

Boomers Can Benefit From Sustainable Age-in-place Homes

With Boomers at or nearing retirement, homes will need to change to accommodate their dreams, desires and changing needs and remain sensitive to the planet's natural resources.

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. - May 22, 2013 - [PRLog](#) -- When we hear the words “sustainable design,” it refers to buildings that are designed to reduce their carbon footprint. But with the growing population of 76 million baby boomers, creating a “sustainable life” at home will be the next big wave in design according to Michael A. Thomas, a Palm Springs, CA. interior designer with a special interest in creating live and work environments to sustain the quality of life.

According to Thomas, the ultimate place to spend retirement years is to be in a home of ones choosing, homes that combine safe, secure barrier-free spaces with “green designed” interiors. By providing for good indoor air quality, selecting high efficiency appliances and choosing low maintenance furnishings, fixtures and finishes, boomers can expect to live in their own places for a much longer period of time.

And Thomas should know. He is a well-known speaker on the topic, a Certified Aging In Place Specialist (CAPS) and the co-author of the book “Residential Design For Aging In Place,” a definitive guide to the design principles of aging in place. But as he works with clients, he still finds a resistance to the ideas he presents.

“I find that Boomers are in age denial,” stated Thomas during a presentation he made during a symposium for the United Way and AARP. “And another fear is that the sustainable home designed with universal design principles will look ‘institutional’ or will cost a lot to do. But manufacturers such as Kohler are making high style ‘comfort’ products that cost little or nothing more and feature water savings benefits.”

Some of the ideas Thomas suggests that combine sustainable and age-friendly solutions include: abundant lighting using LED and compact florescent light sources, hard surface flooring like cork and wood from sustainably managed forests, cabinets finished with low or no volatile organic compounds and water, heat and cooling systems with Hepa-type filtrations.

Other concepts include showers with temperature and water flow settings, taller toilet seats with dual flush controls, smart-control thermostats with large readable displays, auto-controlled window treatments that screen out the sun’s glare and harmful rays and solid surface quartz countertops that inhibit the growth of bacteria.

Research by several groups including AARP indicates that nationwide Boomers are increasingly concerned about mobility, health care costs and dependence on families as well as access to government services. But surveys also highlight the concerns boomers have about how and where they will live so that they can sustain their own personal independence. And this trend is only beginning to gain traction.

The number of baby boomers contemplating how they will live longer, productive lives is growing dramatically. Every day in this country, 10,000 people turn 65, a trend that will continue for the next 15 years. And in the State of California alone, the population of people older than 65 began a rapid expansion in 2010, leading to a doubling of the current 3.5 million older adults around the year 2025.

By 2030, when all baby boomers will have entered the age 65-plus category, older adults will represent more than one of every six Californians. Add this to the numbers of “X” and “Y” Generations who may find themselves caring for a parent in their home and the potential demand for accessible, sustainable

homes explodes.

“Considering the alternative may be assisted living centers or nursing home environments, the high cost and perceived low quality of care will certainly create a large demand for homes that have sustainable and aging in place features in place or for ones which can be easily adapted,” Thomas added. “We can’t continue to turn out homes that won’t adapt to this demographic.”

Thomas has written a complimentary 8-page color publication, Ten Essential Elements For Aging In Place ~ A Checklist For Independence, and is available on the web at

<http://www.iageinplace.com/guide-to-aging-in-place.html>

• About: The Design Collective Group, Inc. is a multi-faceted design firm founded in 1996 by Michael A. Thomas, FASID, CAPS. Projects include corporate offices, hospitality and residential interiors from New York to Miami, From Houston To Chicago and from Jupiter Fl to Palm Springs, CA. Thomas has been quoted and published in various media about aging in place including Time, Dwell, Interiors & Sources, the Miami Herald, Houston Chronicle, Palm Beach Post and featured on Outrageous Beach Homes on HG-TV and the Travel Channel.

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