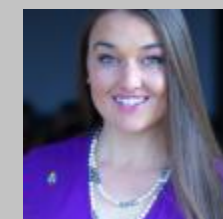




Neuro-Inclusive Intentional Communities in Colorado: Investigating Demand & Policy Recommendations

Desiree Kameka Galloway

Lead Consultant, Neuro-Inclusive Housing Solutions



Research Project Partners

Funded by:



Colorado Developmental
Disabilities Council

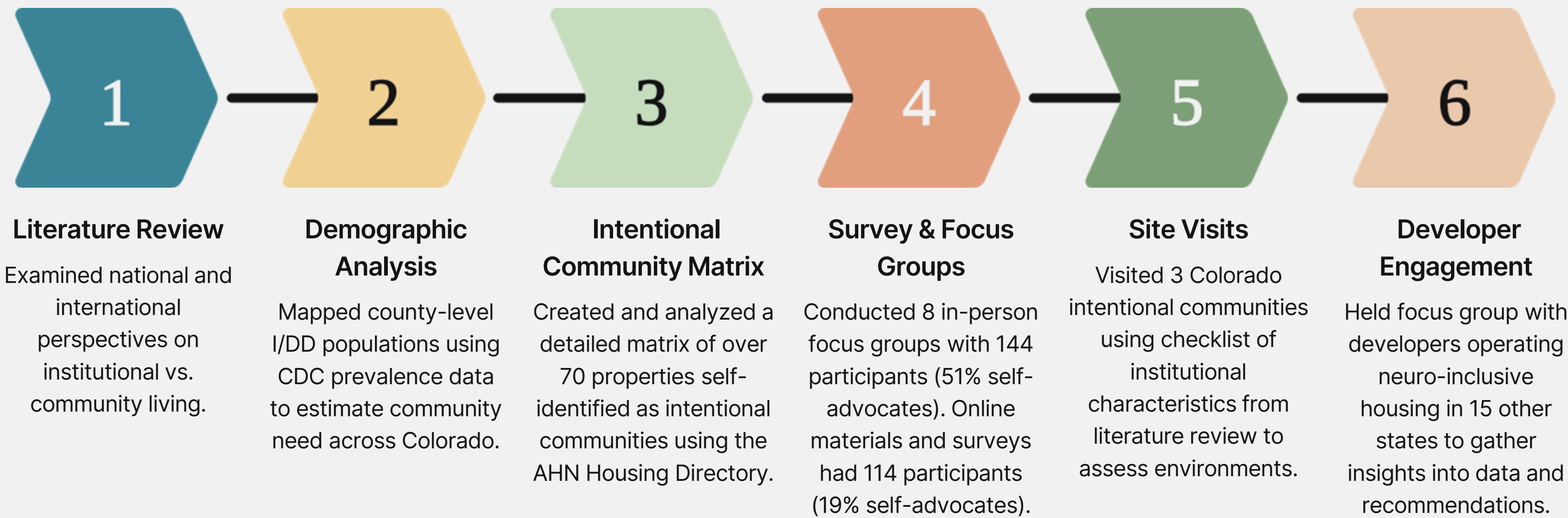


The Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Grant No. 2401COSD totaling \$1,178,610.00, 100% from federal funding. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.



*Special thank you to the leadership of the research and production team, especially
Brian Be, Shannon Sullivan, Tim Dolan (IHC), Mary Eargle (AHN),
and all the participants, focus group hosts and critical readers
who contributed time and energy.*

Research Approach & Elements of the Study



“Need people who know and understand my odd behaviors when in the community. Need everyday activities easily accessible, need friends, want to be settled in a community so when my parents die I don’t have to move.”
–Self-advocate participant

Colorado's I/DD Invisible Housing Crisis

Key data highlights the urgent shortage and economic barriers for adults with I/DD in Colorado

Identified Coloradans with I/DD relying on family

95,000

Risking housing and care gaps as caregivers age.

Identified adults with caregivers aged 60+

21,000

About double the capacity of Red Rocks Ampitheatre.

Receive Medicaid DD or SLS waiver services

13,583

Under 15% of estimated population using I/DD-specific waivers.

Max SSI income if not working

\$967

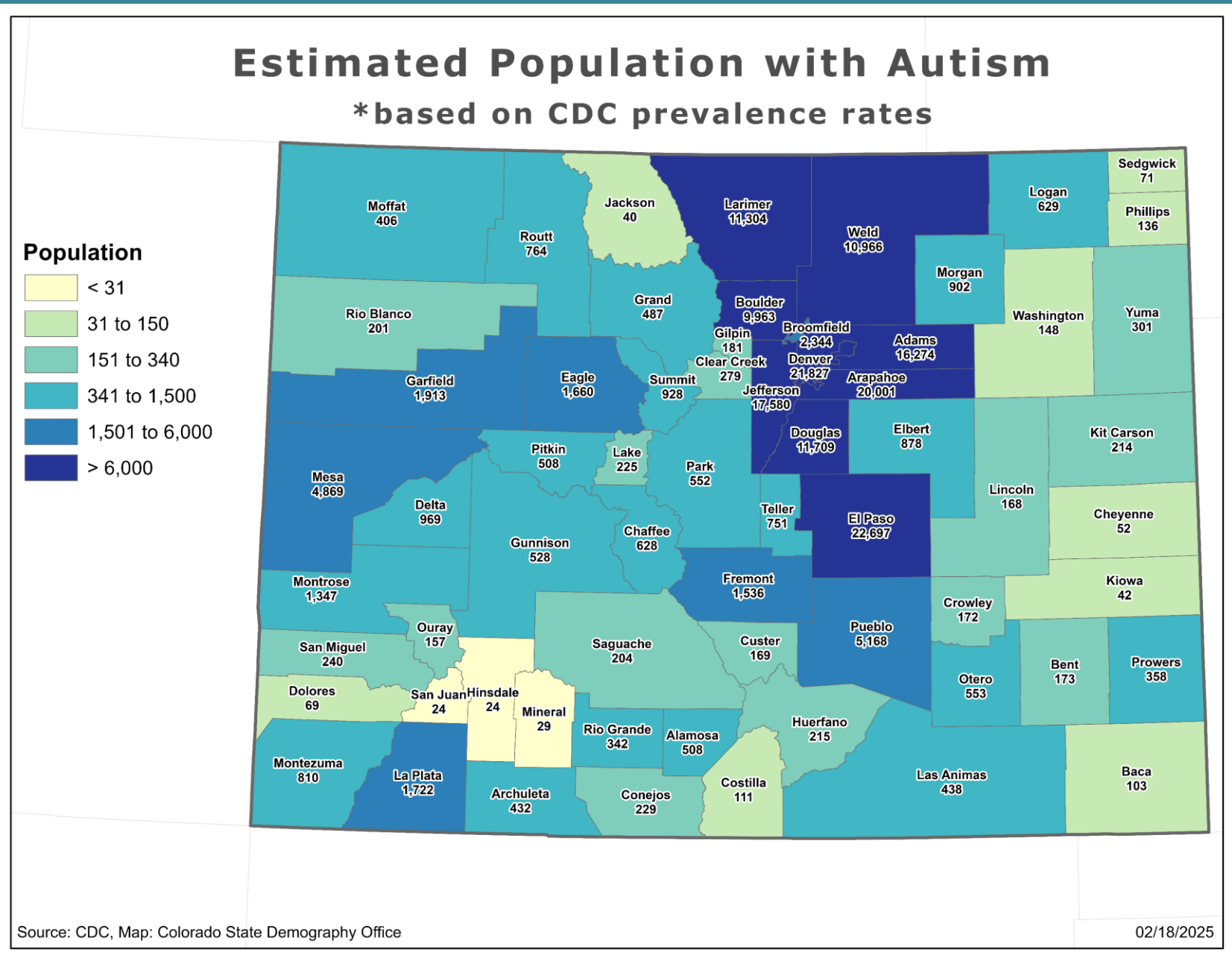
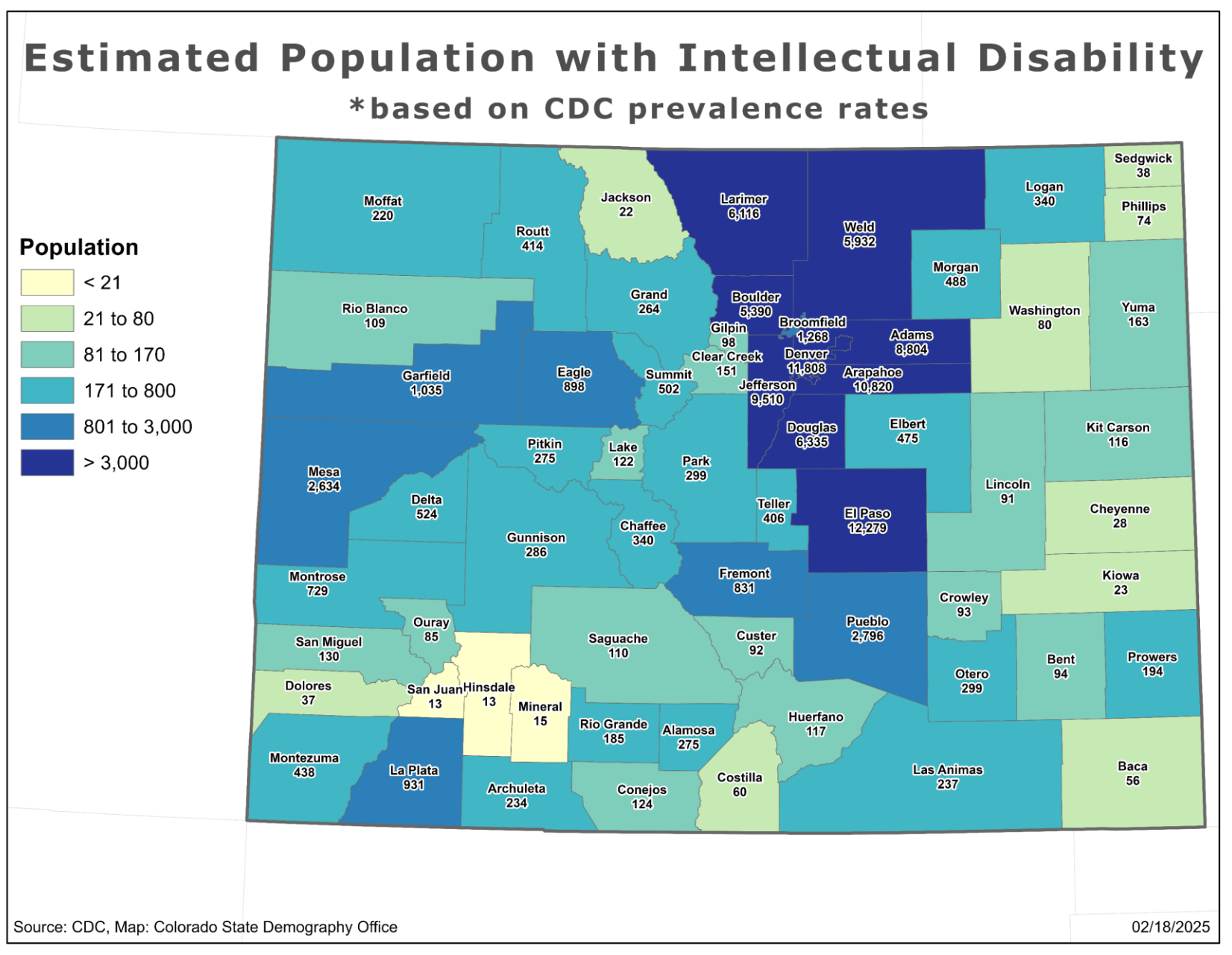
CO has less than 4,500 disability-specific vouchers.

“80% of parents have no plan. They trust us (PASA) to help them figure it out. Access to vouchers would be a game changer because most are using most of their SSI disbursement on rent.”

-Nicole DeVries, Executive Director, Wellspring Community (Unity on Park Site Visit)

Mapping County-Level I/DD Populations in Colorado

Visualizing autism and I/DD prevalence data to guide demand of supportive housing and services



Colorado may have over 475,000 residents with autism and/or other I/DD, based on prevalence rates.

Colorado's Invisible I/DD Housing Crisis

Key data highlights the urgent shortage and economic barriers for adults with I/DD in Colorado

Adults with I/DD employed

8,000

Even when working, they are extremely low income.

Avg. less than 13 hours a week

\$13.65/hr

With SSI, total monthly income ~\$1,400 if working at this rate

Affordable housing gap

162,000

Huge shortage of units at or below \$1,100/month statewide.

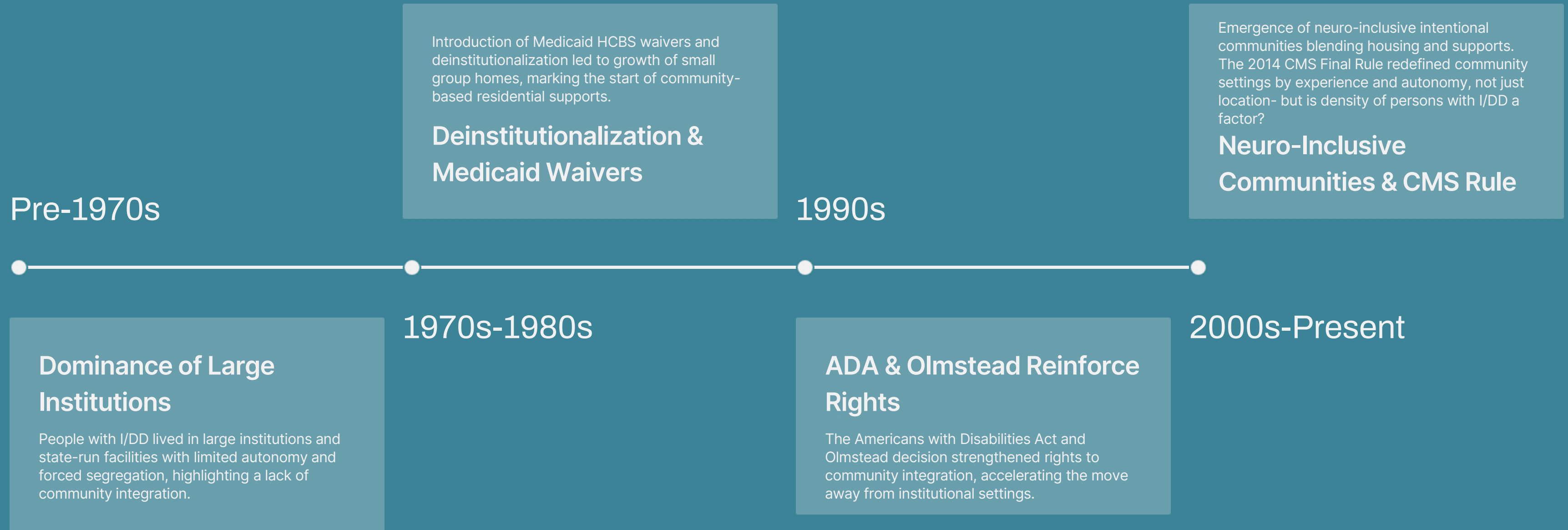
Colorado ranks 8th least affordable state

8th

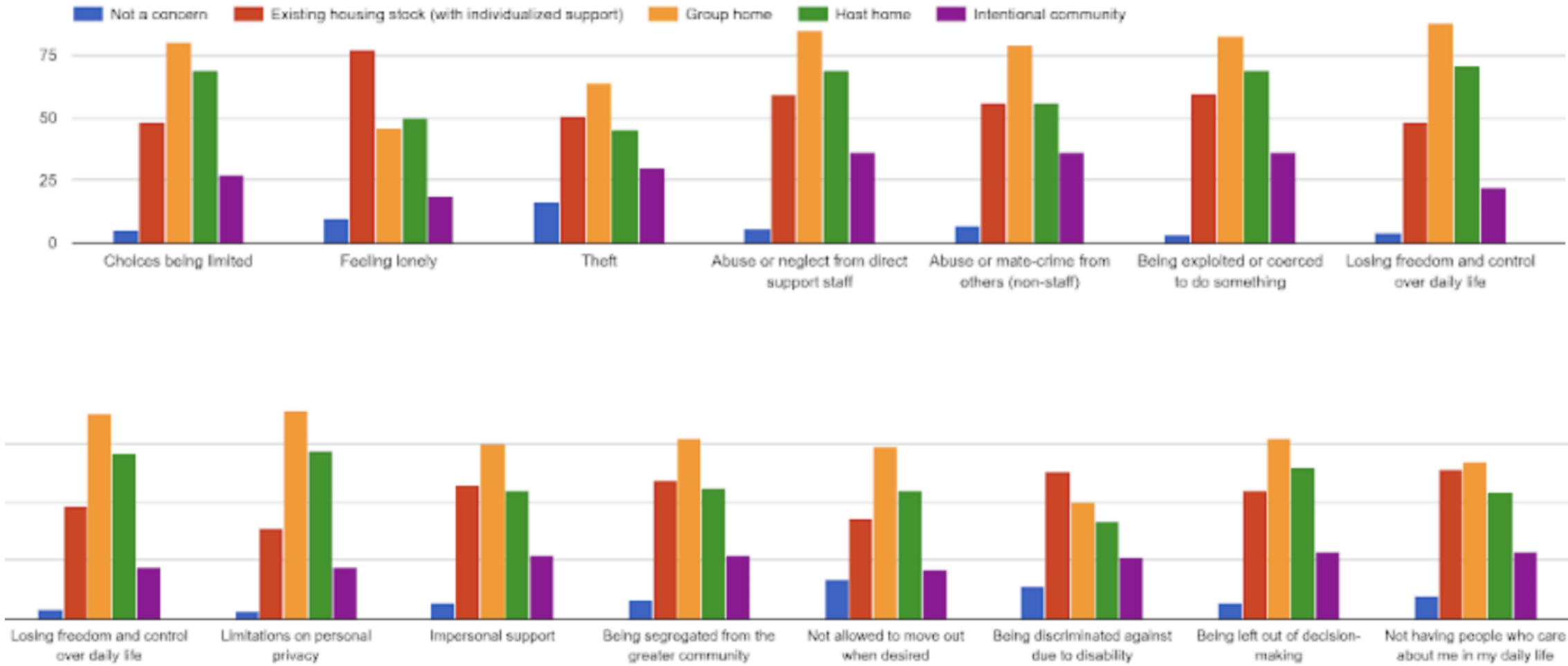
One of many populations who need affordable housing.

“Capital is the hardest part of development. There are no market funding sources [for neuro-inclusive housing].” –Housing Developer Focus Group Participant

Historical Context: Evolution of Residential Options



Fears or Strong Concerns Across Setting Types



Stakeholders Feedback on Institutional Settings

Institutional Characteristics Identified

- Clinical, Sterile Atmosphere
- Rigid Schedules and Limited Autonomy
- Lack of Privacy and Personal Space
- Staff-Controlled Environment
- Group-Based, Depersonalized Living
- Segregation from the Broader Community: Gated campuses or fenced-in perimeters to “keep people in”
- Emphasis on Safety over Independence: Locked doors, constant in-person surveillance, and risk-averse policies that feel overly restrictive.

Stakeholder Recommendations to Prevent Settings from Becoming Institutional

- ✓ Governance & Resident Voice: Establish resident advisory boards, ensure influence in governance, include people with disabilities in leadership, and transparent reporting.
- ✓ Oversight & Accountability: Mandate third-party oversight, regular inspections, sanctions for non-compliance, dedicated advocates, and transparent evaluations.
- ✓ Accessibility & Built Environment: Design with modern amenities, diverse unit sizes, full HVAC, inclusive common spaces, and universal design standards.
- ✓ Funding & Financing: Create dedicated funding, streamline benefits paperwork, adjust for cost-of-living, and allow self-direction of funds.
- ✓ Regulation & Compliance: Uphold resident choice, avoid restrictive programming, remove limiting policies, balance integration mandates, and protect rights.
- ✓ Support & Services: Guarantee needed supports, provide accommodation authorization, select trauma-informed and neuro-affirming staff.
- ✓ Community Integration & Inclusion: Incentivize quality and diversity, engage community in planning, offer shared public spaces.
- ✓ Training & Capacity Building: Mandate safety drills and first responder training, educate housing professionals, and develop clear orientation materials.





93% of Participants Reported a Desire for Neuro-Inclusive Intentional Communities as a Housing Option

Colorado stakeholder's priorities for future housing (open-ended themes)



Social Connection & Belonging

"A. has lived by himself for 5 years and is so lonely that it affects almost everything he does. And now he is withdrawing into himself further with grocery delivery, food delivery, etc. If I (dad) didn't see him 3+ times weekly, even though he has external PASAs, I think it would go badly for him."



On-site Access to Support / Supportive Amenities

"Inconsistency of staff always becomes our problem when it isn't our problem."



Safety & Security

"Someone to track or know if strangers are trying to get in."
"Safety leads to freedom."



Autonomy & Independence

"I want my freedom (not a host home)."
"Supported independence"

93% of Participants Reported a Desire for Neuro-Inclusive Intentional Communities as a Housing Option

Colorado stakeholder's priorities for future housing (open-ended themes)



Understanding Neurodiversity

"I want to live in a community where people understand and accept me for who I am. I want friends who get me and a place where I can be myself without judgment. It's about feeling safe, happy, and included."



Purposeful Engagement & Planned Activities

"Planned activities are important because it's hard to keep up as family caregivers age."



Cognitively Accessible & Supportive Design

"Universally designed infrastructure to accommodate my cognitive, physical and social challenges... [challenges] could potentially be avoided if a community has built-in disability accommodations."



Stable & Resident-Centered

"Changing host homes every few years disrupts all natural support systems we work hard to create."



Key Features Driving Intentional Community Choices

Explore the top ranked factors influencing housing decisions for adults with I/DD in intentional communities

1 Affordability

Most residents prioritize affordable housing and rental subsidies to reduce financial barriers for adults with I/DD.

2 Oversight

External advocacy and oversight bodies ensure community safeguards and protect resident rights.

3 Natural Supports

Informal networks and community bonds create a supportive environment enhancing residents' inclusion.

4 24/7 Access to Support

Round-the-clock support providing a safety net for residents at all times.

5 Neighbors Seeking Neurodiverse Relationships

Residents value living among people who want to foster relationships, promoting acceptance and mutual understanding.

6 Extra Security

Security features like cameras and key fobs ensure a safe living environment for residents and families.

7 Transportation

Additional options beyond public transportation as this is a major barrier to accessing the greater community.

8 Cognitive Accessibility Features

Features accommodating sensory and cognitive differences create an inclusive, comfortable living space.

9 Things To Do

Planned social activities with transportation or being in walking distance to social activities or opportunities is desired.

10 Prepared Meals & Group Dining

Food insecurity and exhaustive executive functioning demands of food preparation may.

Colorado Site Visits: Case Studies of Intentional Communities

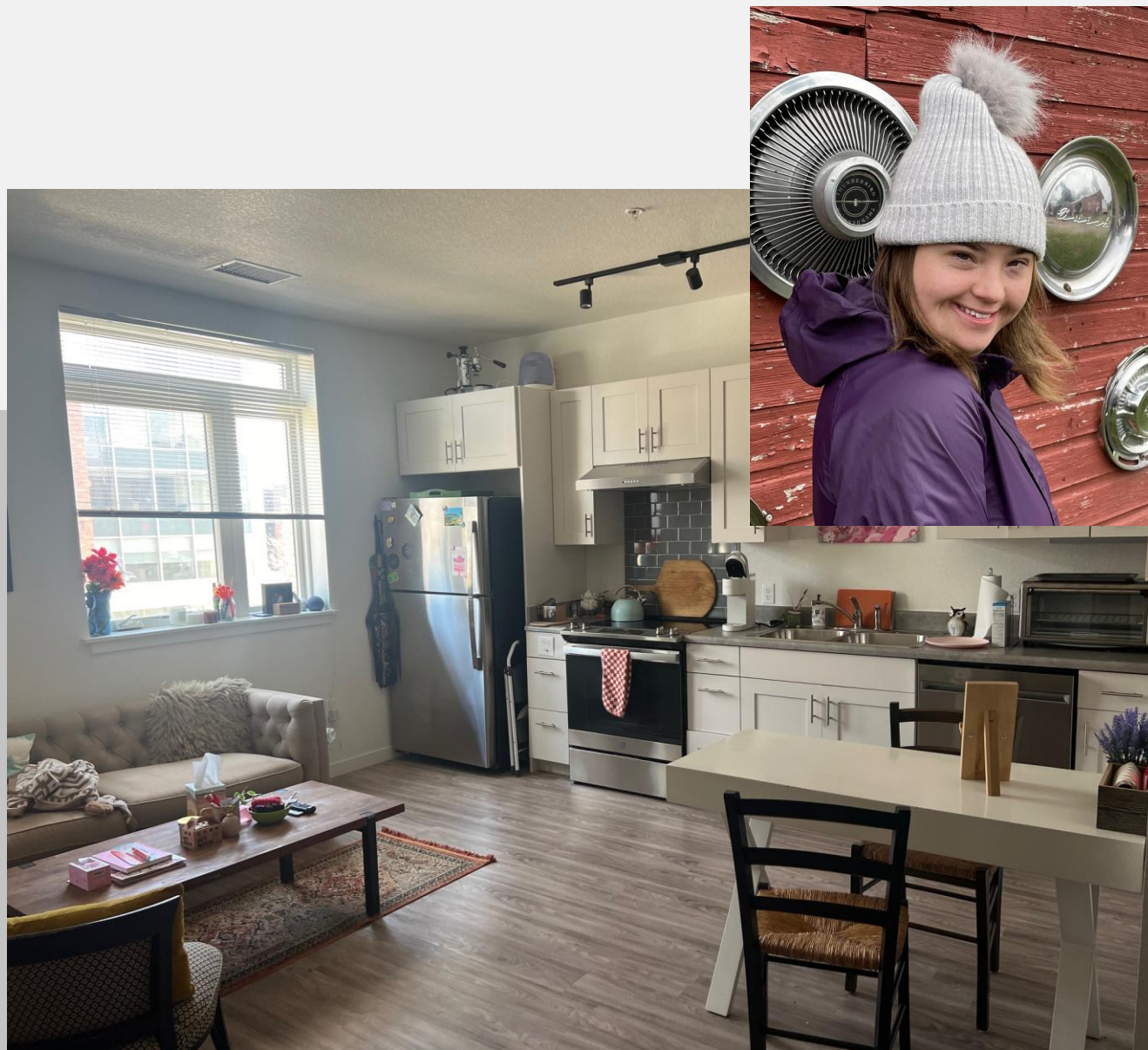
Community	Location	Units	I/DD Resident %	Support Model	Amenities & Features
30 PRL	Boulder	120 in 3 buildings	20 units in 1 building	Consumer-controlled	Social events, in-unit laundry, PASA office
Trailhead	Littleton	81	Est. ~60%	Consumer-controlled	Concierge, high amenities, dining
Unity on Park	Castle Rock	40	50%	Consumer-controlled	Wayfinding, walkable location, community spaces

***When comparing properties against the institutional characteristics’ checklist developed from the literature review, not one property exhibited any of the institutional characteristics on the checklist except for the characteristic of having a higher density of persons with I/DD living at the property.**



Resident Quotes from Site Visits

"This place is radically inclusive. It's a different generation."



"I like that there are people to help me when I need it. The staff is nice and they make sure I'm safe. Sometimes it's nice to have meals cooked for me and activities to do. It's comforting to know help is nearby."

"Teaching life skills is hard without a teaching kitchen. If you provided the space, neighbors would take over the space to cook and eat together."

"People here understand me, they have disabilities too. I'm safe and accepted."

"To be free, to be yourself is so important. I feel free."

"Being independent. I come down for events or go back to my room whenever I want."

"It's really fun. I invite my friends over. It's really great."

"Failed twice with host homes, so I wanted my own place."

"It's difficult when we have to eat alone. It's more comfortable to do things or eat together."

"I like that I can chill out and not worry about anything."

"It's natural to live with people with disabilities, to be together because they get it."

Key Insights from CO Intentional Communities

Reflections from residents and staff highlight safety, support, and needed cognitive accessibility features.

1

Prioritize resident safety through peer support

Residents often experienced discrimination elsewhere, emphasize the need for safe, welcoming environments.

2

Tackle food insecurity

Successful partnerships with food banks and community pantries increase access; residents welcome voluntary meal services to ease food challenges.

3

Manage noise with quiet hours and sound-proofing

Noise sensitivity, especially for people with I/DD, calls for enhanced sound insulation to improve comfort.

4

Empower residents through advisory councils

Monthly resident councils foster meaningful feedback and connection.

5

Provide 24/7 on-site support staff

Access to resident assistants or PASA staff around the clock is crucial to address unique support needs beyond property management capabilities.

6

Address housing stability amid job changes

Residents face housing insecurity due to layoffs and lack of vouchers; affordability challenges persist even within local Area Median Income limits.

7

Ensure staff parking and drop-off zones

Free accessible parking for support staff and safe drop-off areas for Access-a-Ride enhance daily convenience and mobility.

8

Adequate indoor and outdoor common spaces

Adequate shared spaces encourage social connection and foster a strong sense of community beyond individual homes.

9

Engage adults with I/DD early in planning

Involving residents during development ensures housing and programming are well-tailored to their needs and preferences.

10

Secure sustainable funding for supportive amenities

Vital supports require consistent funding sources instead of relying on fundraising or fees from low-income residents.

Matrix of 70 Intentional Communities Nationwide

Data highlights from properties in 27 states that identified as intentional communities on the Autism Housing Network

Affordable

21%

HCBS waiver used

53%

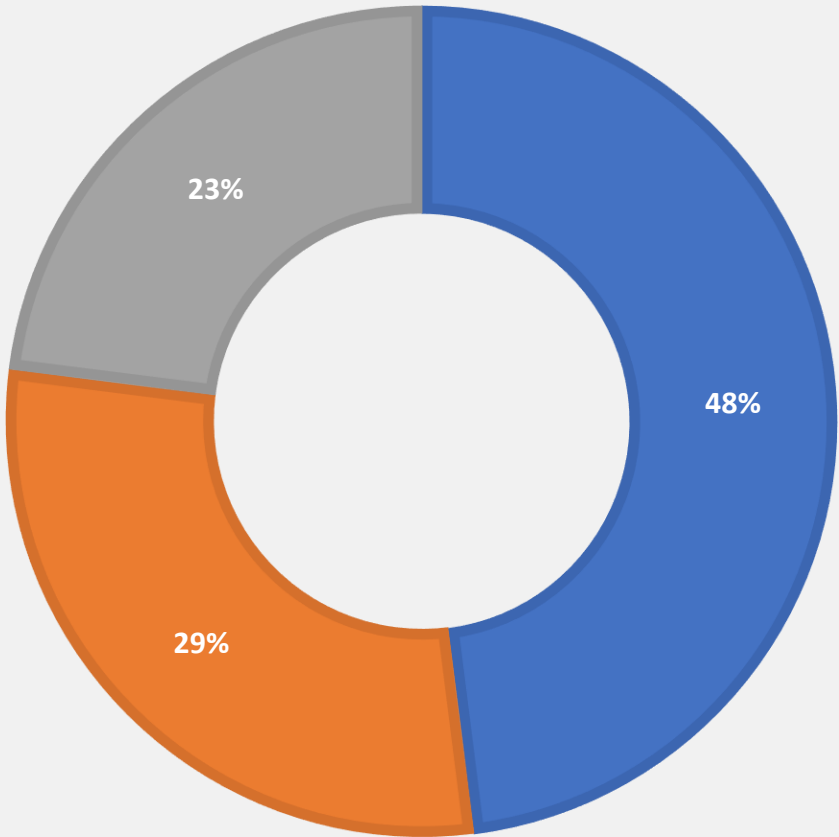
Multi-family Properties

74%

Thus, intentional communities are limited to residents whose families can afford to assist with at least market-rate housing costs and/or private pay for support services.

PROPERTY RELATIONSHIP TO LTSS

Consumer-Controlled Provider Controlled Hybrid



Avg. Neuro-Inclusive Design Features or Amenities

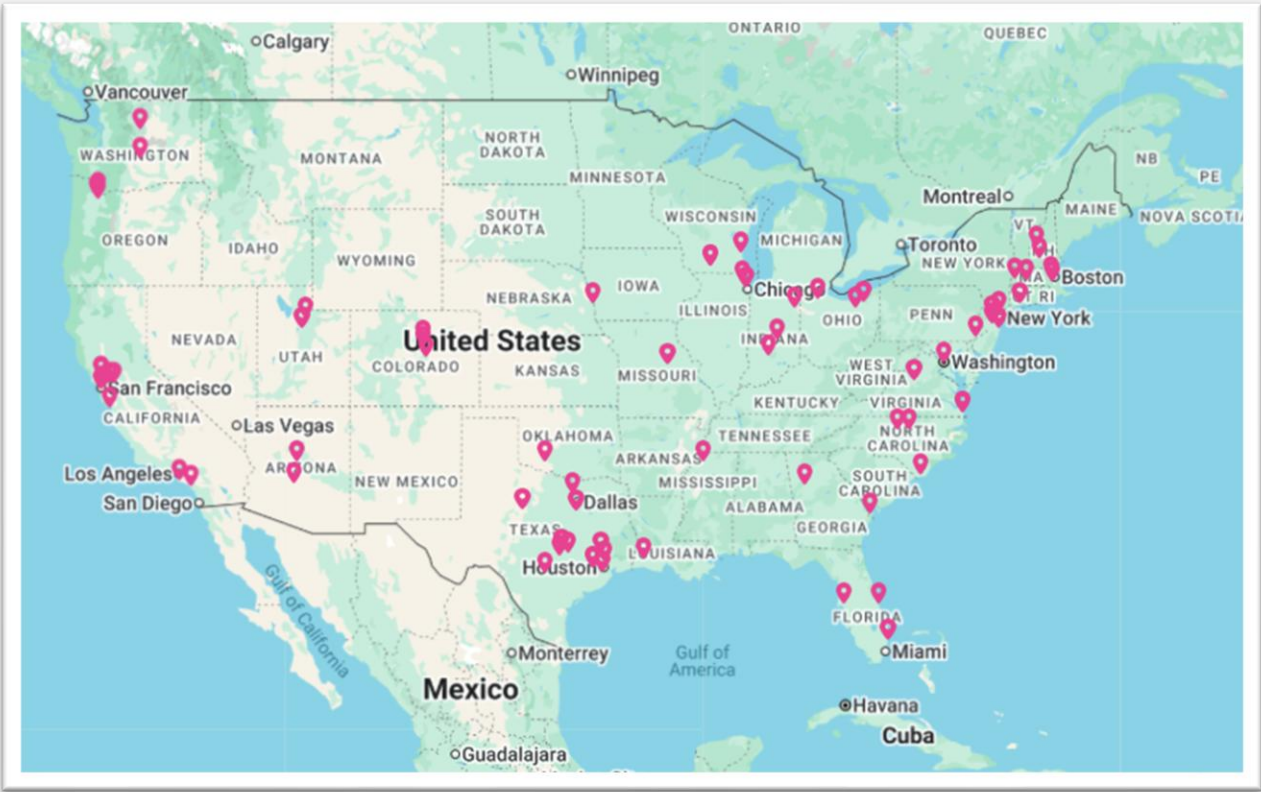
7

Avg. Supportive Amenities

6

At least one resident has 24-7 support needs

64%





Foundational nomenclature for housing and service delivery models that will further define market segments, establish best practices and guiding principles, and help drive crucial partnerships that address pressing needs resulting from the current housing crisis.

SCAN HERE

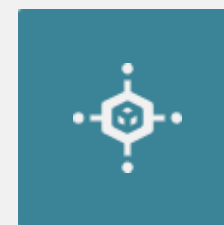


Access the digital report and order more print copies.



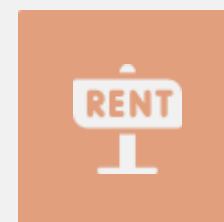
Challenges of Existing Affordable Housing Funding Streams

Understanding barriers faced by neuro-inclusive housing developers under current regulations and funding mechanisms for affordable housing development.



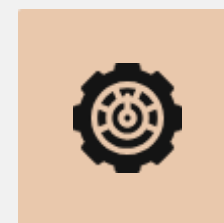
Lack of Design Standards or Incentives

No incentives exist for developers to create neuro-inclusive properties or incorporate supportive amenities.



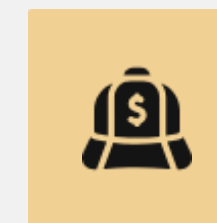
Tenant Selection Constraints

Developers often cannot control tenant selection or the lease-up process due to regulatory restrictions.



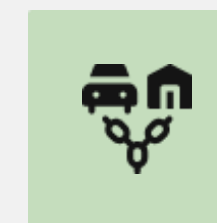
Risk Aversion and Olmstead Interpretations

Systems resist clustering people with I/DD due to liability fears and varied interpretations of Olmstead requirements.



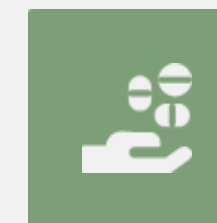
Funding Gaps

Insufficient funds are available to support the extremely low incomes, necessary supportive programming and common spaces for residents with I/DD.



Compliance Burdens

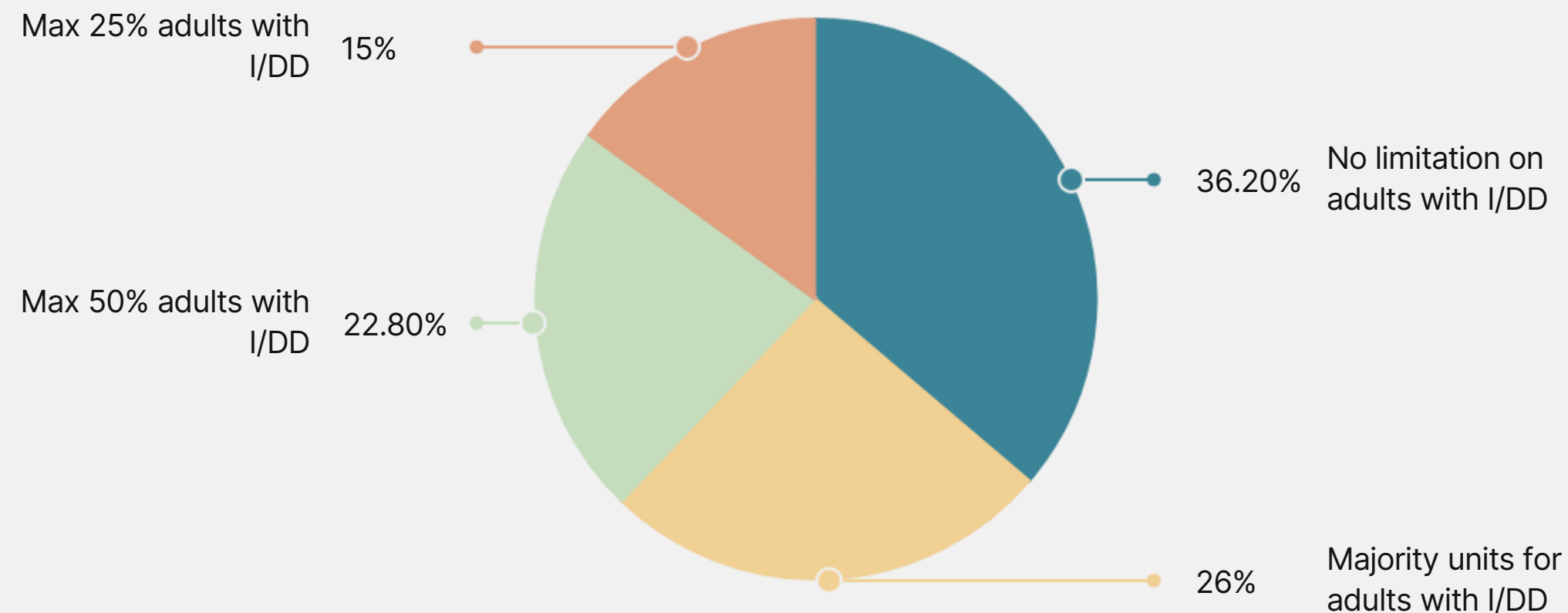
Repetitive, inaccessible paperwork complicate housing stability.



Not Meeting High Support Needs

Adults with profound autism or complex medical support needs are difficult to accommodate in apartment developments with small, attached units.

Should There Be The Maximum Number Of People With I/DD Who Live In An Intentional Community?



Intentional Community Research Project Survey

"It's not the number of us (disabled people) that make a place institutional, but controlling, abusive or negligent systems that define institutions."

"A number metric doesn't make sense. It's more important who is running it and what control do residents have..."

"No %- this makes me angry."

"Assigning a maximum number is naive as a metric."

"No Limits. Different ratios appropriate for different communities. 100% I/DD is not segregation if it is a choice. Talking about high quality options that support community access."

"I want 100% people with disabilities, because you don't know what people without disabilities might do to you."

"50% disability of any kind, 50% neurotypical, but non criminal backgrounds, no drugs"

"I think there shouldn't be a limit, but I also think other populations need to be included in order to create an inclusive and sustainable world."

"Unsure. Need to balance level of support, "triggers" of others, aggressive behaviors or screaming stims"

"Unsure, but size matters if only people with I/DD. Cultural mix important and "eyes" to prevent abuse."

Feedback on Density Limits for Residents with I/DD

	Concerns About Exploitation	A few prefer 100% disability settings to protect residents from predatory relationships.
	Integration and Natural Supports	Mixed-ability neighbors provide informal help, foster friendships, and reduce reliance on staff.
	Safety and Emergency Preparedness	Non-disabled residents can act as first responders in crises, boosting overall building safety.
	Autonomy and Non-Discrimination	Fixed caps are viewed as infringing on personal choice and potentially violating fair housing principles.
	Skepticism of Percentage Metrics	Doubt about using a single ratio; many favor flexible, context-driven approaches over rigid numbers.
	Minimum Disability Thresholds	Some advocate for minimum percentages (e.g., 50%) to ensure solidarity, peer support, and avoid tokenism.
	Inclusion of Staff, Family, and Seniors	Proposals to include on-site staff housing, family members, or seniors to enrich support networks.
	Conditional/Unsure Perspectives	Ambivalence about fixed limits; emphasize nuance, risk of “box-checking,” and need for tailored solutions.

Other State Strategies Related to Neuro-Inclusive Housing



Require Planning for Housing Needs of Adults with I/DD

Under California Government Code Section 65583(a)(7), every city and county housing element in this state must include an analysis of the special housing needs, explicitly including “persons with developmental disabilities.”

Leveraging Existing Funding Sources

Florida, Indiana and Pennsylvania all set aside a percentage of LIHTC allocations targeting inclusion of residents with I/DD specifically. WA has a I/DD Fund as part of the State Housing Trust Fund.

Strengthening Medicaid & Housing Partnerships

NY’s Developmental Disability Agency (OPWDD) provides housing developers rental subsidies and supportive services once in operation, or rental subsidies and capital funding if they set aside units for people with I/DD.

Pre-development Community Integration Review Process

NJ Developmental Disability Agency (DDD) has a rental subsidy program and for emerging multi-family developments where multiple waiver recipients will live in close proximity and/or a day program exists onsite, DDD conducts a Community Integration Review that evaluates whether residents will be integrated into the community based on their needs, interests, strengths, and hopes/dreams.

Considerations for a Neuro-Inclusive Housing Funding Stream

Funding Gap Considerations

Considers the deep affordability needed in perpetuity, allow for funding of common areas and operational funding for supportive amenities.

1

I/DD-Specific Guardrails & Incentives

Implement minimum neuro-inclusive design standards, incentivize population needs, and allow a tenant selection process that guard against predatory relationships.

2

Partnerships & Service Integration

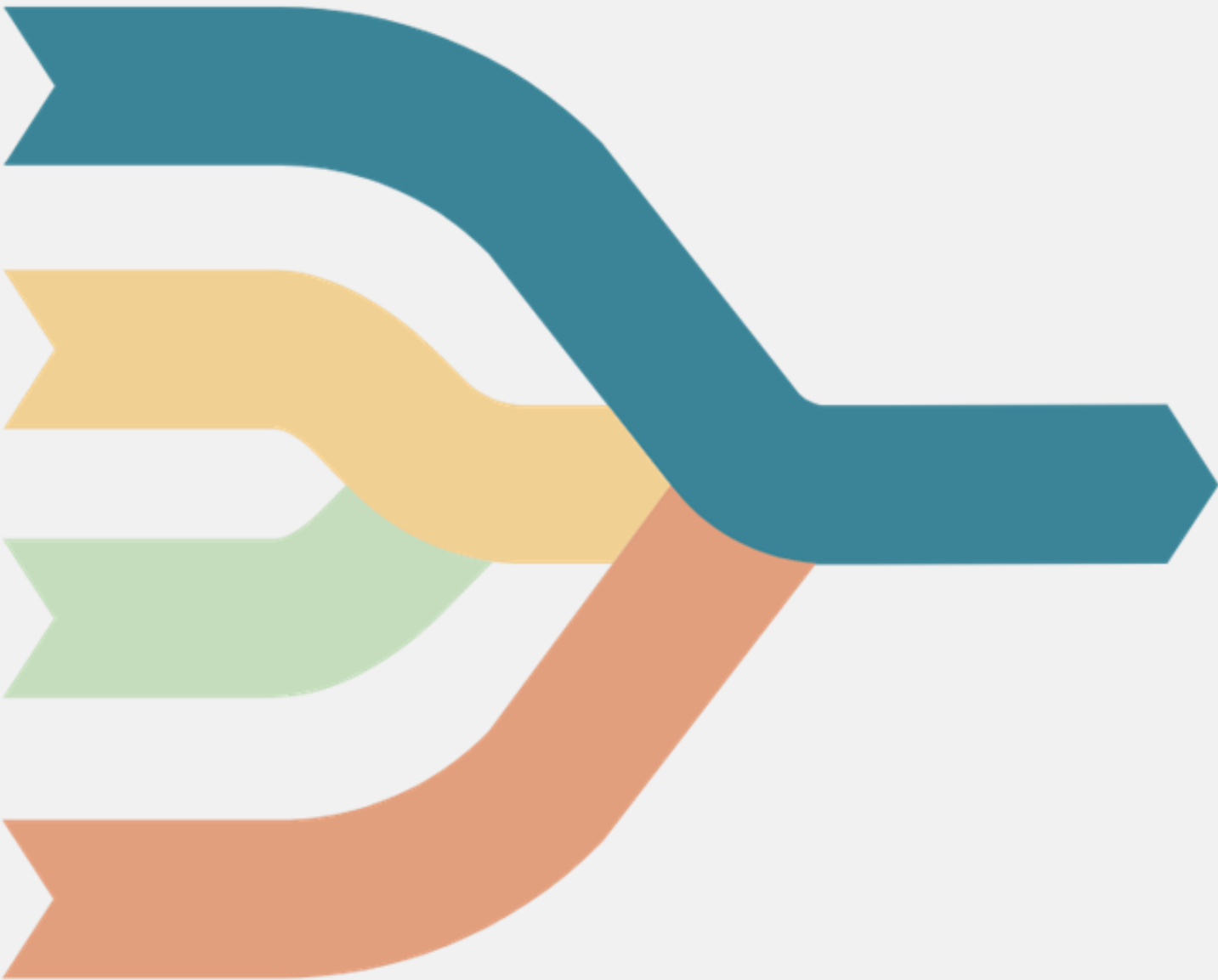
Mandate developers to collaborate with disability organizations in pre-development stages and establish MOUs with PASA's or community-based organizations to provide supportive amenities.

3

Community Integration & Tenant Protections

Require Community Integration Plans approved by HCPF that secures HCBS compliance and plans for resident feedback loops.

4



Funding Source Potential for Neuro-Inclusive Housing & Supportive Amenities

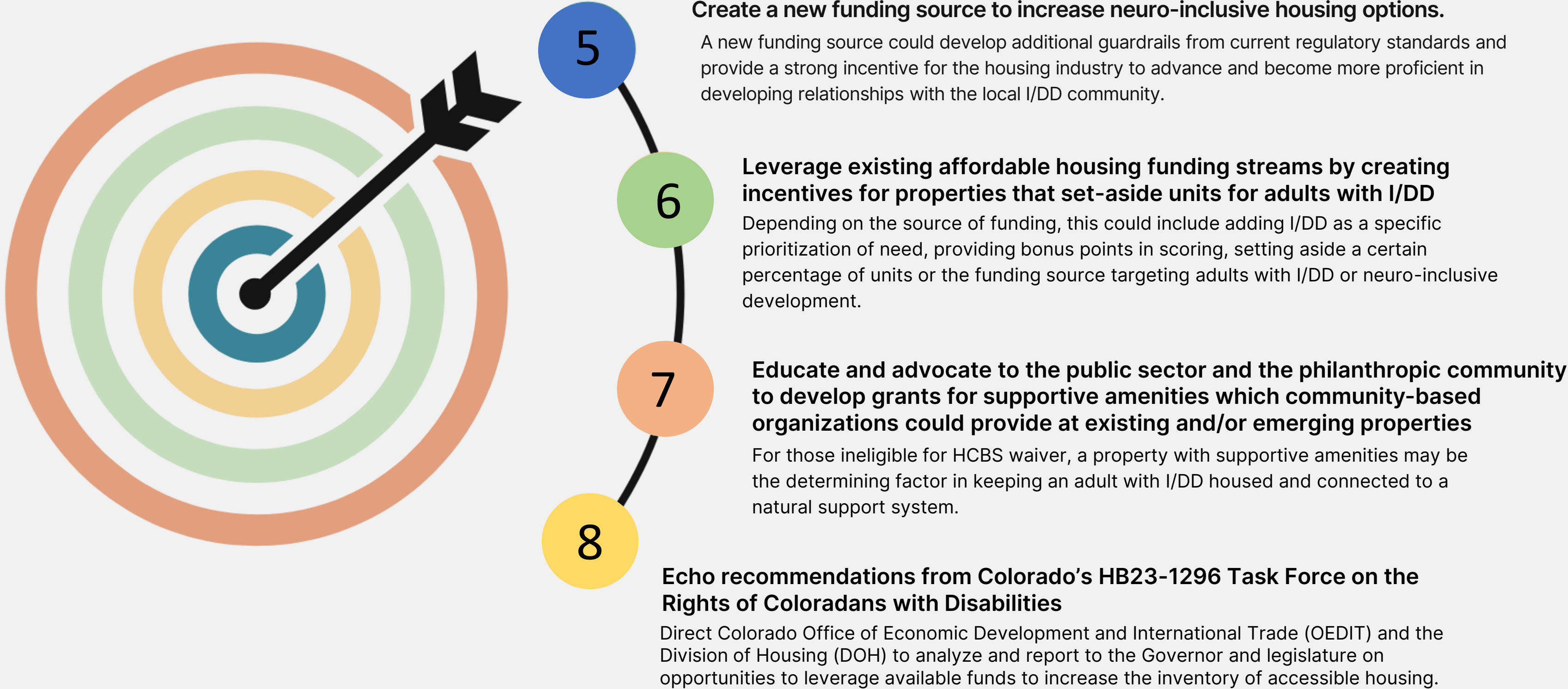
Funding Mechanism	Description	Pros	Cons
State Tax Credit	Tax credits to incentivize neuro-inclusive housing	Leverages private investment, scalable	Complex to administer
Social Impact Bond	Pay-for-success investment model	Aligns outcomes with funding, innovative	Pilot scale, requires outcome metrics
Housing Trust Fund	Dedicated funds for affordable & supportive housing	Flexible, fills funding gaps	Political variability, smaller scale
Project-Based Vouchers (PBV)	Rental subsidies tied to specific units	Stable rent support	No capital for development
State Budget Appropriation	Annual earmarked funds for neuro-inclusive initiatives	Direct control, can be recurring	Dependent on political will



Pathways Forward: Recommendations



Pathways Forward: Recommendations





Thank you for joining us.

Contact with additional questions: Desiree@NeuroInclusiveHousingSolutions.com