Report 5

Manufactured Housing And The Senior Population

MANUFACTURED HOUSING RESEARCH PROJECT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The housing needs of Michigan's senior population in terms of affordability, location and physical design were emphasized by the Michigan Manufactured Housing Task Force in its report of July, 1989. The first part of this report examines the size and characteristics of the senior population, both nationally and in Michigan. It concludes with an outline of the common housing needs and design requirements of the older population. The second part of the report presents the findings of a survey conducted in September 1991 at the largest of Michigan's three senior manufactured home communities. The survey was designed to explore a number of the issues and concerns of the Task Force report regarding the suitability of manufactured home rental communities as residential environments for older people.

Seniors in Michigan constitute 12% of the total population but their numbers will grow in the next 20 years to around 20%. In fact, older people are the most rapidly increasing age group. Most older adults live in single family homes which they own. However, in a 1985 survey nearly 1 out of 4 Michigan seniors reported they were thinking about moving. and 31% of these potential movers said they would consider a "mobile home."

The researchers developed the survey questionnaire to evaluate how well manufactured homes and senior manufactured home rental communities were meeting the needs of older adults living in them. The survey was conducted in Chateau Avon, an older adult manufactured home community of 617 home sites located in the city of Rochester Hills, Michigan. The survey was included in the September 1991 newsletter of the Avon Homeowners Association's. The survey was delivered to 605 homes and 369 responses were received, a 61% response rate.

The survey explored factors that attract older people to this type of housing as well as their assessments of the manufactured housing unit, and the park community and its

relation to the surrounding urban area. The findings of the study should be of interest to planners, housing agencies, and the suppliers of manufactured homes and communities.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE SENIOR HOMEOWNER SURVEY:

The homeowner residents of Chateau Avon are generally pleased with and proud of their community. They see it as a safe and secure residential environment that is quiet, has a good appearance, and most importantly, affords them a lifestyle with privacy as well as nearness to family and friends. In addition, Chateau Avon was seen as well located in terms of providing good access to shopping and services. The survey indicated that residents of the Avon community are active and involved in activities both within and outside Chateau Avon.

Most residents viewed the Avon community's facilities, open spaces, and recreational and social activities, as well as the community rules and maintenance, as positive assets, and even offered suggestions as to how they could be further enhanced. Residents' greatest worries were economic in nature, particularly increasing lot rents and the values of their homes for resale.

Resident evaluations were very positive with regard to the locational and neighborhood qualities of their manufactured home community. The major difficulty in realizing the considerable potential of manufactured housing for seniors does not appear to be either physical or social. In fact, the survey results indicate that senior residents give quite high marks to their manufactured home community on its physical and social dimensions, and generally good though somewhat less enthusiastic ratings to the physical character of their manufactured homes. The most serious worries for seniors seem to be economic, i.e., rising rent levels and potential declines in the market value of their homes.

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