

# 50+ Housing Council Update

## *The Secret: Sell the Lifestyle not the Home*

RECENTLY I WAS ASKED BY A GROUP OF REALTORS TO MEET WITH THEM AT A MODEL HOME IN A DEVELOPMENT THAT IS GEARED TOWARD BABY BOOMERS. **BY SUE MARSHALL**

The single-family model home was gorgeous. The floor plan was a perfect fit and it had all the upgrades that a baby boomer would want. The development was nicely situated with meandering roads and made use of its natural surroundings of trees and wetlands. I had met several of the sales people over the years and considered them among the best in luxury homes sales. I asked them to describe to me in detail the prospects that have been expressing interest. They described to me the empty nesters (or soon to be) that are looking to downsize (careful on assuming what that means). They love large gourmet kitchens, main-level master bedroom and see their families as visiting often. They spend a large amount of time traveling and hope to have a limited amount of maintenance with their new home. I asked them about whether there was a Home Owners Association. They quickly responded with “no” and seemed proud to not have one. They indicated that there is no chance for any common areas or amenities to the development. My question to them was, are you selling a product or are you selling a lifestyle?

The best tool to sell lifestyle is a Home Owner’s Association (HOA). The HOA begins formulating the feeling of what it is like to live in a new community. In our above example they had missed the link. This “great” product did not answer a prospects question of “what is it like to live here?” My suggestion to this sales team was to create amenities and common areas that these new families could commune together with the existing local public establishments. The neighborhood was within

blocks from a retail area of shops, pharmacy, grocery store, LifeTime Fitness and several restaurants. I suggested that they create a directory for the development that lists descriptions and locations of these establishments. They may even approach these local establishments for co-op marketing opportunities. Even though they did not have a formal HOA they could organize neighborhood social groups to encourage a sense of connectedness. I also suggested that they gather information on local contractors for lawn maintenance, cleaning, exterior and interior home maintenance. Instead of a formal HOA you now can sell the benefits of maintenance-free living by choice, not by mandatory fees.

When you ask developers about HOAs, often they will focus on the legal aspects of an HOA. However an HOA has a broader impact on the homeowner experience and should be top priority. The key is to personalize the community maintenance and social experience. With planning and preparation, a properly managed HOA will help owners feel proud and encourage their friends to join them. Referrals have been traditionally responsible for less than 10 percent of traffic in sales models, hence undervalued. By building a caring and compassionate HOA culture (whether mandatory fees exist or not) referrals can contribute up to 50 percent of the traffic in models. When you focus on giving an unbelievable experience, homeowners will tell their friends about the joys of living in the community with passion, enthusiasm, and conviction that advertisements can never match. So forget client/prospect gifts, and focus on giving them the experience of a lifetime.



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Fueled by the entrance of baby boomers into the already hot active adult market, the 50+ housing market is the fastest growing segment of the home building industry. As this market expands, the design criteria for active adult and senior housing is changing to better meet the needs of this consumer group.

The Builders Association of the Twin Cities (BATC) is very pleased to introduce the winners of their first annual *Best of 50+ Design and Marketing Awards*. This new award program honors design and marketing excellence for active adult for-sale housing, apartments, as well as congregate care and assisted living communities. These awards were created to elevate the quality of active adult and senior housing and help builders better meet the needs of these customers.

**2007 WINNERS:**

**OVERALL COMMUNITY**

Medici Development LLC

*Project: The Villas at Rivers Edge, Rogers*

**HOME DESIGN - SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED**

Bob Michels Construction, Inc.

*Project: Private residence, Medina*

**HOME DESIGN - SINGLE FAMILY ATTACHED**

Pillar Homes Partner, Inc.

*Project: Bloom Hill Townhomes, Bloomington*

**HOME DESIGN - MULTIFAMILY-UNIT DESIGN**

David Bernard Builders & Developers

*Project: Village in the Park, St. Louis Park*

**COMMUNITY COMMON AMENITY FEATURE**

Cooperative Communities, LLC

*Project: The Gramercy Club, Burnsville*

**AGING IN PLACE REMODELING**

New Spaces

*Project: Private residence, Bloomington*

**SALES & MARKETING - COLLATERAL MATERIAL**

Opus NWR Development, LLC

*Project: The Summit of Mendota Heights, Mendota Heights*

For more information on each category, visit [www.batc.org](http://www.batc.org), click on awards.