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Design Next: Ideas for Tomorrow's Market

Nine architects and designers present creative design ideas that grab the attention of today's home buyer

By [Mike Beirne](#), Editor

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If Millennials are on the path toward accumulating less wealth than their parents' generation, can they buy houses? Will they have any impact on house design?

Young adults born after 1980 are underemployed, and their unemployment rate is more than double the national average, according to Generation Opportunity, a conservative activist group. They're carrying \$45,000 in debt, mostly college loans, per a study by PNC Financial; and the bulk of near-term job growth is expected to come from the service and retail sectors—jobs that hardly pay wages that will boost the ranks of the middle class.

The future of marketing new homes for this group might involve providing a product that enables willing parents to invite their adult children to live under the same roof. Consider that 21.6 percent

of adults between 25 and 34 years old were living in a home where someone older was the head of household, according to 2010 U.S. Census Bureau data. That figure is up from 15.8 percent in 2000 and 11 percent in 1980.

Millennials are not going to be lifelong renters, but living in a multigenerational home could be a life stage many will have to pass through before buying their own place. Some designers are just catching on to that market need, but Robert Hidey—one of the architects featured in PB's Design Innovation Report—has been designing multigenerational homes since 2000.

Neil Howe, the historian, economist, and demographer, coined the term "Millennials" along with long-time co-author William Strauss. Howe studies the collective personalities of generations and has written several books about Generation Y, although he'll caution you that Gen Y is a misnomer. The name mistakenly implies that adults born between 1980 and 2000 are an extension of the Gen X generation, born between 1965 and 1979. No generation is like the one that precedes it, so he prefers Millennials.

Recent surveys from home builders and sellers about Millennial housing preferences—smaller over McMansion, automated systems, home theater and office—didn't reveal much new information for Howe. He is more interested in learning what their attitudes are regarding houses with open versus closed porches, and what they think about their neighbors and being closer to their community.

Ironically, some attributes that attract Millennials also are a draw for Boomers trading down. Sarah Susanka, another designer on these pages, notes that infill will become trendy as homebuyers opt for neighborhoods that are less auto dependent and deliver a cozy sense of togetherness. Both buyer groups have a hankering for modern and minimalist, which are signatures of Phil Kean designs.

Here's another observation builders and designers could consider for marketing purposes. Unlike previous generations that invited their older parents and grandparents to live with them, Boomer parents are inviting adult Millennials. Both generations are doing what immigrant and large extended families have done for decades: pool resources to live in one building, whether it's a multi-unit home or a house remodeled to accommodate an in-law apartment. Some parents are digging deeper into their wallets.

"The Boomer parents are co-signing loans," said Howe. "They're giving mortgages to the kid and just charging them for the interest rate. It's not a bad deal. They figure they'll do better investing in their kids, even if they're charging them just 2 or 3 percent, than they would putting the money in the bank."

If two or three generations are living under one roof, even in autonomous units, all dwellers would appreciate the benefits of universal design espoused in the next few pages by Esther Greenhouse and Darin Schoolmeester. The concept of expandable rooms from Nick Lehnert also can appeal to the lifestyles of both generations. Everyone yearns for privacy, and that desire for

outdoor refuge is answered by Scott Adams. Given that Boomers saw much of their net worth evaporate in the stock market and housing crashes, and Millennials carry too much college debt, designs that render houses more efficient and affordable, such as entries by Larry Garnett and Todd Hallett, will be in play.

[Nick Lehnert, KTG Group Inc.](#)

[Darin Schoolmeester, MVE & Partners Inc.](#)

[Phil Kean, Phil Kean Designs](#)

[Scott Adams, Bassenian Lagoni](#)

[Esther Greenhouse](#)

[Todd Hallett, TK Design & Associates](#)

[Larry W. Garnett, Larry Garnett Designs](#)

[Robert Hidey, Robert Hidey Architects](#)

[Sarah Susanka, Susanka Studios](#)

Multigenerational Living



While the term multigenerational living came into the lexicon just a couple of years ago, the concept has been around for more than a decade. The Irvine, Calif.-based firm Robert Hidey Architects (RHA) has been designing homes with some form of detached autonomous living

space since 2000, including Esperanza—a development of 1,650-2,100-square-foot homes in Palm Desert for Taylor Woodrow (now Taylor Morrison)—and La Cima, 4,000 to 6,000-square-foot luxury homes in Irvine for Laing Luxury Homes.



After the economy crashed, the concept of multigenerational living began to receive a lot of attention from developers because of its appeal to a broad range of buyers who suddenly needed to incorporate in their households aging parents, boomerang kids, or extended family who wished to maintain their sense of independence. The need for multigenerational housing is still relevant today. Even though we have moved into a stronger housing market, separate living spaces to accommodate the privacy of family members are becoming extremely common in new homes, regardless of the price point.



RHA's recent award-winning Lambert Ranch project in Irvine received broad national attention for its array of options for private quarters, including models with a second master suite on the ground floor, featuring exterior and interior entries, as well as free-standing guest houses and even compound estates.



Residential builder clients today expect floor plan solutions with optional independent living quarters. Indeed, the firm has recently designed starter homes in Santa Clarita that offer separate first-level, lock-off suites that can be occupied by family members or rented out to friends, as well as in a large luxury project in Playa Vista. Both are equipped with in-suite bathrooms, larger storage space, and a private entry so occupants can come and go without imposing on the family.



- A.** Separate covered entry to detached living quarters lends a sense of individuality to living quarters.
- B.** Popular open floor plan comfortably incorporates a living suite and kitchenette area with a dining nook.
- C.** Larger master bedroom with its W.I.C, full, oversized bathroom and dual vanity is reminiscent of hotel suites and larger homes.

D. Covered loggia with breezy outdoor kitchen and strategically organized courtyard provides a common ground where inhabitants of both homes can interact.

E. Oversized garage accommodates the storage needs of multiple families.

F. Spacious great room in main house comfortably accommodates multiple families.

G. Separate laundry rooms within each house add to the independence of each household.



Robert Hidey, AIA

Robert Hidey Architects

roberthidey.com

rhidey@roberthidey.com

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