

Advocating for the Creation and Preservation of Senior Housing that Promotes Health and Well-being

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Senior Housing Preservation - Detroit

Senior Housing Preservation – Detroit (SHP-D) is a coalition of housing advocates, non-profit developers, educators, and religious and political leaders who are dedicated to the preservation of subsidized low-income senior housing in Detroit.

SHP-D members not only advocate for the preservation of existing low-income senior housing, but for the creation of more deeply affordable housing to address the growing senior population.

A Coalition Forms

- In 2013, the Griswold Apartments in Downtown Detroit transitioned to The Alfred, displacing over 100 seniors from their homes.
- Responding to the needs of these tenants, housing advocates, non-profit developers, educators, and religious leaders came together to coordinate their efforts to support these seniors.
- SHP-D was created to advocate on behalf of seniors to preserve existing low-income apartments, educate community leaders on displacement, and promote the inclusion of low-income seniors in the vision for a greater Detroit.

Filling a Void

- In Detroit, there are nearly 6500 extremely low-income, senior congregate housing units.
- Prior to 2014, there was no housing advocacy group that existed in the city for this population.
- Senior housing displacement is increasingly becoming a concern in Detroit.
- Displacement from longtime homes affects tenants' mental, physical, and spiritual well-being, according to research by Wayne State University, School of Social Work.
- With a growing senior population and need for better housing, SHP-D advocates for more extremely low-income housing that can address the physical and mental health needs of this vulnerable population.

Committee Structure

- Advocacy Committee
- Preservation Committee
- Communications Committee
- Research Committee

Advocacy Committee

- The heart of the SHP-D coalition is advocacy.
- This committee works to establish the coalition's advocacy agenda by reviewing local, state, and national policy development that is relevant to low-income senior housing.
- Additionally, establishes meetings with elected officials and government staff to articulate the coalition's perspectives and to shape policy.
- Maintains a linkage to the Communications Committee through the development of policy papers and community outreach on policy issues.

Preservation Committee

- Monitors senior housing facilities that are at risk for transition.
- Explores options for supporting adaptive reuse of other buildings for low-income senior housing, and opportunities to influence policy development.
- Provides updated lists of senior housing at risk in the Midtown and Downtown areas of the city.

Communication Committee

- Develops and delivers communication content through a variety of channels.
- Supports the educational and promotional objectives of the coalition.
- Develops printed pieces, as well as visual and social media.

Research Committee

- The dilemma of low-income senior housing in Detroit presents an opportunity for academic researchers.
- Examines various aspects of forced dislocation and other relevant topics.
- Also, seeks opportunities to translate published knowledge through policy analyses and academic journals.

Challenges for Renters in Detroit

- Currently, there are no rent control policies in place.
- Landlords are not required to provide annual lease agreements to tenants.
- There is no First Right to Refusal.
- There is no Right-to-Counsel.
- The only real protections for tenants are under the Michigan Fair Housing Laws.

Challenges with Preservation & Development of Senior Housing

- Developers need more project-based Section 8 vouchers to create low-income housing
- High cost to develop properties
 - building materials
 - structural age
 - rising real-estate prices (seller's market)

Case Studies in Renovating Affordable Senior Communities During a Pandemic

- March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic started the conversation about the need to protect seniors in congregate housing.
- Within monthly meetings, SHP-D members discovered the need to address COVID-19 issues within senior properties and began initiating conversations on how to protect seniors during a pandemic, and how to put these protections into practice, especially during renovations.
- In collaboration with the City of Detroit's Housing and Revitalization Department, SHP-D's non-profit developer members highlighted the importance of establishing best practices for developers to implement when renovating senior properties. These practices were presented in a Preservation Forum hosted by SHP-D and in the 2021 Building Michigan Communities Conference (BMCC).

SHP-D Member Organizations

AARP

Authority Health

CSI Support & Development Services

Detroit Area Agency on Aging

Develop Detroit

Enterprise Community Partners

Ethos Development

Hannan Center

LISC Detroit

National Church Residences

Presbyterian Villages of Michigan

Samaritas

Office of Senator Stephanie Chang, District 1

United Community Housing Coalition

Volunteers of America

Wayne State University School of Social Work

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