

Trends in Retirement Communities

The Boomer generation, some 76 million strong, has begun to retire and seek the next phase in their lives – and that is changing the way senior living communities across the country operate.

The demand is high and as the most affluent generation thus far, today's older adults require a standard of living that significantly exceeds the expectations of past generations. Aging baby boomers are looking for retirement communities that maximize well-being, enjoyment, and engagement with their peers.

The senior living industry is rushing to accommodate the different lifestyle of the boomer generation. Many retirement communities now provide progressive housing solutions with a greater variety of features and amenities. Some of these new trends include:

Tech Support

The baby boomer generation wants to be entertained, connected, and protected through available technology. Smart home tech and on-demand services available through just a few taps on the phone enable seniors to live independently for longer periods of time.

When assisted living is required, facilities often have computer systems that keep track of vital signs and medications, USB connections and Wi-Fi, keyless room entry, and movement sensors capable of detecting emergency situations.

Eco-Friendly Features

For those eco-conscious boomers, many retirement communities are adopting greener practices. These eco-friendly methods include meeting the EPA's Energy Star standards, improving indoor air quality, focusing on water conservation, enhancing building weatherization, and utilizing renewable energy sources like solar power.

Many assisted living locations are also embracing non-toxic cleaning products, cooking with locally grown and organic foods, and implementing recycling programs.

Person-Centric Perks

A new era of person-centered care is guiding the design and function of retirement communities. Today's American seniors are used to living in a world that caters to their needs and want amenities that enhance their quality of life. Many retirement communities now offer concierge services, group fitness classes, on-site spas, class offerings, shopping, entertainment excursions, and wellness programs. Even the Muzak is evolving; it's not all Glenn Miller in the background these days, you'll hear Led Zeppelin and other classic rock in some communities. Even Jimmy Buffet has gotten into the act with the opening of three separate "Margaritaville" themed retirement communities in the southeastern US which are "active adult communities inspired by the lifestyle of fun, food, and music depicted in the songs of legendary singer, songwriter and best-selling author Jimmy Buffett."

Gone are the days of the so-called "old folks" nursing homes where residents live out their days with little social interaction. Retirement communities put greater emphasis on meaningful socialization with a full menu of enjoyable activities such as yoga, tai chi, exercise classes, game nights, barbecues, book clubs, and organized group outings to theaters, museums, and restaurants.

Many retirement communities also are improving the amount of personal space that residents can enjoy with things like walk-in closets, spacious bathrooms, and fully-equipped kitchenettes. These amenities provide a comfortable setting that is more similar to the homes that seniors are used to living in.

Senior care will continue to evolve to meet the needs of boomer retirees. Retirement living isn't about the end stage—it's about new beginnings and growth. Boomers—and their Gen X children—want to make informed senior housing decisions that offer nothing but the best.

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