It has a wheelchair-accessible entrance, plus entertainment area, hall and a bathroom;

Level 2) *Fully Accessible* -

The ground floor of the home is fully accessible, including all Level 1 features plus an accessible bedroom and kitchen, parking area and entrance. Examples of additional features include raised toilet and appliances; grab bars in bathroom, etc.

Level 3) *Enhanced Accessibility* -

The home includes Levels 1 & 2 features and has been customized for specific accessibility needs (for example, a ceiling track for transfer or electronic care monitoring

To have your home certified...

1. The homeowner contacts Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) for a list of independent Lifelong Housing Certification Inspectors.
2. The homeowner pays the inspector for evaluation, plus \$35 certification fee.
3. After the evaluation, the inspector provides the completed checklist and certification fee to RVCOG.
4. RVCOG issues a certificate to the homeowner and adds the home to its database.
5. The homeowner provides a copy of the certificate and checklist to potential buyers.

Goals of Project:

- To encourage the marketplace to make lifelong livability a community preference.
- To educate the entire community, but especially builders, realtors, homeowners, landlords and decision-makers, about the social and economic value of lifelong livability.
- To clearly define what lifelong livability is.

You can obtain the complete Rogue Valley Lifelong Housing checklist from their website (above).

All PowerPoints from the presentations will be available on the League website (<http://www.lwvarwc.org/>) in the near future.

Kyle Kellams, producer of Ozarks at Large on KUAF public radio, recorded two segments related to Lifelong Housing. The first segment, aired on 2/15/17, features Beth Barham describing how the panel event came about and the purpose of addressing Lifelong Housing in Fayetteville (<http://kuaf.com/post/housing-aging-and-fayetteville>). On 2/21/17, an interview with Connie Saldana from Rogue Valley addresses the history and goals of their certification program: <http://kuaf.com/post/lifelong-housing-proposed>.

**Lifelong Housing: Homes for All Ages
Working Group Kick-Off Meeting
February 17, 2017**

The League and other partners would like to see a Lifelong Housing certification program started in Fayetteville, and to disseminate the idea to other cities and rural areas in Northwest Arkansas.

To get this rolling, a Working Group Kick-Off meeting was held on the morning following the panel. League and Age Friendly Fayetteville members reached out to a large number of potential communities of interest for this group, including City staff, builders, design / architect professionals, realtors, non-profits as well as community members whose work and / or expertise touches on elder issues, green building experts, and community development representatives. The group is open to anyone interested in putting an oar in the water to move a certification program forward for Fayetteville.

Nineteen persons attended the Kick-Off meeting, with good representation across the communities who should be represented in the discussion. The group shared their ideas on how to move the project forward, and brainstormed about who should be added to the Working Group.

Beth Barham (League) and Alishia Ferguson (Age Friendly Fayetteville) agreed to develop “talking points” for outreach to potential Working Group members for the next meeting. The certification check list developed by Rogue Valley will be the starting point for a similar program in Fayetteville. The group saw no need to make changes to that at this point. The talking points and Rogue Valley check list will be added to the League website.

Beth, Yolanda Fields (City of Fayetteville) and Connie Saldana (Rogue Valley) will develop a plan of work for a certification program that will include the tasks required and a budget for staffing a program in Fayetteville. The next meeting is anticipated in April (date and location to be announced). At the second meeting, the Working Group will discuss the plan of work and reach a consensus on whether group members recommend housing the certification program for Fayetteville in City offices or under another organization in the community.

Anyone wishing to participate in the Working Group is encouraged to contact Beth Barham at beth.barham5@gmail.com to add your name to the list of participants. We would welcome your input!