

SPECIAL NEEDS PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Persons with disabilities in Model City face unique problems in obtaining affordable and adequate housing. This segment of the population, which includes individuals with mental, physical, and developmental disabilities need affordable, conveniently-located housing which, where necessary, has been specially adapted for wheelchair accessibility, along with other physical needs.

The living arrangements for persons with disabilities depend on the severity of the disability. Many persons live at home in an independent environment with the help of other family members. To maintain independent living, disabled persons may require assistance. This can include special housing design features for the physically disabled, income support for those who are unable to work, and in-home supportive services for persons with medical conditions. Accessible housing can also be provided via senior housing developments.

The majority of persons with disabilities live on an income that is significantly lower than the non-disabled population. Many disabled individuals live on a small fixed income which severely limits their ability to pay for housing. The Task Force on Family Diversity estimates that at least one-third of all persons with disabilities in the United States live in poverty. Persons with disabilities have the highest rate of unemployment relative to other groups. For most, their only source of income is a small fixed pension afforded by Social Security Disability Insurance (SDI), Social Security Insurance (SSI), or Social Security Old Age and Survivor's Insurance (SSA), which will not adequately cover the cost of rent and living expenses even when shared with a roommate. In addition, persons with disabilities oftentimes experience discrimination in hiring and training. When they find work, it tends to be unstable and at low wages.

Description of Need

A disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. According to the 2000 Census, an estimated 17 percent of Model City residents (12,742 persons) have one or more disabilities. Approximately 2,534 of the City's disabled population have mobility/self-care limitations and require assistance in daily living. Of the City's senior population, approximately one-third have one or more types of disabilities.

Disabilities by Employment Status	NUMBER	PERCENT OF DISABLED POPULATION
Age 5-64, Employed persons with Disability	4,095	5.5
Age 5-64, not Employed with Disability	3,092	4.1
Persons Age 65 Plus with Disability	5,555	7.4
Total Persons with Disabilities	12,742	100%

Source: Census 2000 SF 3:P42

The most pervasive disabilities for the general population are physical and mental disabilities, accounting for more than 46 percent of all disabilities and affect 14,696 residents.

Physical Disabilities: According to 2000 Census data, persons with physical disabilities in Model City number 8,627 – 30 percent of the total disabled population. Seniors have a higher percentage of physical disabilities, 19 compared to 12 percent among persons aged 5-64.

There is a scarcity of housing in the City accessible to persons with a physical disability. In 1990 only one percent of the City's housing units were accessible. In order to accommodate the City's population with physical disabilities, there is a need to adapt houses or apartments for wheelchairs and other special requirements. Both federal and State housing laws require certain features of adaptive design for physical accessibility in all multifamily residential buildings with four or more units built for first occupancy starting March 13, 1991. However, numerous dwelling units built before that date are not subject to these accessibility requirements. This, however, does not assist individuals – particularly seniors – who choose to remain in their homes rather than move to assisted living facilities and/or other newly constructed units.

Mental Disability: According to 2000 Census data, there are 4,864 persons (15 percent of all disabled individuals) with a severe mental disability in Model City. This figure also includes a large proportion of the homeless (one-third to one-half) which are often thought to have mental disabilities. Persons with mental disabilities are a critically under-served population with respect to housing. Approximately 20-50 percent of these are capable of living semi-independently in their own supported housing units with assistance in maintaining their apartment, the provision of meals and obtaining transportation, as do other persons with disabilities.

There are a limited number of day treatment facilities and programs, including drop-in socialization centers, to serve persons with mental disabilities. These individuals do not have regional centers as do the persons with physical disabilities and there is no respite care to families who care for their relatives with mental disabilities on a 24-hour basis.

Persons with Disabilities by Disability Type	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL DISABILITIES
TOTAL DISABILITIES TALLIED	31,718	100
TOTAL DISABILITIES FOR AGES 5—64	7,187	66
Sensory Disability	1,776	5.6
Physical Disability	3,806	12
Mental Disability	3,489	11
Self-Care Disability	1,400	4.4
Go-Outside-Home Disability	2,729	8.6
Employment Disability	6,060	19.1
TOTAL DISABILITIES FOR AGES 65 AND OVER	10,795	34
Sensory Disability	2,099	6.6
Physical Disability	6,026	19
Mental Disability	1,375	4.3
Self-Care Disability	1,134	3.6
Go-Outside-Home Disability	2,330	7.3

Source: Census 2000, P41

The State Department of Social Services' Community Care Licensing Division identifies three adult residential facilities in Model City that provide 24-hour non-medical care for adults ages 18-59 who are unable to provide for their own daily needs. These three facilities provide capacity for 34 adults.

The State Department of Rehabilitation, Local Regional Center (RC) for the Developmentally Disabled reports 1,631 active clients residing in the County as of November 2007. Fifty-five percent of these persons reside in the homes of private guardians, while another 20 percent reside in independent living facilities. Approximately 13 percent live in some form of community care unit. Nearly 52 percent of these clients possess some form of mild mental disability.

Strategies and Programmatic Responses to Meet Projected Needs

Appropriate housing for persons with mental or physical disabilities include very low cost units in large group home settings (near retail services and public transit), supervised apartment settings with on- or off-site support services, outpatient/day treatment programs, and inpatient/day treatment programs, crisis shelters and transitional housing.

In 1984, Title 24 of the State Uniform Building Code mandated that all multiple-family residential construction projects containing in excess of 5 units under construction after September 15, 1985, would conform to specific disabled adaptability/accessibility regulations. In 1988, the Federal government enacted the U.S. Fair Housing Amendment Act, also with the intent of increasing the number of rental units being built that would be accessible to handicapped individuals. In July 1993, the State of California issued "California Multifamily Access Requirements" based upon the Act. Unfortunately, the actual increase in the number of handicapped-accessible units available on the current rental market has been small.

The City does not require special building codes or onerous project review to construct, improve, or convert housing for persons with disabilities. Both the federal Fair Housing Act and the California Fair Employment and Housing Act impose an affirmative duty on local governments to make reasonable accommodations (i.e., modifications or exceptions) in their zoning and other land-use regulations when such accommodations may be necessary to afford disabled persons an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling. For example, it may be a reasonable accommodation to allow covered ramps in the setbacks of properties that have already been developed to accommodate residents with mobility impairments. The Model City allows homeowners to build ramps into single-family dwellings to allow first floor access for physically disabled residents. Such ramps or guardrails are permitted to intrude into the standard setbacks required under zoning, and are subject only to a building permit. This provision eliminates the need to obtain a zoning variance.

The City also makes rehabilitation funds available to income qualified households for accessibility improvements. The Emergency Repair Program (ERP) has been designed in part to address these needs by providing affordable loans to assist disabled tenants to improve their rental units to meet their physical needs.

The housing needs of several other categories of disabled persons, including developmentally disabled persons and the mentally ill are typically not addressed by Title 24 Regulations. The housing needs of persons with these types of disabilities, in addition to basic affordability, range from needing slight modifications of existing units to the need for a variety of supportive housing arrangements. Some of this population can only live successfully in housing which provides a semi-sheltered, semi-independent living state, such as clustered group housing or other group-living quarters; others are capable of living independently if affordable units are available.

Non-profit developers report that there is a need for jurisdictions to fast-track the permitting process for these projects, as well as waive or defer fees as they operate on limited budgets. Examples of fee waivers include school fees, since these residences do not house children. The City's recently adopted Affordable Housing Incentives Ordinance allows for fee deferral prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

Group-home living quarters for a variety of specific disabled clientele groups have traditionally been found intermixed within Model City's residential neighborhoods. Consistent with State law, group homes with six or fewer residents per facility are allowed by right in all residential zones. Larger single-family homes are purchased or leased by the supporting agency and house a small group of disabled clients along with support personnel. The availability, however, of these larger (4 to 5 bedroom) homes is diminishing, as well as becoming cost-prohibitive to purchase and/or lease. Care facilities with seven or more persons are also permitted in all residential districts and several commercial districts, subject to a conditional use permit.

In addition, in the City's discussion with service providers as part of the outreach related to the update of the City's housing element, some developers have found that current City parking requirements are costly and burdensome. Compliance with general parking requirements add costs to development particularly for lower-income, non-driving population residing near convenient, public transportation in the inner City. The City will provide an exception to the parking requirements that currently exist for projects accommodating senior citizens and persons with disabilities through conditional use permits.