

# A (Slightly Surprising) Story of Intergenerational Living



## Intergenerational Task Force

A SAGE-AIA DFA Joint Intergenerational Task Force

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## What We Learned from Survey One

Let's face it: **the world of senior living has been long overdue for a little intergenerational shake-up.**

So, with a coffee in one hand and curiosity in the other, we launched Round One of our Intergenerational Living Survey. Our 19 questions were launched into the ether using social media channels between 9/27/2023 - 2/4/2024.

**We didn't know what to expect.** A handful of responses? A flurry of skepticism? A few rants about parking?

Instead, what we got was 500+ thoughtful, passionate, sometimes funny, other times brutally honest responses from residents, family members, developers, care providers, architects, and designers. From people who are already living this life to those who are designing what comes next.

So, what did we learn? **Buckle up!**

# Who Showed Up to the Party?

A beautifully diverse crowd: Respondents ranged from 22 to 89 years old, with an average age right in the sweet spot at 57.



**56% FEMALE**



**44% MALE**

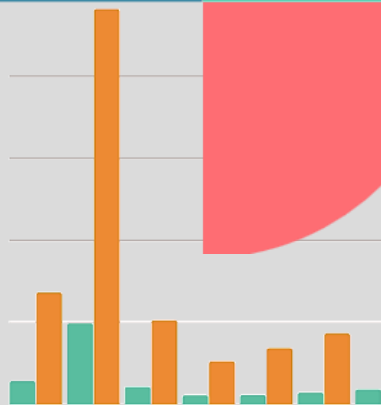
Average Age-57

OVER

**2700**

COMMENTS

**AGES 22-89**



## Survey Respondents

While most responses came from designers, about 70 respondents identified as residents and family members. And approximately 150 respondents were care providers: owners (for-profit & non-profit), operators, and marketing.

# Respondents Know a Lot about a Lot!

Nearly half had more than 10 years of experience in the senior living field. (Translation: These folks know their stuff!)

## Average work time

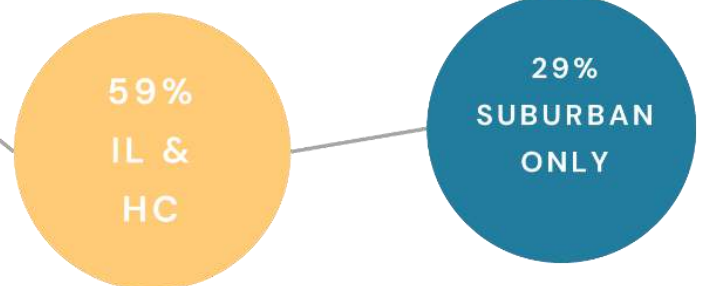
How many years have you worked in Senior Living?



## Urban/Suburban/Rural?

With which type of setting are you most familiar?

- Urban only 13%
- Urban-Suburban only 21%
- Suburban-Rural only 10%
- Rural only 3%
- Urban-Sub-Rural only 25%



## Average stay

How many years have you LIVED in Senior Living (Or your loved one)

- <1 year 19%
- 5-9 years 24%
- 10 or more years 24%

## Most familiar with?

What type of Senior Living setting are you most familiar with?

- 24% work in IL only
- 18% in Healthcare only

# Where in the World...?

Respondents hailed from the U.S., Canada, Australia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Greece, Nigeria... and yes, someone even took the survey while eating stroopwafel in Holland. Probably.

## Asked & Answered...

Most of the questions were quantitative, but we did give several options to comment. And with more than 2700 resulting remarks, there was enough to fill a 45-hour work week (at 1 minute per comment). This level of enthusiasm and desire to understand an approach rivals a 2010 survey that was trying to understand [person-centered culture change](#) and [household models](#) for long-term care.



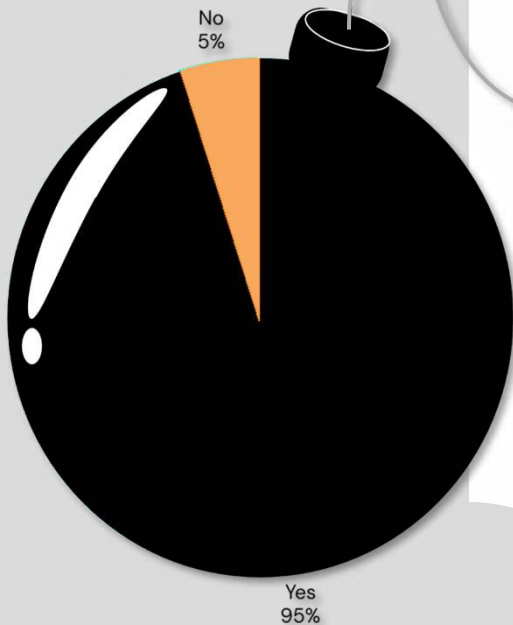
95% responses from USA

3% from Canada

2% from Other (Australia, Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland, Greece, Nigeria)

## Just do it!

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that designing and programming for intergenerational connections should be a priority in the senior living industry!



## The Intergenerational **Spark** that (Nearly) Everyone Wants to Ignite

Across roles and regions, there was strong consensus: Intergenerational programming and design aren't just "nice-to-haves" —they're emerging as essential. Interest is alight for communities that transcend age brackets. We're not talking bingo with preschoolers (though hey, we're not against that either).

We're talking:

- Shared outdoor spaces
- Communal learning environments
- Co-housing models
- Flexible, shared-use spaces that invite daily, natural interaction

Intergenerational living isn't about forcing it — it's about designing for it.

# A Vision for 2033: Co-Existence, Not Co-Habitation

When we asked people what they imagine intergenerational senior living looking like in a decade's time, a consistent vision emerged:

*"Older adults and younger people living side by side – not because they have to, but because they want to."*

*"Seniors teaching classes, toddlers drawing on sidewalks, students walking past memory care patios on their way to class."*

The message? The future is integrated, not isolated:



## AFFORDABLE AND FLEXIBLE HOUSING

Providing diverse housing options that cater to different financial needs and can adapt to changing health and mobility requirements.



## ENGAGED AND INTEGRATED COMMUNITY LIVING

Designing inclusive, multi-generational living spaces with shared educational, cultural, and recreational activities that encourage interaction and support between generations and that break down ageism, encourage socialization, and celebrate cultural diversity.



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOCUS

Prioritizing physical and mental health through fitness programs, nutritious dining, and outdoor activities that serve the senior community and the general public and are inviting to all.



## TECHNOLOGY AND CONNECTIVITY

Leveraging technology to enhance communication, promote digital literacy among seniors, and ensure seniors remain connected with society.

## A NEW APPROACH FOR INTERGENERATIONAL LIVING

An integrated, inclusive approach to senior living that values community connections, lifelong learning, and intergenerational engagement as a central part of well-being.



## ACTIVE, PURPOSEFUL & MEANINGFUL LIVING

Providing opportunities for seniors to contribute to the community, e.g. volunteering, continued employment, and active participation in community events service to maintain a sense of purpose, and reduce the risk of isolation.



## INTEGRATION WITH THE LARGER COMMUNITY

Mixed-use development concepts and designing senior living spaces as integral parts of larger communities, close to essential services (healthcare, shopping, etc.), family, and public amenities and transportation, providing opportunities for seniors to interact with people of all ages.



## EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND SHARED LEARNING

There is a strong desire for collaborations with educational institutions, from grade schools to universities, providing mutual learning / lifelong learning and mentorship opportunities.



## INTEGRATING CHILDCARE WITH SENIOR CARE

Combining daycare or preschools with senior living facilities to encourage daily interaction across generations.



## SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Promoting environmentally conscious community designs that are vibrant, with green spaces and sustainable practices.



## SOCIALIZATION TO REDUCE AGEISM

Breaking down stereotypes and stigma associated with aging by promoting socialization between seniors and younger individuals.



## ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Ensuring all community spaces are accessible and adaptable to the needs of individuals as they age, with a focus on mobility and safety.

# The Perks and the Pitfalls: The Highs and (A Few) Hesitations

## Top Perceived Benefits:

- Enhanced quality of life
- Reduced isolation
- A sense of purpose and reciprocity
- Lifelong learning and cognitive engagement
- Busting ageist stereotypes (with style)

### **Socialization and Reduced Isolation**

Provides opportunities for meaningful social connections that combat loneliness and promote mental health

### **Lifelong Learning**

Allows for the exchange of skills and knowledge, keeping seniors mentally stimulated and engaged with the world

### **Community Connection**

Fosters a strong sense of belonging and integration within the wider community, breaking down societal barriers

### **Increased Quality of Life**

Enhances the daily living experience with a sense of purpose and access to diverse activities and amenities

### **Improved Health Outcomes**

Engagement in community life can lead to better physical and mental health, and potentially longer longevity

### **Breaking Down Ageism**

By facilitating interaction between generations, intergenerational living helps to dispel stereotypes and reduce stigma associated with aging

### **Universal Design**

Adopts design principles that benefit all ages, making living spaces more accessible and safer for everyone

### **Value for Both Young and Old**

Recognizes the contributions of seniors and provides valuable experiences for younger people, leading to mutual respect and learning

### **Sense of Purpose**

Offers seniors the chance to contribute to society, whether through mentorship, volunteering, or simply sharing their experiences

### **Enhanced Mental Stimulation**

The diversity of ages and ideas contributes to a stimulating environment that keeps residents mentally active and engaged



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# The Perks **and the Pitfalls:** The Highs and (A Few) Hesitations

## Top Concerns:

- Safety (because preschoolers do tend to run at Mach 3)
- Differing lifestyle rhythms
- Privacy (hello, nap time)
- Staff training and culture shifts
- Infection control (a.k.a. everyone's post-2020 favorite)

### **Safety and Security Concerns**

Worries about physical safety, risk of crime, and the potential for accidents, especially among the vulnerable elderly population

### **Noise and Lifestyle Differences**

Concerns that differing lifestyles, schedules, and noise levels between generations could cause conflict and discomfort

### **Resistance to Change and Acceptance**

Challenges with overcoming the resistance from both current industry norms and potential residents who may not be open to or interested

### **Privacy and Space Needs**

Ensuring that there is a balance between shared spaces for interaction and private areas to meet the needs of all residents

### **Health and Infection Control**

Worries about the spread of illness, especially children, who may be carriers of common viruses, and seniors' susceptibility to serious complications

### **Programming and Engagement Challenges**

The difficulty of creating programs that engage all generations and the concern about whether these programs will be underutilized or not meet expectations

### **Staffing and Operational Complexity**

The additional staffing needs to manage intergenerational programming and the potential increase in operational complexity and costs

### **Ageism and Generational Biases**

Concerns about ageism and harmonious coexistence; along with the potential lack of understanding about conditions like dementia

### **Cost and Funding Issues**

Questions about the affordability of intergenerational living, financial models, and whether additional costs are justified by the benefits

### **Legal and Regulatory Hurdles**

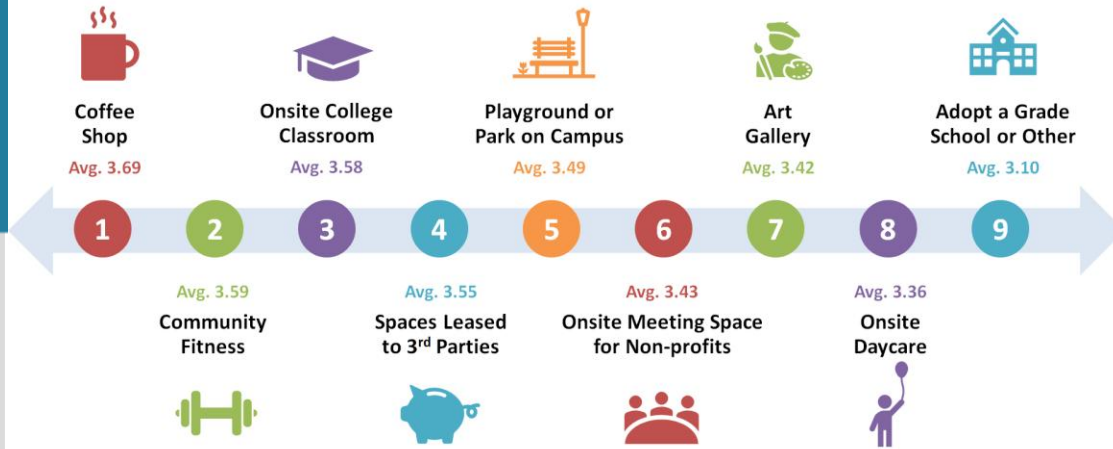
Issues related to zoning, building codes, and the Fair Housing Act that might make it challenging to create intergenerational living spaces



Adapted from Pitfalls - Image by iStock.com, 2016, ©2020, 2021

# Most Desirable “Intergen” Amenities

What made the wishlist?

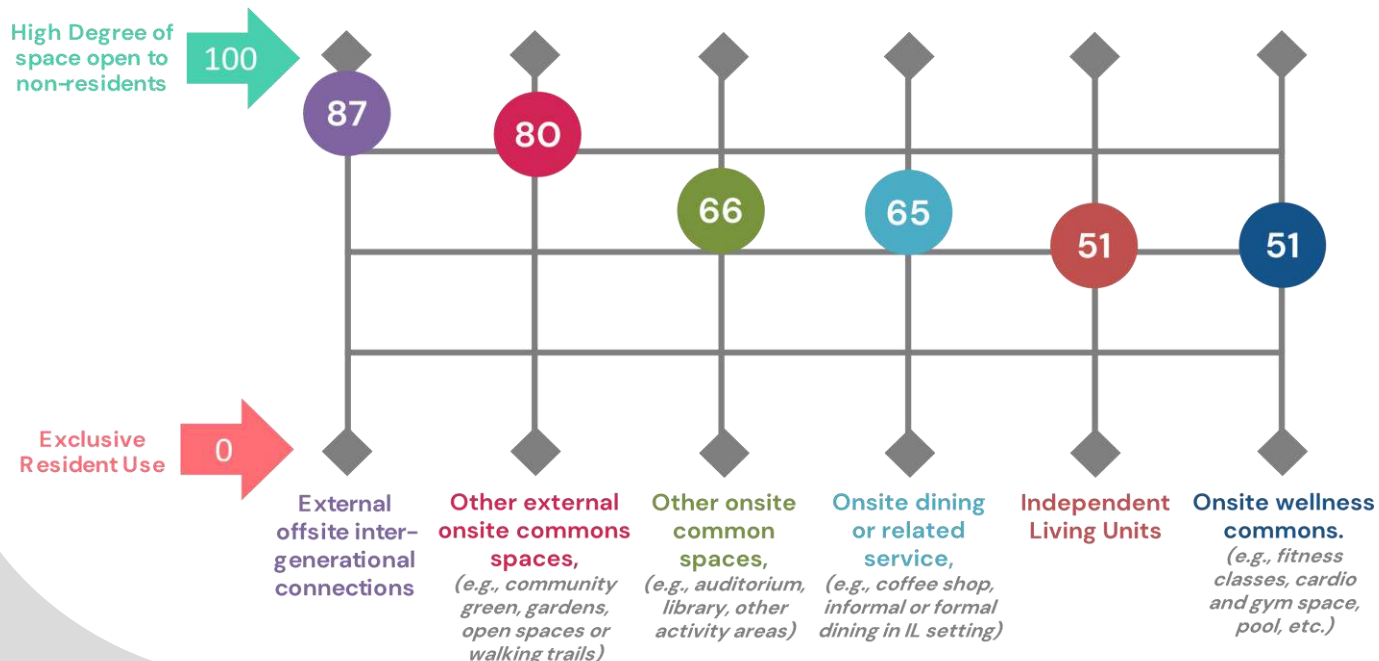


...Not just amenities... Destinations!

## Exclusivity vs. Inclusivity: Where Should Generations Mix?

People were most open to intergenerational integration and overlap in outdoor and public-facing spaces — plazas, gardens, dining venues. They were a bit more reserved about private residential areas. The takeaway?

*Make space for connection, but also for retreat.*





# Market Differentiator: Let's Get Down to Business

Turns out, this concept resonates more with some than others. Residents, care providers, operators, and marketing folks gave it high marks (on a 1 to 5 scale). Designers and developers? A little more cautious. And the finance pros came in with a slightly skeptical 3.53—reminding us that great ideas still need viable business models.

“From a marketing and sales perspective, how important are *intergenerational design and programming* to current or prospective senior living residents or their families?”



(Importance on a scale of 1–5)

- 4.29 - Marketing
- 4.07 - Owner FP/NFP (FP scored slightly higher than NFP)
- 3.95 - Operators
- 3.88 - Current/Potential Resident
- 3.85 - Designers (Arch-ID-Landscape)
- 3.74 - Developers
- 3.53 - Other (Finance-Industry Associations)

The takeaway? It might not be everyone's silver bullet just yet, but intergenerational design is already acting as a differentiator for those thinking long-term.

## Measure(s) of Success

Our “know-it-all” respondents say success boils down to one benchmark:



### Key Benchmark Questions to Ask

On any typical day, how many non-seniors (not including staff) are on site?



# Boost Intergenerational Interactions

After binge-reviewing respondents' 2700 comments, six principles emerged that can be used to guide the trajectory for intergenerational interaction.

## "Up, Not Back"

Is the building brought up to the street to encourage walkable connections?

## "Intergenerational, Not Age Segregated"

Is there programming targeting non-seniors?

## "Connect, Not Apart"

Are there walkable connections?  
What is the site walk score?

## "Out, Not In"

Is there direct outside access to the commons?

## "Varied, Not Generic"

Is there a design blending between IL and Health Center?  
Does the design appeal to different age groups?

## "Mixed Use, Not Single Purpose"

Is the first impression inviting mixed use, or "typical senior living"?

## Final Thoughts (For Round One)

Round One showed us there is real appetite, real creativity, and real caution when it comes to intergenerational living. People are ready for innovation — but they also want it done thoughtfully, accessibly, and with heart.

So what's next? We're taking this feedback into another round— where we dive into new themes, workshop ideas, and begin building a practical, usable "Intergenerational Score" (think Walk Score, but for community connection).

This journey is just getting started. And the best part? You're coming with us.

Stay tuned. Stay curious. **Stay intergenerational.**

# INTERGENERATIONAL Roadmap

<b>BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN</b> <small>DESIGN AND PROGRAMMING WHICH BRINGS NON-RESIDENTS ON TO THE CAMPUS</small>	<b>PHYSICAL SPACE</b>	<b>PROGRAM/ OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATION</b>
<b>CAFE/ COFFEE SHOP OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY</b>		
<b>DINING/RESTAURANT OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY</b>		
<b>FITNESS SPACE OPEN TO STAFF / COMMUNITY</b>		
<b>SHOPS/STORES / MINIMART OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY</b>		
<b>ONSITE ART GALLERY OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY</b>		
<b>ONSITE WORK-STUDY / INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS</b>		
<b>ADOPT A GRADE SCHOOL WITH ONSITE CLASSES OR TUTOR</b>		
<b>SPACES LEASED TO OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS</b>		
<b>PLAYGROUND OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY</b>		
<b>ONSITE DAYCARE</b>		
<b>COMMUNITY PARK/GARDEN OPEN TO THE PUBLIC</b>		
<b>HOST AN ONSITE FARMER'S MARKET</b>		
<b>HOST ONSITE NEIGHBORHOOD FESTIVALS/EVENTS</b>		
<b>ONSITE "LIVING LAB" CONNECTING RESEARCHERS AND RESIDENTS/STAFFS</b>		
<b>COMMUNITY/GERIATRIC CLINIC OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY</b>		
<b>OTHER?</b>		

## The Goals

The roadmap is created to help with the physical & spatial design ideas and programmatic & operational considerations that the Senior Living communities can adopt to incorporate intergenerational design strategies.

- The roadmap is divided into 3 categories ;
1. Bringing outside in
  2. Taking inside out
  3. Blurring the boundaries

# INTERGENERATIONAL Roadmap

<b>TAKING THE INSIDE OUT</b> <i>DESIGN, CONNECTIONS &amp; PARTNERSHIPS TO FACILITATE OFF-CAMPUS RESIDENT CONNECTIONS</i>	<b>PHYSICAL SPACE</b>	<b>PROGRAM/ OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATION</b>
<b>LOCATED IN URBAN SETTING WITH EASY WALKABLE CONNECTIONS</b>		
<b>LOCATED NEXT TO A YMCA WITH MEMBERSHIP PRIVILEGES</b>		
<b>LOCATED IN OR NEXT TO A SHOPPING DISTRICT</b>		
<b>LOCATED IN A NEW URBANIST COMMUNITY</b>		
<b>LOCATED NEXT TO SCHOOLS WITH SHARED PROGRAMS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES</b>		
<b>LOCATED ON OR NEXT TO A COLLEGE CAMPUS</b>		
<b>LOCATED IN A LARGER MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<b>DEVELOPMENT OF NEW SINGLE FAMILY AND RETAIL SURROUNDING AN EXISTING STANDALONE SENIOR COMMUNITY</b>		
<b>OTHER?</b>		

<b>BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES</b> <i>LOOKING BEYOND AGE-RESTRICTED HOUSING</i>	<b>PHYSICAL SPACE</b>	<b>PROGRAM/ OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATION</b>
<b>APARTMENTS (OR FLOORS) LEASED TO NON-SENIORS</b>		
<b>APARTMENTS SETASIDE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS</b>		
<b>APARTMENTS SETASIDE FOR ARTIST IN RESIDENCE</b>		
<b>APARTMENTS SETASIDE FOR WORKING SINGLE MOTHERS</b>		
<b>NON-AGE SEGREGATED APARTMENTS BUT ADD-ON TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES PACKAGES FOR SENIOR RESIDENTS</b>		
<b>OTHER?</b>		