



50+ BUILDER

AMERICA'S RESOURCE FOR BUILDERS OF
AGE 50+ NEW HOME COMMUNITIES

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EXPAND MARKET SHARE BY OFFERING A VALUE-ADDED PRODUCT

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So you have an outstanding location for your new community, so does the developer across the street. What can you do to set your community above the rest? Or, if you don't have the best location, what can you do to improve sales in that community anyway?

Improving your product design to create homes that enhance the "active lifestyle" is the best way to differentiate communities and be on the leading edge with value-added design. By incorporating universal design, developers can create communities that meet both the current desires and future needs of buyers, while positioning the company as a leader in truly senior-friendly housing.

Many developers are reporting a record volume of visitors touring models, and yet they are not seeing the record setting sales to go along with these visits. Our newest "senior" shoppers are not the same as those in the past. Currently dealing with the challenges of their own aging parents, Baby Boomers are much more aware of the challenges of

aging in traditionally designed homes. Not all of the Baby Boomers are going to overtly ask for a house that will accommodate them when they get older, but they will appreciate it when they find it.

User-friendly beyond the senior market

What is really special about universally designed homes is that they are much user-friendlier for people of any age. Homebuyers experience the benefits from the first day they move in. No-step entries with wider doors and hallways make it easier to move in large, heavy pieces of furniture, and wheeled luggage and baby strollers can also be rolled into the home without straining backs.

Incorporation of universal design in homes extends the active lifestyle by reducing unnecessary obstacles and hazards, enhancing convenience and comfort through ergonomic features, improving health and well-being, expanding usability to all friends and family regardless of age or abilities, and supporting freedom of choice of where one wants to recuperate from illness or injury.

ABOVE

The universal cabinets appear to be traditional cabinets; however, they readily adapt to accommodate people who wish to sit while preparing their meals. Photo courtesy of Jerry Laursen.

50+ UNIVERSAL DESIGN

All of these impressive benefits can be provided with only a modest increase in the cost of construction — \$1,500 to \$5,000. The minimal increase in cost for the basic structural universal features could be included in the base price of the

versal design. Homes that accommodate the continuum of changing abilities over the lifespan will allow people to “age in place”. Eighty-nine percent of the people surveyed by AARP stated that they want to stay in their homes. Many of the long-

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Using transom windows enhances visibility and creates the bright, open feeling of this dining room. Photo courtesy of Jerry Laursen.

home, while the additional features could be offered as options to increase builders' profits.

Well-done universal design actually enhances the aesthetic value of the home. Functional allocation of space and enhanced lighting create homes that feel better and work better. Eighty-eight percent of my universal homebuyers are able-bodied families who just love the open and convenient floor plans. Twelve percent of my buyers are people who have some functional limitations that make living in a universal home essential. By incorporating universal design, you expand your market share.

A holistic approach

There are efforts around the country to increase the production of universal homes. Some jurisdictions have actually approved projects more readily because they incorporated uni-

term care insurance companies are now offering in-home-care services. Unfortunately, traditionally designed homes do not support “aging in place” or in-home caregiving. Universal homes provide the adaptability and usability to support these goals.

The principles of universal design can be applied to not only the individual dwelling units, but to the community as a whole. Designing for diverse and changing abilities and needs requires consideration of more than just wider doors and hallways. The more successful senior housing communities demonstrate a more holistic approach that takes into consideration health and wellness, community participation, transportation, life-long learning opportunities and purposeful, meaningful activity.

Hire experienced consultants

There is a lot to consider when designing a new home. Fortunately, there are universal design consultants available to collaborate with architects and builders and assist with the interpretation and synthesizing of these principles into workable and marketable floor plans and specifications.

Universal design can create a phenomenally better product when done well. Just installing wider doors and hallways is not going to give you the improved product that will boost your sales. Well-done universal design creates the “wow” factor that you want. Customers will love it when they see it even if they don't know what it is called.

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Universal design is truly the leading edge in design. Builders who implement the principles of universal design now will set their communities above the rest of the market. With the intense public education by the media, buyers are becoming much more sophisticated and will not accept the traditional designs of the past that pose unnecessary constraints and hazards that limit freedom of choice and threaten health and well-being of the active lifestyle.