

## Question of the Month

**Q: "The recent Senior Housing and Care Conference and Expo sponsored by the Colorado Real Estate Journal featured several architects who specialize in senior housing and care facilities. As one of those architects, would you share a few highlights from your remarks at the conference?"**

Please contact Pym's Capital Resources or The Highland Group if you would like to participate in the Senior Housing & Care Question, or if you have a question that you would like to see addressed.

### Jami Mohlenkamp

I was glad to be part of the conference panel looking at trends in design for independent living and assisted living. Construction has been robust in the recent past and there are still a number of projects coming into design. Many of the projects have been market rate and we are seeing an increase in affordable options. Construction costs continue to rise in our region and are further affected by factors such as noncombustible construction and increased building systems and envelope energy code requirements.



**Jami Mohlenkamp**  
Principal, OZ Architecture

Looking at amenities, OZ has been focusing on designing spaces that encourage the family to stay longer. Family is one of the greatest amenities we have. We are creating rooms for younger visitors, including teenagers and children, like media lounges, video game rooms and playrooms. We've also integrated landscaping that creates visual interest and can be used by children to play on. The addition of a business center allows adult children the opportunity to catch up on work while taking a break from visiting with a loved one. Using the windows in the resident room, we have been looking at designs that maximize natural light and frame views to natural elements and landscape outside. Lastly, community is another integral amenity. Selecting sites with the opportunity for strong neighbor connectivity is critical. The project must also be designed to facilitate circulation into and off of the site for residents and visitors.

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### Chad Holzinger

My remarks at the conference were directed to market-rate, age-qualified rental communities. A cultural shift has occurred, which is transforming the way we design age-qualified apartments. Communities are being planned and constructed with an increased emphasis on physical health, social health and an emphasis on proximity to a walkable neighborhood with restaurants, transit and culture. The most successful new developments take these factors into careful consideration, recognizing that success in these areas results in an enduring community that will enjoy low vacancy and low turnover. The way a building engages a tenant can make a fundamental impact on health. Not simply a fitness center, but instead, the way the whole building encourages individuals to move



**Chad Holzinger**  
Principal, Shop Works Architecture

through it. It is important to design corridors with daylight, that express joy and aren't dark or smelly. Stairs with natural light with direct connection to the resident amenities, leasing office and mail are great design techniques that invite activity, instead of discourage it. The procession from the parking to the building also is an opportunity for healthful design — utilization of landscaping, gardening (food and flowers), as well as careful placement of seating areas and shade invite residents to be in a delightful environment instead of isolated in their home. Last, to the extent possible, placing communities in vibrant neighborhoods with easy access to shops, transit and workplace, also can contribute to the health and durability of a community. Successful implementation of these ideas also makes an enormous impact on the social health of a community. When the built environment welcomes human interaction, relationships within the building can be easily made and residents begin to establish a human network that cares for the property and one another.

### Dennis Boggio

My segment of the conference focused on new models of skilled nursing. For the first time since the nursing home construction boom that occurred after Congress passed the Medicare/Medicaid Act in the 1960s, there is a high demand for new construction and repositioning of nursing facilities, and there is a new focus on the physical environment. There are a few reasons for this recent flurry of activity.



**Dennis Boggio**  
Principal, Lantz-Boggio Architects

1. The average nursing home in America is over 45 years old and most of these older facilities are obsolete with regard to the values and expectations of newer generations of seniors.

2. Debt and equity to fund new projects is available through real estate investment trusts, commercial banks, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and private equity investors.

3. Demographic trends have result-

ed in growth of the short-term rehabilitation population. This Medicare reimbursed component is the economic engine that establishes feasibility for new projects and new models. "Build it and they will come" is an appropriate axiom for today's new nursing facilities but only if you build to satisfy ideals that seniors and families have for their living and care environment. The older nursing home supply generally includes two beds per room with shared baths and a total gross building area of less than 300 square feet per bed. Responsive new nursing facilities contain approximately 725 gross sq ft per bed in single-occupancy hotel-type suites with private baths and showers and an overall noninstitutional persona. Beyond the "resident" suites, the amenity spaces contain a variety of options that are designed to invite family and friends while relating to changes in preferences for daily activities that have occurred as the generations evolved. Theaters, bistros, grab-and-go food options, outdoor kitchen and dining experiences as well as a variety of outdoor spaces relate to a non-institutional goal for both image and living opportunities. These outdoor spaces also are consistent with concepts for a healing environment.

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In this new era of nursing home construction, the new focus on a physical environment that promotes healing, feelings of home along with current expectations for activities and family participation is changing the paradigm for nursing facilities in America.

### Yong Cho

At the Colorado Real Estate Journal senior housing conference, I focused my comments on age-restricted rental housing, an exciting new option that that offers great homes and community features attractive to active adults, typically age 55 and older. The decision comes from a thoughtful process and evalu-



**Yong Cho**  
Principal, Studio Complextiva

ation of current and future needs and desired lifestyle. The decision comes from priorities: a person may be an empty nester; someone who no longer wishes to own a home with maintenance and repair worries; a couple may no longer have a need for a larger home and choose to pare down responsibilities to free up energy and time for activities that they enjoy.

The following considerations are of importance when designing age-restricted housing:

1. Location: Residents want to be engaged and lead a full life with a longer-term, sustainable solution to meet their needs, now and in the future. The location should provide access to health, transportation, recreation, arts/entertainment and other important public amenities.

2. Community: The sense of vitality and authenticity of a community that enables deep, meaningful connections is important. The community should be designed with a culture of mutual and self-direction and governance in mind. The residents want greater control and sense of direction of the community and its environment — having diverse, motivated, engaged energetic fellow residents who are oriented toward sharing and growing. To that end, type, quantity, quality and diversity of amenities should be carefully designed to enable and support residents' goals and needs.

3. Architectural design: All aspects of the building design — from the exterior look and feel to the common spaces and individual rooms — should resonate with residents. The building vibe should reflect the energy, personality and lifestyle of the residents. The design needs to meet specific, tangible requirements and also deliver "intangible" needs. Intangible qualities include a nurturing and dynamic environment that fosters a strong sense of community and also works as a safe, private homestead.▲

### MODERATOR COMMENTS



**Elisabeth Borden**  
Moderator,  
The Highland Group Inc.

April's Senior Housing and Care Conference was a big hit, with around 400 registrants. For those of you who missed it, these architects were gracious enough to share some highlights. Be sure to come next year!

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