

SALES & MARKETING

The iPad Requires a Different Way of Thinking for Home Builders

The iPad is a marketing phenomenon. Given the rapid adoption of iPads, websites need to be configured for easy and stimulating viewing on them. And the medium seems to be more about pictures, videos, and interactivity than text. Users like to be able to blow up images, customize floor plans, and watch YouTube content.

Multigenerational Households Are Here to Stay

Often thought to be a product of the recession, the trend—driven by older adults and immigration—has been growing for decades.

Multigenerational households are on the rise. The growing trend for multigenerational living situations is much broader than unemployed boomerang kids and has been growing since long before the Great Recession, according to a recent report put out by AARP as well as a separate study released last year by the Pew Research Center.

The Pew report, titled “The Return of the Multigenerational Family Household,” found that between 1980 and 2008, the number of Americans that lived in a household with at least two adult generations or a grandparent and another generation rose from 28 million, or 12% of the population, to 49 million, 16% of the population.

The Pew Research Center includes instances where adult parents were living with an adult child age 25 or older. The trend has been especially pronounced among the elderly. By 2008, one in five Americans aged 65 or older lived in a multigenerational household, compared to 17% in 1990, according to the Pew Center’s research. By 2010, nearly 3.5 million American householders shared their home with a parent, according to the AARP report, “Multigenerational Households Are Increasing.”

The trend is likely to continue to grow simply “because there are so many Boomers,” says Nancy Thompson, senior media relations manager at AARP.

Another factor driving the growth in multigenerational homes for the past two decades—and unlikely to reverse anytime soon—is the influx in immigrant households in the U.S. Minority Americans are far more likely to have multiple generations living under the same roof, the Pew study showed. While 13% of whites live in a multigenerational household, that number rises to 22% of Hispanics, 23% of blacks, and 25% of Asians. And as of the 2010 Census, the Hispanic population was the fastest growing in the nation.

At a time when builders could use a bright spot, it’s clear that the number of Americans in need of housing that can accommodate multiple generations is growing. And fueled by retiring Boomers and fast-growing minorities, that trend doesn’t look likely to change.

Inside the Minds of Trillion Dollar Women

Setting your building or remodeling project up for success

According to the book *Trillion Dollar Women: Use Your Power to Make Buying & Remodeling Decisions* (BuilderBooks.com), “women are valuable to homebuilders and remodelers because their decisions are worth so much – literally trillions of dollars in homebuilding and remodeling transactions are controlled by female decision makers.”

In fact, women make or direct 91% of the decision to buy a new home.

What is Woman-Centric?

Woman-Centric Design is the science of looking at every feature of a home through a woman’s eyes. Paul Foresman of Design Basics describes the four ‘lenses’ through which women see and measure a home or plan – *those areas used for entertaining, de-stressing, flexible working, and storage/organization*. “Women taught us that we have to bring in both the practical, functional aspects of design *and* have the aesthetics – the ‘wow’ first impressions.”

Design Basics developed the Woman-Centric concept through over 7 years of research, including holding numerous focus groups. “But we also spent time with women in their homes watching what they would do to overcome common design deficiencies,” says Foresman. He cites an example of watching a woman bring her dogs back in through a sliding door. It had been raining and the dogs were tracking their muddy paws onto the carpet. Woman-Centric design would call for a hard surface transition area where pet’s could be to welled before they reached the carpet.

Woman-Centric in Action

What are some of the design elements that make a home more desirable? Foresman lists a few for us here:

Spa Shower: “Our research shows that 78% of women never use the bathtub in the master bath. So when you start designing master bathrooms around the idea of an oversized spa shower, you can create a much more desirable master bath.”

Pet Friendly: Places for dogs to shake off when they come in wet and to store pet toys and supplies.

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TRILLION DOLLAR WOMEN

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Work-In Pantries that are big enough to prepare food in and that has an extra dishwasher and sink. This de-clutters a kitchen, even allowing some upper cabinets to be replaced with windows for a more open feel.

Entertainment Kitchens that flow seamlessly into other living spaces and that accommodate larger groups.

Lockers in the transition space between the garage and home so that every family member can store their personal items.

Attractive Front-Entrance Garages: “We found that women prefer to be able to pull straight in and back straight out of the garage as opposed to making the sharp turns often required for side-load door.”

Benefits of Woman-Centric Building

When buyers are introduced to these concepts, such as not having to walk through the laundry room to get from the garage into the house, they ask, “Why don’t all builders build this way?” It just makes sense.

And these designs aren’t gender-specific. These houses just live well. And that’s what we’re focusing on. It’s the livability as well as the aesthetics; in this marketplace you’ve got to have both. “We want to give a new definition as to what value really is,” says Foresman. “Let everybody else compete on price; I want to focus on making everyone else obsolete by creating a remarkable Woman-Centric model home.”

5 Key Changes in Boomers’ Expectations for Homes

Del Webb has conducted 10 extensive opinion surveys on the boomers since 1996, and says the famous 76 million cohort has changed significantly over the years. The SURVEY found them considerably less interested these days in heading for the traditional Arizona/Florida locales -- if they’ll move at all. And their reasoning for pulling up stakes has changed, too.

Five things to know about boomers’ retirement plans:

1. The last day on the job is going to hit later than it used to.

The younger boomers, who are turning 50 soon, plan to retire a median of four years later than 50-year-olds who responded to the survey in 1996 -- at age 67 versus 63. The survey found plenty of people who like to work and want to continue, whether in the same kinds of jobs, as consultants, or some other field, part time or full time. Then there are those who just have to work.

And then there’s this sobering admission: Boomers who are turning 50 this year are three times as likely to think they’ll never be financially prepared for retirement compared to older boomers -- 41 percent today vs. 15 percent who said that in the 1996 survey.

2. The still-at-work decision will affect whether they’ll move.

Among the older baby boomers (who started turning 50

in 1995), one-third plan to move in retirement; more than 50 percent plan to move to a different state, 25 percent to a different city within the same state, and fewer than 20 percent within the same town. Younger boomers now are more interested in moving than their similarly aged predecessors were in the 1996 survey.

3. The ones who are planning to move some distance are changing the rules.

Florida has slid off the map. In the survey, the top two destination preferences were North and South Carolina. A major influence: cost of living.

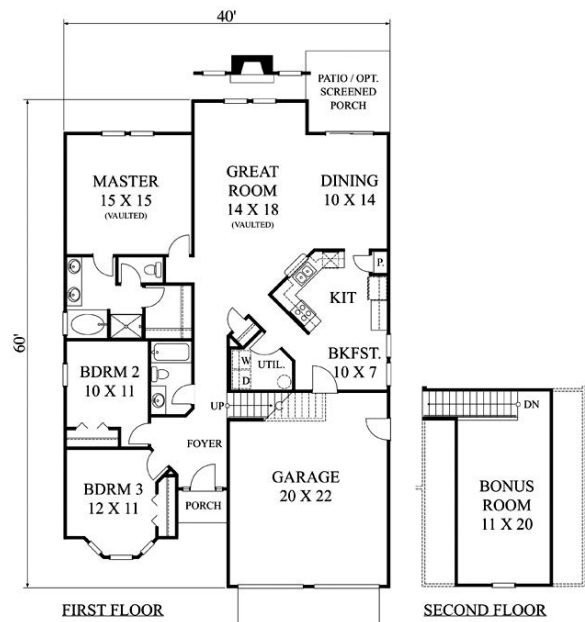
4. What they want once they get there has changed significantly.

Boomers are drawn to urban amenities such as shopping, restaurants and cultural amenities, and access to health care ranks very high for them now.

Another attitude adjustment: The belief within the housing industry that baby boomers will retire to some spot that’s close to their relatives has gotten the heave-ho. Being close to grandchildren ranked second to last among their decisions about where to live.

5. The houses they’ll live in are changing, too.

Reflecting the economy of the past couple of years, boomer consumers are more accepting of less square footage and are more interested in spaces that can handle multiple uses. They prefer ranch plans like this one by James Wentling Architects.



Builders have changed the “everything is included” approach in order to appeal to financially chastened boomers who are interested in a simpler, less luxurious house to start with, but may add some of the extras as they go along. However, despite their loudly expressed financial worries, home-shopping baby boomers just recently have begun to display a little more willingness to crack open their wallets. There’s some frugality fatigue setting in.