

## Including Housing for People with Developmental Disabilities In Local Comprehensive Plans

### ***What is a Comprehensive Plan?***

Comprehensive Plans are documents created by cities and counties to guide their physical development, transportation and other facilities needed to meet the needs of population growth. Comprehensive plans are a requirement of the Growth Management Act (GMA), which was enacted about 20 years ago. GMA requires that all cities and counties have a comprehensive plan. There are seven sections that are required to be in all Plans. They are:

- Land use
- Utilities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Capital facilities
- Rural (for counties only)
- Shorelines

Comprehensive plans can be amended once a year.

### ***Finding Your Comprehensive Plan***

Some libraries will have the latest copy of city or county comprehensive plans. You can also go on the Internet to your city or county's website and look for "comprehensive plan". Additionally, you can also go directly to a city or county planning department and request a copy of their comprehensive plan.

### ***What to Look For in Your Comprehensive Plan***

Turn to the housing section of the comprehensive plan and read it. There is a general preamble on housing goals and then there are some specific objectives and policies to help the city meet their goal(s).

Now look for a subsection entitled "special needs housing". In this subsection, it should have a list the type of special needs housing, such as, senior housing, foster care facilities, Etc. If Adult Family Homes for people with Developmental Disabilities is not on the list, work the City's Planning Department to get it listed. Also, look for wording that offers waiver of mitigation (impact) fees for non-profits that develop adult family homes.

### ***Changing your Comprehensive Plan***

The planning department should help craft the language of your proposed changes and tell you when the next public hearing regarding changes to the plan will be scheduled. At the hearing, the Council or Committee tasked with approving the changes will review proposed changes in a public session. The information they review has been prepared by planning staff. Usually the committee will approve proposed changes, but it is helpful if the person who is proposing the changes is there to address any questions and to voice support for the change.

## **Making Your Case for Changing Your Comprehensive Plans**

### ***Knowing How Many People are Impacted and Who Can Help***

Contact the local DD office and ask for the number of people with developmental disabilities that live in your zip code. This will help make a case for the potential number of people who could benefit. Another important number for advocacy is the people with developmental disabilities over 50 who are still living with their parents (either by zip code or by county). This is a growing group of people and many will outlive their aging parents. Finding resources in their local community, before their parents die, is an important issue to many people. Emphasize that the State may find a place for them, but not necessarily in their own community. This will increase the pressure for local communities to consider this in their planning. We want to keep people in the communities where they have been living. To move them to another City will increase the trauma of leaving the family home and the other changes they are experiencing. Staying in the City will create caregivers jobs.

### ***Additional Sources for Data***

The local ARC, Parent Coalition, the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the local School District are all resources for determining the number of people in the community who have Developmental Disabilities. Data by zip code is a good way to bring the problem down to the local plan level.

## **Potential Benefits of having a Specific AFH identified in the Comprehensive Plan**

### ***Reduce or Eliminate Impact Fees for DD Housing***

In many communities, building a house requires the payment of numerous impact fees. However, the City can waive the impact fees for non-profits that build homes for low-income families or that build Adult Family Homes for people with special needs. The impact fees that can be reduced or eliminated include: school facilities, recreation facilities, public streets and roads and fire protection. The waiver of these fees can reduce the total cost of the home by as much as 10%.

Also, having Adult Family Homes for people with Developmental Disabilities listed in the Comprehensive Plan may result in an expedited permit process.