



CHAPTER 5 SNAPSHOT

SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

Purpose:

- Assess the extent to which the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, the homeless, and large families in Oakland County have special unmet needs related to housing.

Content:

- Defines the five special needs population categories and discusses why each of the groups is considered to have special needs related to housing.
- Uses existing data sources to estimate the current number of people/households in Oakland County that fall into each category and, where data allow, estimate the number that will exist in future decades.
- Where possible, estimates the number of housing units available to these special needs populations and assesses the extent to which each special needs group faces affordability challenges.
- Draws implications from the findings.

Major Findings:

- *All five of the special needs groups have considerable housing and service needs that are unmet.*
- *A disproportionate share of elderly households face affordability problems. Currently, a large share of the elderly faces housing affordability problems, and the supply of subsidized housing for the elderly is inadequate to meet the current demand.*
- *The elderly will create the most obvious pressure for change in the coming decades. The elderly population is expected to explode over the next three decades growing by 104% and accounting for about 21% of the county's population by 2030.*
- *The county's current population of people with disabilities is under-served. This problem is likely to grow in the near future. Both the number of disabled and the extent of unmet need are expected to grow in the near future for two reasons. First, as the population of the county ages, the disabilities among that population will grow. Second, more and more of the disabled children that currently live with their parents or other relatives will need to find alternative housing as their parents/relatives grow older and are no longer able to care for them.*
- *The county has a relatively large share of persons with HIV/AIDS who have little housing assistance targeted to their special needs. Though small relative to the total population, persons with HIV/AIDS are more common in Oakland County than all other counties in the*

state, but Wayne. Currently, there is only a modest amount of housing with supportive services available to this population. Service providers have improved their capacity to serve the HIV/AIDS population in recent years. As the county seeks to address the needs of persons with disabilities, it could target some of its actions specifically to persons with HIV/AIDS to increase both housing and support services.

- *The need for housing and support services for the homeless population outstrips the available supply.* Homelessness is a real issue in Oakland County. The estimated minimum of 1,300 people who are homeless in the county is significantly larger than the number of permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, and emergency shelter beds available to serve the homeless.
- *Large families face affordability problems.* There is no overall shortage of housing to accommodate large families in Oakland County, but it tends to be expensive. The percentage of large family owners with cost burden is higher than statewide totals. Most of the rental housing for large families costs at least \$750 per month, and a large share costs more than \$1000 month. Only a very small number of subsidized units are large enough for large families.

Conclusions:

- *Significant changes in the county's housing stock and elderly services will need to take place* in order for the county to accommodate this growing population. These changes must seek to increase the supply of both traditional elderly housing and new, alternative housing arrangements to serve this increasingly diverse population and enable it to age in place.
- *Support services to enhance the quality of life for those elderly will also need to be addressed,* as will the question of how the housing market will be impacted when many elderly homeowners decide to sell their homes for smaller, more manageable units.
- *Public, private, and nonprofit leaders in the county will need to address funding limitations and zoning/land use laws* that inhibit or prohibit the provision of affordable housing for people with disabilities.
- *Support services for people with disabilities must also be addressed.* In addition to increasing the overall supply of housing for people with disabilities, there is a need to aggressively enhance the capacity of organizations that provide support services to this population. Accomplishing these goals may require some changes in regulations and funding amounts for existing state and federal programs that serve people with disabilities.
- *Significant action will be required for the County to realize its goal of eliminating homelessness.* It will require increased awareness across the county of the reality of homelessness. It will also need a concerted effort and commitment by stakeholders with resources to explicitly address the special needs of the homeless and their service providers.