



This research identifies the challenges that low-income, elderly renters face when attempting to stay in their own dwelling or community as they grow older, and suggests remedies for those challenges.

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## Investigating Aging-In-Place Strategies Used by N.C. Low-Income, Elderly Renters

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### Who cares and why?

North Carolina has a growing population of elderly residents. According to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, the state ranks 9th in the country in the size of its age 65 and older population. Nearly a quarter (24%) of the state's home or apartment renters are also age 55 and older; when looking at the number of renters in rural areas, that percent is considerably higher.

Many of these elderly renters want to “age in place,” meaning that they want to continue to live safely, comfortably and independently in their own home and community. Aging in place can yield cost savings for families, governments, and health systems: the median monthly payment for a nursing home was \$5,243 in 2013, while non-institutional long-term care, such as living at home using an in-home care service, was \$928. Aging in place also benefits people's emotional health, by allowing them to stay in familiar surroundings; and benefits the community, which gains their economic contributions and stability.

The number of seniors who rent is projected to increase significantly in next 15 years, from 6 million in 2010 to 12 million in 2030. Aging renters are particularly vulnerable if they have low incomes, making them unable to adapt their living space or relocate to an appropriate senior housing unit. Few studies on older renters aging in place have been conducted in the field of housing.

This project aims to examine the factors which may affect elderly, low-income renters pursuing their desire to age in place, and states the strategies that they should employ if they want to stay in their current living place or community.

The findings from this project contribute to a new understanding of the elderly renters' decision-making processes when choosing their place to age, and will provide knowledge about the challenges they currently face in their home and community environment. Identifying these challenges can also be a benefit to landlords, property managers, senior-service agencies, local municipalities or state governments, leading to their saving time and effort when assisting aging renters in their communities.

### What has the project done so far?

Researchers assessed aging renters' residential (home, neighborhood, and town) environments, their health and financial conditions, and their formal and informal resources by conducting 25 onsite interviews with urban aging renters; 51 surveys with rural aging renters; and 23 home design assessments in a central urban city. Currently, researchers have interviewed four landlords as a pilot study to identify their perceptions and the unit preparations that they are willing to make for aging renters.



This research has revealed hindrances to low-income aging renters' ability to age in place, including a lack of affordable rental units; insecure finances; negative health outcomes; and fewer elderly-friendly design features in their homes. Senior service or program providers are encouraged to pay more attention to these findings, so that they can better serve older renters who want to age in place.

## Impact Statement

The number of older renters in the U.S. is expected to double from 6 million in 2010 to 12 million in 2030. Aging in place can yield substantial savings for elderly families and the government compared to long-term care homes. North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University researchers studied the challenges faced by low-income older renters who are aging in place. These seniors often struggle with unaffordable housing, unsupportive home environments, and a lack of formal and informal resources. Identifying these obstacles to aging in place will help develop practical strategies to support aging renters.

### What research is needed?

The next step is to conduct an in-depth study of rural seniors' aging-in-place indicators, leading to a better understanding of the housing, health and service needs of older adults in rural communities, and to contribute to developing policies or service programs which ultimately will serve to stabilize, enhance and sustain the rural community.

### Want to know more?

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