



# DESIGN AHEAD OF DEMAND: AMENITY STRATEGIES FOR EVOLVING LIFESTYLE EXPECTATIONS

HOSPITALITY, MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPMENTS, AND MASTER-PLANNED  
COMMUNITIES SHARE DESIGN LESSONS PROVEN TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT



# IN THIS GUIDE

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: HOSPITALITY STAYS AHEAD: DESIGNING FOR THE DEMANDS OF THE NEXT-GEN GUEST</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: HOW MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPERS ARE TURNING AMENITY PRESSURE INTO ROI OPPORTUNITY</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY: MEETING LIFESTYLE EXPECTATIONS THAT DON'T SIT STILL</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>26</b>



# INTRO

RESEARCH BY HARVARD PROFESSOR GERALD ZALTMAN HAS FOUND THAT 95% OF PURCHASING DECISIONS ARE DRIVEN BY EMOTION.

**C**onsumer purchasing decisions have come a long way in a short time, upending time-tested design strategies across the hospitality, multifamily, and master-planned community sectors. Expectations for amenities have changed as consumers prioritize properties that offer enhanced lifestyles and opportunity to build community.

As a result, leading developers are identifying strategies that turn every square foot into an opportunity to enhance the guest, member, and resident experience – and contribute to revenue, retention and brand loyalty.

Creating the right experience requires speaking to consumers' emotions to build a sense of connection to community and, by extension, property. Research by Harvard professor Gerald Zaltman has found that 95% of purchasing decisions are driven by emotion. When developers infuse properties and communities with elements carefully crafted to curate powerful emotions, they inspire the strong sense of connection that leads to increased demand. For example, Statista's Renter Study has found that a property's "sense of community" grew in importance by 19% from 2019 through 2022 as a reason

that renters decide to renew their lease. When it comes to making properties competitive within their market, design that inspires emotion and connection becomes an essential strategic element.

Hospitality, multifamily, and master-planned community developers can look to one another for cues in creating this powerful resonance. Thiel & Team is seeing boundaries blend across these sectors, as developers respond to consumers' aspirations. At home and when they travel, consumers are looking for experiences that prioritize wellness and wellbeing, cater to multi-generational needs, deliver curated lifestyle programming, and balance a sense of belonging with one of exclusivity. In this guide, you'll find how these sectors are sharing design inspiration to create wholly unique experiences to stand apart.

# CHAPTER





## HOSPITALITY STAYS AHEAD: DESIGNING FOR THE DEMANDS OF THE NEXT-GEN GUEST

**E**xtraordinary aesthetics and exceptional service were once the hallmarks of the luxury hospitality experience. Today, those traits represent the bare minimum. Individuals who are accustomed to a thoughtfully curated and responsive smart home environment want a higher level of experience.

Guests and members expect hospitality environments to support total well-being, brand-aligned lifestyle expression, and flexibility across generations and use cases – not just a beautiful place to stay or play.

To stand apart, hotel and club destinations are harnessing purpose-driven design to deliver the enhanced experiences that speak to their target audience. Next-gen hospitality spaces are being designed to deliver more than amenities. They are delivering belonging, status, and longevity.

### WELLNESS LIVING IS TRANSFORMING DESIGN

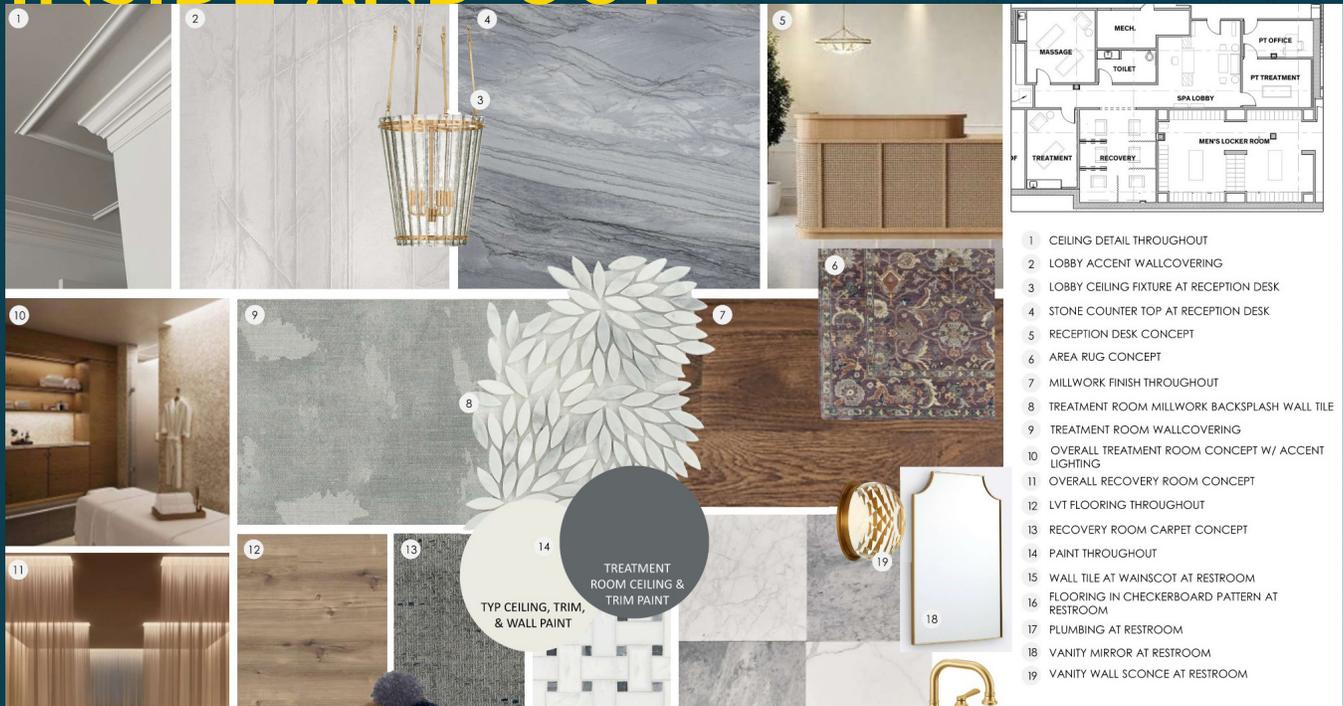
Condé Nast Traveler reports that “travel has become our fountain of youth,” as travelers seek wellbeing, longevity, and community in equal parts. Research from Booking.com found that more than two thirds (67%) of surveyed travelers want

new wellness activities to mix into their daily lives, creating a more balanced version of themselves. More than half (58%) agreed that they would pay for a vacation that’s sole purpose was to extend their lifespan and wellbeing.

The hospitality industry is responding to this demand in a number of ways. The most forward-thinking hotels and clubs are already prioritizing locally sourced, organic, artificial additive-free, and fully traceable ingredients in everything from the soaps to the “grab and go” food options. Even the bar is getting a wellness-forward upgrade, with alcohol-free adaptogenic cocktails, crafted from functional herbs and botanicals, designed to restore, not deplete.

This approach can be reflected early in the design phase as well, through the use of toxin-free materials and finishes to enhance indoor air quality.

# COUNTRY CLUB RENOVATION EMBRACES WELLNESS INSIDE AND OUT



When Colonial Country Club made the decision to update its historic building and programming, it opted to dedicate space to amenities that support training and recovery for golf, tennis, and other sports offered by the club. By relocating primary food and beverage programming to a new facility, the building's existing lower level was available to rededicate to these health and wellness services. Reprogramming this space demanded the architectural design team to modernize offerings within the design constraints of the existing storied architecture.

Fortunately, many of today's wellness amenities can be easily integrated into even historic buildings. The new design brings dedicated workout zones for golfers and tennis players within the main fitness area. Two workout rooms give members space for private training sessions and small group workouts as well as larger group classes. A private Pilates room and trainer treatment room round out the space.

The new design calls for expanding locker areas to create space for a red-light therapy treatment room and massage rooms. A new spa blends spa treatments, massage, a recovery lounge, and physical therapy with a fresh retail space. The result seamlessly blends Colonial's timeless legacy with contemporary offerings.

To support this sense of wellbeing, hospitality designers can embrace the use of natural materials and warm organic palettes and enhance sensory layers through the use of soft ambient lighting, herbal scent diffusion, and thoughtfully designed acoustics in common areas.

For a more transformative approach, some resorts and private clubs are integrating longevity-focused spaces that cater to high-performance recovery, medical grade biohacking offerings, and proactive health management. Spas are incorporating amenities such as IV therapy lounges, cold plunges, red-light beds, and hyperbaric recovery chambers that speak to this interest in longevity without commanding a significant amount of space. Fitness areas, too, are adapting to embrace a focus on recovery as a key element of fitness. This shift demands rethinking hospitality fitness spaces with a focus on creating open, fluid environments that encourage varied movement styles, from high-intensity training to yoga, meditation, and functional recovery.

Design can help guests to seamlessly blend performance with relaxation. Temperature- adaptive flooring, soft lighting gradients, and kinetic-inspired furniture can enhance movement. Zoned fitness layouts can intuitively guide guests between cardio, strength, and recovery areas. Spa-quality recovery suites, guided breathwork spaces, and post-exercise rejuvenation zones can help guests replenish energy and leave the gym feeling refreshed. Hospitality brands can meet this expectation by transforming dated locker rooms into full-scale wellness retreats.

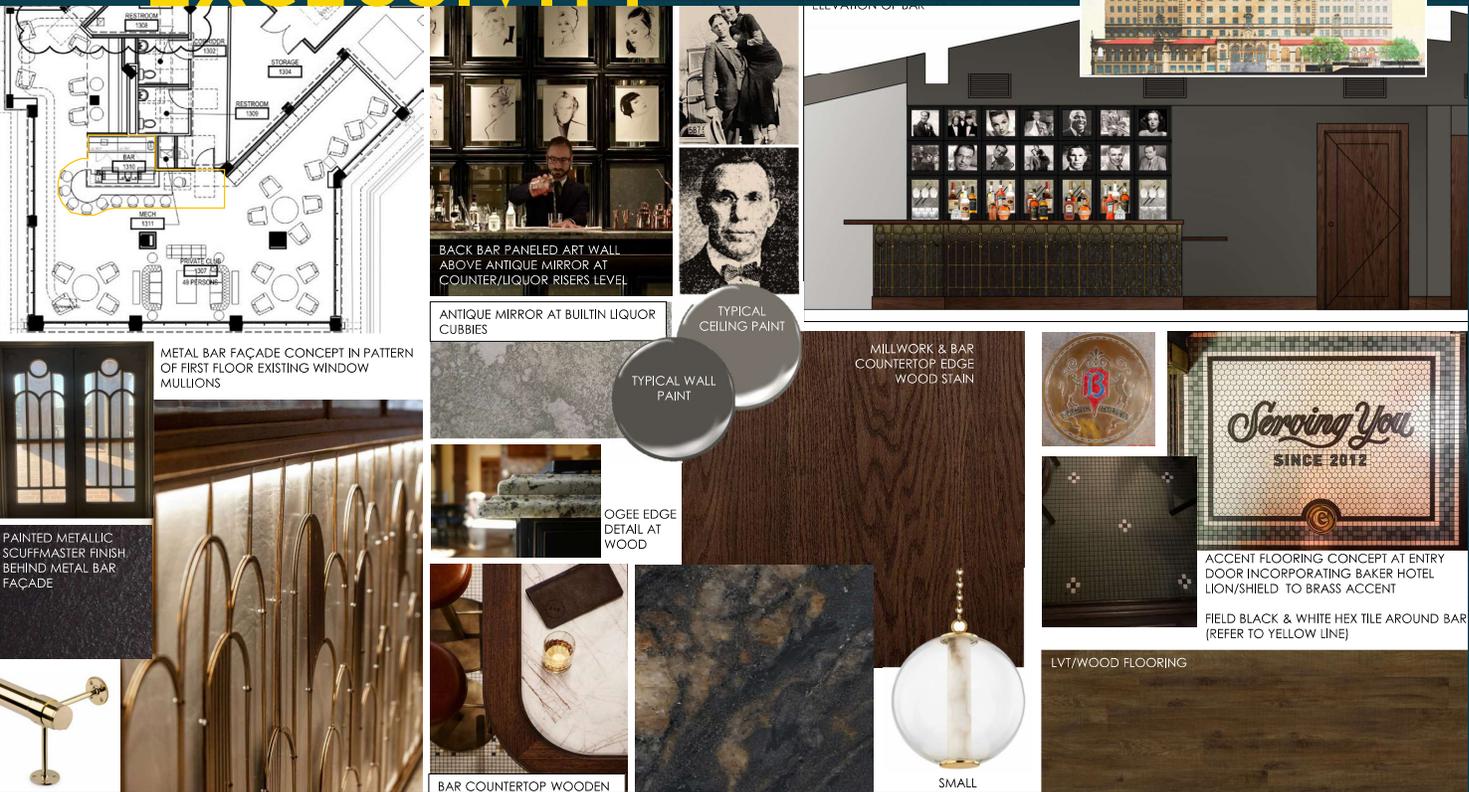
### ACCESS AND TAILORED EXCLUSIVITY SHAPE THE NEW LUXURY EXPERIENCE

Hospitality brands and operators are also reevaluating how to balance a sense of welcome with exclusivity. In the saturated luxury market, for example, exclusivity has become one of the most powerful differentiators a venue can offer. For discerning guests and members, access – not just amenities – represents the higher bar for luxury.



Vaquero Club Exterior  
Dining & Lounge ▶

# HOTEL SPEAKEASY CURATES EXCLUSIVITY



A renovation of The Baker Hotel & Spa in Mineral Wells, Texas, is incorporating elements of modern luxury throughout the historic venue. The project is the result of a broad team of investors committed to revitalizing downtown Mineral Wells. That same team tasked their historic preservation designers with creating a space on the property where business conversations can take place away from guest activity. The designers responded with a design that creates a sense of exclusivity for anyone welcome in the invitation-only space.

Guests exiting the elevator on the 13th floor will find a relatively unassuming hallway and unembellished doors. Unlike the grand experience greeting visitors to other floors, this space is meant to feature nondescript signage and finishes more similar in tone to back-of-house areas as a deterrent to anyone not “in the know.” Crossing the threshold of the 13th floor speakeasy reveals an experience specifically curated for premium members. Higher end materials, personalized liquor cabinets, and food and beverage programming that reflects the hotel’s unique history all point to a sense of exclusivity.



Lakes at Castle Hills  
Poker Room ▶

As a reflection of this trend, member-only tiers and speakeasy-style experiences are appearing in hospitality spaces that were once all-access. A “velvet rope” design aesthetic reinforces exclusivity through architectural nuance, materiality, and spatial flow. Designers use cues like subtle flooring thresholds, rich materials, mood lighting, and discreet signage to enhance the sense of exclusivity.

The trend toward hyper-personalization reflects the growing demand for exclusivity. Guests and members no longer want one-size-fits-all experiences. They expect brands to know them, anticipate them, and design with them in mind. In fact, Research company Medallia has found that 61% of consumers agree they would be willing to spend more for a personalized hospitality experience. The most progressive hotels and clubs are turning data into design direction, offering seamlessly personalized experiences that elevate perceived value and deepen loyalty.

Hotels and clubs are realizing this trend in a manner of ways. AI-driven concierge services, guest profile tracking, and exclusive invitation-only experiences

are becoming industry differentiators. Hotels and clubs are also using interior design as a canvas for personalization that makes guests a part of the brand story.

### EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT - AND REVENUE STREAMS - THROUGH PROGRAMMING

Top-performing hospitality properties and private clubs are expanding their focus beyond their traditional audience to build a deeper sense of connectedness and loyalty among their guests. Research from consumer intelligence firm Motista indicates that fully connected customers are 52% more valuable than those who report being “highly satisfied.” This connection translates to more frequent use and more purchases. As a result, many hotels and clubs are rethinking amenity strategies to include family-centric spaces and programming. Clubs that engage the entire household can create the strong emotional connection that reduces churn. What’s more, creating family-inclusive spaces – from private swim lessons and junior golf clinics to family cooking classes and multi-age wellness events – unlocks secondary revenue streams.

Achieving this shift isn't as simple as adding kids' clubs. It depends upon hospitality owners' ability to create multi-generational value through intentional design. The right strategy can translate into longer stays, deeper loyalty, and a stronger return on investment.

This intentionality begins with an evaluation of how every available square foot is being utilized to maximize ROI. For example, many hospitality venues are recognizing that infrequently used private event space generates greater value when it's converted to support more rhythmic day to day activities. Elevated kids' lounges, "quiet play" nooks in restaurants, and multi-use outdoor spaces designed to evolve from stroller-friendly morning yoga to evening firepit s'mores can be integrated into existing layouts. High-performance, family-proof finishes – think plush performance fabrics, rounded corners, warm lighting, and subtle acoustic zoning – make families feel welcome without sacrificing luxury.

In support of this multi-generational programming, many hospitality stakeholders are opting to invest in the transformation of their retail experiences. Traditional pro shops are becoming lifestyle retail spaces that appeal to both golfers and non-golfers alike. Curated retail boutiques might now offer golf fashion, luxury athleisure, and high-end wellness products.

As part of its renovation, Cowboys Golf Club in Grapevine, Texas, modernized its retail space. Design elements, from shelving to lighting, reflect this change, but it's made more impactful by operational shifts. Although golf balls and other

sports equipment are still predominantly featured, the inventory mix is more heavily tilted toward lifestyle products. Personnel with a background in retail rather than golf instruction, operate the shop.

These simple changes encourage social engagement and extended shopping experiences. Some retail areas are even incorporating lounge-like spaces to encourage guests and members to stay awhile. In other cases, retail is being integrated into existing social areas, with lounges and club areas doubling as exclusive shopping environments via rotating brand pop-ups, interactive product displays, and limited-edition drops tied to loyalty status.

## ADAPT AND COMPETE

Hospitality owners and operators know they must evolve to keep up with the expectation of modern guests and members. In today's competitive market, amenity spaces are no longer auxiliary; they are essential. Every square foot can and should enhance the guest or member experience, serve a purpose, and contribute to revenue or retention. By creating fresh opportunities for engagement and connection, hospitality brands and clubs can deliver the curated experiences that their guests and members want.



Lakes at Castle Hills Bar & Dining ▶

# CLUBS UTILIZE EXISTING SPACE TO BRING FAMILIES IN



Rather than build an entirely new clubhouse, The Lakes at Castle Hills in Lewisville, Texas, opted to reexamine how it utilized its existing outdoor space. While the club was committed to retaining its men's only 19th hole, it recognized that increasing family engagement at the club presented a real growth opportunity. The design team revitalized the existing bar, then extended a patio and added a family-friendly outdoor area with food and beverage services. While there are distinct boundaries between the two spaces, they are blended visually to create a flexible space for use by members and families, boosting family programming and use for outdoor events.

Canyon Creek Country Club in Richardson, Texas, made similar changes to support its growing engagement with youth athletics programs. Subtle changes, such as expanding their retail element to incorporate youth and women's clothing within the pro shop, spoke to this focus. The club also established a small outdoor food and beverage station to serve families engaged in lifestyle sports. However, they too recognized the importance of setting space aside solely for the primary member. The restaurant renovation created space for both upscale dining and, separately, family-friendly seating. This subtle separation respected the various ways in which guests interact with the club.



CHAPTER

# 2





## HOW MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPERS ARE TURNING AMENITY PRESSURE INTO ROI OPPORTUNITY

**T**oday's renters aren't just leasing an apartment – they're choosing a lifestyle. According to The New American Dream report from property management firm Entrata, one in five renters today expect to be lifelong renters. Apartment living provides the flexibility and freedom these renters want. With this switch, renters are also becoming more discerning in selecting properties that deliver curated, community-first amenity environments that support wellness, connectivity, and aspirational living.

Amenity spaces have become the battleground for lease-ups, brand differentiation, and long-term retention. As renter preferences evolve and competition intensifies, top-performing developers and operators are rethinking their common areas as programmable, experience-first destinations, and design is doing the heavy lifting. Amenity ROI is no longer just about square footage: it's about strategic, flexible, and emotionally resonant design that adds value across the full resident lifecycle.

### RENTERS WANT FLEXIBLE AMENITIES THAT WORK 24/7

One of the most significant trends shaping today's multifamily properties is renters' desire for amenity spaces that facilitate remote work.

Research from Yardi Matrix reports that residents desire for coworking space isn't going away anytime soon. Coworking environments 2.0 are an expectation for 67% of surveyed renters. LendingTree finds that nearly 2 in 5 Americans (38%) have a side hustle, adding to the demand for elevated work-from-home alternatives embedded into the residential experience. These entrepreneurs are looking for quiet, dedicated space where they can entertain clients or chat via video with partners.

With space at a premium, many multifamily properties are embracing use of flexible, multi-purpose coworking zones. Rooms that incorporate amenities that support conferences by day and dinner parties by night can maximize the use of space and potentially create a secondary stream of revenue.

Designers can support this shift by incorporating the hospitality concepts around place-making through features that support the shift from focused work by day to social activation by night. Built-in banquettes and coffee bars, integrated acoustic designs, and layered lighting help tell this story.

Larger spaces can incorporate flexible zones with moveable partitions and integrated technology that supports TED-style talks or small group workshops. Thinking beyond the typical workspace can also create opportunities in smaller footprints. Beyond a conference room function, small spaces can be attuned to deliver an acoustic experience suitable for podcasting, for example.

The same desire for connection that drives renters to use coworking spaces also encourages renters

to select properties that deliver opportunities for socialization. In many cases, the features that make coworking spaces successful – such as attention to connectivity and acoustics – make for great gaming and media spaces. The key is to deliver on-demand access so that experiences feel organic, not forced. Providing access to coffee stations during the day and self-pour solutions that dispense wine and other beverages at night delivers this sense of accessibility and flexibility.

However, achieving after-use flexibility requires attention to design details. For example, properties may want to separate leasing offices from social spaces that will operate beyond the traditional 9-to-5. Property owners find they're better able to create this type of flexible use space by working with designers who can provide insight into

## MORNINGSTAR DELIVERS FLEXIBILITY TO SUIT EVERY RESIDENT



Jefferson Morningstar, a multifamily development in The Colony, Texas, aims to cater to deliver an exceptional living experience to a broad spectrum of residents. As part of this commitment, the property design calls for a large open area with dedicated sections for coworking and socialization, and the ability to open the space up or down depending on what the moment calls for. While private offices are also available, the large central space provides seating for social gatherings and large islands that can support working groups or food provided during social events.

programming potential and create a space that allows for a range of future possibilities.

## RESIDENTS WANT SPACES THAT SUPPORT WELLBEING

Renters aren't focused on just work and play alone. Eighty-two percent of U.S. consumers consider wellness a top or important priority in their everyday lives, according to a McKinsey report on the \$1.8 trillion global consumer wellness market. So it should be no surprise that renters – especially Millennial and Gen Z demographics – seek out properties that actively support their mental, physical, and emotional health.

This goes beyond the dated tendency to install a gym on the first floor. Multifamily communities are increasingly turning toward smaller, more versatile studio spaces in lieu of large spaces that mimic the gym down the street. Layered lighting paired with a mirror-based personal trainer or fitness-on-demand screen can support residents whether they're looking for a calming space for yoga or area from which to activate their fitness routine. Adding transition zones between high-impact areas and recovery lounges can promote a full-cycle fitness experience.

Properties are also finding success by providing quiet meditation rooms, guided breathwork pods, and circadian lighting support daily restoration. Spa-inspired wellness lounges with infrared saunas, cold plunges, and aromatherapy stations enhance can also enhance a property's value. Many of these solutions can be cost-effective for owners, requiring only a space to install, for example, an infrared sauna kit.



▲  
Top: Loyd Clubroom, middle: 121 Grove Street Co-Working, bottom: Loyd Leasing Office

# INDOOR-OUTDOOR CONNECTIONS FUELS SENSE OF WELLNESS



Blending indoor and outdoor space has proven to be one of the most effective strategies for supporting resident wellness, and it's a strategy that Vita Apartments in Orange, Calif., has embraced. From the double-height faux living green wall in the entryway to the open rooftop clubroom, the property delivers touches that build connection with the outdoors. The lively rooftop offers ample reason to be outside, with a firepit, outdoor screens, a pass-through window near the community kitchen, pools and cabanas, and playful seating arrangements throughout. Its outdoor spaces are seamlessly integrated with the interior, expanding the common areas' functionality and adding to the vibrancy the property delivers.

On a simpler scale, residents are responding to subtle signals of health-conscious design. Organic material palettes, use of natural materials and air purification systems, and abundant use of natural light all speak to an environment of wellbeing.

## LIFESTYLE PROGRAMMING OPENS OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD COMMUNITY

In focusing on renter experience, multifamily communities are curating lifestyle offerings that create an emotional connection for residents. This can be as simple as elevating ambient storytelling through signage, color palette, scent, and art that reflects local culture or property identity. It also means extending the sense of home throughout the property. Features like Uber rooms and DoorDash lounges give residents space to comfortably spend time waiting for services. Touchpoints including grocery and package drop-off areas benefit from thoughtful design that puts resident comfort and convenience at the forefront.

Properties are also increasingly making space for residents to partake in more niche social activities. Demonstration kitchens, podcast rooms, maker's labs, sound lounges, and boutique fitness studios are becoming part of the property footprint. Rooms that give tenants space to create need little more than tabletops and utility sinks. However, the popularity of these community-building spaces is also prompting property owners and managers

to invest in more niche solutions ranging from 3D printers to pottery wheels to professional-scale easels.

These spaces can also provide property owners with opportunity to generate revenue. Bookable micro-spaces might include dinner party lounges, soundproof Zoom pods, music rooms, and private wellness suites. Design plays a key role in supporting monetization; premium finishes and materials, such as stone-clad kitchen lounges, curated retail nooks, and rentable wine lockers, add to the sense of on-demand luxury. Layering seamless digital booking experiences into app platforms simplify this process for operations.

In considering the types of lifestyle programming to highlight, developers and designers need to think bigger about the demographics they're serving. Today's renters-by-choice include families and Baby Boomers. In fact, 90% of Baby Boomer renters report that they value the freedom from property maintenance and repair work that renting offers, according to data from Bank of America.

Flex spaces can support multi-generational programming. Older renters can benefit from low-impact fitness options and shared dining areas that provide space for children and grandchildren to visit. Developers can create welcoming spaces for families without sacrificing the peace of adult renters by incorporating playgrounds within private

**IN CONSIDERING THE TYPES OF LIFESTYLE PROGRAMMING TO HIGHLIGHT, DEVELOPERS AND DESIGNERS NEED TO THINK BIGGER ABOUT THE DEMOGRAPHICS THEY'RE SERVING.**

# THOUGHTFUL DESIGN BRINGS BIKE ENTHUSIASTS TOGETHER



The developers of Aura in Orange, Calif., wanted to prioritize thoughtful design for every space, no matter the size, to achieve maximum impact, creativity, and dynamic use for residents. Among those spaces is a unique bike craft room. The room provides storage for cyclists, but also gives bikers room to make repairs, clean their equipment, and connect with their neighbors.

courtyards or activity stations along adjacent bike trails. Multi-age programming zones can host kids' yoga in the morning and wine tastings at night.

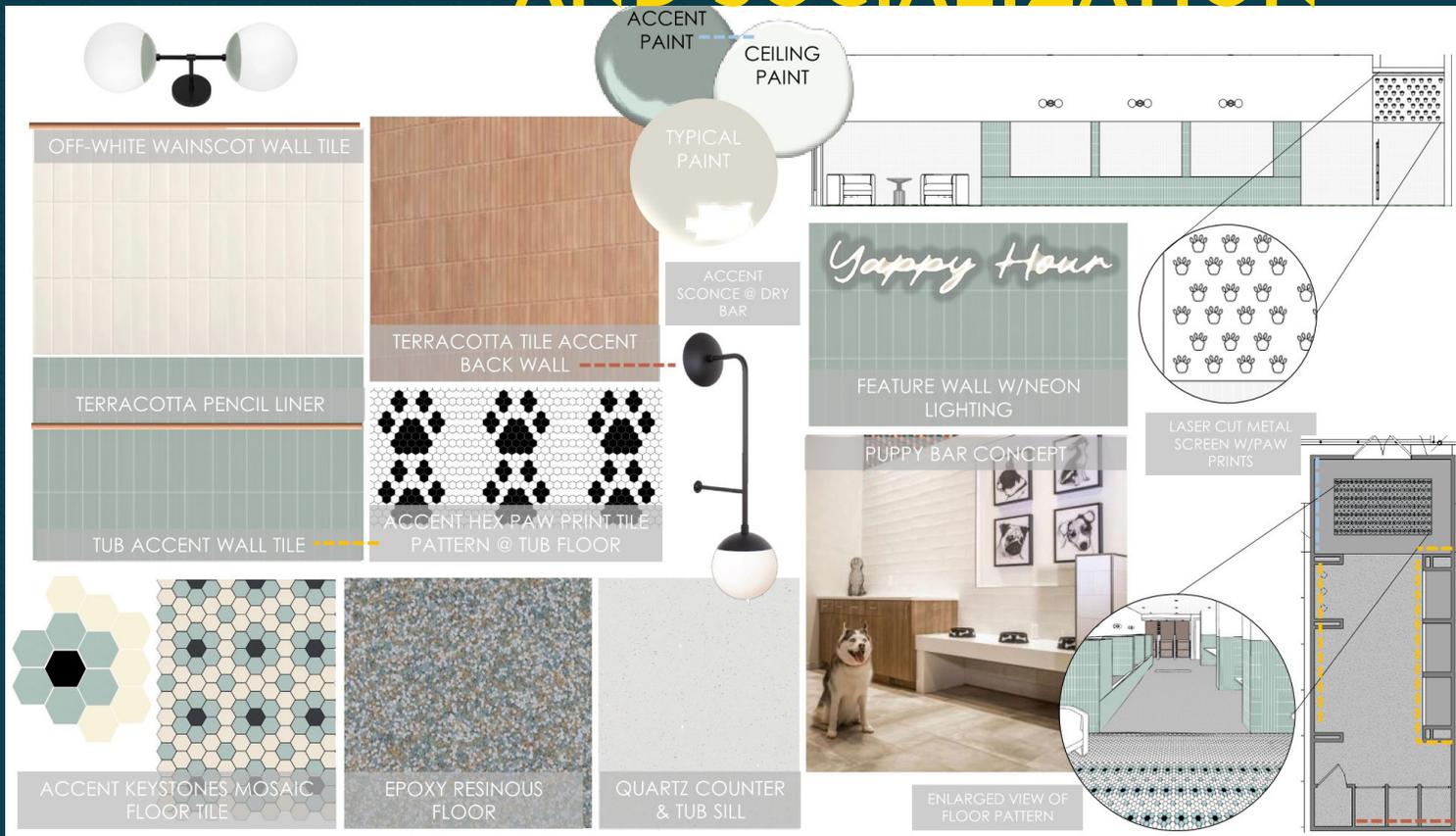
There's another member of the family to accommodate as well: the family pet. As of 2023, pet owners make up the majority (59%) of renters, according to research by Zillow. Luxe pet lounges with grooming zones, treat bars, and play areas are no longer relegated to back corners – they're being highlighted as a key area for social engagement. Properties are developing spacious dog parks where residents and their pets can unwind and socialize. Others are adding fences to ground-floor units to position them as premium options for providing pet accessibility. To support this trend, designers must deliver high-performance finishes able to stand up to the wear and tear of pets to ensure comfort for all residents.

## PRIORITIZE FLEXIBLE DESIGN

It's no secret that amenity spaces are now a core asset class. From first impression to long-term retention, every square foot of a multifamily property's amenity space must drive financial and functional performance.

Designs that prioritize wellness, social connection, and personalization will outperform static programming. But to maximize the value of their investments, multifamily developers must prioritize flexible solutions capable of evolving with residents' needs, hosting multiple use cases, and fostering community. With the right design partners, owners and operators can create amenity-rich spaces that create lasting value.

# PET-FIRST AMENITIES PRIORITIZE ACTIVITY AND SOCIALIZATION



Sandy 28 in Portland, Ore., is putting its renters' furry friends first. The development is home to a community dog park that helps pups and owners feel at home, with comfortable seating adjacent to the dog run. The lounge features pet beds alongside the coffee bar, with ample space for socialization.

It's not alone in making pets a priority. The Perch PDX features a thoughtfully designed onsite dog wash station, featuring integrated crates and multiple leash hooks so owners can safely attend to multiple pets.

CHAPTER 1

3



## DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY: MEETING LIFESTYLE EXPECTATIONS THAT DON'T SIT STILL

**M**aster-planned communities are no longer just about curb appeal and clubhouses. These communities have become full-spectrum lifestyle destinations. Buyers have proven willing to invest in smaller homes in exchange for community-wide amenities that feel like an extension of the home.

Master-planned communities are no longer just about curb appeal and clubhouses. These communities have become full-spectrum lifestyle destinations. Buyers have proven willing to invest in smaller homes in exchange for community-wide amenities that feel like an extension of the home.

When it comes to amenities of choice, buyers are looking for immersive wellness benefits, opportunities to deepen social connection, nature-first infrastructure, and lifestyle programming that adapts to their life stage and values. By investing in human-centered amenity strategies, developers will find that they can deepen residents' engagement with their community and dramatically increase absorption.

### LIFESTYLE-FIRST PLANNING CURATES DAILY LIFE THROUGH PURPOSEFUL AMENITIZATION

For decades, the clubhouse has served as the center of community for master-planned communities. However, growing interest in lifestyle amenities is prompting developers to think bigger. The result is a new focus on micro-destinations within the macro community.

Residents today want villages within villages: clusters of walkable, activated nodes that feel like distinct lifestyle zones, each with unique programming. Some neighborhoods are building community around themed areas, with a focus on wellness, adventure, arts, or family activities. Developers are

anchoring these nodes with hybrid third places that combine retail, community services, food and beverage, and family programming. Designs that emphasize nature and mobility – through placement of walking trails and bike paths, greenways, and bike and scooter parking – further reinforces the sense of connectedness while providing residents the freedom to explore.

The possibilities for zones are virtually endless, but depend upon a sound understanding of the target audience. Designers can identify opportunities to create flexible nodes, including:

- Mixed-use pavilions with retractable walls, built-in audio-visual systems, and modular seating that support multiple functionalities from morning wellness through evening social activations.
- Flex zones with integrated coffee kiosks, event lawns, social firepits, shaded reading nooks, and play areas.
- Outdoor plazas structured to support farmer’s markets, pop-up shops, food trucks, and evening concerts.
- Walking trails that include hubs where people can park their bikes, have a seat, and grab a bite to eat at a food truck.

Within the shift toward lifestyle-driven villages, nature has emerged as a key amenity. Master-planned community buyers see access to parks, trails, and open space as an important amenity category. As a result, developers must consider not just the “villages” they’re creating but also the green spaces in between. These outdoor connections provide opportunities to design with intention. Simple features such as covered

## COMMUNITY EXPANDS BEYOND THE CLUBHOUSE



Amalyn, a master-planned community in Bethesda, Md., maintains the clubhouse as a social epicenter. Yet, the community’s focus on fostering a healthy and active lifestyle for residents of all ages opened up an opportunity to create zones across the property. Outdoor programming is supported by an inviting outdoor pool with a water lounge, grand sun deck, private cabanas, and an outdoor bar. A separate splash pad creates space for children. A state-of-the-art fitness center opens to a Zen garden where residents can gather for yoga or partake in meditation. Throughout the property, touchdown spots ensure that work is seamlessly integrated with daily life.

porches, community gardens, and firepit seating areas can lead to connection.

Another key element: the ability to integrate work with pleasure. Master-planned communities are adopting strategies from multifamily and hospitality properties in creating places to support coworking. With the community serving as an extension of the home, it's becoming more important to integrate network access and integrate touchdown spots where, for example, parents can take a quick call before youth sports begin. This focus on tech-driven connectivity supports the increasing desire for smart homes – and creates an opportunity to enable app-driven services throughout the community.

### SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE MUST SUPPORT MULTI-GENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Amenities may be a key factor in attracting buyers, but they are the surface layer of what homebuyers really want: community. Designing master-planned communities' social infrastructure with intentionality is essential for facilitating neighbor-to-neighbor

connection. Increasingly, this means designing physical spaces and programming for the entire family.

Master-planned communities give busy families access to many of the lifestyle activities they crave, making it incredibly easy to get to the gym, the golf course, and youth sports on a given day. But modern families span more life stages than ever. Even in 55+ communities, family-friendly gathering spots are a must. Master-planned communities that offer layered experiences for everyone, from toddlers to grandparents, foster a sense of community.

For example, more communities are installing multiple smaller pools over a single resort-style pool to create separate spaces for adults with and without young families. Pickleball courts have proven to have staying power because they provide space for multiple generations to enjoy. Placing activity lawns with toddler-safe turf alongside hammock gardens creates space for everyone to play and relax as they see fit.



Outdoor Movie Theater at Aura, Orange County CA

# ADULT COMMUNITY HOLDS SPACE FOR FAMILY



Riverton Pointe in Hardeeville, S.C., caters to active adults seeking luxury living. Yet putting community at the forefront of the development meant creating space for the entire family. The community is expanding with the addition of a 14,370-square-foot clubhouse that will include private, family-oriented spaces capable of hosting celebrations and serving as an extension of residents' homes when families visit. The clubhouse also incorporates nearly 5,000 square feet of covered outdoor spaces designed for year-round use, inviting residents and guests to explore the spacious greenways. Additional amenities, such as the on-site restaurant and resort pool, offer room for communities to grow.

While family-friendly gathering spots such as pizza ovens, splash pads, and outdoor movie lawns are gaining in prevalence, developers can accommodate multiple generations through simpler design details. Amenity centers that prioritize flexible indoor-outdoor social space over traditional formality can feel like an extension of the home for everyone.

## HOSPITALITY DESIGN STRENGTHENS SENSE OF IDENTITY AND PLACE

For the next generation of master-planned communities, interior design is no longer just about finishes: it's about feeling. Thoughtful, emotionally intelligent design is a core strategy for infusing communities with the sense of identity that increases resident retention and long-term brand value. As a result, community developers are investing in hospitality-caliber interiors across amenity buildings, from wellness pavilions and resident lounges to coworking hubs and family clubs.

Today's buyers are drawn to communities that reflect not just geography but also values, culture, and vision. Interiors are becoming a tangible expression of brand identity and community ethos. In fact, Opendoor's 2024 Emotions in Real Estate Report calls the "emotional return on investment" a driving factor of home buying and selling decisions today.

The Emotions report notes that homeowners' emotional attachment to their home increasingly plays a role in the timeline for home sales, particularly among the 66% of homebuyers aged 55 and up who agree that they're emotionally attached to their homes. This deep connection means homebuyers are looking for a home that speaks to their emotions. Whether it's through calm minimalism, warm biophilia, or energetic eclecticism, interior palettes and design language play a central role in building this emotional resonance.

The Club at Ruby Hill  
Outdoor Loggia &  
Bocce Ball Courts ▶



# NATURE SETS THE STAGE FOR THOUGHTFUL PROGRAMMING



Like many master-planned communities, a vibrant Amenity Center sits at the center of Horizon Lakes in Rockwall, Texas. Yet it's The Greens – a central welcome lawn and event space – that serves as the hub of activity and community. From The Greens, residents can easily access fitness amenities, aquatics programming, and conference and coworking spaces. Winding trails thread through the community, encouraging walking and biking, and connecting residents to amenities that include the lakeside beach. A hillside restaurant offers alfresco dining and lake views.

These spaces provide the stage for connection, wellness, and discovery, but thoughtful programming serves as a foundation for multi-generational community-building. A family pool, lazy river, and play fountain engage young families while a diving pool, biergarten, and ornamental vineyard make space for adults-only activities. Lifestyle activities, from yoga to pickleball, are designed to cater to a wide-ranging audience.

Designers can create this powerful response through boutique-style amenity interiors with layered lighting, curated local art, rich textures, and sensorial moments that mirror luxury hotels. Place-based palettes and materials – from local limestone to reclaimed wood to coastal whites – deliberately reflect regional character and reinforce a sense of authenticity.

Strategic design can also reinforce a sense of place throughout the sense of community. Signature design gestures, such as monogrammed wayfinding, sculptural furniture, and storytelling walls, introduce the community brand in immersive ways. Consistent design language across touchpoints — from leasing office to wellness lounge to signage — further cohesion and deepen brand memory.

### INSPIRE EMOTION THROUGH INTENTIONAL DESIGN

The future of master-planned community success is rooted in one word: intention. Communities designed to foster residents' sense of belonging, wellness, and curiosity will outperform those that don't. With insight from the hospitality and multi-family development industries, forward-thinking developers can design with a focus beyond absorption rates, emphasizing emotional retention through intentional design strategies.

**SIGNATURE DESIGN GESTURES, SUCH AS MONOGRAMMED WAYFINDING, SCULPTURAL FURNITURE, AND STORYTELLING WALLS, INTRODUCE THE COMMUNITY BRAND IN IMMERSIVE WAYS.**



▲ Top: Gentle Creek Country Club, middle: Ruby Hill Fit Gym, bottom: Ruby Hill Fit Lawn

## CONCLUSION



◀ Swing Suite Concept for All-Weather Play

Real estate developers with an eye to the future recognize the importance of balancing staying power with the need to meet potential buyers and renters where they are. Consumers have consistently demonstrated through their purchasing decisions that they prioritize experiences. It's a trend that will continue driving development across the hospitality, multifamily, and master-planned community sectors for some time to come.

The key in standing apart from competitors likewise seeking to deliver a curated experience is to weave experiential elements into every aspect of design – and ensure no amount of space goes unused. By looking to other sectors, digging into the desires of the targeted demographic, and working with an experienced design partner, developers can engage with their guests, members, renters, and residents on a more powerful and rewarding level.



THIEL & TEAM™

[thielandteam.com](http://thielandteam.com)

**Special thanks to:** Elyssa Stephenson, Paige Byrd, Ana Harper, Trish Hammond,  
Josie Noyola, Emily Rowan, Jessica Ruiz, Cigdem Eski, Kelsey Sullivan, Courtney Ortiz