

55+ Housing

ONLINE MAGAZINE



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Established in 1989, the NAHB 55+ Housing Industry Council consists of a network of local and state councils and national members. NAHB 55+ provides builders with the expertise needed to prosper. Our members meet the unique housing needs of the strongest growth segment of the housing market by building lifestyle homes and communities for: persons 55+, persons 62+ and multi-generations.

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..... The No. 1 Trend in 55+ Amenity Design: Flexibility

by Sue Ridgeway

Changing Demographics

The 55+ home buyer continues to be an influential home-buying segment. To be successful with this demographic, builders need to understand the 55+ buyer's changing expectations with 55+ communities and their amenity spaces, and flexibility is the key. In fact, flexibility is probably the No. 1 trend we are seeing in 55+ amenity design.

Flexibility makes sense when considering the reality of today's 55+ buyer. Today's buyers are much different than the 55+ buyer from the past. The leading edge of the boomer buyer is younger, healthier, and not nearly as close to retirement (and slowing down) as in years past. *We are living longer, healthier, and more active lives.* To be successful in today's fast-changing 55+ market, communities and amenities need to be flexible enough to adapt, morph and change.

Fifty-five years old used to be considered "old" or at least closer to retirement than other buying segments. Many envision a 55+ community and their residents differently today than just 10 years ago. Consider that the average age of the Rolling Stones is 75. They are the leading edge boomer. While conversely, Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise who, at 56 and 57 years old respectively, could be your new 55+ buyers. Gone are the days of formal ballrooms and card tables; this demographic wants and expects more engaging features including flex space that can evolve.

Enduring Design Trends

Although COVID-19 has impacted the immediate wants and needs of 55+ buyers' amenities, there are some underlying trends that we do not anticipate going away forever. For example, the desire to have group fitness class offerings within an amenity space may not be a top priority for a buyer right now. However, this is a feature 55+ buyers consistently say they want in an amenity space and will return to it when deemed safe. The following are some of the design trends we predict will continue to be important to buyers going forward.

Open Floor Plans and Movable Furniture

The trend for open floor plans allows for small intimate groups to create a niche to gather. If designed with movable furniture pieces, it is flexible enough to accommodate larger groups or events. Additionally, easily moveable furniture allows for quick transitions from large gathering space, to smaller more intimate table seating.

A perfect example of flexibility in action is this atrium area of a community amenity space in Northern Virginia. It was designed to be a flexible space to truly experience seamless indoor/outdoor living. What residents saw was the opportunity to easily transform the space. At one point they even turned

this area into a dance floor and hosted a swing dancing night at the clubhouse. Unfortunately, no photographic evidence of that night exists. However, you can see how easily the furniture can be moved to accommodate a myriad of activities.

Designing for Targeted Programming

Another important trend is designing for the space's programming. Gone are the days of 'one size fits all' when it comes to amenity space. Not all 55+ communities' buyers are going to have the same buyer profiles. We know that buyers in South Florida tend to

Birchwood Clubhouse at Brambleton





Birchwood Clubhouse at Brambleton (VA)



Birchwood Clubhouse at Brambleton (VA)



Birchwood Clubhouse at Brambleton (VA)

Once the builder understands the wants and needs of their specific buyer, the designer can go to work designing for that specific programming.

want different amenities in their communities than 55+ buyers in the Rocky Mountain region. They may be of a similar age, but their wants and needs tend to be quite diverse. Not all amenity space programming, and ultimately the design, will be the same.

Once the builder understands the wants and needs of their specific buyer, the designer can go to work designing for that specific programming. It is truly understanding what the buyer wants, expects and needs, and designing accordingly that what will make the amenity successful (and ultimately that community).

For example, in this community they knew the residents wanted arts and crafts classes, so a special art studio was designed.

This same community also wanted to provide a teaching kitchen for residents so they could hold periodic cooking demonstrations, as it was listed as a “wish list feature” for buyers. It is important to note that this space is so flexible they also use it for parties, community dinners, as well as a community-wide CSA drop-off/pick-up location.

The dining room can quickly be transformed into a community beer tasting event.

In this Colorado community clubhouse, the residents’ described themselves as outdoorsy and active, and wanted a place where they could fix their bikes or tune their skis. This space offered a casual, fun, but functional workspace for the residents.



Kent Place, Denver, CO
Photographer: Steve Hinds, SHI Architectural Photography



Birchwood at Brambleton (VA)



Birchwood at Brambleton (VA)



Kent Place, Denver, CO
Photographer: Steve Hinds, SHI Architectural Photography



Birchwood at Brambleton (VA)



Birchwood at Brambleton (VA)

Although this amenity space was in an in-town community and its residents wanted more of a bar/lounge feel to their amenity space:

Fitness-focused

Designing to include fitness options has always been important in the 55+ amenity space. However, the types of fitness offerings buyers want has evolved. The range of activities for today's 55+ buyer is diverse: from yoga and weight machines, to swimming and pickleball. The builder, program director and interior designer must understand how they can develop the community to provide and adapt to reflect the needs and demands of the new 55+ buyer.

Providing a focus-fitness design that all residents would enjoy means again being flexible. Flexible enough to include both cardio equipment, space for yoga-type activities, and perhaps most importantly a pool. Almost all buyers, across the board cited a desire for a pool within their community's amenity space.

Outdoor Space

Incorporating the outdoor space in any amenity space design is key. And again, being flexible with that design

to allow for small groups to gather or large community-wide events is imperative. Using flexible, movable furniture is important as is taking advantage of any natural views or special features.

For example, this clubhouse in Virginia is situated adjacent to a beautiful man-made lake. As a result, the entire design of the facility is all about showcasing the lake including taking advantage of upstairs and downstairs outdoor lounge areas.

In addition, if space allows, any thoughtful additional surprises you can design into your community will help differentiate you and add additional lifestyle value for your buyer to enjoy and of which to be proud.

For example, this development's community gardens are a wonderful addition for the residents. Many residents truly enjoy the ability to be outdoors and just enjoy nature.

Knowing Your Buyer

The 55+ communities of today look almost nothing like the retirement communities of a few decades ago. Today's boomer buyer is more likely to be out on the

pickleball court or at a wine tasting than playing bridge or listening to classical music. Understanding the buyer and defining spaces that can be flexible and adjust with the ever-changing 55+ buyer is integral to good design, happy home buyers, and a successful selling season. Design that will encourage community residents to want to use and participate in these spaces. Design that will create a community of happy residents, which breeds success, profits and respect for the builder.



Sue Ridgeway, Director of Marketing at Lita Dirks & Co.

Sue brings years of diverse marketing experience in a myriad of industries to her role as Director of Marketing and Business Development at Lita Dirks & Co. She is responsible for developing and executing marketing strategies and campaigns in alignment with the company's brand and overall objectives. She has established a track record of creating ways to increase the sales funnel, enhance online presence, and expand brand awareness of any company with which she is associated.

LD & Co. specializes in the interior design and merchandising of model homes, sales offices and community clubhouses for residential and commercial homebuilders and developers throughout the nation.

Sue is a member of NAHB, HBA of Denver, and PWB.

Thinking Outside of (and Defining) The Box – Tales of Successful COVID Pivots



by Beth Haynes

For 55+ communities and many of those who buy homes within them, it's all about the lifestyle. Lifestyle drives the engagement of home owners and is an important part of the sales process for prospective buyers. COVID-19, and the social distancing and operating impacts that all builders and communities have experienced this year, has created challenges for organizations. It has also made it imperative for sales and marketing teams to rethink how to approach showcasing the experiential lifestyle of our communities. Although so much loss has been experienced because of the pandemic, it has provided our industry an opportunity to innovate and think outside of the box, and a chance to pivot our approach to prospect and home owner engagement.

It's been inspiring to participate in webinars and connect with industry colleagues who have experienced success in navigating the changes to how we do business (changes that sometimes were happening daily). Regardless of community size or approach to shaping, there have been a lot of challenges in keeping social connections in place during COVID-19, but there have also been some great inspirations that have risen.

Although so much loss has been experienced because of the pandemic, it has provided our industry an opportunity to innovate, and think outside of the box and a chance to pivot our approach to prospect and home owner engagement.

Here are just a few stories to inspire how communities have approached an engaging lifestyle in this new era.

Meeting Home Owners Where They Are

"It's been really interesting in the world of social distancing to be someone whose primary role is to socially connect people," according to Michelle Pearl, lifestyle director for Altis, a Pardee Homes active adult community in California. Before COVID, Pearl held several events for her home owners and prospects that included socializing, food, drink, music and fun. Her challenge? How to keep people connected even when they are stuck inside their homes.

According to Pearl, the key was adaptability – being able to turn on a dime. She learned quickly that she had to meet the home owners and prospects where they were with their comfort in virtual engagement and, as time would allow, in-person attendance. Her solution was the creation of a variety of options to help discover the lifestyle of Altis and keep them plugged in.

Through testing and trial and error, Pearl introduced programs that would appeal to a wide range of interests



and comfort levels, including a virtual clubhouse program with guest chefs, a virtual coffee with the mayor, virtual paint and sips and her version of Ted Talk Tuesdays. She even created a treasure hunt with outdoor stations and other “together, apart” events.

Some ideas worked well, and others had a lower engagement, but she’s continued to explore new ways to effectively maintain a presence with her home owners and prospects. “The biggest mistake you can make with this group is to put them all in the same basket,” said Pearl. Through her adaptability and ingenuity, she has been able to continue to provide a lifestyle that is appealing to prospects and keeps her home owners connected.

Forming Virtual Connections That Cross State Lines

When states are in lock-down, it can be a challenge to strike a chord and inspire prospective buyers from out of state to consider exploring your community. Noble’s Pond, a 55+ active lifestyle community in Delaware, draws the majority of home buyers from surrounding states. The impact of COVID-19 meant rethinking the sales and marketing efforts to effectively capture and engage prospects throughout the sales journey in the absence of a physical visit or event. Its Virtual Summer Event Series was created as an innovative alternative to reach new and existing prospective home buyers through four interactive online programs highlighting

the lifestyle and homes. Taking place throughout three months, each session was designed to be a short 30-minute online event that provided compelling information to attendees through a mix of pre-recorded video content, live presentations by members of the construction, sales and design teams, interactive polls, and a Q&A session with the Noble’s Pond team. Attendees were able to participate from the comfort of their current houses, within states including New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Florida and Massachusetts.

“Our Virtual Summer Series was a first for Noble’s Pond, and I’m thrilled with the response we saw from those discovering the community for the first time and prospects who were already considering making the move to our community,” said said Justin Olear, vice president of construction and operations. “It also helped us create a sense of comfort with engaging with sales virtually, and that opened the door to schedule one-on-one virtual follow up appointments with prospects.”

The Silver Lining

One thing that COVID-19 has shown us is that, as an industry, we can and should embrace new ways of doing business. Whether it’s rethinking home owner events or converting an open house to online engagement, thinking outside the box is proving a successful approach for many communities.



Beth Haynes specializes in developing and implementing strategies for motivating 55+ consumers. She is the Director of Marketing for Regal Builders, overseeing the strategic marketing for their 55+ active lifestyle communities, including Noble’s Pond, located in Dover, Delaware.

55+ Selling in the Time of COVID-19

A 55+ sales guide to the new normal

by Jane Marie O'Conner

The pandemic stopped everything – for a time. March was a month no one expected or was prepared for as it blew into our lives like a hurricane. Staff and customer confusion, restricted travel and home isolation in areas of quarantine, unfamiliar digital platform learning curves and remotely working from home were tough industry and personal adjustments. Fast-forward to the present and the 55+ industry is figuring it out along with the rest of the world by applying technology, creativity and innovation to the sales process like never before. The sales engine doesn't stop; it finds new ways to quickly fuel itself. In fact, everyone who was interviewed for this article shared that although the first few months saw sales challenges, the last few months have exploded with inquiries and traffic that in most cases is on track to make up for the lack of spring sales. The pandemic's pause created pent-up demand because after being quarantined, 55+ buyers were eager to embark on their new lifestyle. Jason Armstrong, vice president of marketing and sales for Patrick Square in Clemson, S.C., stated, "Our 55+ customers have become more aggressive in their timeline and have a renewed sense of urgency because they don't want to wait. Their mentality is, I want what I want now."

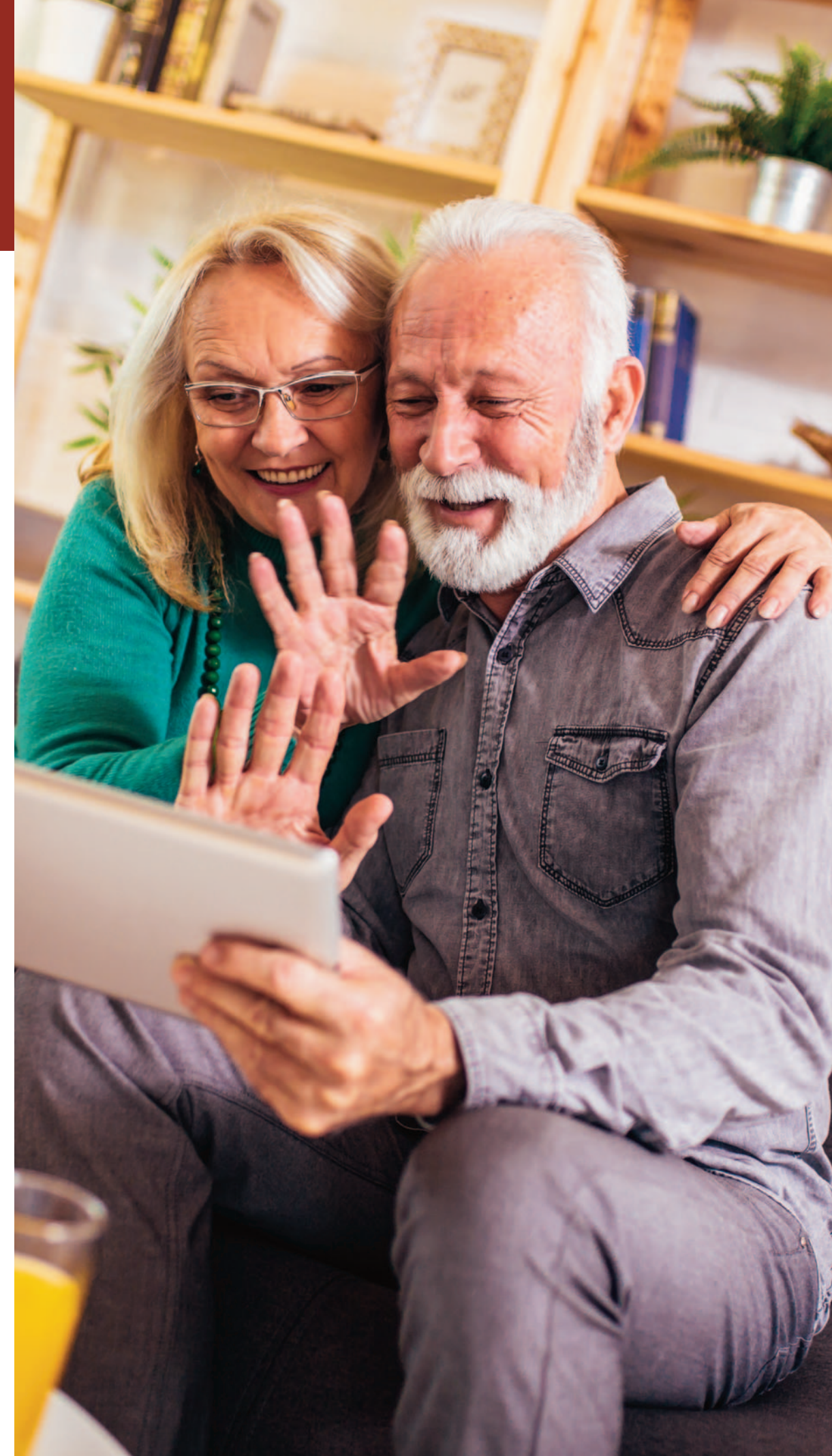
How has the marketing and sales processes changed?

Marketing had already shifted heavily to digital prior to the pandemic, and now more than ever it has become a go-to source for up-to-date information for consumers.

Tracking data reveal that online behavior has shifted because people are spending more time at home; online searches are now conducted throughout the day and at odd hours of the night, which is not your typical metrics for online use. Videos that are organic – meaning not highly produced – share quick encounters filmed on iPhones in real time, making the message so much more authentic and resonant with consumers. The increased use of drone videos gives consumers a bird's-eye view of homes and communities in progress, showing momentum and building consensus that it's okay to come in for a visit. This "on demand" style of marketing provides the information that customers like viewing and absorbing when they want to access it.

A word of advice: Think like a consumer. Rethink, Retool, and Refine your website!

Joel Grossman of Calcagni Real Estate in Connecticut said, "Websites are our stores now. It is more important than ever to provide a website experience that elevates the viewers desire to spend more time exploring their 55+ options online." Livestream virtual appointments provide a sense of comfort and safety for customers reluctant to visit in person, generating a whole new level of contactless demonstrating and selling. Grossman said, "It is imperative that you communicate the safety procedures you implement within your communities because 55+ customers are excited about exploring but want to be assured of solidly practiced safety procedures before they decide to visit." Grossman also emphasized the importance of managing expectations of consumers while understanding their emotional dynamics.



JP Ankney of Gulfstream Development in Sylvania, Ohio, said that its approach to the pandemic is to “try to keep the situation on a lighter side, asking people if they are tired of their home yet.” At its newest 55+ community, Stony Creek, the sales team highlights that this is time for a change by choosing an active lifestyle environment that enables enjoying outdoor living spaces and private amenities.

Reiterating its lighter approach to the pandemic, Gulfstream’s newest floor plan, the Corona Model for a Social Distancing World, is now available. Ankney stated, “It is a flexible plan that allows for one member of a household to be quarantined but still have access to a luxurious suite featuring a Zoom meeting room, no-contact delivery portal, and self-isolating drinking station.”

Other features include:

- A sanitizing station immediately inside as you enter from the garage.
- A hoarding closet off the kitchen will accommodate an entire pallet of Charmin Extra Soft.
- For safe socializing with friends, a social distancing wet bar in the foyer features dual barstools bolted to the floor at a safe distance of 6' apart.
- A Purell dispenser is conveniently mounted near the kitchen faucet.
- Outdoors, the veranda features a grill and beyond that, a social-distancing firepit with spacing at 6' around.
- The home features hands-free technology with no doorknobs or light switches. All lights are operated by motion detectors and doors are automatic.
- Windows are fixed and non-operable and the HVAC system features a Binford 6100 air cleaner.
- All appliances and mechanical systems are "smart" and can be controlled via handheld device apps.

Powering all of this is 6G Wi-Fi technology, not yet available to the general public, which also insures non-buffering video conferencing and telecommunications.

- Mobile apps to operate things like garage door opener, remote locks, lighting, appliances, etc.

“We are hyper-focused on appointments,” stated Francine Wallace, vice president of consumer experience for Pardee Homes’ 55+ community Altis in Beaumont, Calif. They also experienced high demand once quarantine orders were eased and visits to communities resumed. Wallace said, “Consumers are doing their homework. The spike in website traffic and time on websites has increased dramatically. The consequence is that those that do come in for appointments are more qualified and have a very good idea of what is being offered and what they want.”

Sales Secret: This is prime time for sales professionals to compress the sales cycle because so much of the homework has been done before prospects’ first visit to the community.

Lifestyle directors have been integral in the sales process because they are able to convey, demonstrate and introduce the social aspect and vibrant lifestyle of the community to customers. With COVID, most clubhouses are closed to customers and the home owner ambassador programs have also ceased. With their ingenuity and creativity, these directors have come up with ways to court customers and continue to convey the vibrant lifestyle awaiting homeowners. Lifestyle Director Michelle Pearl at Altis hosts Zoom sessions with interested customers playing games like Trivial Pursuit, Zumba and Laughing Yoga sessions; introducing them to existing homeowners and giving them a taste of the lifestyle they can enjoy when they relocate to Altis. (For more insights into Pearl's and others successes, check out "Thinking Outside of (and Defining) the Box - Tales of Successful COVID Pivots" on pg. 6-7.)





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How are consumers feeling?

Buyers across the board state that they want to start living again. According to Armstrong at Patrick Square, he hears customers say they are "so tired of it!" However, they are learning to live with it without letting it impact their adjusted social reality of the three W's in controlling #COVID19: Wear a mask, Wash your hands, Watch your distance.

Consumers are more accepting of technology; in fact, they are embracing it like never before. Video platforms such as Zoom and Facetime have become comfortable communication connections with the 55+ cohort for nurturing, courtship and advancing the sales cycle.

How do the buyers envision living differently after COVID?

After spending extended time at home, consumers have taken a hard look at their lifestyle and what they may want in their new dream home. Dual office spaces or flex spaces are coming into focus. Outdoor living spaces are more important and are chosen more frequently as a customization option. Smart Home Technology with voice commands and remote access are no longer add-ons. "We are including them in the base price of the home," stated Justin Olear of Noble's Pond in Delaware. "Technology and the conveniences it provides for our home owners are here to stay."



Debra Bernard, president of The Bernard Partnership, said the following rooms have become more popular:

1. Home offices or multiple home office spaces
2. Flex spaces that can change over time
3. Multigenerational options (though these have been trending for a decade)
4. Outdoor barbeque areas including outdoor kitchens, and full lanais
5. Entire rooms off the primary bedroom

What's new in standard operating procedures?

The sales process has become more remote but more personal at the same time. More virtual appointments are being conducted, and consumers are embracing the opportunity to continue their quest to moving forward. In addition, authentic communication with casual videos and video texting has become a new mainstay.

Sales and Welcome Centers are operating on appointment mode. Should there be walk-ins, there is a strict protocol for COVID screening questions, and walk-ins must wait for a member of the sales team to personally meet with them; there is no roaming the community without accompaniment. After each

appointment, surfaces and touch points are sanitized as a cautionary and protective strategy.

Camera comfort has evolved. Most sales professionals pride themselves on their ability to connect and engage with customers face to face. However, the forced switch to virtual meetings temporarily caused panic. Tighter training in virtual practices, scripting and a laser focus on setting goals for each virtual call, along with planned follow-up before the call ends, helped to sharpen their skills and get them over the intimidation of the camera. Some report they have become better sales professionals utilizing these existing but latent communication tools in their tool chest.

Rethink. Retool. Refine.

There is cause for optimism amidst the pandemic for 55+ builders and consumers alike. The pent-up demand caused by the shutdown has already exploded, customer's resale homes are selling quickly in most areas, and the lowest interest rates in modern history have all intersected to give us reason for lots of hope and optimism for the future of 55+ lifestyle housing. A new opportunity is here for the asking with eager consumers seeking a new adventure. Invest in the time to rethink, retool and refine marketing messages and the professional development of your team. Happy selling!



Jane Marie O'Connor, MIRM, CAASH, CAPS, CSP, CMP, CPDF Analyst, CPB Analyst

Jane has been assisting builders, developers and 55+ industry professionals to Rethink, Retool and Refine their strategies for over 25 years: strategic product and concept refinement; product development incorporating easy living design principles; marketing & sales positioning; top and mid-level management leadership coaching; and sales training and brain science services to active lifestyle communities nationally and internationally.

Jane has earned numerous awards during her career from the local to the national level for her work in the active lifestyle and seniors housing industry. She is active in numerous industry organizations locally and nationally. She is a Trustee for the 55+ Housing Resource Council of NAHB. She is a regular educator/speaker at industry events nationally and internationally.

We're More Than Homes, *We're a Community*



The NAHB 55+ Housing Industry Council is a community of industry professionals who build and support the strongest growth segment of the housing market today, and through the next decade through exceptional products and services.

We provide access to resources and opportunities that help members collaborate with other 55+ professionals to make deals, valuable business connections, as well as address industry issues.

Learn more and join our community at
nahb.org/why55plus



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How One Florida Community Digitized Its Home Leasing Program

By Kim Bockover

Modern problems call for modern solutions. For the leasing team at The Floridian Club of Sarasota, the solution was clear: It had to take its home leasing program digital.

For the standard apartment community, the transition to completely digital leasing is likely an easier sell. But it presents challenges for active adult communities catering to renters ages 55 and over.

By now, websites and social media have become part of the 55+ buyer's home search. But with the need for social distance touring, prospects are learning to use FaceTime, Skype and Zoom in their home-renting journey as well. Just months ago, many prospects were unfamiliar with these apps, and industry sales teams

were hesitant to introduce them as viable replacements for in-person tours.

But The Floridian Club and the community's clientele have embraced this new way of touring – so much so that prospects have viewed the community's online leasing page over 8,000 times. It's provided a way for the leasing staff to connect with both in- and out-of-state prospects to provide a socially distant touring experience.

What team members have found is that digital leasing allows them to spend more one-on-one time with prospects answering their questions and even helping them get familiar with apps that help facilitate the touring process. They're able to build rapport with

prospects more quickly and move them towards signing a lease — all without having visited the community. It helps to have a strong product that appeals to the modern 55+ buyer!

Through it all, the leasing team continues to meet its sales goals despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. And although the team members are hopeful for a future in which virtual open houses, masks and staying at home are no longer the norm, they are enjoying getting to know future renters virtually and are seeing the benefits of doing so.

Kim Bockover has been with Barrington Group, Inc for over 21 years. She has held roles at BGI spanning from property management to marketing and sales. She now oversees leasing and operations at BGI's newest property, The Floridian Club of Sarasota. Kim prides herself on creating a beautiful and welcoming environment for all prospects and residents.



The Floridian Club and the community's clientele have embraced this new way of touring – so much so that prospects have viewed the community's online leasing page over 8,000 times.

Hot Products

Schluter®-SHOWERPROFILE-WS/-WSK

Curbless showers are one of the staples in 55+ living, but what happens when water gets everywhere in the bathroom from a shower? Schluter Systems now has two different splash guards for the problem – both are wheelchair accessible and can be combined with either a semi-circular lip or collapsible upright lip.

Available in anodized aluminum, the Schluter®-SHOWERPROFILE-WS is a support profile that is set in conjunction with the tile using thin-set mortar. It has a 3/4-in. wide visible surface and a height of 5/16 inch. Where thicker tiles are used, simply fill the space below the profile with thin-set mortar. Resistant to mold and fungi, they require no special cleaning or maintenance. Adding the Showerprofile-WS into your clients' curbless showers will making living exponentially easier for them.



Hot Products

Better-Bench, The Shower Bench Solution!

Because 55+ communities and clients often need benches in their showers as they age in place, using the most efficient and highest quality bench is crucial for builders. The Better-Bench from Innovis Corporation is a series of easy-to-install shower benches that are simpler and easier to install than other shower benches currently on the market. Six different versions are available, ranging from small shelves all the way to full benches.

Designed in a simple and easy way, these benches can be mounted to most vertical surfaces and are made with long-lasting and corrosion-resistant materials. The benches are able to hold up to 400 pounds, and the trays up to 100 pounds, making this product a staple for any 55+ client.



Due to health and safety concerns and ongoing travel restrictions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) regretfully announced that the 8th annual Design & Construction Week® (DCW) featuring NAHB's International Builders' Show® (IBS) and NKBA's Kitchen & Bath Industry Show® (KBIS) will no longer be an on-site event. Instead, the two groups are planning a robust, all-virtual event.

Design & Construction Week was scheduled to take place on Feb. 9-11, 2021, at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. The new all-virtual DCW 2021 will still take place the week of Feb. 8 with extended programming. Registration coming soon at buildersshow.com.



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2021 Builders' Show UPDATE

The 2021 Builders' Show Will Transition to a Virtual Event

View Update

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