

**Published September 3, 2008****Affordable Apartments Limited for Lamorinda Seniors***By Jennifer Wake*

According to the U.S. Census Bureau there were nearly 40 million seniors over age 65 with in 2006. Although incomes tend to be higher for Lamorinda seniors, many find they can no homes and extensive gardens, can no longer drive, or due to changing health can no longer They then must find alternative housing. Options that are close to transportation, shopping seniors keep their independence, but the choices in Lamorinda are limited. And for those se incomes, finding affordable senior housing in the area is nearly impossible. When Marilyn Finn Washington D.C. area to her home town of Lafayette six years ago, she was thrilled to find not only rented mostly to seniors, but had reasonable rates and was within walking distance believe it," Finn says. "I had been looking at some really terrible places for the same rent a areas." One apartment manager even told Finn she was "not a good fit" because the renter regularly held parties in the common area, late into the night. Her rent for a one-bedroom a per month at her complex on Lafayette Circle. The apartment openings were not advertised was looking to have individual seniors rent the apartments," Finn says. "Since there isn't m had one water heater for the sixteen units, they needed to keep the units occupied by indi maximum of one car." Seniors paid their rent on time and people stayed due to the low ren renters and the owner, explains Finn. Unfortunately, four years ago Finn's apartment comp model was changed. Rents immediately increased by \$100 per month. Many of the seniors advertised, and turnover was high. Recently the property changed hands again. Last week rents will increase \$150 per month in September, with her monthly rent increasing to \$1,10 average for the area). She plans to check out other options, but her search may be a diffi Choices owner Linda Wurth. For the past 30 years, Wurth has worked with hundreds of sen help them find appropriate and affordable housing. "It's overwhelming for people," she says there are only three apartment complexes with subsidized rental units for seniors on fixed i (Chateau Lafayette subsidized by the California Housing Finance Agency (CHFA), Orinda Se the U.S. Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Towne Center Apartments v program through the city of Lafayette), waiting lists can reach into the hundreds. Chateau currently closed, and the only way to find out if it has reopened is to continually call their openings do occur, the majority of these spots are given to those seniors with extremely lo Orinda Senior Village, where approximately six to 10 units open each year, the first 40 per go to those applicants with annual incomes of \$18,100 or less. The rents charged would be

income, minus approved medical expenses. "Even if you get on the list, if your income is not in the income bracket, your wait may be longer," Wurth says. And the waiting list is not the only mountain to climb. The paperwork at Orinda Senior Village includes a 14-page application and a meeting regarding the residential selection policy. "There is a great need for affordable housing and we can walk someone through the system," Wurth says. Fortunately, additional senior housing is being discussed at recent Lamorinda town and city council meetings. Part of the Town of Moraga's Center Street project includes hundreds of senior housing units that would be walking distance to shopping and transportation, however, it may be too little, too late. "I love living in Lafayette. I grew up here. My children live in the area," Finn says. "Living in a safe area and walking to shopping, the library, the bank, the BART is a retiree's dream. I hope that I can keep adjusting my life to my rent increases, but when I can't. It is great comfort to see concern [by city planners] about affordable senior housing in the area. I hope it arrives in time for me."



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