



industry | **BABY BOOMER**

# Don't Make Me Move Again...Give Me Flexibility

Yes, we know that Baby Boomers make up the largest demographic in history, nearly 80 million strong. But did you know that Boomer women outnumber Boomer men? **By Sue Marshall**

Did you know that women influence approximately 80 percent of the household purchase decisions? Do you realize that they are at the peak of their earning potential, and many are not planning to retire in the typical sense of the word? Many plan to work well into their 70's and possibly beyond. And finally do you know what they want in a new home and how to effectively market to them?

The other day I was thinking about reaching my mid-forties and what that feels like, putting together memories of my Mother in her forties. For fun try this exercise yourself. Is your 45 your Mom's 45? I can tell you for me absolutely- not. Boomer women are demanding more choices. We want options and we are very sophisticated buyers on all fronts. So what do

we want in housing choices? When thinking through this question keep in mind that we would prefer not to move again so the word flexibility is key.

Home plans need to feature a secondary bedroom suite for an older parent or adult child, at minimum a flex room with a Murphy bed that can double as a home office/guest room. Another key to flexibility is universal design. And remember to identify with us by not making these features about us but to make things more functional for our guests (because it is not about us getting old). Some examples would be three-foot doorways, pre-framing for grab bars and a walk-in shower with a minimum threshold.

Boomer women want to be environmentally responsible. We worry about our children and grandchildren and what kind of world they will live in. We are very concerned about how our choices in the past and future impact that world.

Saving energy is a direct gift to them. We want builders to give us options on products for saving energy, and also direction on things like house design and placement on a lot that may make a difference in heating and cooling. We want to spend time enjoying nature so give us our own private outdoor oasis. The other day, a friend asked me how long this "green thing" is going to last. I replied as long as Boomers are able to make purchasing decisions on their own, maybe 40 years. He was thinking until the next real estate boom. What do you think?

Boomer women have devoted their lives to others. It is our turn to have a home that lives the way we want to live. We do not need four bedrooms for kids, three baths to clean and three car garages to store everyone else's stuff. We want affordable homes that meet our median income not the top 10 percent of our generation. We want to upgrade things and not be told it is a bad idea for resale. We want what we want, the way we want it. With our husbands retiring and our grown children and parents sometimes living with us, boomer women want their own personal space. Give us a flex room, sunroom, reading or education room (not craft room that was our Mom's hobby) at the least, a sitting room off the master bedroom. Give me "my space" and I will give you a sale.

**SUE MARSHALL**

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