



Baby Boomers Dominate New Housing Trends

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Many of The Home Builder Association of Dayton builder members are custom builders such as myself. During this downturn we are finding that many of our current buyers fall into a single broad category. Our buyers, the largest American generation, are either retired or quickly nearing retirement age. Baby boomers, the generation born between 1946 and 1964 and who count more than 76 million, may be getting older, but they are definitely not ready to head to the retirement home!

The boomer generation is more active than generations past, has a more sophisticated style and wants options and choices in their homes. Whether they are selling the homes where they raised their children and heading to sunnier pastures, or staying put and redesigning to accommodate their retired lifestyle, these boomers are making an impact on new housing trends. Some features that homebuilders and remodelers are seeing as they begin to cater to the boomers include:

Home Offices – Some boomers are choosing to work past the age of 65. As they transition from a traditional 9-to-5 job, however, they want home offices for flexibility. A second career or part-time employment often eliminates the hassle of commuting while keeping them active and bringing in supplementary income.

Tech/Media Centers – The tech-savvy boomer generation wants top-of-the-line amenities for their homes such as a media room with surround sound and central control systems, which manage all media sources in one location. The house may include a wireless home network (Wi-Fi), remote control lighting and security features.

Wider Doors and Hallways – As a person ages, there is a likelihood that use of a wheelchair might become a necessity. Designing a home that is livable now but can transition and be functional as the occupant ages is important in ensuring that the home will be a good long-term investment. Wider doors and hallways are useful for moving larger furniture today, and will also be wheelchair accessible tomorrow.

Better Lighting/Bigger Windows – The need for more lighting usually increases as we grow older. To accommodate this, builders are adding more windows and making them larger to let in more natural light. They are also adding more light fixtures in areas including under cabinets and in stairwells. Multiple switches to reduce the number of trips and dimmer controls to eliminate glare are other options.

First-Floor Bedrooms and Bathrooms – More than 40 percent of new homes have master suites downstairs, a 15 percent increase over a decade ago. Boomers not wishing to go up and down stairs with bad knees and aching backs have helped fuel this trend. The bedrooms are also bigger, with larger walk-in closets and bathrooms that have a separate tub and shower and dual sinks.

Easy to Maintain Exteriors/Landscaping – Yard work, painting, and other landscaping chores may no longer be enjoyable to aging homeowners. People who move to a new home when they retire may opt for a maintenance-free community. Those that choose to stay in their homes might make improvements to exterior surfaces such as installing stucco, brick or low-maintenance siding. Lawns are being replaced with living patios, decorative landscaping, or flowerbeds, which can be a hobby for gardening enthusiasts.

Flex Space – “Flex space” has become more prevalent in both new homes and remodeling. Flex spaces are rooms that take on the purpose of the present homeowner’s needs but can adjust with changes as they occur. What may have once

started out as a guest bedroom can be redecorated to serve as a hobby room or library. This allows homeowners to stay in their homes longer as it continues to serve their needs throughout life's stages.

In June, at the 2008 Homearama Showcase in Country Brook North, you will have the chance to experience for yourself these trends in a way that that cable TV or the internet could never do justice. You will be able to walk through the spaces, feel the effects of the lighting and windows and smell the beautiful landscaping that will surround these magnificent homes.