

# BOOMERS in Transition | what's next in unit design?



# DESIGN TEAM



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## TOPICS

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Spatial Organization

Cooking & Dining

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Master Suite

Storage

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## INTRO

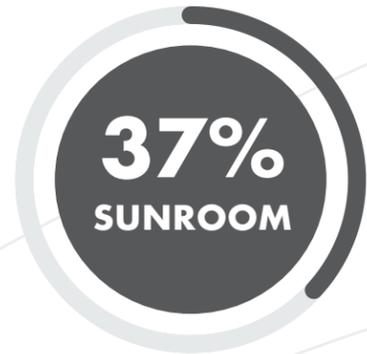
The question everyone is asking right now is—What do Boomers want? We know this influential demographic of approximately **74 million** people is redefining aging. As an architecture firm that specializes in designing places where people live and creating a sense of community, we want to know how and where Boomers want to live in the coming years.

Our Boomers in Transition survey series begins by exploring what is next in unit design. We asked respondents questions about overall spatial organization as well as design decisions related to various areas and functions of their living environment, including cooking and dining, living, the master suite and storage. In the following pages, we will share the information gathered during this process and offer our insights on the future of unit design.

**63%** of our respondents represent active adults ages **55-84** who were responding from the perspective of a resident.

# SPACIAL ORGANIZATION

Exploring preferences for space adjacencies. How do people want their space to flow from one area to the next?



Preferred type of outdoor connection.

We understand that first impressions are important. When it comes to walking into your home, what you see from the front door sets the tone for residents and visitors alike. Our respondents know the importance of a welcoming entry point. While the majority want a dramatic view, a close second were those who would like a foyer or decompression zone that allows people to have a place to enter and greet guests rather than walking directly into definable living space.

Whether or not the dramatic view is to the outside, a **distinct connection to the outdoors** is a priority. More than just windows, residents want direct access via a sunroom, screened porch or balcony.

In order to maintain the dramatic views from the living space, the majority of respondents chose an outdoor connection that didn't obstruct the view. This is achieved by placing the balcony, screened porch or sunroom off to the side of this living space as opposed to in front.

And in the case of bedroom locations, the answers were quite clear. Respondents overwhelmingly prefer a **split bedroom configuration** that positions bedrooms on either side of the living space rather than side by side down a short corridor.



As shown in the preferred layout, a projected living room and split bedroom configuration pairs well with a side access balcony to provide unobstructed views from the entry and living. This combines the preferred elements of each question.

*"The leap from a single family home or condo to an independent living apartment is a big one. Thoughtful design can soften the transition. Maximizing the sense of space and creating transparency by effectively introducing abundant natural light and minimizing hallways are useful tools to create drama within a smaller footprint." ► Gene Guskowski*

# COOKING & DINING

*The heart of the home is the kitchen. What are priorities for a functional kitchen and what type of dining experience is preferred?*

Many Boomers are transitioning from their beloved home where they may have raised a family and had a kitchen that was truly the hub of activity. When thinking about downsizing to an apartment, this is an area where they have strong opinions, and an area that can truly reflect and support their desired lifestyle.

The **majority** of our respondents **are looking for a medium-sized kitchen for the preparation of an occasional meal with space for entertaining.**

While a small kitchen for basic food prep was not desirable, some people still want a larger kitchen for regularly preparing meals with cooking and food storage as a focus.

When it comes to the ideal kitchen layout, **an L-shaped plan was preferred.**

While many modern kitchen layouts include open shelving, our results show that base cabinets with drawers of multiple depths and overhead cabinets are favored.

Storage was definitely a hot topic with **usable storage and accessibility** selected as priorities over top of the line appliances. Consistent with these responses was the fact that 67% want a walk-in pantry and most preferred the option of sliding shelves.



*While there were distinct opinions about the kitchen layout, respondents were more varied in their dining needs. A smaller café setting was slightly preferred, but counter dining and a designated dining room were also desirable options.*

# USABLE STORAGE & ACCESSIBILITY



*“As the overall size of the kitchen becomes smaller, it is necessary for the storage to be more functional and accessible. Deep pull out drawers allow easy access to pots, pans and dishes. Refuse and recycling can be efficiently hidden inside an 18-inch-wide pull out lower cabinet. Lower cabinets should allow for both upper and lower shelves to pull out completely.”* ► John Cronin

# LIVING

When it is time to relax or entertain, what type of spaces support living life to the fullest?



Respondents who wanted additional living space.

Here is another area where residents facing the challenge of downsizing have some “home sweet home” comforts they want to maintain. They want to **continue to live in style**, so architectural details such as vaulted ceilings add drama to an interior as well as wall space that supports personalization, entertainment and comfort. The following were identified as highly desirable focal points that create impact in an interior.

**media wall 36%** | **gas fireplace 47%** | **art wall 27%**

And there is no question that residents welcome the perk of some additional living space. There is a different use for about every personality type, including space to host guests, explore interests or support work functions. The simple fact is that they **would cherish a little extra space.**



## ADDITIONAL SPACE USAGE

62%

OFFICE

54%

GUEST

35%

HOBBY

23%

MEDIA

11%

DINING

9%

OTHER

*“While more space is always desired, to remain cost effective, the ability to build in flexibility in the unit layout is important.*

*We have found in the one-bedroom with den and two-bedroom units you can build in this flexibility.*

*The den or second bedroom allows residents the opportunity to use these spaces as office, craft rooms or media rooms.*

*And for those who still want it, these areas can be utilized as formal dining areas. These modifications can be treated as open areas or separated through the use of French doors.”*

► Russ McLaughlin

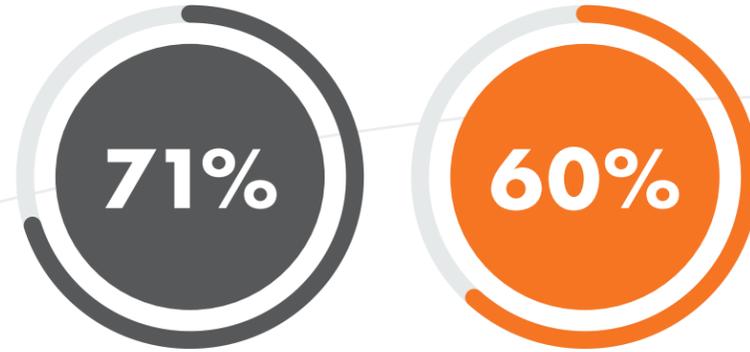
# MASTER SUITE

*It's time for bed. What makes a sweet Master Suite?*

Everyone knows the importance of the perfect mattress to get a good night's rest, but does the size of the bed matter? For those who like to unwind or read a book before lights out, they will sacrifice the mattress size for some additional lounge space. Respondents slightly prefer a queen-size bed and seating arrangement over the space needed for a king-size bed.

Just like the kitchen, usable and accessible storage continues to be a priority in the Master Suite. **The amount of storage is priority number one.** And while the size of the closet is most important, **respondents prefer to access a separate closet from the Master Bedroom** without requiring them to walk through a private toilet and bathing area.

In the Master Bathroom, storage options such as a linen and medicine closet are again at the top of the list—only slightly edged out by a large shower with glass doors. A private bathroom and double sink were noted as other desirable features.



*71% believe size of storage is most important while 60% rank separate access as a priority.*



*"You can easily replace a mattress, but it is hard to remodel your master suite. Finding the balance of tranquility, privacy and function is crucial." ▶ Eric Harrmann*

# STORAGE

*And what about the laundry, utility room and miscellaneous space to store things? Where do we put all of our stuff?*

When it comes to the future of unit design—one important area to continue to explore is innovative storage solutions. **Accessibility is again a priority** with residents preferring an additional walk-in closet in their units or at least a storage space somewhere on the same floor. **It is all about easy access.**

As are the preferred laundry solutions. Respondents would like laundry equipment, whether utility or standard size, to be side-by-side configurations for ease of use. And an added benefit would be locating this laundry equipment in a small utility room with space to accommodate miscellaneous storage.

**side-by-side 80% | stacked 20%**



*In a small walk-in closet within your living unit.*



*In a remote location on the same floor as your living unit.*



*In a remote location on another floor of the building.*

*Miscellaneous Storage*



*“Storage can be a huge challenge when downsizing. As the survey results suggest, we need to think about storage as an integral part of the unit design so that we meet the needs of the residents without dramatically increasing unit size. Built-in shelving, innovative, accessible kitchen cabinetry, and the inclusion of a utility room instead of a closet will be the trends of storage for future unit design.”*

► Justin Koepler

# WHAT DID WE LEARN?

**Boomers in Transition want Positive First & Lasting Impressions and Comfortable Living Spaces. As designers who understand the challenges of bringing profitable, large-scale developments to market, we must dig deeper to deliver Thoughtful Design Solutions.**

## Positive First & Lasting Impressions

When designing senior living communities, careful consideration is given to the impact at campus entry points, so it is not surprising that respondents are looking for a little drama at their unit entries. A spectacular view as you proceed through an entry sequence instills a positive first impression while giving residents an area to decompress as they return home or a cozy space to welcome guests. These desirable details can be a differentiator setting a senior living unit apart from a typical market rate apartment, an element that eases the transition from a single family home.

What becomes critical in achieving a positive lasting impression are the details beyond the front door. Respondents are looking for spaces with tall ceilings, open concepts and access to ample natural light. One of the lessons learned through this survey is that no matter the outdoor space, residents want to maintain the drama of the entry experience with an uninterrupted view from the living room. This becomes useful information for designers in the planning process, encouraging layouts that position balconies, sunrooms or screened porches to the area off to the side of the main living space.

## DESIGNER TAKEAWAYS

While creating drama does not drive the size of the unit, many of the desired details do have square footage implications. Design professionals must carefully consider the program requirements and size impact of these details to create a balance that delivers the most marketable units.

## DEVELOPER TAKEAWAYS

While the list of preferences tends to require more square footage, think of this data as a global view. Apply your local perspective to select the details that will differentiate your property and the square footage increases that make most sense from a rentability standpoint.

## Comfortable Living Spaces

Successful solutions infuse the best features of single family living into a smaller footprint. No matter the shape and size of the unit, the priorities are stylish, clutter-free, efficient and accessible living spaces where residents can age in place comfortably.

Focal points, such as a media wall, fireplace or featured art wall, offer opportunities for personalization, the accents from single family life that truly make a space feel like a home.

It is no surprise that the kitchen continues to be considered the hub of the home. While residents understand the need to downsize, they want kitchens that support entertaining yet better suited for aging in place. Emphasis in the kitchen, bathroom and throughout the unit was placed on ample and accessible storage. The storage solutions should require less bending and movement and provide enough space to maintain a clutter-free environment. One of the biggest surprises was the desire for a walk-in pantry in the kitchen.

Residents want simple and efficient spatial relationships with direct access rather than layered adjacencies that require entering one space to access another. And they want spaces and storage options that support flexibility as their needs change over time.

## Thoughtful Design Solutions

Every project is about the delicate balance of needs, wants, challenges and financial parameters. This survey gives us insights to share with our development partners, valuable information to support an open dialogue as we develop the program requirements for a project. Then it is our job to balance these preferences—the square footage, marketability and rentability—to create the ideal unit options to best suit the market, development and residents.



# VIRTUAL TOUR

## RESIDENT TAKEAWAYS

We are listening. Our task is to infuse residential character into communal living environments and provide residents of varying tastes with unit options. Our goal is to support downsizing while delivering spaces that allow people to live comfortably as they age in place.

## Boomers in Transition Survey Series

We are on a mission to enhance the senior living experience by exploring how and where Boomers want to live in the coming years. This report shares what we have learned about unit design so far, what we consider the building blocks of the design process.

We will continue to look for feedback on topics such as living in community, desirable amenities and healthcare services. We welcome your feedback as we consider the new standard for living spaces occupied by transitioning Boomers and what makes these environments their future “home sweet home”.

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**Take our Living in Community Survey:**

<https://agarch.com/living-in-community/>

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**If you would like information about our surveys or our architectural services please contact:**

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## About AG

AG Architecture is a full service architectural and engineering firm that continues an almost 50-year commitment to innovative senior living design. Whether new construction, an addition, or a complete repositioning, our goal is very straightforward—to improve the quality of life for our ever-growing senior population.

On every project, we take a bold, long-term view to design a building that benefits the people who live and work inside—and outside—its walls. The AG team has built long-term relationships with senior living providers around the country because they have benefitted from our ability to provide vision, build consensus, and bring certainty and predictability to the construction process.

