



# Condominium Trends

## Lifestyle Changes and Generational Differences

*[by Jack Carr, P.E., RS, LEED-AP]*

**As our offices are involved in condominium projects all over the country,** I have had the opportunity to directly observe what new condominium owners want in their condominiums and the common amenities attracting buyers. In addition, I thought I would share the new trends and elements recent surveys have revealed about the market. You might be surprised!

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) recently released

a survey listing the top eight items current condominium and HOA home buyers want in their new residence. These items ranged from 92 percent to 82 percent favored by those surveyed in the following descending order:

- Unit owners want a separate room to perform laundry tasks such as folding clothes.
- Exterior lighting is very important, not only for showcasing and curb

appeal but also for personal safety reasons as more and more units are being purchased by women.

- Unit owners want energy efficient appliances with Energy Star certification ratings; low water flow plumbing fixtures; and windows with Low-E and Low-U factors. They realize energy- and resource-sustainable systems not only are good for the environment but also keep the homeowner's living costs down.

- Surprisingly, ceiling fans are a big draw. People are beginning to appreciate these fans will not only provide good ventilation and healthier indoor air, but also reduce both their heating and air conditioning bills.
- Backyard patios are a major attraction. Homeowners want to bring the outdoors into their lives. A short walk through any big box store will illustrate how much floor space is being devoted to patio and other outdoor living activities.
- Hardwood floors are important. Not only are they perceived to be more high-end than carpet, but also wood flooring is thought to reduce allergy and other health related issues, as well as lower maintenance.
- Garage storage is a growing requirement. Well organized and accessible storage reduces clutter in the actual living space, thus adding to unit quality of life.
- Everybody wants an eat-in kitchen. America's eating habits are becoming more casual and fluid. Formal dining rooms do not draw the family together like an eat-in kitchen, where everyone can be part of the day-to-day activities.

#### NEW DEMANDS ON CHANGE

There is an old maxim saying living styles and habits skip a generation. This appears to be occurring with regard to condo trends. With the exception of the love of the automobile, Boomers are beginning to act like Millennials while Gen-Xers are staying more traditional. While it has long been known Millennials can live car-less by relying on city transportation, Uber, Zip Cars, and bicycles, Boomers are still paying high prices for covered parking spaces for their must-have vehicles. For this reason new condominiums wanting to attract young professionals are often located near these alternate transportation modes and these same condominiums provide for both bicycle parking and storage.

Modern condominiums target empty nesters, which include not only retirees but singles, newly divorced, and young couples who only need a single bedroom and a flex room. All generations want granite or quartz countertops, stainless appliances, and above-average kitchen/ bath cabinets with the trend toward glass doors.

The trend in the buildings themselves is Millennials and Boomers want taller and taller buildings with views. Rooftop amenities include cabanas and entertainment areas. Everyone seems to want dog-friendly buildings including dog play areas, dog walking services nearby, and lounges allowing dogs. These lounges are becoming more stylish with lots of daylight, charging stations, multi-functional seating, and open out into outdoor seating and entertaining areas. These features are important as more condominium owners are tele-commuters wanting to leave the static interior of their unit to feel more freedom of movement and natural settings.

And of course, Millennials and Boomers moving back to the city want more than a row of exercise equipment and free weights in the clubhouse. They are attracted to other activities including nature trails, yoga studios, gardening areas, bocce courts, and shuffleboard. Amenities such as tennis courts are not for everyone, and they are expensive to maintain for the few that want them. Boards are being asked to forego resurfacing the courts and replacing them with pickle ball or other more inclusive activity features in the common areas. So whether you are on the board or a property manager looking to the future, the time is now to decide on what will attract the buyers of the future and maintain property values.



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