



# Not your grandma's retirement home

TODAY'S ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES LOOK LIKE FIVE-STAR RESORTS ON THE OUTSIDE WITH ALL THE AMENITIES ON THE INSIDE. PHOTO COURTESY OF FOX HILL.

Senior living gets luxurious

DANIEL SAVICKAS

When most people think of senior assisted living, visions of fluorescent lights, handrails and large, hospital-like corridors usually come to mind. But in some communities, nothing could be further from the truth.

"These places aren't built like a skilled nursing facility; they're built like a posh resort," said Lee Ratta, senior vice president of organizational advancement for the Front Porch Development company, based out of Burbank, CA.

Front Porch's recently completed Walnut Village, a continuing care retirement community in Anaheim, CA, is

a great example of the new senior living. The project, which is built on a 12-acre lot, includes restaurants, art galleries, a piano bar, a pub, a beauty/barber shop—which even offers Botox treatment—a gym with free classes, cooking classes, and a library.

"This is a continuing care facility, but it's set up like a village to be very walkable. Think of it as a retirement community with all of the amenities of a resort," Ratta said. "The residents own their own place, and when they buy they are ensured a home and continuing care.

Residents can choose from 42

different floor plans and decide on buying a condo or living an apartment. Units range in size from 850 to 1,800 square feet, and each unit comes equipped with a balcony and is built to meet ADA requirements. "Everything is ADA and universally designed," Ratta said.

## CONNECTED AND SAFE

Not only is Walnut Village visually not what one would expect, but it is technologically more advanced as well, making residents more connected and safer.

"Seniors are getting more tech-savvy, so the entire village has wireless



Internet," Ratta said. The village also relies on assistant technology, a feature that scans a room for movement. If there is no movement in a room for an extended period of time, the office is alerted and someone is sent to check on the resident. Residents are also given a pendant to wear that can be pressed at any time to alert caregivers to their location and that something is wrong.

The bathrooms, in the units and throughout the village, are wired with a cord that's attached to a transmitter, which residents can pull if they've fallen down. An alert is sent and caregivers come to aid the residents. The showers are built with no threshold, so if residents in wheelchairs need to roll themselves in, it can be easily done. But Ratta insists it was built without looking like it was designed for someone who is incapacitated. "Basically we built a five-star cruise ship and then took into account design concepts associated with health care."

All of the hallways are shortened, and special windows, door levers and cabinets that are easy to operate are installed in each unit, while lean rails are blended in throughout the buildings through the wainscoting.

"It looks like millwork, not a rail for old people, though it's an actual lean rail," Ratta said. "We approach everything that way."

**MOVING ON UP**

John Becker of DiMella Shaffer, which


built Fox Hill Senior Condominiums in Bethesda, MD, wholeheartedly agrees with Ratta that the key to building continuing care facilities is to design them so they don't look like they were built for aging residents but built so that they serve residents' needs.

According to Becker, Fox Hill was designed for people in their early to mid-60s. "We designed it so people can move in, still go to work and go on with their

of amenities, as well as gourmet restaurants and gyms and unique features such as onsite banking and physical therapy facilities. Fox Hill also gives its residents pendants to alert on- and off-site medical personnel that there is an emergency.

Another option for continuing care facilities can be found at Edgewood in North Andover, MA. Edgewood was designed by Windover Construction out of Manchester, MA. It features 24 single-family houses and duplexes, which range in size from 2,000 to 2,400 square feet. There are the usual amenities, but the big advantage to this project is that it lets residents to move within the complex based on their lifestyle.

"Edgewood allows people to downsize by buying a single-family home, then an apartment and then a nursing home," said Lee Dellicker, president of Windover. "When a resident wants to move out of their single-family home into an apartment with nursing, which

is all on the same campus, they can sell their home with a guaranteed 90% back on their home price. Then they can buy into the nursing home." 



IN MANY CASES, LONG GONE ARE THE STERILE HOUSING QUARTERS AND LONG HALLWAYS WITH FLUORESCENT LIGHTS, REPLACED WITH MORE COMFORT AND CUSTOMIZED AMENITIES. PHOTO COURTESY OF FOX HILL.

life, but when they get older, they won't have to move again. It makes it easier for people to carry on that way.

Fox Hill is a 700,000-square-foot building that sits on a 21-acre lot adjacent to a golf course. Two-hundred-and forty condominiums and 83 care center units make up the continuing care facility. When residents get to the point where they need more help in their daily tasks, they can move into one of the care center units.

The building is made up of five different wings and has its fair share

