



# **Housing Livability Assessment Tool for Residents**

Checklist for Older Adults to Assess their Housing on Physical and Mental Wellness, Safety and Security, Property Design, and Management Practices to Support Independence to Age-in-Place.



## Introduction

The Housing Livability Assessment Tool for Residents (H-LAT Res) was created by Safe and Healthy Communities (SHC). SHC is a non-profit organization devoted to ensuring safe, healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities for all people. The development of the tool was funded by the NextFifty Initiative, a foundation that promotes independence and dignity for older adults.

***The H-LAT Res is designed to assist older adults, people with disabilities, as well as their family members to assess the health and safety of their housing.***

The tool provides guidance for the design of housing such as apartments and outdoor spaces, policies to support wellbeing, and suggested programs that support health and wellness to help older adults age in place. Older adults (age 60+) can remain healthy, safe, and independent in their housing property as they age with proper accommodations through thoughtfully designed spaces. Maintaining independence can help older adults delay or avoid the need to move to an assisted living or nursing care facility.

This tool supports residents who may need to use a walker, wheelchair, or low sight or hearing. The tool focuses on safety and security features, creating policies and design for people of differing abilities. For example, physical features include plenty of lighting, peepholes in doors, type of flooring, handrails, and grab bars. Management policies should include at least yearly fire drills or for stopping bullying. Additionally, the tool suggests opportunities for social engagement, physical activity, and features to support being in the outdoor space.

The tool is an easy-to-use checklist, divided into three phases with guidance focusing on different aspects of housing.

This tool's checklist design features, policies, and programs that were developed from more than 20 sources including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), AARP Home Fit Guide, Universal Design principles, Aging in Place Enterprise Green Communities Tool, and numerous published research articles related to healthy and safe housing design for older adults. Not all ADA requirements are included in this tool because some standards were too detailed to be effectively incorporated without sacrificing ease-of-use.

Additionally, SHC conducted over 80 interviews from 2019-2021 with primarily residents and a few staff at mostly affordable housing authority properties for older adults and people with disabilities and completed site visits and pilot tested the tool at multiple properties across the U.S. to further improve the tool.

## Instructions

The tool is split into three phases:

- 1) Outdoor Space, Fitness & Wellness, Social Engagement/Education Opportunities
- 2) Throughout Housing Property and Apartments
- 3) Management/Operations

In each phase, the resident will go through a checklist of items and rate each by scoring yes, or no/unsure. At the end of each section, indicate your overall level of satisfaction by circling the appropriate smiley/frowny face (shown below) and write down anything you would like to change about your housing property for each section. At the end of the assessment, indicate your overall level of satisfaction via the appropriate smiling, neutral, or frowning face.

		
<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>It's okay/unsure/ needs improvement</b>	<b>Unsatisfied</b>

**Checklist Rating System:** Each section has an item listed with two options next to it. The two options that you can mark are below.

**Yes:** checking yes means that the housing property does have the feature. If the feature exists on the property but could be expanded or improved, still check yes, but write needed improvements in the notes section.

**No/Unsure:** checking no means that the housing property does not have the feature, or that you are unsure if the housing property has this feature.

**Not applicable (N/A):** checking N/A indicates that this element is not related or relevant because that feature is not part of the housing property.

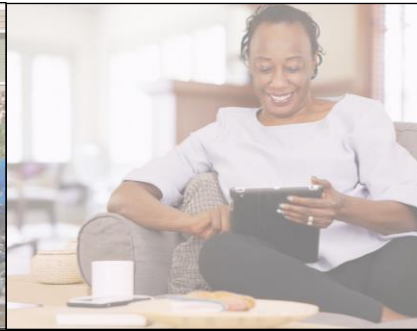
**Before you begin your walkthrough**, think about what are your top 5 features or qualities that you would like in your housing for you to age in place? Mark them below and provide examples for them.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

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**Disclaimer:** Safe and Healthy Communities (SHC) makes no claims, promises, representations, assurances, warranties or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of the contents, examples, references, instructions and/or guidance contained herein. The guidance indicators and strategies discussed may not be suitable for each reader's or situation and consultation with local professionals and compliance with local regulations is advised.

**For a list of all our tools for older adults and people with disabilities, please visit [safeandhealthycommunities.org](https://safeandhealthycommunities.org)**



**Phase 1:  
Outdoors,  
Wellness & Social  
Engagement**

Outdoors

Fitness & Wellness

Social Engagement/  
Educational  
Opportunities

**Phase 2:  
Throughout Housing  
Property and  
Apartment**

Entrances, Exits, and  
Lobby

Stairways, Elevators,  
Hallways, Steps, and  
Flooring

Common Areas

Apartment Entrance

Kitchen

Bathroom

Bedroom

**Phase 3:  
Management &  
Operations**

Residents' Rights  
and Input

Management  
Responsibilities

Training

Maintenance  
Responsibilities

Disease Outbreak  
Response

Pest Control

Fire and Emergency  
Safety



# Phase 1:

Outdoors, Wellness & Social  
Engagement

## Outdoors

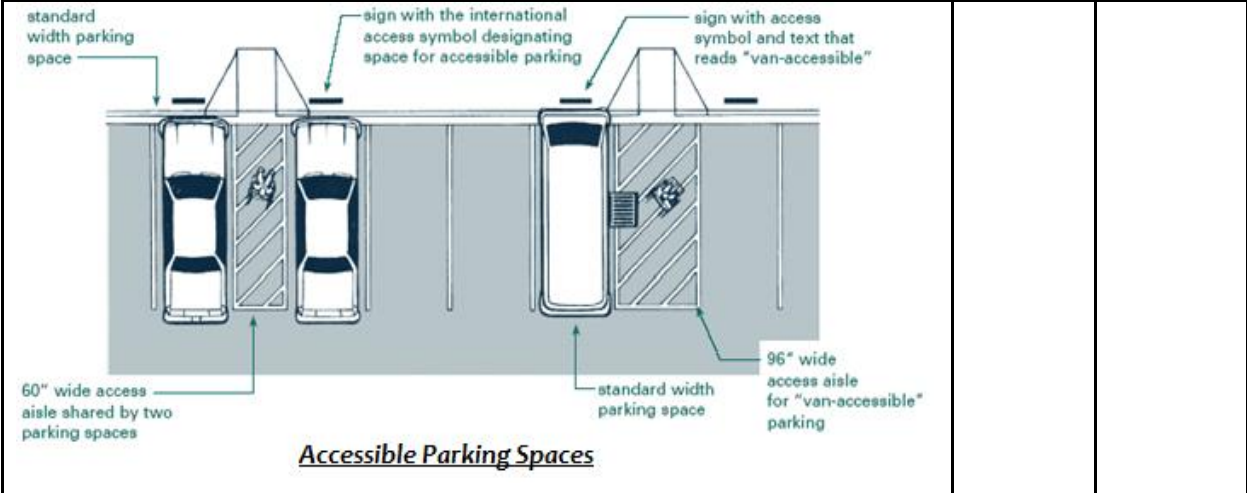
General	Yes	No/ Unsure
Are the deck, patio, or balcony surfaces level with indoor floor level? (There are no trip hazards between going outdoors or back indoors)		
Are the lighting fixtures only overhead lighting, or are there lights that are focused lower where needed?		
Are there any areas for social and cognitive activities such as playing cards?		
Are there areas for recreation and exercise like exercise equipment, croquet, or bocce ball?		
Are there shade structures like umbrellas or sails to protect from the sun?		
Is there at least one water feature such as a fountain or small pond?		
Are there wheeled carts available to carry heavier items to apartments?		
Is the outdoor space maintained at all times for safety and cleanliness? (Is it free of litter, debris, and animal waste?)		
Are there wheelchair accessible drinking fountains or water dispensers available outside or close by indoors?		
Does the outdoor space have a clear layout with clear destination points? (e.g., walking loops with signs where needed)		
Are there handrails along walkways where there is a walk up or down or around curves?		
Do walkways have color/texture changes to indicate surface level changes on edges of pathways or ramps?		
Are the walkways wide enough to allow for two wheelchairs to pass each other?		

Is the paving of walkways level and easy for devices like walkers, rollators, and wheelchairs?		
Are the pathways lined with lights?		
Is there enough available seating with backs and armrests to help get in and out of the seating?		
Are there tables that can accommodate wheelchairs rolling under the table?		
Does the seating contrast in color to the ground? (e.g., white cement and brown bench to see the bench well when trying to sit down).		
Is there seating in sunny and shady areas at all times of day?		
Is there a garden for use and/or enjoyment?		
Is the gardening area protected from sun and wind?		
Is there plenty of shaded seating near the gardening area?		
Is there wheelchair access to raised garden beds, allowing wheelchairs to pull underneath?		
Are the raised garden beds high enough to reduce bending over?		
Are there enough trees, plants, and flowers?		
Are there plants and accessories to attract wildlife? (e.g., birdfeeders)		
Is there a sign near the garden with instructions about gardening?		
Is there a garden watering system installed and functional?		
Can the garden be seen from indoor seating areas so gardeners feel safe and other residents can be enticed to participate?		
Does the parking lot have trees to provide shade and shelter for cars, people, and pavement?		
Is the parking lot lighting adequate?		



Is there a mini ramp in curb in front of entrance for wheelchairs or walkers?		
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Are there accessible parking spots with access aisles that are close to entrances with accessible pathways?		
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**Bonus Indicators:**  
**If any of these are present, add them to the 'Yes' column**

Are there outdoor adult playgrounds with fitness equipment for increasing balance, flexibility, and exercises to get your heart rate up?		
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A photograph showing three people (two men and one woman) using outdoor fitness equipment at a park. The equipment consists of stationary bikes with resistance levers and handles, designed for cardiovascular and strength training.

Is there a greenhouse for year-round gardening?		
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Are there bike racks?		
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Are there places for children to play?		
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Is there at least 1 bag of soil provided for each interested resident for use in garden beds?		
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Is there any outdoor art like murals for resident enjoyment?		
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**Indicate your level of satisfaction for the Outdoors:**

		
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**Based on what is important to you, what would you like to see changed and/or improved at your housing property? (Please consider all "No's" you marked above)**



Empty response area for text input.

## Fitness & Wellness

Fitness	Yes	No/ Unsure
Are there fitness classes that cater to a variety of mobility and ability levels available on a regular basis?		
Are the indoor stairs inviting (e.g., painted), central to use instead of the elevator, and safe? (e.g., well lit).		
Is there signage posted to educate residents about the health benefits of using stairs?		
Are there social fitness groups such as a walking group available?		
Is there indoor exercise equipment such as treadmills, stationary bikes, and stair climbers?		
If there is exercise equipment, are there clear instructions or pictures showing how to correctly use?		
Wellness		
Are there plants in the indoor spaces?		
Are there wellness programs offered regularly? (e.g., weight loss, fall prevention, smoking cessation)		
Are indoor spaces decorated with art and some pictures of nature?		
Are there telehealth (remote/virtual medical care) services or support provided?		
Does the property provide information on local health clinics and support services?		
Does the property allow pets for companionship?		
Are there amenities for dogs? (e.g., dog park, waste bag stations)		

Does the property organize activities and games for residents like arts & crafts, playing cards, quilting, etc.?		
<b>Bonus Indicators: If any of these are present, add them to the 'Yes' column</b>		
Is there a pool available for residents to use to get your heart rate up?		
Do residents have a wearable alert system that allows them to call for help in case of an emergency?		
Are there easily accessible balconies and/or decks?		
Are there in-person healthcare services available?		


**Indicate your level of satisfaction for Fitness & Wellness:**

		
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**Based on what is important to you, what would you like to see changed and/or improved at your housing property? (Please consider all “No’s” you marked above)**

## Social Engagement/Educational Opportunities

Social Engagement/Educational Opportunities	Yes	No/ Unsure
Are there big group spaces for entertainment?		
Are there regular social activities like book clubs, gardening, crafting, and other hobbies?		
Is there a community kitchen for gatherings, cooking, or nutrition classes?		
Are there coffee social hours for residents to interact?		
Are there indoor areas for individual and small group games like puzzles, cards, or chess?		
Are games, books, and other activities provided?		
Are there opportunities to attend spiritual/faith-based gatherings offsite or at property?		
Is there furniture on each floor and near entrances for resting and socializing?		
Is there free/affordable transportation to and from volunteer and social activities or to grocery stores?		
Are there life skills classes offered? (e.g., computer skills, financial planning, cooking healthy, safety, scamming risks)		
<b>Information Sharing</b>		
Is it easy to find information about local volunteer and mentoring opportunities?		
Do common areas have clearly displayed, large-printed information about social activities, volunteer opportunities, property policies, and/or list of nearby pharmacies or grocery stores?		
Are public transportation schedules posted in common areas or shared directly with residents?		

<p>Are residents provided with clear guidance and information on how to get Access-a-Ride, Dial-A-Ride, or other taxi services?</p>		
<p>Is important information easily visible in large, easy-to-read fonts? (e.g., mostly black on white backgrounds or other contrasting colors)</p> 		

**Indicate your level of satisfaction for the Fitness & Social Engagement/Educational Opportunities:**

		
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**Based on what is important to you, what would you like to see changed and/or improved at your housing property? (Please consider all “No’s” you marked above)**



## **Phase 2:**

**Throughout Housing Property and  
Apartment**

## Housing Property

Entrances, Exits, and Lobby	Yes	No/ Unsure
At the entrance, if there is a ramp, are there handrails on both sides?		
Are there secure handrails on both sides of entrances if steps are present?		
Is the entrance door easy to unlock, lock, open, and close?		
Is there a level, curb-free path from parking lot or drop off area to property entrance?		
Is there a bench or table near the entrance door for placing packages while locking or unlocking the door?		
Do entrances have awnings (overhangs) for protection from the weather?		
Is there at least one step-free main entrance?		
Is there an intercom system at entrances that can allow in visitors?		
Does the main entrance have push button automatic doors?		
Are the address numbers large, illuminated, and visible from the street?		
Can the front desk staff easily see the lobby by the entrance for security?		
Are administrative offices near entry with seating nearby and doors open for residents to easily visit?		
Are there windows that allow for natural light?		
Do windows have views of nature?		
Are elevator buttons centered and easy to reach?		



Is building layout information posted at entrances and on each floor?		
Are there sensors for outdoor lights to automatically turn lights on at dusk and off at dawn and/or when motion is detected?		
Are outside walkways and entrances well-lit so you can feel safe?		
<b>Stairways, Elevators, Hallways, Steps, Flooring</b>		
Are there sturdy handrails on at least one side of the hallways?		
Are elevator thresholds even with the flooring?		
Are the elevators large enough to accommodate wheelchairs and emergency stretcher beds?		
If carpeted, is the carpeting short and a neutral solid color like tan without patterns or dark spots.		
Does the elevator lobby area on each floor use different furniture and/or wall colors to help remind residents which floor they are on?		
Are there non-slip adhesive strips to reduce slipping applied to any uncarpeted steps in stairwell?		
Is there contrasting paint colors to distinguish surfaces? (e.g., edges of stairs, walls from door frames or floors)		
Is there lighting in the hallways and stairs for nighttime?		
Are there LED step-lights along hallway flooring in case of power failure?		
Are large area rugs secured to the floor with double-sided tape or non-slip mats? (e.g., no scatter or throw rugs)		
Are hallways wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass each other?		
Is there a medical emergency response system (e.g., a touch button) to connect to the fire, police, or any other emergency response department?		

<b>Common Areas</b>		
Are there restrooms near the common areas?		
Is there a computer station with low-cost or free internet?		
Are doorway thresholds low to ground and not a tripping hazard?		
Is there accessible seating with backs and armrests to help residents in standing?		
Are electrical cords secured along walls?		
If landlines, is there convenient telephone access or push buttons to call for help, accommodates those with hearing or vision impairments?		
Are electrical outlets placed at a height that does not require excessive bending or reaching to use?		
Are there signs posted near public bathroom sinks and handwashing stations as reminders for staff and residents to wash their hands?		
Is there hand sanitizer available in common areas?		
Are common area and public bathroom trash cans no-touch or foot operated?		
Is there a shared laundry room on each floor for residents to use?		
Does the laundry room have a front-loading washer and dryer that is up off floor?		

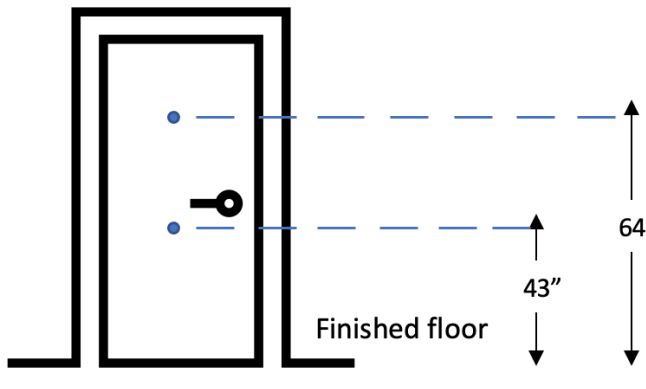

**Indicate your level of satisfaction for the Housing Property:**


		
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**Based on what is important to you, what would you like to see changed and/or improved at your housing property? (Please consider all “No’s” you marked above)**




# Inside Apartment

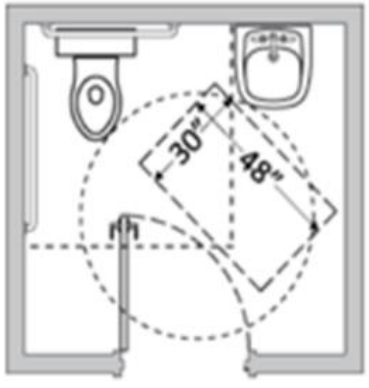
Guidance below is based on single-level apartments or other housing

Apartment Entrance	Yes	No/ Unsure
<p>Does the entrance door have both high and low peephole?</p>  <p>The diagram shows a door with two peepholes. A horizontal dashed line from the top peephole to a vertical arrow on the right indicates a height of 64 inches. A horizontal dashed line from the bottom peephole to a vertical arrow on the right indicates a height of 43 inches. The text 'Finished floor' is positioned below the 43-inch measurement.</p>		
<p>Does apartment door have deadbolt, and secure side latch, or chain?</p>		
<p>Is the entry threshold low to ground and not a tripping hazard?</p>		
<p>Are the interior doorways large enough to fit a wheelchair? (about 3 feet wide)</p>		
<p>Are there lever door handles throughout the apartment?</p>  <p>The image shows a modern, silver-colored lever door handle with a cylindrical grip and a circular base plate.</p>		
<p>Are light switches rocker style and easy to reach?</p>		

			
Are there air conditioning vents in each room?			
Are thermostats placed at a height that does not require excessive bending or reaching to use?			
Does the apartment have an open floor plan with plenty of space for wheelchairs to turn around?			
Are electrical outlets placed at a height that does not require excessive bending or reaching to use?			
Are electrical cords secured along the wall?			
<b>Kitchen</b>			
Is sink faucet lever, touch, pedal, or sensor style? (e.g., faucet without a twisting motion)			
Is there good lighting and task lighting? (e.g., lighting above the sink, stove, and countertops)			
Is the microwave placed at countertop level?			
Is there plenty of easily accessible cabinets or shelves that do not require the use of a stepstool?			
Are the handles on cabinets and drawers easy to grab? (e.g., not knobs)			
Are work surfaces at an easily accessible height?			
Is there a seated workspace available? (e.g., table, pull-out work surface or removing lower cabinets)			
Are easy-to-read appliance controls placed at the front to avoid reaching over hot surface?			

Is there a side-by-side refrigerator/freezer with ice/water dispenser on door?		
Are large area rugs secured to the floor with double-sided tape or non-slip mats? (e.g., no scatter or throw rugs)		
<p>Is there a side-hinged door oven or wall oven elevated off ground to avoid excessive bending?</p> 		
Are there smart sensors to remind residents to close or turn off appliances?		
Are there stove sensors to shut it off if the temperature gets too hot or stove is left on for too long?		
Does the electric cooktop with level burners have red warning light indicating when surface is hot?		
<b>Bathroom</b>		
Does a shower have a level entry with no step?		
Is shower entrance wide enough for a wheelchair?		
Is there a light in shower stall?		
Are there grab bars in shower and bathtub that are adequately long and sturdy?		
Is there a shower/bath seat/bench that is permanently installed?		

<p>Can the vanity accommodate a wheelchair with removable base cabinets and have a panel to protect the user from pipes?</p> 		
<p>Is the showerhead hand-held with a flexible hose?</p>		
<p>Does the hand-held shower head have an easy ON/OFF button?</p>		
<p>Is there slip-resistant flooring and non-slip strips in bathroom and/or shower?</p>		
<p>Is the toilet higher than a standard toilet or is a toilet seat riser provided to make it easier to sit and stand?</p>		
<p>Are there bars to aid sitting down or standing up from the toilet?</p> 		
<p>Does the toilet paper holder allow roll changes with one hand?</p> 		

Does the bathroom door have a wide opening with lever handles?		
<p>Does the bathroom have space for a wheelchair to turnaround?</p> 		
<b>Bedroom</b>		
Does the closet have an adjustable hanging rod that can be moved to different heights?		
Can shelves in the closet be adjusted to different heights?		
Is there lighting in the closets?		
Are there visible smoke/heat detectors within 15 feet of the bedroom?		
Is the carbon monoxide detector within 15 feet of the bedroom and can it be heard from each room?		
Can furniture be moved around easily?		
<b>Bonus Indicators:</b> <b>If any of these are present, add them to the 'Yes' column</b>		
Are there touch or sound (clapping) controlled lamps?		
Are there bed and chair fall guards available to protect against falls?		
Is there a wireless control system for the thermostat, front door, alarm, lights, etc.?		



Are there monitors that allow staff/family to check-in on residents?		
Is there a voice-controlled clock and/or Amazon Alexa?		
Are there house-keeping services available to clean the apartment and pick up trash?		
Are there laundry services that pick up and clean the residents' laundry?		
Is there a balcony or patio in the apartment to be able to easily enjoy the outdoors?		

**Indicate your level of satisfaction for Inside Apartment:**

		
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**Based on what is important to you, what would you like to see changed and/or improved at your housing property? (Please consider all “No’s” you marked above)**



# Phase 3:

## Management/Operations

## Management/Operations of Housing Property

Residents' Rights and Input	Yes	No/ Unsure
Have you received a copy of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rights and responsibilities?		
Have you received a copy of the resident handbook in your preferred language? (e.g., includes emergency phone numbers, property rules and regulations, transportation information, nearby grocery stores, list of local services)		
Is there a resident survey completed at least once every 1 to 3 years?		
Is it clear that you have the right to file complaints with management, owners, or government agencies without retaliation, harassment, or intimidation?		
Is it clear that you have the right to organize and participate in decisions regarding the well-being of the property and your home such as having a resident advisory board/council?		
Is there a comment box for residents to provide feedback anonymously?		
<b>Management Responsibilities</b>		
Is there a resident manager onsite or available 24/7?		
Do management staff communicate with residents on all relevant issues?		
Are there resources for reporting elder abuse posted? To report elder abuse or find services for older adults and their families, call 1-800-677-1116		
Do operators and managers give prompt consideration to all resident complaints and resolve them as quickly as possible?		
Is there a smoke-free policy throughout buildings?		
Does management share information on hoarding issues with staff and residents?		

Do residents receive clear documentation about the fees and monthly charges?		
Does entrance have a clear policy posted “Never Allow Strangers into Building” and “Do Not Prop Door Open”?		
Is there a clear policy and posted signs for “No Bullying Allowed or Aggressive Behavior by Staff or Residents”?		
Does management have a policy ensuring equity and diversity of residents?		
Is there office space for visiting partners to work from? (e.g., service providers)		
<b>Training</b>		
Are staff provided cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or automated external defibrillator (AED) and first aid training at least yearly?		
Does management offer training to staff about how to help with hoarding behavior?		
Are there classes for management and staff specific to aging and the needs of older adults?		
Is there training for residents and staff about bullying?		
<b>Maintenance Responsibilities</b>		
Does management have a protocol for broken elevators that is shared with residents?		
Does management ensure that pebbles and salt are removed from walkways and parking lots within 24 hours after snow/ice storms?		
Does maintenance address work orders in a timely manner?		
Are urgent work orders that can cause injury, threaten health, or cause serious property damage taken care of as soon as possible?		

## Emergency and Fire Protocol

Are residents and staff educated about the property's emergency plans and procedures?

Does management have Fire and Emergency Safety Regulations?

Does management conduct regular Fire Safety Drills at least once a year?

Does management conduct regular tests of fire alarms once a year?

Does management have annual fire safety inspections that are in accordance with federal and state requirements?

Are there large maps showing fire exits and escape routes posted throughout the property?

Is there signage and signals using sound, light, or strobe lights for emergency exiting?

Are there water leak sensors to detect flooding in laundry room, bathroom, and kitchen?






## Pest Controls

Does a licensed pest/infestation control company make regular visits?

Does management put "No Pesticide" signs clearly marked on residents' doors for those sensitive to and/or who have relevant medical issues?



















Does management use less-toxic options for pest control available for those who have the “No Pesticide” signs up on doors? (e.g., borax)		
Does management inform residents in several ways of pesticide usage at least 24 hours before spraying occurs?		
<b>Disease Outbreak Response</b>		
During respiratory disease outbreaks, are all residents, staff, and visitors required to wear a face mask when in public spaces?		
Are all informational materials written in large font and easily accessible to residents?		
Is there a clear schedule or sign-up sheet for residents to use when they can use shared spaces to restrict the number of people at one-time?		
Are there printed materials posted about outbreak locations including building entrances, common restrooms, and hallway bulletin boards?		
<b>Bonus Indicators: If any of these are present, add them to the 'Yes' column</b>		
Is there a lease video in different languages of what is allowed and not allowed at the property?		

**Indicate your level of satisfaction for Management/Operations of the Housing Property:**

		
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**Based on what is important to you, what would you like to see changed and/or improved at your housing property? (Please consider all “No’s” you marked above)**

## Final Scoring Sheet

Indicate your level of satisfaction in each category			
Outdoor Spaces/Property			
Fitness & Wellness			
Social Engagement/Education Opportunities			
Housing Property			
Inside Apartment			
Management/Operations			

Overall level of satisfaction			
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Were the five attributes you named on page three met? If not, what could be improved?



**Go back through the tool and make a plan to address any item that is important to you with property management or form a group with your fellow residents to address important issues in your housing property.**

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**Acknowledgements:** Karen Roof, Emily Hentz Leister, Rena Soller, Sean Rusnak, Emily Hentz Leister, Amelia Cavazos, Elizabeth Larson, and Leah Pidgeon with Safe and Healthy Communities, and Housing Authorities in Jefferson County (CO), City and County of Denver, City of Aurora, Grand Junction CO, and Higgins Plaza and Kavod Senior Living and other private housing properties for pilot testing the tool at their property(ies) and provided feedback, allowing SHC to pilot test or conduct resident interviews.