



November 10, 2008

Dear Editor:

As the President of Maryland's preeminent senior healthcare association, the LifeSpan Network, I have been puzzled by the contrasting views communities and governments take toward continuing care retirement communities (CCRC). Just recently in the Baltimore metropolitan area, we have seen Howard County Government and its communities embrace the proposed development of a CCRC and a decidedly opposite reaction of a Baltimore neighborhood, Roland Park, which has rallied against a much smaller senior housing proposal.

The benefits of CCRC development are clear. Such communities help seniors take responsibility for their long-term care health needs and help control the growth in spending for public programs like Medicare and Medicaid by providing preventative care and limiting the need for hospitalizations. They allow seniors more options to stay in or nearby their own neighborhoods.

Furthermore, seniors tend to thrive in CCRC settings, which combine healthcare services with social interaction, keeping seniors more in touch and involved in their immediate communities. As the State of Maryland and counties prepare for a doubling of the senior population over the next 20 years, CCRCs will play an important role in building an infrastructure to ensure that seniors are able to maintain active lifestyles and still receive high quality health services.

From a local government perspective, CCRC development is unlike traditional housing projects such as townhomes, apartment complexes and single family homes. It has been demonstrated time after time that CCRCs, independent of how many seniors they house, have a lower impact on traffic congestion, schools, and public safety demands. In addition to scarcely utilizing municipal and county services, CCRCs typically add significant tax revenue to these jurisdictions, thereby providing a net financial benefit to localities.

Often, communities' initial reactions to development are negative. However, I urge elected officials and civic leaders to take the time to fully examine the overall impact and the long term needs of seniors before rushing to judgment. The final analysis clearly indicates the value of CCRCs.

Sincerely,  
Isabella Firth  
President  
LifeSpan