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The Design of Local-Authority Rental Housing for the Elderly That Improves Their Quality of Life.

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Abstract:
As the population ages, the demand for suitable rental housing will increase. Suitable housing means housing that can accommodate those impairments that typically correspond with ageing. This paper explores the quality of life (QoL) requirements of those elderly with high-care needs who live in rental housing. Using a qualitative case study approach, it examines the living experiences of six elderly people who need assistance and are living in local-authority rental housing in New Zealand. The themes of QoL were identified from the literature and related to the larger themes of; 1. Activities and independence, 2. Sense of control, 3. Privacy, 4. Relationships, 5. Quality of care, and 6. Comfort. The survey consisted of a detailed documentation of the physical environment, followed by interviews with and full-day observations of the residents and their caregivers. The study finds that the design of housing that improves their QoL requires solutions to accommodate the various conflicting needs for their QoL that include those derived from the diversity in the user’s preferences and impairments. In the design of rental housing, there is greater need for additional or reorganized space to accommodate caregivers and visitors, maintain residents’ independence, privacy, and other aspects important for their QoL.