

Carroll County, MD – Zoning and Site Development Codes Revisions

Task 1 – Assessment of Existing Documents and Best Practices: Age-Restricted Housing

April 28, 2026

Executive Summary

Michael Baker International assisted the Carroll County Department of Planning and Land Management with an assessment of existing zoning and site development regulations related to age-restricted housing. This task, Task 1, focused on evaluating how the County’s current regulatory framework addresses Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages and how those regulations align with adopted planning documents and contemporary best practices.

The assessment included a review of the Carroll County Master Plan (2014, amended 2019), the Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan (2018), and the Finksburg Corridor Plan (2013), each of which identifies an aging population and recognizes the importance of providing housing options that allow residents to age in place. These plans support age-restricted housing in appropriate locations, particularly near services, commercial areas, and infrastructure, and emphasize walkability, community amenities, and compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods. The plan review found no inconsistencies between adopted plans and existing regulations; however, it identified opportunities to strengthen the County’s codes to more clearly implement stated plan goals.

A detailed evaluation of the Zoning Code and Development and Subdivision of Land Code found that while age-restricted housing is permitted in several zoning districts, the current regulatory framework relies largely on generalized residential standards and discretionary review. There are limited use-specific provisions addressing site layout, internal pedestrian connectivity, community amenities, building scale and massing transitions, accessibility, or aging-in-place features. As a result, recent and legacy age-restricted developments have often been shaped through project-specific approvals rather than predictable, clearly defined standards, leading to uneven development outcomes and perceptions of incompatibility in some cases. Field observations of existing developments reinforced these findings.

Best practices for age-restricted housing were also identified. This research highlights a clear shift toward active-adult communities that support social engagement, physical activity, universal design, and proximity to daily needs. Best practice examples demonstrate the value of establishing flexible but predictable density standards, defined amenity expectations, and context-sensitive design requirements.

Task 1 establishes a clear baseline for understanding the regulatory landscape and planning policy recommendations around age-restricted housing. While the existing regulatory structure generally supports these uses, there is an opportunity to create more prescriptive regulations to

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better align development outcomes with the needs and recommendations identified in the plans. Identified issues/concerns include:

- **Scale and Compatibility:** Recent projects (e.g., Snowden’s Creek Retirement Home) are perceived as out-of-scale relative to surrounding neighborhoods—too tall, too large, or visually incompatible.
- **Lack of Community Amenities:** Developers receive significant density bonuses, yet provide minimal amenities, resulting in dense clusters of units without corresponding community benefits.
- **Universal Design / Aging in Place:** County Code Chapters 155 (Development and Subdivision of Land) and 158 (Zoning) do not require universal design or age-responsive features. Developers often claim to include them, but there is no standard or enforcement mechanism.
- **Mismatch Between Zoning and Expectations:** In projects like Nells Acres Retirement Village, areas originally envisioned for low-density single-family homes instead saw high densities (e.g., 150+ townhomes vs. 20 as-of-right) due to the bonus structure permitted under the County Zoning Code.
- **Emergency Access.** Project site design and layout must consider requirements affecting emergency access and operations. For example, both Snowden’s Creek and Nell’s Acres buildings pose significant firefighting operation challenges, and both have one point of ingress/egress.

The findings of this assessment will inform the direction and recommended code amendments to be further refined in Task 2 and translated into draft code language in Task 3.

Introduction

Michael Baker International, Inc. (Michael Baker) assisted the Carroll County Planning and Land Management Department with an independent evaluation of the County’s Development and Subdivision of Land Code and Zoning Code, codified under County Code Chapters 155 and 158. This effort included recommending and advancing targeted code amendments to align County regulations with the Carroll County Master Plan (2014, amended 2019), the Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan (2018), and the Finksburg Corridor Plan (2013).

Task 1 of the project involved a review of applicable County Code regulations related to zoning, site development standards, design guidelines, and other associated requirements for selected land use classifications. This review of existing County regulations and best practices focused specifically on age-restricted housing (55+), including Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages, as defined in the County’s Zoning Code (Chapter 158 of the County Code), as follows:

- **RETIREMENT HOME.** A building designed to meet the needs of, and exclusively for, the residences of senior citizens or couples where at least one occupant is a senior citizen.
- **RETIREMENT VILLAGE.** A development consisting of single-family, two-family, and/or townhouse dwellings designed to meet the needs of, and exclusively for, the residences of senior citizens or couples where at least one occupant is a senior citizen.

This assessment of age-restricted housing does not include a review of assisted living uses, specifically Assisted Living Facilities and Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs), as defined in the County’s Zoning Code.

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This assessment of existing regulations, past planning efforts, and best practices includes an examination of how the County's Code functions and how the regulations stipulated therein compare to contemporary planning and development standards related to age-restricted housing. This work included:

- **Examination of Past Planning Efforts:** A review of existing plans and previous planning efforts that outline and identify key community goals and objectives related to these land uses, including:
 - Carroll County Master Plan (2014 and 2019 amendment)
 - Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan (2018)
 - Finksburg Corridor Plan (2013)
- **Existing Code Review:** A focused analysis of Carroll County's Zoning Code (Carroll County Code Chapter 158) and Development and Subdivision of Land Code (Carroll County Code Chapter 155).
- **Best Practices Evaluation:** Research to identify modern approaches to zoning regulations, site design standards, and architectural requirements for Age Restricted Housing.

Collectively, this assessment establishes a clear baseline for the update process for age-restricted housing. It provides the foundation for informed decision-making as the project team develops recommendations for Zoning, and Development and Subdivision of Land Code amendments under Task 2.

Examination of Past Planning Efforts

This section provides a crosswalk of age-restricted housing land uses pertaining to Retirement Villages and Retirement Homes, with the goals and objectives of three planning documents:

- **Carroll County Master Plan (2014) and Amendment (2019)**
- **Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan (2018)**
- **Finksburg Corridor Plan (2013)**

Together, these plans provide guidance for land use planning in the areas of the county within the jurisdiction and under the authority of the Carroll County Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Commissioners. These plans are intended to provide guidance for land use policy and regulations specified under the County's Zoning Code and Development and Subdivision of Land Code.

This examination answers the following:

- **Community Need**
 - What do the plans' community analyses (i.e., demographic analysis) illustrate about the need for age-restricted housing?
- **Consistency with Plan Goals and Objectives**
 - Do the plans' goals and objectives support or discourage the development of age-restricted housing?
- **Design Standards**

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- Do the plans provide guidance on the design and components of age-restricted housing development?
- How does the guidance align with the existing regulatory standards for retirement villages and retirement homes?
- **Location**
 - Do the plans indicate where retirement villages and retirement homes are appropriate or not appropriate?
 - How do those locations align with where the uses are permitted in the Zoning Code?

Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan (2018)

Community Need

The Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan clearly documents an aging population, which establishes a demonstrated need for age-restricted housing. Key findings from the plan’s analysis include:

- The population aged 60 years and older increased from 13% in 2000 to 17.5% in 2010, with the 60–74 age cohort growing by nearly 58% during that decade (pp. 58).
- The Housing Needs section explicitly identifies the need to provide housing that allows residents to “age in their community” as younger age cohorts decline (pp. 60).
- “The housing challenge facing Freedom throughout the planning horizon is twofold: provide *housing to meet the needs and desires of the aging population* in a manner that allows them to age in their community; and provide housing that attracts young adults and families with young children (pp. 58).”

Plan Consistency

The plan’s goals and objectives support the development of age-restricted housing:

- Overall Plan Goal: “Allow potential for a variety of housing types and densities to serve *all ages*, particularly the aging population and families with young children, consistent with the Vision Statement of this Plan (p. 3).”
- Housing Element Goal: “Allow development of housing types and densities in appropriately timed and sized residential developments that meet the needs of the population and preserves the character of existing communities (pp. 51).”

Regulatory Consistencies with the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zoning Code includes age-restricted housing types as uses, including Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages. ● Age-restricted housing (Retirement Home and Retirement Village) is noted as a need in the plan. It is permitted as a Conditional Use in certain Residential districts while permitted by-right in certain Commercial districts. While additional permissions may have been expected given the identified need in the plan, the fact that it is permitted in some districts is consistent with the plan.
Regulatory Inconsistencies with the Plan	None. There are no identified inconsistencies between the plan and the code. However, there is an opportunity for more prescriptive code language to further the goals of the plan.

Design Standards

The plan provides the following guidance regarding design of age-restricted housing:

- “In all cases, the goal should be a *built environment that provides opportunities for older people to easily participate in community life and activities* (pp. 65).”

Regulatory Consistencies with the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the conditional use approval process, the Board of Zoning Appeals can attach conditions for recreation and community spaces to their approval. • The cluster development option for Retirement Villages allows for a denser lot pattern that contributes to walkability (and potentially increased activity) and more opportunities for interaction with neighbors.
Regulatory Inconsistencies with the Plan	<p>None. There are no identified inconsistencies between the plan and the code. However, there is an opportunity for more prescriptive code language to further the goals of the plan. For example, there are no supplemental use or design regulations for Retirement Homes or Retirement Villages that would ensure that the built environment of these age-restricted developments allow for easy participation in community life and activities. As such, there is an opportunity to evaluate adding supplemental use and/or design regulations for these uses.</p>

Location

The plan provides the following guidance on appropriate locations for age-restricted housing:

- “For those who choose age-restricted and assisted living communities and facilities, *appropriately zoned land should be available in proximity to essential goods and services* (pp. 65).”
- “Designate future residential development, particularly for senior citizens, *in proximity and accessible to commercial and recreational opportunities* (pp. 66).”

Regulatory Consistencies with the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages are permitted by Conditional Use in the denser residential zones, R-20,000 (villages only), R-10,000 and R-7,500, which tend to be located closer to commercial corridors. • Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages are permitted by-right in the C-1 and C-2 commercial zoning districts.
Regulatory Inconsistencies with the Plan	<p>None.</p>

Finksburg Corridor Plan (2014)

Community Need

The Finksburg Corridor Plan does not explicitly identify a demographic-based need for age-restricted housing. Its demographic analysis focuses on overall growth and household characteristics, not age-specific housing demand.

Plan Consistency

The plan’s goals and objectives are not specific about age-restricted housing; however, the following housing goal is identified:

- “To provide opportunities for residential uses along secondary roadways that are compatible in design and density with historic structures and the existing community character (pp.15).”

Design Standards

The plan does not refer to age-restricted housing, but provides the following guidance regarding design of housing:

- “...residential uses along secondary roadways that are *compatible in design and density with historic structures and the existing community character* (pp.15).”
- “*Sidewalks connecting large residential areas and commercial areas* are especially important (pp. 48).”

Regulatory Consistencies with the Plan	Through the conditional use process, the Board of Zoning Appeals can attach conditions for compatibility in design and sidewalks.
Regulatory Inconsistencies with the Plan	None. However, there are no sidewalk requirements in the land development and subdivision code, so there is an opportunity to codify sidewalk requirements in areas where appropriate, such as within Designated Growth Areas (DGAs).

Location

The plan does not refer to age-restricted housing but provides the following guidance on appropriate locations for housing:

- “Opportunities are envisioned for... *residential or mixed uses along Old Westminster Pike*, to create a more compatible character of development within the historic Finksburg area (pp. 10).”

Regulatory Consistencies with the Plan	Retirement homes and retirement villages are permitted by-right in the C-1 and C-2 commercial zoning districts, which is the district along Old Westminster Pike.
Regulatory Inconsistencies with the Plan	None.

Carroll County Master Plan (2014) and Amendment (2019)

Community Need

The plan clearly documents an aging population, which establishes a demonstrated need for age-restricted housing. Key findings from the plan’s analysis include:

- “According to the Maryland Department of Planning, the County’s 65 and over population is expected to be 23.5 percent of the total population by 2030 (pp. 29).”
- “Over the last decade, age-restricted housing communities for adults 55 and over has been constructed all over the County (pp. 70).”

The plan explicitly recognizes age-restricted housing as a response to aging in place and downsizing needs, but also flags a demographic tradeoff:

- “While this type of housing will help those who wish to downsize and age in place, it does not help the younger demographic wishing to stay or locate in Carroll County (pp. 70).”

Plan Consistency

The plan’s goals and objectives support the development of age-restricted housing:

- Goal: “Encourage a range of housing types, density, and affordability (pp. 24).”

Regulatory Consistencies with the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zoning Code includes age-restricted housing types as uses, including Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages.• Age-restricted housing (Retirement Home and Retirement Village) is noted as a need in the plan. It is permitted as a Conditional Use in certain Residential districts while permitted by-right in certain Commercial districts. While additional permissions may have been expected given the identified need in the plan, the fact that it is permitted in some districts is consistent with the plan.
Regulatory Inconsistencies with the Plan	None.

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Design Standards

The plan does not provide any specific design standards specific to age-restricted housing.

Location

The plan does not refer to age-restricted housing but provides the following guidance on appropriate locations for housing:

- “It is in the Designated Growth Areas (DGAs) that public facilities are available, and therefore greater flexibility in design and density can be realized (pp. 10).

Regulatory Consistencies with the Plan	Retirement homes and villages are only permitted within higher density zoning districts typically located within the DGAs, where the water and sewer services necessary to serve this type of development are available.
Regulatory Inconsistencies with the Plan	None.

Carroll County Field Tour

On March 13, 2026, members from the Michael Baker team went on a field tour of Carroll County with staff from the Department of Planning and Land Management, the County Administrator, and Commissioner Susan W. Krebs of the 5th District. During the field tour, the group visited several locations of past and recent developments around the Freedom area to give the project team a better understanding of the history of the County, the outcomes and processes around recent developments, and the desired outcomes from this next planning effort. Below is a summary of some of the locations that directly relate to Age-Restricted Housing, including an identification of some of the successes, challenges, and opportunities to improve these types of projects in the future.

Nells Acres

Nells Acres is a newly developed, age-restricted (55+) Retirement Village located along Route 26 just west of the Liberty Reservoir. The development has been approved through multiple conditional use and site plan actions dating back to the mid-1990s, with built phases and later revisions that reduced previously approved densities and shifted to townhouse-style villas. Its lengthy and phased approval history is often cited as an example of how retirement communities have relied on -project specific approvals rather than clear, modern -use specific- standards in the County's Code

The newest phase of the development does provide a community room and some open space throughout the development, but it struggles with providing truly functional and active open space and other amenities that would help to foster a sense of place and community amongst the residents.



Snowden Creek

Snowden Creek is a recently developed Retirement Home located in the Eldersburg/Sykesville area of Carroll County along Oklahoma Road. Built around 2020, the project consists of a multistory apartment building with approximately 100+ units and a range of shared amenities, including fitness, community, and recreation spaces, and was developed under conventional zoning and site plan review rather than a retirement-specific regulatory framework.



Similar to the issues and opportunities with other developments such as Nells Acres, Snowden Creek illustrates how retirement-oriented developments have largely been accommodated through generalized residential standards and project-specific review, rather than through clearly defined, use-specific design and development standards. Nestled next to nearby single-family homes, the development also struggles with a sense of scale and massing that is not necessarily consistent with its immediate character, recognizing the need to account for such a consideration during the regulatory or approval process.

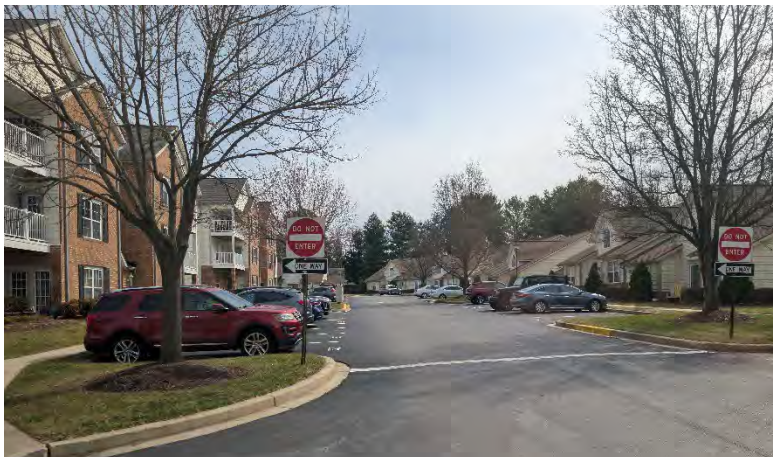


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Winifred Manor

Winifred Manor is an established, age-restricted (55+) residential community developed primarily between the late 1990s and early 2000s, the community consists of approximately 150 condominium and attached villa style units arranged in low-rise buildings and quad formations.

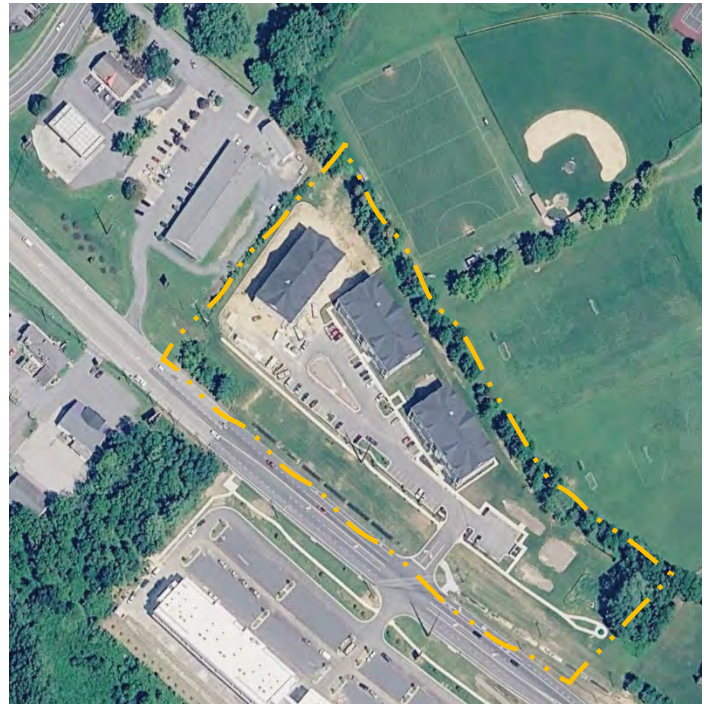
Winifred Manor is designed as a low maintenance-, independent living community with shared amenities such as a clubhouse and outdoor recreation areas, and is situated near shopping, services, and senior facilities, making it a representative example of an older, yet effective, way of developing age-restricted housing in the County that compliments its context while also integrating good design and amenities for residents. For example, the development's multi-story residential buildings are placed in the center, while its single-story quadplexes are located on the periphery where they adjoin single-family neighborhoods.



Liberty Place

Built in 2023, Liberty Place is the newest version of a Retirement Home in Carroll County with 54 condominium units across multiple low-rise buildings, offering modern, -open concept floor plans designed for independent, -low maintenance- living.

While Liberty Place does provide some shared outdoor amenities such as a gazebo and fire pit, it once again lacks any large or centrally located community amenities or gathering space that could have been provided should they have been a requirement of the County’s Zoning Code with additional regulation or design requirements that go beyond what is currently in-place.



Existing Code Review

Zoning Ordinance Analysis

General Commentary

Within the County's Zoning Code, the term "age-restricted" is used, although seldomly, as a seemingly umbrella term to encapsulate both the Retirement Village and Retirement Home uses. However, since age-restricted is not defined and not used as a standalone use it does create some confusion when reading through the Code to fully understand use permissions and other related requirements. Therefore, the primary focus on the analysis of the County's Zoning Code will be on the specific uses Retirement Home and Retirement Village.

Temporary Deferral

Per County Zoning Code §158.161.01 Temporary Deferral on Retirement Villages and Retirement Homes in the Freedom Designated Growth Area, as of the writing of this assessment, there is currently a temporary deferral on the final approval of all Retirement Village and Retirement Homes within the Freedom Designated Growth Area for a 6-month period that started on December 18, 2025, which will expire on June 18, 2026. These types of projects can still be submitted and reviewed by the County but will not receive their final approval during this deferral period.

Definitions

Currently, the Zoning Code for Carroll County does not include a formal definition for "Age Restricted" or "Age Restricted Housing". And while a definition does exist for both "Retirement Home" and "Retirement Village" the lack of a definition for Age Restricted housing is notable since it is a term that is used within the Zoning Code. Similarly, the age-restriction that applies to both Retirement Home and Retirement Village falls back on the definition of Senior Citizen, which per the County's Zoning Code is anyone "at least 55 years of age". Below are the codified definitions for both Retirement Home and Retirement Village.

- **Residential Uses:** *Single-family, two-family, semi-detached, townhouse, multi-family, assisted living, retirement community, **retirement home, retirement village, continuum care, and nursing home.***
- **Retirement Home:** *A building designed to meet the needs of, and exclusively for, the residences of senior citizens or couples where either occupant is a senior citizen.*
- **Retirement Village:** *A development consisting of single-family, two-family, and/or townhouses designed to meet the needs of, and exclusively for the residences of senior citizens or couples where either occupant is a senior citizen.*

Districts & Uses

Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages are generally permitted as a Conditional Use in some residential districts or as a by-right use in 2 of the County's commercial districts.

- Per §158.075.01 Residential Districts: Regulation of Principal Uses any Retirement Home or Age-Restricted Multi Family housing constructed after 2021 is a Conditional Use with the R-10,000 and R-7,500 Zoning Districts.
 - Those that were constructed prior to 2021 were a Conditional Use in the R-40,000, R-20,000, R-10,000, and R-7,500 Zoning Districts.

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- As stated in that same table, Retirement Village is also a Conditional Use within the R-20,000, R-10,000, and R-7,500 Zoning Districts.
- Per §158.079.D.6.h Light Industrial District, Retirement Homes are a specifically prohibited use within a Business/Industrial Park.
- Per §158.082.A.12 Commercial, Industrial, and Employment Campus Districts: Regulations of Principal Uses both Retirement Home and Retirement Village are permitted uses in the C-1 and C-2 Zoning Districts.

Bulk and Area Requirements

- Retirement Homes in **residential** districts are required to meet the following bulk and density standards:
 - Front Yard – 50 feet
 - Side Yard – 20 feet
 - Rear Yard – 40 feet
 - Corner Front Yard – 25 feet
 - Lot Width – 100 feet
 - Height – 35 feet
 - Density: The maximum allowable density in the R-10,000 and R-7,500 districts for retirement homes shall be as determined by the Planning and Zoning Commission but not exceeding one dwelling unit per 3,000 square feet.
- The density for a Retirement Village in a **residential** district shall be established by the Planning and Zoning Commission at the time of initial site plan review.
 - The maximum allowable density in the R-20,000 district for a retirement village shall not exceed 3.5 dwelling units per acre and shall not be increased at any subsequent site plan reviews.
- Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages in **commercial** districts are required to meet the following bulk and area standards:
 - Front Yard – 10 feet
 - Side Yard – 10 Feet
 - Rear Yard – 15 feet
 - Height – 50 feet
- Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages in **commercial** districts that *adjoin* a **residential** district are required to meet the following bulk and area standards:
 - Front Yard – 10 feet
 - Side Yard – 15 Feet
 - Rear Yard – 15 feet
 - Height – 35 feet

Parking

The following minimum parking requirements apply to Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages:

- Retirement Home/age-restricted adult housing (including Retirement Village) – single-family, two-family, and townhomes: 2 parking space for each dwelling unit.
 - *Overflow/guest parking may be required at the discretion of the Planning and Zoning Commission.*
- Retirement Home/age-restricted adult housing – multi-family: 1.5 parking space for each dwelling unit.

- *Overflow/guest parking may be required at the discretion of the Planning and Zoning Commission.*

Emergency Service Access

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), fire departments provide fire protection services to their jurisdictions as well as respond to a variety of other emergencies. To do their jobs effectively, fire departments (and other first responders) must have access to the areas where incidents occur.

NFPA 1, Fire Code, specifies certain requirements related to fire emergency access as follows:

- **Access Road Location Requirements:**
 - Fire department access roads must be provided so fire apparatus can drive within 50 ft (15 m) of an exterior door that allows access to the interior of the building. This 50 ft (15 m) distance can be increased to 150 ft (46 m) for one- or two-family dwellings, or townhouses, that are protected with an automatic sprinkler system.
 - The fire department access roads also need to be located so that any portion of the building or facility is not more than 150 ft (46 m) from fire department access roads as measured around the exterior of the building or facility. This requirement ensures that first responders can reach most parts of the building with their hose lines. This 150 ft (46 m) distance can be increased to 450 ft in buildings that are protected with an automatic sprinkler system because a correctly installed sprinkler system reduces the fire risk to the occupants and firefighters.
 - If the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) determines that a single fire department access road can be impaired by through traffic, terrain challenges, climate conditions or anything else then multiple access roads might be required.
- **Access Road Specifications:**
 - Access roads need to allow adequate access to the building and room to setup and perform manual suppression operations. Fire department access roads require 20 ft (6.1 m) of unobstructed width, 13.5 ft (4.1 m) of unobstructed vertical clearance and an appropriate radius for turns in the roads and dead ends for the vehicles apparatus to turn around. The minimum 20 ft (6.1 m) width allows for two-way vehicular traffic and for one fire apparatus vehicle to pass while another is working at a fire hydrant or conducting aerial operations while the 13.5 ft (4.1 m) vertical clearance ensures that fire apparatus can safely pass under power lines, bridges, and other obstructions.
 - Bridges need to be designed to be able to support a load sufficient enough to carry a fully loaded fire apparatus and the vehicle load limits need to be provided at both entrances to the bridge. The grade of the road also must not exceed 1 ft (0.3 m) of elevation change every 20 ft (6.1 m) or whatever the design limits of the local fire apparatus dictate.
 - As determined by the AHJ, certain parts of the fire department access road are required to be marked, these marked portions of the fire department access roads are called fire lanes.
- **Obstructions:**

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- Designated fire lanes must be free and clear of obstructions, which includes not permitting vehicles to park therein. Other obstructions might include gates, doors or any other security feature. Emergency access can be granted by installing an access box (Knox Box) which is a listed box that usually contains items such as keys, access codes, card keys, or a remote opening device for first responders.
- County Code:
 - Chapter 70, Parking Regulations, of the County Code stipulates Parking Regulations specific to fire lanes, which under § 70.01 are defined as “A lane or area for the ingress or egress of Fire Department and other emergency vehicles in order that fires may be prevented or controlled, and exitways unobstructed for life safety purposes.”
 - Chapter 91, Fire Protection, of the County Code stipulates minimum requirements for water supplies for firefighting in rural and suburban areas where adequate and reliable water supply systems for firefighting purposes do not exist.

Approval Process

- As stated in §158.161, the authorization of conditional use for a **Retirement Village** shall be subject to prior concept site development plan and traffic study review and determination of density, exterior design, and site layout by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
 - The determination of density shall not be increased at any subsequent site plan reviews.

Development and Subdivision of Land Analysis

Carroll County’s regulations for the Development and Subdivision of Land provide little substantive guidance specific to the design or development of Retirement Homes or Retirement Villages.

The code generally applies uniform land development and subdivision standards, such as lot layout, street design, utilities, and stormwater management, without addressing the unique site planning, accessibility, circulation, or amenity needs associated with age-restricted housing, including Retirement Homes and Retirement Villages.

As a result, issues such as walkability, internal connectivity, open space design, and accommodation of mobility limitations are not meaningfully differentiated from conventional residential development. This lack of tailored standards leaves the primary responsibility for shaping senior oriented development to zoning provisions or discretionary review, rather than establishing clear, predictable design expectations within the subdivision regulations themselves.

Land Development and Site Plan Review and Approval

The review and approval process for zoning and land development is managed primarily by the Carroll County Development Review Division. The process varies depending on whether an applicant is pursuing a standard land development (site plan/subdivision) or a zoning-specific action like a variance or conditional use.

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For residential, commercial, or industrial projects, the County Code review process typically follows these stages, which are normal to most any county or local government jurisdictional land use regulatory process:

- **Pre-Application/Submittal Conference:** Developers meet with County Development Review Division staff to establish a file and receive initial guidance.
- **Concept Plan Review:** Prior to a final plan, a concept plan must be submitted.
 - The Technical Review Committee (TRC)—composed of various county agencies—conducts a monthly public meeting to provide feedback.
 - The County Planning and Zoning Commission reviews the concept plan. Concept plans expire after 12 months if a final plan is not submitted.
- **Adequate Public Facilities (APF) Testing:** The project is tested to ensure infrastructure (roads, schools, etc.) can support the development.
- **Agency Concurrence:** Before final approval, the developer must document compliance with specific codes including Floodplain Management, Forest Conservation, Stormwater Management, and Grading.
- **Final Plan Approval:** After all agency comments are addressed, the Planning and Zoning Commission votes on final approval. Approved plats are then recorded in the county land records.

Summary of Existing Code Review

General

The Carroll County Zoning Code and the Development and Subdivision of Land Code provide limited standards or regulatory guidance specific to Retirement Homes or Retirement Villages beyond those applied to many other residential or institutional uses.

While these uses may be identified and permitted within certain zoning districts, the codes largely rely on broad, conventional development standards, such as density, setbacks, parking, and subdivision design, that are not tailored to the functional, demographic, or design considerations unique to senior and age-restricted housing.

Therefore, key elements such as accessibility, internal circulation, pedestrian orientation, open space configuration, community amenities, and proximity to services are not meaningfully addressed or differentiated from standard residential development. This regulatory approach places greater emphasis on generalized zoning compliance rather than establishing clear, use specific expectations for the siting, layout, and design of age-restricted housing.

This regulatory framework results in perceived inconsistencies or conflicts with the past planning efforts of the Carroll County Master Plan, the Finksburg Corridor Plan, and the Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan that identifies age-restricted housing as a need in Carroll County. While the plans do not provide hyper-specific guidance on design and location of these uses, the guidance that is provided emphasizes the importance of proximity to commercial areas and the inclusion of recreational amenities, sidewalk connectivity, and access to gathering spaces. Therefore, the County should consider amending the existing regulatory code requirements to include specific requirements that reinforce the plan goals and objectives, such as including design standards among others as outlined in the recommendations section of this report.

How does all this work together?

While the County's regulatory review and approval process is sound, the County Code lacks the sufficient use-specific zoning and design standards for Retirement Home and Retirement Village uses. This gap significantly limits the County's ability to implement the policy objectives identified in past planning efforts for these age-restricted housing types.

As a result, age-restricted housing projects may technically comply with existing regulations while falling short of the desired form, function, or level of community integration envisioned in the adopted planning documents. This creates a disconnect between the intent of the plans and actual development outcomes.

This condition is well understood and acknowledged by County Planning staff, who review and enforce these regulations on a day-to-day basis. However, from an external perspective, it may appear that the County is not adequately addressing the challenges and needs associated with these types of projects, without recognition of the current limitations within the County's regulatory framework.

Accordingly, as the project advances into Tasks 2 and 3, it will be critical for the Michael Baker team to develop concepts and recommended zoning and site development code amendments that more effectively link the goals and objectives of past planning efforts with the regulatory tools available to the County.

Initial Recommended Regulatory Changes and Amendments

Based on the findings and research conducted by the consultant team during Task 1, a series of initial recommendations for regulatory changes was developed for the Carroll County Zoning and Land Development Codes. These recommendations are intended to better align adopted planning policies and best-practice research with the County's existing regulatory framework.

These initial recommendations will be further refined during Task 2, informed by stakeholder input and technical review, and will be subject to approval by the County Commissioners prior to being translated into draft code language during Task 3.

Overall Regulatory Direction

The Task 1 assessment found that while age-restricted housing is generally permitted in appropriate zoning districts and supported by adopted plans, the County's regulatory framework relies heavily on discretionary review and generalized development standards that are not tailored to age-restricted housing.

Recommended Zoning Code Amendments (Chapter 158)

1. Provide for a Standalone Age-Restricted Housing Section

With the potential inclusion of a series of amendments to age restricted housing, the County should consider a consolidated and stand-alone section in the Zoning Code that is dedicated to Code addressing age-restricted housing uses.

2. Establish Structured Density Frameworks

Replace open-ended density determinations with base density ranges by zoning district and clearly identified criteria for density bonuses tied to measurable public benefits. The County may wish to evaluate the minimum lot size requirement for retirement villages to ensure that the overall number of units does not exceed community expectations.

3. Create Context Sensitive Design Standards

Introduce standards that require height and massing transitions, internal placement of larger buildings, and enhanced buffering where age-restricted developments abut lower-density residential neighborhoods and within other large-scale age-restricted developments, like retirement homes. This could also include subsections addressing site design elements such as internal pedestrian circulation, direct connections between residential buildings and amenities, and site layouts that reduce excessive walking distances.

4. Require Baseline Universal Design/Aging-in-Place Elements

Require demonstration of minimum site and layout features that support aging in place, such as step-free access, accessible pedestrian routes, and unit layouts capable of accommodating mobility limitations.

5. Reassess Density Calculations

Revise the permitted density for developments to be calculated as an average number of units per acre, rather than a maximum applied uniformly across the site.

6. Consider Refining the Approval Process

Establish clear and objective review criteria for conditional uses related to age restricted housing, including traffic impacts, emergency access, and compatibility with surrounding development. This can also include code language that provides clearer guidance to the Board of Zoning Appeals on appropriate areas for conditions of approval. Among other approval conditions, ensuring that the “age restricted (i.e., 55+)” requirement notes are specified in the approved development plan and plat and in the property deeds.

7. Refine Parking Design and Minimum Standards

Parking standards for retirement villages could be refreshed to ensure that minimum garage and driveway dimensions reflect real-world usability. In addition, site layouts should provide adequate guest and overflow parking to prevent spillovers onto internal streets.

8. Require a Minimum Percentage of Housing Types in Retirement Villages

Encourage or require a mix of unit types (e.g., single story units, attached villas, or townhomes) within retirement villages of a certain size. Using a variety in housing form and placement can improve site character, compatibility, and livability.

Recommended Development and Subdivision of Land Code Amendments (Chapter 155)

1. Codify Expectations for Community Amenities

Establish baseline expectations for meaningful indoor or outdoor community amenities proportional to development size or require the submission of a Community Amenity Plan that clearly describes the types of community amenities and their intended uses with land development applications.

2. Review the Standards Open Space Calculations

Required open space associated with retirement village developments could be calculated based on the net developable area, rather than the gross tract area, to better reflect realistic development constraints.

3. Clarify Emergency Access Expectations

Develop County-specific emergency access expectations for larger age-restricted developments and ensure early coordination with Fire and EMS during concept plan review. County requirements for emergency access should be based on and consistent with the applicable National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.

4. Sidewalk and Pedestrian Network Standards in Designated Growth Areas

Establish sidewalk and pedestrian connectivity requirements for age-restricted developments located within Designated Growth Areas, with waiver provisions for demonstrated site constraints.

Best Practices Evaluation

Summary of Issues/Concerns

Research performed by Michael Baker under Task 1 identified the following issues/concerns that the County has identified following recent age-restricted housing development projects:

- **Scale and Compatibility:** Recent projects (e.g., Snowden’s Creek Retirement Home) are perceived as out-of-scale relative to surrounding neighborhoods—too tall, too large, or visually incompatible.
- **Lack of Community Amenities:** Developers receive significant density bonuses, yet provide minimal amenities, resulting in dense clusters of units without corresponding community benefits.
- **Universal Design / Aging in Place:** County Code Chapters 155 (Development and Subdivision of Land) and 158 (Zoning) do not require universal design or age-responsive features. Developers often claim to include them, but there is no standard or enforcement mechanism.
- **Disparity Between Zoning and Expectations:** In projects like Nells Acres Retirement Village, areas originally envisioned for low-density single-family homes instead saw high densities (e.g., 150+ townhomes vs. 20 as-of-right) due to the bonus structure permitted under the County Zoning Code.
- **Emergency Access.** Project site design and layout must consider requirements affecting emergency access and operations. For example, both Snowden’s Creek and Nell’s Acres buildings pose significant firefighting operation challenges, and both have one point of ingress/egress.

National Trends

Research reveals that today’s 55 and older adults generally seek communities that prioritize an active lifestyle, social connection, and low-maintenance living. Unlike previous generations, today’s 55+ demographic often views this stage of life as a "new chapter" rather than a quiet retirement, driving demand for resort-style amenities and homes designed for long-term independence.¹

According to this research, the 55+ demographic seek housing development and community amenity design features that include the following:

Key Lifestyle Priorities

- **Active Living Amenities:** Physical activity is a top priority, with walking and biking trails (71%), swimming pools (71%), and fitness centers (70%) being the most sought-after features.

¹ **AARP Research.** (2024, December). *2024 Home and Community Preferences Survey: A National Survey of Adults Age 18-Plus.* AARP Public Policy Institute.
55places.com. (2025, January). *2025 55+ Housing Survey: Active Adults Are Planning Their Next Chapter.* 55places Blog.
PrivateCommunities.com. (2025, March). *The Most Popular Lifestyle Communities of 2025.* Private Communities Blog.

Task 1 – Assessment of Existing Documents and Best Practices: Age-Restricted Housing

- **Social Connection:** Residents look for a strong sense of belonging, often facilitated by full-time lifestyle directors, social clubs (e.g., book clubs, gardening), and common areas like clubhouses.
- **Low-Maintenance Living:** Many move to eliminate the "physical load" of home upkeep. Popular services include lawn maintenance, snow removal, and exterior home repairs.
- **Safety and Security:** Gated entrances and a neighborhood of peers who "look out for each other" provide a significant sense of peace of mind.

Home Design and Accessibility

55+ adults increasingly want universal design features that allow them to age in place without future modifications:

- **Single-Level Living:** Ranch-style homes with main-floor primary suites and laundry are highly preferred.
- **Accessibility:** Open floor plans with wider doorways, step-free entries, and walk-in showers with grab bars.
- **Technology Integration:** Interest is rising in smart home systems for safety (fall detection), climate control, and telehealth access.

Desired Community Features

- **Proximity to Essentials:** Easy access to high-quality medical facilities, shopping, and restaurants is a critical factor for long-term satisfaction.
- **Recreational Specifics:** Beyond basic gyms, modern communities now feature specialized hubs like pickleball courts, yoga lawns, and even coworking spaces for those still working or starting new ventures.
- **Quiet Environment:** The age restriction ensures a generally quieter atmosphere, though many residents still value being close to family and friends.

Best Practice Examples

Michael Baker identified the following Retirement Village and Retirement Home development projects that exemplify sound land use planning and design principles and provide the high quality of life amenities that today's 55+ adults expect and seek. Each of these examples are further examined in the attached Age Restricted Housing Best Practice slides.

Retirement Villages

- Amblebrook at Gettysburg (Gettysburg, PA) – Amblebrook is a master planned, resort-style 55+ active adult community located in Straban Township, just a few miles from historic downtown Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Spanning a campus designed for "low-maintenance living," the community focuses on a holistic approach to wellness and social engagement.
- Bloomfields (Frederick, MD) – Bloomfields is a 520-acre active-adult 55+ community located in the northern countryside of Frederick, Maryland, on the grounds of the historic Crum Farm. Developed by Natelli Communities, it is planned to include over 1,300 new homes, including single-family homes, villas, and cottages. This age-restricted development offers a low-maintenance, active adult lifestyle with a stunning collection of brand new cottages, villas, and single-family homes built by distinct home builders, NVHomes and Ryan Homes.
- Traditions of America at Lititz (Lititz, PA) – Traditions of America at Lititz is a 55+ active adult community situated just beyond the historic heart of Lititz, Pennsylvania. Designed as a well-organized, low-maintenance neighborhood, it offers a blend of comfort, convenience, and lifestyle-focused living that supports wellness, recreation, and social engagement.

Retirement Homes

- Ashlynn Ridge (Newnan, GA) – Ashlynn Ridge is a modern 55+ active adult and independent living community designed to provide affordable, maintenance-free housing for older adults seeking to age in place while remaining active and connected. The development offers one- and two-bedroom apartment homes with contemporary finishes such as granite countertops, vinyl plank flooring, walk-in closets, and private patios or balconies, all within a secure, elevator-served building environment.
- The Baldwin (Londonderry, NH) – The Baldwin is a nationally recognized life plan retirement community that exemplifies best practices in senior housing design by blending traditional neighborhood form with modern senior living amenities. Rather than a conventional campus layout, The Baldwin is organized as a walkable, mixed-use environment with individual residential entrances, small blocks, and shared civic spaces that mirror the scale and feel of a New England town center. The development supports independence, familiarity, and daily social interaction while reducing the institutional character often associated with retirement communities.

Carroll County Zoning and Site Development Revisions

TASK 1 – BEST PRACTICES

AGE RESTRICTED HOUSING

April 28, 2026



Carroll County Zoning and Site Development Revisions

BEST PRACTICES - AGE RESTRICTED
HOUSING



Issues & Concerns

- **Scale and Compatibility:** Recent projects (e.g., Snowden Creek) are perceived as out-of-scale relative to surrounding neighborhoods—too tall, too large, or visually incompatible.
- **Lack of Community Amenities:** Developers receive significant density bonuses, yet provide minimal amenities, resulting in dense clusters of units without corresponding community benefits.
- **Universal Design / Aging in Place:** County Code Chapters 155 (Development and Subdivision of Land) and 158 (Zoning) do not require universal design or age-responsive features. Developers often claim to include them, but there is no standard or enforcement mechanism.
- **Mismatch Between Zoning and Expectations:** In projects like Nells Acres, areas originally envisioned for low-density single-family homes instead saw high densities (e.g., 150+ townhomes vs. 20 as-of-right) due to the bonus structure.
- **Emergency Access.** Project site design and layout needs to consider requirements affecting emergency access and operations. For example, both Snowden Creek and Nell's Acres buildings pose significant firefighting operation challenges, and both have one point of ingress/egress.

Development Project Examples:

- **Snowden Creek**
 - 3-4 story multi-unit
 - Large parking lots
 - Incompatibility/out-of-scale with surrounding neighborhood: massing, height, architecture
 - Emergency access issues
- **Nells Acres**
 - Community did not envision 150 townhomes vs. 20 single-family homes
 - Lacking age responsive design: *No requirement for uses that allow for aging in place.*
 - Emergency access issues



Retirement Villages

Amblebrook at Gettysburg



AMBLEBROOK AT GETTYSBURG

Amblebrook at Gettysburg

[Amblebrook at Gettysburg](#) is a master planned, resort-style 55+ active adult community located in Straban Township, just a few miles from historic downtown Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Spanning a campus designed for "low-maintenance living," the community focuses on a holistic approach to wellness and social engagement.

Developed by CCD Rock Creek and Managed by Crown Community Development. [Crown Community Development](#) is a part of the Henry Crown and Company umbrella of diverse operating and investment companies, established in 1919. Crown Community Development develops and invests in master-planned communities throughout the U.S., including Seattle, Austin, San Antonio, Nashville, Tampa, Chicago, Castle Rock, CO, Indianapolis, and Gettysburg.

Amblebrook at Gettysburg

Location: Straban Township, Adams County, PA

Land Use Regulations: Zoning Code, “Age Qualified Housing” <https://ecode360.com/11626968>

Development Type: Age Qualified Housing is permitted by Special Exception in the Residential High-Density District (R-2) <https://ecode360.com/11626730#11626807>

Purpose: The purpose of any age-qualified housing development is to encourage the development of affordable and market-rate housing for individuals aged 55 and over by allowing for the greater variety of building types at a higher density than would normally be allowed; by allowing greater flexibility in site planning so as to promote the sound development of land which reduces residents' burdens of property maintenance and which reduces demands on municipal services; and to promote flexibility in land use planning in order to improve site layouts, protect natural features and environmental values and utilize land in harmony with neighboring properties.

Amblebrook at Gettysburg

Amenities:

- 24,000 sq. ft. clubhouse with theater, bar and lounge, community hall
- Multi-purpose fitness center w/indoor and outdoor aquatics
- Heartland Market & Café
- Boulevard Welcome Center
- Farmers Market
- Happy Tails Dog Park
- Fishing ponds with dock
- Scenic trail system
- Outdoor amphitheater
- Community Garden
- On-site concierge and lifestyle director
- Local produce and milk delivery

SEE NEARBY PLACES

■ Parkview

■ Grandview

■ Highland

■ Greenway

■ Woodside

① Model Village

② Welcome Center and
Heartland Market & Café

③ Rock Creek Clubhouse

④ Rock Creek Fitness Center

⑤ Great Lawn

⑥ Fishing Pond and Dock

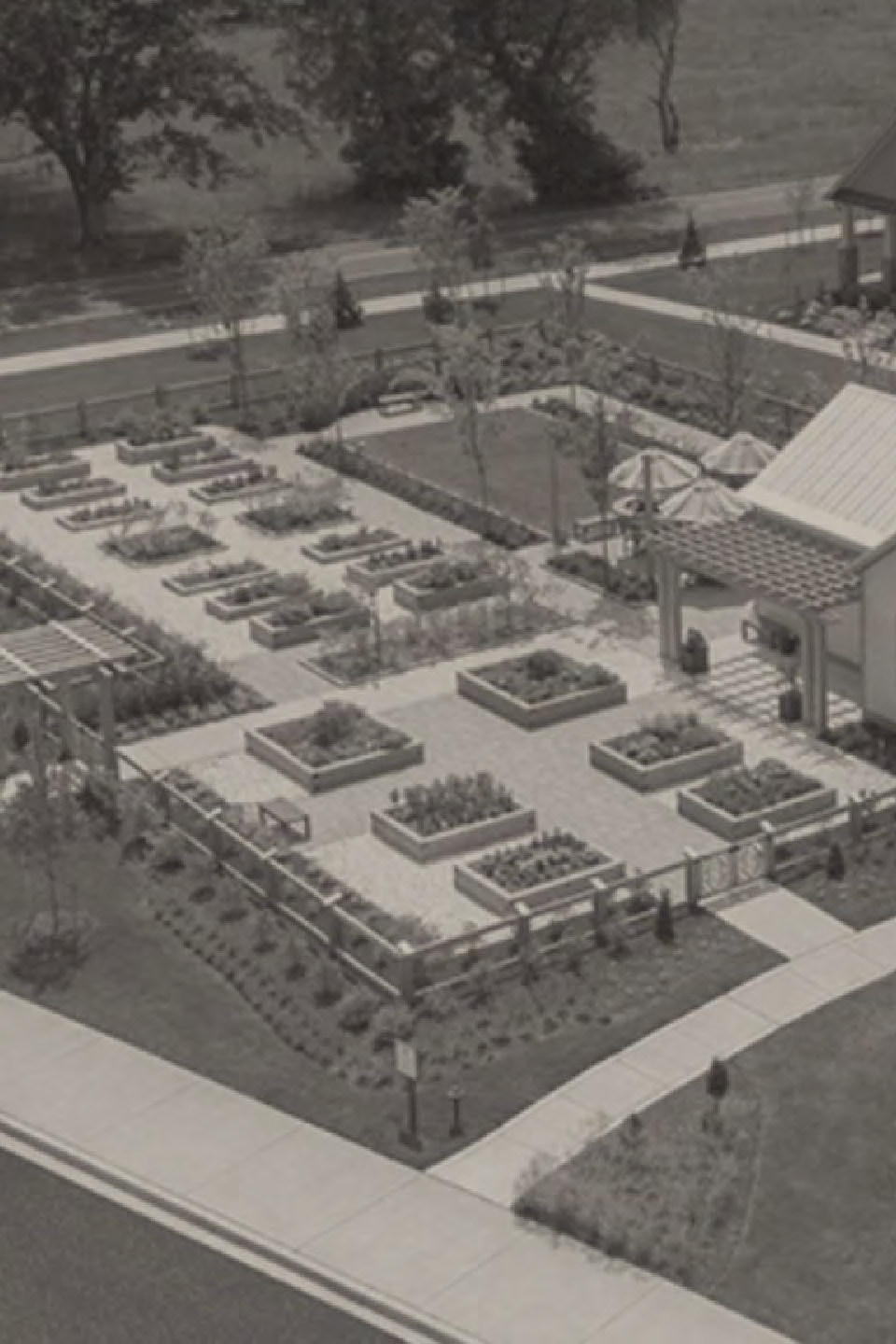
⑦ Dog Park, Walking Trails,
Pickleball & Tennis Courts





Best Practice Example – Amblebrook at Gettysburg

Bloomfields at Frederick



Bloomfields at Frederick

Bloomfields is a 520-acre active-adult **55+ community** located in the northern countryside of **Frederick, Maryland**, on the grounds of the historic Crum Farm. Developed by [Natelli Communities](#), it is planned to include over 1,300 new homes, including single-family homes, villas, and cottages.

Bloomfields offers a low-maintenance, active adult lifestyle with a stunning collection of brand new cottages, villas, and single-family homes built by distinct home builders, NVHomes and Ryan Homes.

Bloomfields at Frederick

Location: City of Frederick, Frederick County, MD

Land Use Regulations: Governed by a combination of the City of Frederick's Land Management Code (LMC) and specific development standards established through its master plan and annexation resolutions.

- **Base Zoning (MU-1):** The property is primarily zoned **Mixed-Use (MU-1)**, which typically requires a balance of residential, nonresidential, and open space uses.
- **Age-Restricted Community Development (ARCD):** The community is developed under the [ARCD provisions \(Section 412 of the LMC\)](#). This overlay provides the "active adult" framework and allows for flexible design specifically for retirement-oriented communities.

Purpose and Intent: The Age Restricted Community Development (ARCD) option is intended to provide flexible design of active adult/retirement-oriented communities within the City. The City recognizes that age-restricted or active adult communities have inherent design characteristics and needs that require alternative regulatory standards. The ARCD option is consistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. It will be implemented in a manner that recognizes this alternative and accommodating approach to land design and development, in an effort to provide housing options for the City's aging residents.

Bloomfields at Frederick

Amenities:








- Community Clubhouse with Club Room, Game Room, Card Room and more
- Community Fitness Building with state-of-the-art equipment, Yoga Studio and Trackman Golf Simulator room
- Elaborate Outdoor Swimming Pool
- Outdoor Pavilion
- Pickleball, Tennis, Bocce Courts, Basketball
- Putting Green
- Outdoor Fireplace Settings
- Playground for the Grandchildren
- Community Herb Garden
- Potting Shed
- Dog Park
- Park and Trail System



Bloomfields

55+ Effortless Living

KEY

-  Community Park
-  Clubhouse
-  Fitness Center
-  Swimming Pool
-  Bocce Ball
-  Pickleball
-  Tennis
-  Open Air Pavilion
-  Tot Lot
-  Basketball
-  Putting Green
-  Gathering Green
-  Dog Park
-  Firepit
-  Herb Gardens, Potting Shed, Firepit
-  City of Frederick Linear Park

-  Single Family Homes
-  Cottage Homes
-  Single Family Homes
-  Villa Homes



Rendering is an artist's representation for illustrative purposes only. Details are subject to modifications without notice. The information and designs contained in this artwork are not part of a legal contract, and cannot be used or reproduced without prior written consent of Natelli Communities.

Traditions of America at Lititz



Traditions of America at Lititz

[Traditions of America at Lititz](#) is a 55+ active adult community situated just beyond the historic heart of Lititz, Pennsylvania. Designed as a well-organized, low-maintenance neighborhood, it offers a blend of comfort, convenience, and lifestyle-focused living that supports wellness, recreation, and social engagement.

The [community](#) includes a variety of age-appropriate homes with options for aging in place. Residents have access to a private clubhouse, swimming pool, fitness center, outdoor recreation areas, and an interconnected network of walking trails.

Traditions of America, Lititz

Location: Warwick Township, Lancaster County, PA

Land Use Regulations: Zoning Code - [R-2 Medium Density Residential](#)

Development Type: Conditional Use – [Age Restricted Moderate Density Development](#)

Regulations:

- Architectural considerations
 - During the conditional use process, proposed buildings within the moderate density housing for age-restricted development shall incorporate architectural treatments acceptable to the Township.
- Density
 - The maximum permitted density of a moderate density housing for age-restricted development shall be 4 dwelling units per acre, but can be increased to 4.5 dwelling units per acre if the development fronts along a collector or special collector road.
- Housing Mix
 - Minimum 70% single family, maximum 30% duplex
- Thorough open space and common space requirements

Traditions of America, Lititz

Amenities

- Within close proximity to downtown Lititz.
- Clubhouse
- Fitness Center
- Aerobic Studio
- Sauna
- Ballroom
- Heated Outdoor Pool
- Homes include first-floor bedroom, optional second floors, and attached garages across both detached and attached models.
- Community includes walking trails and riparian buffer restoration.





Adjacent to a
Hospital

Best Practice Example – Traditions of America at Lititz



Retirement Homes

Ashlynn Ridge



Ashlynn Ridge

[Ashlynn Ridge](#) is a modern 55+ active adult and independent living community located in Newnan, Georgia, designed to provide affordable, maintenance-free housing for older adults seeking to age in place while remaining active and connected. The [development](#) offers one- and two-bedroom apartment homes with contemporary finishes such as granite countertops, vinyl plank flooring, walk-in closets, and private patios or balconies, all within a secure, elevator-served building environment.

Beyond individual residences, Ashlynn Ridge features a strong amenity package that supports social interaction and healthy living, including a clubhouse, fitness center, theater room, beauty salon, library, community kitchen, and outdoor walking paths with landscaped gathering areas. The property participates in an income-restricted affordable housing program, expanding access to quality senior housing and is conveniently located near shopping, healthcare, and regional transportation corridors, making it a practical and well-rounded retirement living option in the Newnan area.

Ashlynn Ridge

Location: Newnan, GA

Land Use Regulations: [Zoning Code](#) – Residential Multiple Family – High Density (rezoned from Community Shopping Center District as part of the development)

Development Type: Apartment – including Section 42 that provides tax credits for affordable housing as an Allowed use.

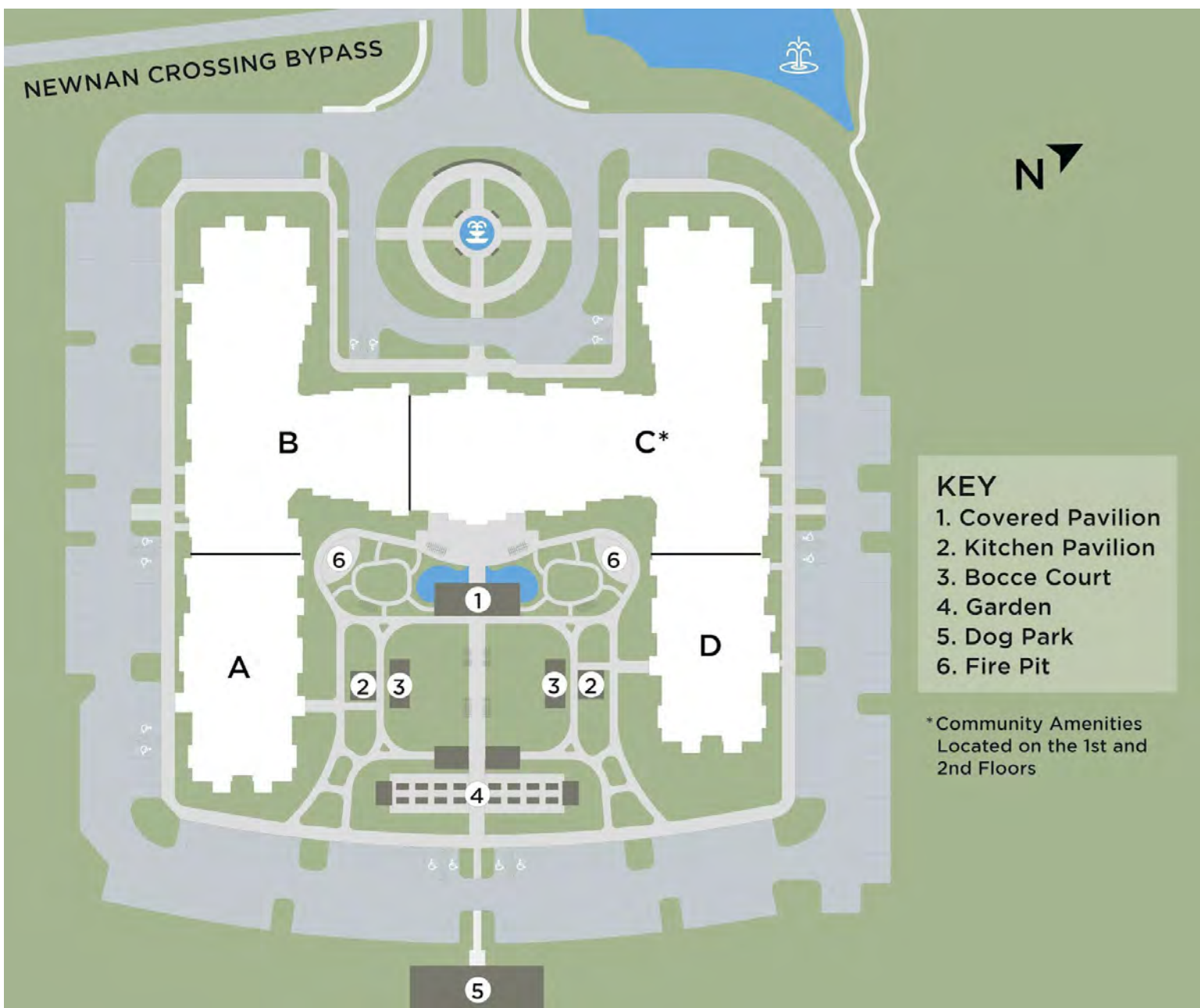
Purpose: The RMH, Residential Multiple Family Dwelling-Higher Density District, is intended to provide for higher density multiple-family dwellings which may have a relatively intense concentration of dwelling units ***served by large open spaces consisting of common areas and recreation facilities***, thereby resulting in medium gross densities.

The principal use of land may be one or several dwelling types, ranging from manufactured homes to low-rise multiple-family dwellings, and including two-family dwellings, garden apartments, apartment buildings, condominiums and townhouses

Ashlynn Ridge

- Convenient access to shopping, healthcare, and regional roadways including I-85
- Mix of one- and two-bedroom apartment homes featuring modern finishes such as granite countertops, vinyl plank flooring, walk-in closets, and private patios or balconies
- Includes a
 - Clubhouse
 - Fitness center
 - Theater room
 - Beauty salon
 - Library
 - Community kitchen
 - Landscaped outdoor spaces with walking paths and a pond





Best Practice Example – Ashlynn Ridge

The Baldwin



The Baldwin

[The Baldwin](#) is a nationally recognized life plan retirement community that exemplifies best practices in senior housing design by blending traditional neighborhood form with modern senior living amenities. Rather than a conventional campus layout, The Baldwin is organized as a walkable, mixed-use environment with individual residential entrances, small blocks, and shared civic spaces that mirror the scale and feel of a New England town center. [The development](#) supports independence, familiarity, and daily social interaction while reducing the institutional character often associated with retirement communities.

Outdoor space is a defining feature of the community, with central greens, landscaped courtyards, and pedestrian-oriented streets that encourage walking, informal gatherings, and connection to nature. Indoor and outdoor amenities are intentionally integrated to promote wellness, lifelong engagement, and intergenerational interaction. The Baldwin has been recognized through the AIA Design for Aging Review for its innovative urban design approach, high-quality public realm, and ability to create a vibrant, age-friendly community that supports aging in place while remaining connected to the surrounding neighborhood

The Baldwin

Location: Londonderry, NH

Land Use Regulations: [Zoning](#): Woodmont Commons Planned Unit Development District

Development Type: Planned Unit Development (Multi-Family or Assisted Living Facility)

Purpose: A Planned Unit Development (PUD) allows a landowner to propose his/her own development project largely independent from current land use regulations otherwise applicable to that property. A PUD master plan is akin to a special zoning district designation for a particular tract of land in terms of uses, dimensions, and other development standards.

The purpose of this ordinance is to promote *flexibility* in large scale development by considering project proposals based upon a comprehensive, integrated and detailed plan rather than the specific constraints applicable to piecemeal lot-by-lot development under conventional zoning. A PUD should improve the quality of new development by encouraging aesthetically attractive features and promoting quality site and architectural design.

The Baldwin

- Fully integrated into the Woodmont Commons master-planned, mixed-use development rather than a standalone senior housing campus.
- Mix of one- and two-bedroom apartment homes featuring multiple buildings, individual entrances, active ground floors, and pedestrian-oriented streets.
- Features a main street layout, internal sidewalks, and direct connections between buildings and amenities, encouraging daily movement and social interaction
- Amenities such as
 - Restaurants
 - Café
 - Art Gallery
 - Salon
 - Fitness Spaces
 - Gathering Rooms





Best Practice Example – The Baldwin

Best Practice Highlights

Master planned communities focused on context-sensitive environmental design and amenities that support the active 55+ lifestyle and market needs

- Promote flexibility in master planning and ensure consistent outcomes through zoning and land development regulations.
- Utilize a Special Overlay District or Planned Residential/Unit Development process in addition to base zoning regulations.
- Establish clear standards for permitted uses, open space and amenity requirements, and design expectations—while still allowing flexibility in the mix or number of uses and housing types.
- Require Conditional Use or Special Exception approvals; not treated as standard residential subdivisions and typically require a master plan to guide development.
- Require amenities and open space elements that enhance community character and align with County planning goals.
- Define standards for community amenities and provide clear criteria for usable open space to improve development outcomes and ensure consistency with broader County planning initiatives.

Best Practice Highlights

Use regulations that attract developers who understand the product, market preferences, and master planning expectations

- High-quality best-practice examples typically come from national or regional builders with experience delivering successful 55+ communities and the amenities this market expects.
- Counties and local jurisdictions are increasingly expecting higher standards and better outcomes from these types of developments.

Issues & Concerns – Coming Full Circle

- **Scale and Compatibility:** Using approval processes found in some of the best practices, such as Planned Unit Development (The Baldwin) or Conditional Use (Traditions of America) give municipalities and planning agencies the ability to better regulate the overall scale of development and to ensure they are compatible with their context.
- **Lack of Community Amenities:** Each of the best practice examples identified were intended to showcase the type and scale of community amenities that could be provided within these developments. The County has several tools at its disposal to implement these types of requirements through either a specific approval process or additional supplemental regulations.
- **Universal Design / Aging in Place:** Architectural and design standards within these best practice examples are controlled through either underlying design guidelines/requirements or the approval process they go through. The County can implement similar tools to control the styles, massing, fenestrations, and other elements of the design of retirement homes and retirement community to promote attractive communities that serve the needs of the older residents.
- **Mismatch Between Zoning and Expectations:** As noted in the evaluation of the County's existing regulations, there is a significant gap between the desire of the community for these types of uses and the regulatory tools that the County has enacted. These best practices were chosen largely due to the types of approval process and regulations that were used to achieve the final product which could similarly be considered by Carroll County to achieve community development objectives for the Freedom Area and elsewhere in the County.
- **Emergency Access:** Each of the best practice examples showcase more than one means of access, or sufficient areas for on-street parking that allow for not only good emergency access to the site but also the space needed to move throughout the development for emergency vehicles.