

# WELCOME HOME: UNIVERSAL DESIGN, SUSTAINABLE DESIGN, BABY BOOMERS

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## INTRODUCTION

Recent studies<sup>1</sup> have shown that the trends, indicating where persons on the cusp of retirement want to live, have markedly changed over the last decade. Ten years ago the majority of those in their 50's and 60's stated that they would like to live the rest of their life in houses reflecting the "American Dream" - an individual single story home in the suburbs, with a two-car garage and a substantial front and rear yard.

However, the demographics have significantly changed with the first Baby Boomers - almost a quarter of the American population - coming on the scene. Their desires and situation are different from previous generations.

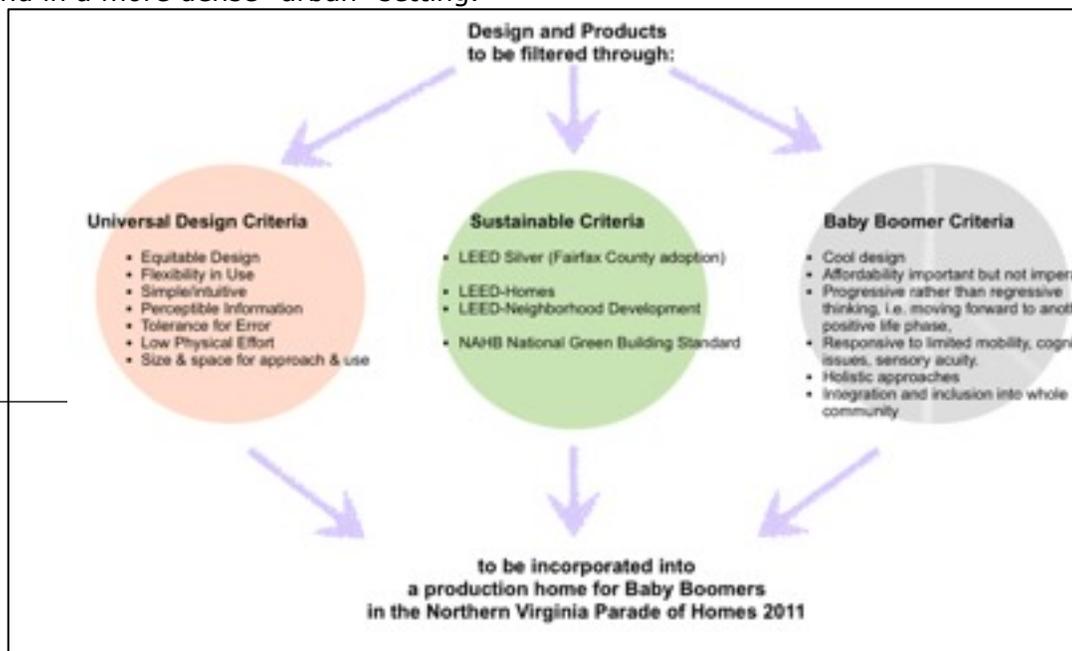
Adding such factors as the current economic climate, concern for the environment, the advances in technology and awareness that the suburbs often lack community services, the hypothesis is that these Baby Boomers are more likely to look at downsizing their living arrangements, in a building with one or more stories, and in a more dense "urban" setting.<sup>2</sup>

This is the intent of the "Welcome Home" program of the Building For All Committee, an interdisciplinary team organized by the government of Fairfax County, VA. The BFAC is comprised of an architect, a builder, consumers with disabilities, county officials, a realtor, and a rehabilitation technologist.

The purpose of the Welcome Home program is to confirm the hypothesis about the housing goals of baby boomers, articulate priorities to address these goals, and to provide practical guidelines and incentives to builders and realtors.

<sup>1</sup> American Institute of Architects: [Home Design Trends Survey for the third quarter of 2010](#). 2010  
Urban Land Institute: "[Housing in America, the Next Decade](#)", 2010

<sup>2</sup> The environmental implications of this perceived trend by a significant section of the population to more urbanistic communities has been noted by visionary planners such as Peter Calthorpe, in his book: [Urbanism in the Age of Climate Change](#) Island Press, Dec 1, 2010.



## METHODOLOGY

Welcome Home's first step is to gather data from as large a sample as possible of key informants. These individuals include architects, designers, health care providers and others knowledgeable or interested in living arrangements for those persons at the cusp of retirement.

The opinions of over 150 such individuals to date have been obtained through a survey questionnaire which can be taken in paper or electronic format. The questions are arranged to enable respondents to prioritize features of home design according to importance to prospective buyers of the Baby Boom generation. These features include those concerned with universal design and sustainable design, without sacrificing aesthetic considerations critical to home buyers.

The following organizations participated in the formulation and distribution of this survey: American Institute of Architects<sup>3</sup>, American Society of Interior Designers, American Builders Association and the Fairfax County Building For All Committee.

The methods of the design and testing of this questionnaire include:

1. Live work sessions last October and November, where the survey questions were handed out and participants prioritized each line item after it had been explained by the moderator.
2. A webinar last November, in which participants completed and submitted their questionnaire in real time via internet; this format also enabled participants to submit questions and comments for clarification and discussion.

3. An online nationwide survey, using SNAP survey software, which has been sent last December, to about 600 selected individuals, working in the field of senior housing.

The findings of the survey will be analyzed and the results will be provided as guidelines for architects, designers, planners, developers, realtors and builders. These guidelines will form the basis for a prototype house and a special builders' award program. A potential venue to introduce this program will be at the 2011 Northern Virginia Parade of Homes.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: AIA Design For Aging (DFA) Knowledge Community Blueprints for Senior Living October 2010 edition:

The invitation to the Welcome Home survey is presented below...

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As someone who is interested in where and how people on the cusp of retiring are going to live, you are invited to participate in a very important nationwide survey.

This project-*Welcome Home*- seeks to prioritize those planning and design features important to prospective buyers of the Baby Boom generation, including those attracted to universal design, sustainable design and "cool" or stylish design. The outcomes of this survey are planned to be the premise for a prototype urban townhouse, a set of guidelines, and an award or recognition program for builders who successfully incorporate these features.

Along with DFA, the organizations whose members are participating in this survey are the American Society of Interior Designers, AARP, National Home Builders Association, and Fairfax County (Virginia) Building For All Committee. To complete the survey, [click on this link](#).

The survey asks you to rate 83 features covering the exterior and main living areas of the home, using a scale of "NEED," "NICE", or "NO" from the viewpoint of the prospective buyer. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes or less to complete. To thank you, and recognizing that your time is valuable, we will be happy to send you the survey report, when it is available. Should you experience any technical problems with the survey, please contact [research@asid.org](mailto:research@asid.org).

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## **PRESENTATION**

The proposed presentation will discuss the development and the findings of this survey and some of the outcomes that have resulted.

There are several educational objectives for this presentation:

### Objective 1:

Current thought - To present an overview of the latest opinions and priorities on universal design, sustainable design and "cool" design. , taken from expert architects, interior designers, planners, builders, health care providers in the field.

The resultant analysis of the survey will provide a solid basis to present current thinking.

### Objective 2:

Good design - To show some current examples of universal design, sustainable design and "cool" design resulting in guidelines and prototypical residential design solutions.

PowerPoint slides of pertinent examples and guidelines will be presented.

### Objective 3:

Evaluation - To present and discuss the results of the guidelines and award program at events such as the Northern Virginia Parade of Homes.

An open forum will be moderated by the presenters.