

HOUSE REVIEW

Housing Designs for Boomers

In 2019, the youngest Baby Boomers will turn 55, while the oldest will be 73. No wonder builders and developers are rapidly opening 55-plus communities to capture the interest of this vast market segment

By Larry W. Garnett, FAIBD, House Review Lead Designer | May 29, 2019



The front elevation of the 55+ Wellness House by KGA Studio Architects.

While we are led to believe Boomers all want similar housing options, the truth is that this enormous group is just as diverse in their later years as they've been throughout their younger homebuying years. While many want to economize and downsize, others desire larger, grander homes. High levels of finish and quality and the prospect of little or no maintenance are high on their list of desired features, as is the flexibility to **navigate physical challenges in the future**.

In addition, some are content to live in attached homes in amenity-rich developments with fitness centers and walking trails, while others prefer single-family detached residences in walkable neighborhoods with convenient access to stores and entertainment. Both of these design types are reflected in this month's projects.

55+ WELLNESS HOUSE

ARCHITECT: [KGA Studio Architects](#), Jerry Gloss, AIA, MIRM, CMP, jgloss@kgarch.com, 303.442.5882

PLAN SIZE: Width: 60 feet; Depth: 70 feet

The 55-plus buyer is looking for a **home design that anticipates “potentials,”** including evolving living arrangements, changing sleeping habits, and declining physical abilities. KGA refers to this overlay of considerations as “life-cycle design.” This buyer demographic has a wide variety of needs influencing their purchasing decisions, and flexibility is key. For this group, designers must create product that offers a range of options, motivates and excites them, and addresses differing needs without large swings in price.

The base ranch plan shown here offers flex space opportunities (D, E, and F) at the front of the home. Standard rooms include two bedroom suites and a grand room/dining/kitchen area. Note the owner’s entry from the garage that merges with the kitchen to create an efficient connector, including a bench and home organization area. And all doors are 3 feet wide for better accessibility. (Front elevation shown, above.)



- A** Front flex space
- B** Large walk-in closet options to an elevator
- C** Larger master bath shower to suit a walker, plus barn doors for accessibility
- D** Optional second bedroom suite and study for the front flex space, plus an exercise room with steam shower/ sauna for the master suite
- E** Optional independent unit in the front flex space for an in-law suite, caretaker quarters, or rental
- F** Optional grandkids' wing for the front flex space



SOLANA AT LA FLORESTA

DESIGNER: Dahlin Group Architecture | Planning, marketing@dahlingroup.com, 925.251.7200

PLAN SIZE 5A: Width: 61 feet; Depth: 38.5 feet; Living area: 2,113 sf



Photo: Applied Photography

Set within La Floresta, a master planned community of all-age neighborhoods in Brea, Calif., Solana embraces the local lively atmosphere with a neighborhood designed for the 55-plus set. Residents enjoy full access to the Buena Vida Clubhouse, while walking, biking, and meandering trails link people and places within the community and out to neighboring regional and state parks. The community's adjacent retail center, the Village of La Floresta, features indoor/outdoor dining, as well as shops and offices, all within easy walking distance.

Solana's 96 single-family detached homes are designed to promote convenient, resort-style living for active, move-down 55-plus buyers, offering smaller homes within a gated, private enclave. Five plans, ranging from 1,396 to 2,113 square feet, promote single-level living and second-floor destinations for game rooms, offices, or guests. The mix of Mediterranean- and Andalusian-inspired architecture fits well with adjoining communities.



- A** Owner's suite and second bedroom on first floor allow single-level living
- B** Covered patio with option for outdoor kitchen
- C** Second-floor bonus room and guest bedroom

THE RESIDENCES AT ROLLING HILLS COUNTRY CLUB

ARCHITECT: Robert Hidey Architects, ahidey@roberthidey.com, 949.655.1550

PLAN SIZE: Width: 61 feet, 10 inches; Depth: 93 feet; Living area: 3,890 sf



Set in a pastoral, semirural area crisscrossed by walking trails, bridle paths, and golf course fairways, these spacious homes feature generous first-floor master suites—a perfect mix for active Baby Boomers. Privileges at the 70,000-square-foot clubhouse—gym, spa, aquatic center, restaurant, and banquet facilities—reinforce a sense of community for residents.

Designed in an interpretive ranch house style, the development honors the area's mid-century architectural heritage while offering modernity, elegance, state-of-the-art technology, and eco-conscious efficiency sought by today's affluent Boomers.



- A** An office or optional guest suite/ third bedroom has easy access to the entry and courtyard for flexibility and privacy
- B** Filled with natural light, the great room flows seamlessly through retractable glass walls from indoors to an adjacent courtyard and dining patio
- C** Covered outdoor dining patio offers continuous access to nature
- D** Off a private hallway, the master suite is served by a generous master bath with dual vanities and a capacious walk-in closet
- E** An upstairs bonus room is accompanied by a secondary bedroom and an en suite bathroom for guests

NARROW LOT – PLAN 1

ARCHITECT: Richard Handlen, AIA, LEED AP; **EDI International**, richard.handlen@ediinternational.com,

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PLAN SIZE: Width: 30 feet; Depth: 110 feet; Living area: 1,630 sf



Most Boomers are empty nesters considering downsizing, if they haven't done so already. While still very active, a common long-range goal is single-story living where they can **age in place**. Second-story spaces are for occasional use, but are not an everyday need. This plan provides options to help meet these desires.



- A** The great room is the focus of the single-story living
- B** A first-floor master suite is the most important consideration for Boomers
- C** A courtyard between the house and garage provides a small private space for outdoor entertaining, gardening, and relaxation with minimal upkeep
- D** An optional covered walkway links the garage and house
- E** A detached garage with alley or corner access allows a variety of lot sizes and road layouts
- F** This side of the house has minimal windows for maximum privacy from neighbors
- G** Two second-floor rooms for projects, offices, or guests; each has a walk-in closet with space to store memorabilia. The layout is set back from the first-floor footprint to maximize sunlight into the courtyard below
- H** An optional studio above the garage is a great escape pad or space for a bounce-back kid, a grandkid's playroom, private housing for a live-in caregiver, or a rental

CARDINAL WOODS RESIDENCES PLAN 1

DESIGNER: [Larry W. Garnett, FAIBD](mailto:larrygarnett@larrygarnettdesigns.com); larrygarnett@larrygarnettdesigns.com; 254.205.2597

PLAN SIZE: Width: 30 feet; Depth: 80 feet; Living area: 1,576 sf



The smallest of three designs for a 55-plus neighborhood, this one-story plan offers two bedrooms and a study. All of the narrow lot designs feature two-car garages accessed from a rear lane. An alcove in the garage can be used for storage or a workbench. The open living/kitchen/dining areas all focus on gated private side yards.



- A** Secluded master suite
- B** Master bath has large shower and walk-in closet
- C** Open kitchen/living/dining
- D** Private side yard with fence and gates at front and rear provide security for grandkids and pets
- E** Windows open to porch and side yard to deliver plenty of natural light in the study
- F** Two-car garage with extra storage space or shop
- G** Front elevations use different materials and roof designs to create a unique streetscape

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