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Primetime

A monthly look at local lifestyle news for those over 50

Woo you

Adult communities step up to create the homes buyers really want

Moving into a new home in your golden years can be invigorating. Not only can you finally get that granite countertop and scrapbooking room, but you can also “buy” maintenance free living, energy-saving conveniences and even a sense of community. The good news is you have choices — and the even better news is the market is waiting to woo you.

Picking and choosing

Choice abounds at Del Webb’s four active adult communities in Illinois: Sun City Huntley in Huntley, Edgewater in Elgin, Grand Dominion in Mundelein, and Shorewood Glen in Shorewood.

“All offer buyers the opportunity to purchase new construction, and we have homes that are finished that are ready for a quick move-in,” says Maria Wilhelm, vice president of sales. “The buyer has a lot of opportunity to choose features, fixtures and materials if they buy a to-be-built home.”

Del Webb offers ranches — one-story homes that range from approximately 1,190 to 3,000 square feet. “Depending on the community, we offer up to 16 floor plans that can fit any buyers budget and housing needs,” Wilhelm adds.

Single story ranches are also popular at D.R. Horton’s three active adult communities: Carillon Club in Naperville, Carillon at Stonegate in Aurora and Carillon at Cambridge Lakes in Pingree Grove.

“By designing the homes with all of the living space on one level, it creates more open living environ-

ments and a greater perception of space versus dividing up the living areas on two levels,” says Chris Naatz, vice president of sales for D.R. Horton. “In addition, single level living is very adaptable to how people will live in the home over time.”

However, the builder also accommodates buyers that want two-story living, as well as those who may want basements. “Overall, we offer a variety of home designs (including townhomes) so that people can choose a home that works well with their living style,” he says.

For those whose choice is to forego single family living altogether and chores such as cooking and housekeeping, Mather LifeWays offers one and two bedroom independent living apartment homes in two of its Illinois communities: The Mather in Evanston, a continuing care community with 241 independent living apartments, and Mather Place of Wilmette, a smaller boutique setting with about 120 apartments, gardens and more intimate community spaces.

Gale Morgan, vice president of sales Mather LifeWays, says buyers interested in these two Mather properties are also looking to the amenities they offer.

“The community amenities are so rich and abundant with social and recreational opportunities,” she says. “And while potential buyers are interested in downsizing their homes, they still want flexible design and use.”

Must haves

So, just what are today’s homebuyers looking for when they contemplate a move? A lot.



An open kitchen in the Edgewater ranch style Del Webb model (right) is a preferred design in homes. The fact that it connects seamlessly to the great room is a plus.

“Based on our experience, baby boomers want a large, open kitchen that connects seamlessly to the great room; a walk-in pantry and kitchen island; and they prefer a master bath with a walk-in shower,” says Wilhelm. “They also prefer stainless steel appliances and hardwood floors.”

Morgan says Mather residents are looking for more “function” rather than size in their kitchens. “However, they want quality in the finishes and appliances,” she adds. “They are still looking for beautiful cabinetry, especially with the open-concept kitchens in view of the living areas.”

Naatz agrees that the kitchen, no matter its size, still steals the heart of homeowners.

“Kitchens remain a hub of the home and our Carillon buyers look for convenient work spaces with islands and ample cabinet space with pantries,” he says. “Often they will choose roll-out shelves and the convenience of the raised dishwasher option. Lever hardware is popular and makes it easy to open doors when your arms are full.”

Trends

Flexibility, reflecting the way people live today, is a top trend. “We design the homes to incorporate open spaces that are flexible and adapt to the way the own-



ers live in the home,” says Naatz. “For example, we create spaces that can be fully functional as either a formal dining room or an office. Sunrooms are popular and invite the outside in with light through large windows. Storage is always a forefront in our design criteria, which we accomplish through abundant closet space, extended garages, three car garages, attic storage and optional basements.”

Morgan agrees that today’s resident seems most interested in quality finishes, and design that offers flexible use and space.

“Second bedrooms generally become the den/office/hobby space with comfortable furniture that can accommodate guests on occasion,” she says. “The smaller dining table often is used as a card/game table and the open kitchen has a breakfast bar for serving or dining.”

Wilhelm says flexibility is “an absolute.”

“They want a flex room that allows them to pursue their hobbies and interests like scrapbooking or

photography, or to use the space for an office,” she says, adding that more than 50 percent of Del Webb homeowners still work either full- or part-time.

When it comes to trends in material, Wilhelm points to the mixing of finishes of cabinets and countertops for different effect. For example, having the finishes on the kitchen island be different from the rest of the cabinets.

Naatz says one of the most important trends is energy efficiency. “Every Chicagoland D.R. Horton home that someone buys today will have the highly regarded Energy Star Certification,” he says. “Ultimately owners can feel good about having an energy efficient home while also saving on their utility bills.”

Naatz says on the top of Carillon buyers’ list is desire for community.

“Ultimately, people are looking for more than a home,” he says. “They are looking for fulfillment. They want to enjoy experiences and share interests with people that have common interests and goals.” ■



Built-ins were added to this apartment in the Mather Evanston.