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FOREWORD

This Handbook deals with the Section 202 Direct Loan Program for Housing for the Elderly or Handicapped and the use of Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments in such housing. Together, they have played a significant role in the resurgence of this different and increasingly important segment of housing and community development.

Housing the elderly or handicapped requires that special consideration be given to such factors as location and site, architectural and special design features, and the inclusion of a wide range of services and programs. As discussed below, these factors are linked together to help offset the problems which tend to accompany the aging process: reduced incomes; loss of spouses, relatives and friends; dispersal of families; declining health, and how to use vast increases in leisure time. When these factors are melded together, they can help the elderly to remain independent and prevent their premature institutionalization. For the handicapped, proper consideration of these same factors can mean escape from virtual imprisonment in their own homes, or in many cases release from the curse of institutional living.

Given these concerns, sites are selected to avoid steep inclines, noxious odors and the like. Architectural barriers, such as steps and narrow doorways are eliminated to assure ingress and egress, liveability of units and access to all areas by all residents. Buildings are designed to meet special safety requirements, wider corridors are included, nonslip flooring is installed, shelves and electric outlets are lower than usual and grab-bars are provided. Private kitchens and bathrooms are included, with or without provisions for central dining. These are the kinds of requirements which generally are apt both for the elderly and the handicapped.

Other problems also must be considered. Because the elderly face declining physical capacities and health, a variety of health and medical facilities and services should be available in the community. Lower than average incomes combined with lessened energy make reasonable rents and convenience to transportation, shopping, personal and other services critical to the residents of these projects. Opportunities for meaningful involvement in voluntary services and other community affairs, part-time employment, and participation in a variety of recreational activities need to be available and encouraged. Aging often is accompanied by the loss of one's spouse, as well as other relatives and friends. Children grow up, move and raise their own families. Thus, older people may need new friends and new companions as an offset to their departure. The handicapped, too, have similar, if not the same problems, and they too, need to be given careful and humane consideration and attention.

Although these problems cannot be eliminated entirely, the combination of special architectural considerations and design features with a variety of services and activity programs can help offset them to a very significant degree. In any event, it is particularly important that such housing not be viewed as simply another institution among institutions,

or as the last stop in life. Rather, it offers wider choices of where and how to live and opportunities for new friendships. This is housing in the community which challenges its residents to engage in meaningful activities as they wish, to seek and enjoy new adventures --- to get fun out of life --- all while retaining their own self-identification as independent, contributing members of society.

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