

## **Urban, Luxurious, Diverse: Experts See New Trends In 50+ Housing Market**

The 50+ housing market is transforming the way builders design and develop active-adult homes, according to experts with the National Association of Home Builders' Seniors Housing Council. Speaking at Building for Boomers & Beyond: Seniors Housing Symposium 2005 in Chantilly, Va., builders and architects say demand is growing for smaller communities with interesting streetscapes and high-end homes designed for individual lifestyles.

When the first active-adult communities were launched in the 1960s, many were large in size, located in traditional Sun Belt states and shared similar community format, design and amenities. However, builders recognize that today's buyers are open to change, demand a variety of choices and are more likely to consider a community close to home.

"For many buyers, the established concept of the active-adult community conjures up images of boring, cookie-cutter neighborhoods with no opportunities for owners to express themselves," said Bill Feinberg of Feinberg & Associates, P.C., a Voorhees, N.J.-based architect and designer. "Builders understand that the active-adult industry is rapidly changing. A single community formula will no longer meet the needs of mature consumers."

Feinberg added that main-street communities, exclusive enclaves and age-targeted villages within master-planned communities are gaining popularity. In terms of design, these youthful, individualistic buyers want diversity in street patterns and streetscapes, embrace natural features such as wetlands and open space, and favor smaller, more flexible communities. They also may not need a large community clubhouse, preferring more informal spaces that offer different experiences and a range of social and physical activities.

While most active adult communities traditionally have been built in suburban locations, urban buyers command a greater share of the market, especially for condominiums, town homes and multifamily apartments. Many buyers are empty nesters who expect a high level of service, spend more on upgrades and are less likely to consider moving to an age-qualified community.

"Boomers are buying lifestyle," said Chuck Covell, president of Greenbelt, Md.-based Bozzuto Homes. "Today's 50+ buyers today are more affluent and crave a sense of lifestyle when buying a new home. They are not buying solely based on price or location."

Covell noted that Baby Boomers will continue to work in some capacity, with many trading their primary careers for a part-time job or a job that is more like a hobby. Builders must include high-tech offices and media centers in active-adult homes to appeal to these buyers, who see themselves working well past the traditional retirement age. Baby Boomers want first-floor living space, including a master suite, as well as high-end kitchens, luxurious master suites and baths and high-tech media rooms.

"Boomers love to socialize, and they want kitchens that are versatile enough for the gourmet chef and stylish enough for entertaining," said Mary DeWalt, MIRM, president of the DeWalt Design Group in Austin, Texas. "They also favor a design scheme that blends their 'old favorites' with new pieces."

**ABOUT SHC:** Since 1989, the Seniors Housing Council has served the special needs and interests of NAHB members and others in the housing industry who build for the growing 50+ market. The Seniors Housing Council provides information, education and research to its members and offers advocacy support to NAHB members on key seniors housing issues. The council supports 11 local councils around the United States and serves more than 1,100 NAHB members involved in seniors housing. Senior Housing Council products include an annual symposium: Building for Boomers & Beyond, the award-winning Seniors' Housing News magazine, industry research and education programs at the local, regional and national level. For more information, contact Taylor Blanchard at 202-266-8680 or [tblanchard@nahb.com](mailto:tblanchard@nahb.com).

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