



Article 2

Westminster Village North  
Indianapolis, Indiana





Renovated therapy courtyard with exercise stations, a variety of colors and textures, and inviting places to sit and visit.

Not-for-profit Life Plan communities (the term LeadingAge advocates for continuing care retirement communities) are at a critical crossroads. While the aging of America's population has created significant opportunities, the marketplace has become significantly more competitive, particularly through the emergence of aggressive for-profit senior care companies, as changes in payment models and insurance reimbursement threaten the financial stability of many communities.

Fortunately, the situation is far from hopeless. In fact, there may never be a better opportunity for not-for-profit communities to secure a solid future and withstand even well-financed competitors. The keys are in understanding the changing needs and expectations of the marketplace, creating a long-term vision, and investing in the future.

Westminster Village North in Indianapolis is a shining example of a not-for-profit Life Plan community that recognized changes and took a strategic approach to ensure its continued viability. Today, the community is prospering, and it continues to remain focused on the future, making it a model for other not-for-profits that wish to do more than simply survive.

In this series of articles, we'll examine the changes in our marketplace and the steps Westminster Village North took to become one of its market's most desirable and successful communities.



Historic aerial photo of Westminster Village North.



# Expectations from today's seniors...and tomorrow's

Not all that long ago, the phrase “senior housing” conjured up long hallways illuminated by four-foot-long cool-white fluorescent tubes and lined with spartan semi-private rooms. Seniors called them “nursing homes” and feared them, because being consigned to a nursing-home bed was viewed the equivalent of giving up on life. Sure, some homes offered hallways with colorful wall-coverings and rooms with bright windows, but even at the nicest ones, the feel was decidedly institutional and invariably depressing.



Warm colors, the fireplace focal point, furnishings, and accessories help create a homelike environment.

## No longer the last resort

“Today’s consumer isn’t as frightened of long-term care,” suggests Shelley Rauch, MBA, HFA, Executive Director of Westminster Village North in Indianapolis. She gives part of the credit to increased use of social media and websites that allow potential residents to research facilities. But she sees the primary reason as a different attitude. “Couples are making decisions about retirement housing earlier,” Rauch says. “They want to ensure that their retirement years will be what they envision and that they’ll be able to do all the things they want, but with the added security of a safe environment that promotes their wellness.”

### What’s “retirement”?

An emerging demographic presents new opportunities (and the inevitable challenges) to Life Plan communities. Empty nesters and other couples in their mid-50s aren’t waiting for retirement to sell their homes. Without kids at home, they want to downsize, and they aren’t interested in spending time or money on home maintenance.

Age-restricted housing communities appeal to this growing demographic, by combining open floor plans that seem larger than the actual square footage, maintenance services, the kinds of amenities one would find at a vacation resort, and opportunities to socialize with neighbors. This type of development is a natural addition to a Life Plan community, and can provide a new entry point to the current continuum.

Like many Life Plan communities, Westminster Village North uses life occupancy agreements to ensure that residents will have access to higher levels of care, even if they outlive their financial resources. That’s particularly appealing to Baby Boomers who watched their parents struggle with finding the right care for an ailing spouse. “We hear a lot of new residents say that they want to make the decision so their kids don’t have to,” Rauch adds. “That’s a very common theme.”

## Enter the HGTV generation

The seniors who are currently moving into Life Plan communities -- a mix of the leading edge of the Boomers and the tail end of the Veterans generation -- enjoyed economic prosperity and consumer freedom through most of their adult years. They became accustomed to choosing every aspect of their active lifestyles, and aren’t willing to give up that freedom of choice just because they’ve entered a new phase of life. “They want to keep the amenities they have, even though they may be moving from a pretty large home to a 1,000-square-foot apartment,” says Jerry Cripps, an architect with K2M Design® who has overseen a variety of renovation and construction projects for Westminster Village North.



New assisted living one-bedroom apartments feature quartz countertops, stone backsplash, the warmth of wood, an abundance of natural light, and views to the exterior.

*"When the kids come in looking for a place for Mom, those amenities and design choices are important to them. Family members want a place that looks as much like home as possible."*

- Jerry Cripps, RA, Senior Project Manager

"That's why it's important to include the upgrades and amenities people have come to expect." That level of finish is also important when children are helping their parents make decisions about senior living. "When the kids come in looking for a place for Mom, those amenities and design choices are important to them. Family members want a place that looks as much like home as possible."

The popularity of home-design TV shows is also raising the bar for expectations, Cripps says. "People like what they see on HGTV and in magazines. When a community offers those finishes and upgrades, it makes it more attractive for people to make that leap from their home." However, that doesn't mean one set of options is going to work for every potential resident. From floor plans to finishes, today's seniors expect a menu of choices, and tomorrow's prospective residents will expect even more opportunities for customization. The more opportunities communities offer to personalize living spaces, the more attractive and competitive those communities will be.

## Building flexibility into communities

A generation back, most senior care communities offered two options: small private apartments for seniors who could care for themselves and a semi-private nursing home environment for those with declining health. As life expectancy increases, and the quality of medical care improves, other options have emerged along the continuum of care. Today, most communities offer a combination of some kind of standalone homes or cottages, independent living apartments, assisted living units for residents who need support with some activities of daily living (ADLs), and skilled nursing care (often with a special wing for people with Alzheimer's and other dementia conditions).

Some of those changes have been driven by insurance reimbursement practices and the recognition that even people in poor health are living much longer, notes Cripps. "Today's assisted living apartment is what we would have considered independent living yesterday. And many of the people who



are in assisted living settings today would have been in skilled long-term care just 15 years ago.”

Westminster Village North was constructed as a sanitarium for tuberculosis patients in the early 20th century, and institutional traces lingered during its first quarter-century as a retirement community. As Cripps and the K2M Design team have updated the community’s buildings to serve the changing population, they’ve faced challenges resulting from the original configuration. As they look ahead, they want to ensure that their designs provide few limitations when future changes are needed.

### Protecting privacy and dignity

One of the hallmarks of the institutional approach to senior living was the semi-private room with two beds along one wall, a light fixture over each, and (sometimes) a curtain in between. Residents shared a bathroom with little or no decor, and typically were transported down the hall to a common bathing facility. Although that approach was tolerated for many years, today’s seniors won’t put up with it. A key reason is that they want to protect their dignity by gaining privacy. In response, communities are looking for ways to transform those prison-like rooms into something more attractive and personal.

“We’ve tried to think about these rooms the way you might think about your home,” explains Cripps. “In a house you have different zones, some of which are public, and some -- typically the bedrooms and bathrooms -- are private. Even though we’re dealing with spaces as small as 300 square feet, we can take steps to create those zones.” At Westminster Village North, Cripps and his team have accomplished that by partitioning rooms with translucent panels. “When you look in the door, you see the public area with a small table.” The private zone, which includes the bed and the bathroom, isn’t as visible from the hallway.

“One of the things that always bothered me about the traditional nursing home approach is that the lights in the hallways are always on, and as the resident is lying in bed, they can see into the hallway,” he adds. “By using the translucent panel, the resident is no longer able to see into the hallway, but a nurse walking by can quickly tell if the resident is in bed. It also adds a decorative touch and allows us to bring natural light from the window into the room and the hallway.”

The Team also upgraded the finishes in the bathrooms to make them more personal, adding a small but significant change to the configuration. “In so many nursing homes, as

you walk down the hall, you can see into the bathroom in every room you pass,” Cripps says. “We angled the bathroom door so people walking by can’t see in. We also installed sliding doors, so you don’t lose floor space to a swinging door.” He says they originally recommended pocket doors, but they proved to be a maintenance headache, so they switched to the barn-style sliding doors that are currently popular on TV design shows.

### Emphasizing personal wellness

Today’s new residents are far more active than their counterparts of a generation ago, and they want to stay that way. The days when “wellness” meant having a room with a treadmill and an exercise bike are long gone. People continue to be concerned about fitness, so workout rooms that are more like health clubs and swimming pools are popular. There’s also growing awareness that wellness also applies to the mind and spirit, so facilities for activities such as Tai Chi and yoga, as well as services such as massages and spa treatments, are appealing to prospective residents. Younger residents are interested in outdoor activities such as walking and gardening.

Don’t forget Fido, either. Seniors don’t want to leave their beloved pets behind, and those dogs and cats can contribute to both physical and emotional health. Communities can appeal to pet owners by including amenities such as recreation areas for dogs and outdoor spaces with protection from the weather, so a quick walk doesn’t mean getting frozen or drenched.

### People are getting older

The Baby Boomers were the largest generation for many decades, and it’s well-known that Boomers are swelling the ranks of America’s seniors. As of 2012, the 65-and-better crowd accounted for 13.7 percent of the nation’s population, and the Census Bureau says one in five Americans will be in that group by 2060. In fact, people 65 and older will outnumber those under 18 in 2056 for the first time in history.

The fastest-growing demographic will be those who are age 85 and older. By 2050, nearly one in four women and one in five men above 65 will fall into the 85-plus group. As Life Plan communities plan for the future, they need to consider the impacts of those demographic shifts, in particular the fact that residents may spend more years in the community.

## Restaurant-style meals

The generation currently arriving at Life Plan communities is accustomed to eating many of their meals away from home. They enjoy restaurant dining and have acquired diverse tastes. Offering one banquet-style dining room with limited hours and a few menu choices probably won't satisfy them.

That's why communities are adding variety to their dining services, with creative menus, multiple locations for meals, and opportunities to dine throughout the day. One of the most popular additions at Westminster Village North is The Bistro, an intimate coffeehouse setting that offers light dining options such as soups and sandwiches, with additional tables in an adjacent outdoor plaza. The Bistro has become a popular spot for informal meetings, and staff members enjoy eating there, too.

## Getting wired ... or wireless

Previous generations may have been slow to embrace technology, but current prospects have been using it in the home and workplace for years. They expect to stay connected in their new environment, so extensive wi-fi access throughout the community is a must.

Cripps says flat-screen TVs have been a boon to designers. "A decade ago, if someone wanted a big TV, they needed space for a big counter-top or cabinet. Now, we can attach a very large screen to the wall, so they can see it easily while lying in bed." As streaming music and movies becomes more popular,



The Bistro has become a popular spot to gather for both residents & staff.

community owners need to ensure that they've installed sufficient bandwidth.

A big "pipeline" will also prepare communities for the next generation of connected technologies. "We're seeing technology that can connect to toilets and mirrors, allowing staff to remotely monitor the health of assisted-living residents," Cripps notes. "Eventually it will allow for a higher level of care that feels much less intrusive."

From décor to resources, the key in reaching the current crop of residents is taking the concept of "home-like" very seriously. It's no longer enough to have a design element or two that reminds the residents of the homes they left behind. Successful Life Plan communities will create an environment that essentially duplicates or even surpasses what residents previously had.



Residents enjoy daily fitness and rehab routines in newly designed gym.



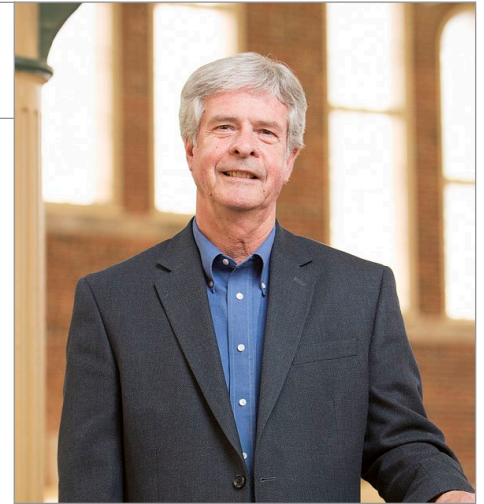
# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON TRUST AND RESULTS

## Dan R. Ware, RA

Senior Project Manager

Dan is a nationally recognized expert in long-term care planning with over 40 years of industry experience. As an active speaker for LeadingAge, Dan is influential in driving progressive change and innovation in long-term healthcare design and development. Focused on topics like healthy living environments, designing for Alzheimers care , and life safety codes, Dan continues to lead and shape the senior living industry.

- **Altenheim Community** Indianapolis, Indiana
- **Copper Trace** Westfield, Indiana
- **Golden Years Homestead** Fort Wayne, Indiana
- **Westminster Village West Lafayette** West Lafayette, Indiana



## Jerry L. Cripps, RA

Senior Project Manager

With more than 33 years of well-rounded architectural experience, Jerry offers a wealth of valuable skills and industry knowledge to any project. From design development to construction administrative services, the range of his abilities span throughout the entire design and construction process. Jerry excels in meeting the needs of his clients, and in managing the details of the project from the design stages thru construction.

- **Westminster Village North** Indianapolis, Indiana
- **Benjamin Manor Adult Living Apartment Community** Lawrence, Indiana
- **Indiana Veterans Home** Lafayette, Indiana
- **Traders Point Christian Church** Whitestown, Indiana



## Amy M. Back, RID

Senior Interior Designer

Amy has 15 years of professional experience including the design and renovation of senior living, healthcare, primary, secondary and higher education, library and faith-based facilities. Amy understands form and function, aesthetics and psychology. She designs for each market segment and end user appropriately. Whether the goal is calming traffic patterns for dementia patients, or fun and rugged material for K-12 students, Amy meets the challenge with fresh enthusiasm, open-mindedness, and polished professional skills.

- **Westminster Village North** Indianapolis, Indiana
- **Copper Trace** Westfield, Indiana
- **Crestwood Village South** Indianapolis, Indiana
- **Robin Run Village** Indianapolis, Indiana







Rendering of the lounge/activity area in the new rehabilitation center addition.

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