

ARCHITECTURE CINCINNATI

Living Environments for an Aging Population Who are Not Aging

Every 6 seconds, a baby boomer turns 60 years old. As this generation ages, an increasing percentage of the population is making plans for the cultural transition from full-time work to a life based on activities, goals, and aspirations of later life. The boomers are generally healthier, more active, and more affluent than previous generations and will look to continue their active lifestyles throughout their later years. This new mindset will generate increased expectations for later life activity and will require new living environments to match these expectations. As a result, architectural design for this aging population is beginning to develop new and more varied options than those of the past.

The previous model of traditional nursing home living as the logical next step housing option for an aging population is disappearing. The new generation of seniors intends to spend their later years pursuing travel and personal enrichment activities in varied and rich living environments. A new, expanded model of senior living communities is evolving which includes a variety of housing options and convenience or support services for a



Piano

much broader age group of older Americans. These communities provide a mix of single family, assisted multi-family, and skilled nursing housing options within a single, identifiable residential community that allows the opportunity to "Age in Place" as a part of a continuing care environment.

These new senior living communities provide a balance of privacy and security with vibrant social and community opportunities and are frequently developed adjacent to existing neighborhoods and

amenities. These developments provide a variety of outdoor areas, dining & entertainment options, and medical & personal support services within an integrated community. The buildings in these communities are designed to reflect the scale, character, and identity of a residential neighborhood, avoiding the institutional feel of nursing homes and hospitals.



Dining Room

The boomer generation will have the opportunity to begin their transition to these later-life lifestyles at an earlier age by moving to single-family residences within these communities while still active and mobile, transferring home ownership obligations to the community association. Upon returning from a week of travel or a day at the golf course, the yard will be manicured and the house will be painted. As individuals age and require occasional personal care assistance, it can be provided on an as-needed, valet basis from sources within the community. This arrangement provides support services to residents while maintaining their independent lifestyle.

As residents age and their lifestyles slow down, they have the opportunity to move to assisted-living residences within the community, in order to have access to in-house personal care assistance and dining services while maintaining contact with neighbors and friends, affording the maximum level of independence and freedom.

The continued development of this new model for senior living environments will provide innovative and varied options for an active and evolving senior population. This expanding population will demand the attention of architectural solutions with the associated support from the construction and general business communities to satisfy their needs.



Steve Birkley, AIA is a project architect with ArchitectsPlus, a firm that is a recognized leader in senior living planning and design. ArchitectsPlus is currently developing several senior living communities in the Greater Cincinnati area.