

Special Advertising Feature

Retirement Communities



COURTESY OF SENIOR RESOURCE GROUP
 Senior Resource Group embraces the idea of experiential living within its communities. Their programming fosters independence among residents. This allows each individual to live the way they want to live, as opposed to following the prescriptive format so often associated with senior living campuses.

Seeking Experiences

Luxury takes on new meaning in modernized older adult communities

by Kelly Bryant

High-end finishes, extravagant amenities and resort-style comforts — today's older adults have more stylish and diverse living options than ever before. But the most sought-after communities are those that go a step further, taking a thoughtful approach to aging well.

In fact, Michael Grust, CEO of Senior Resource Group (SRG), politely eschews the term "luxury" when speaking of the 22 properties the company operates. And that's despite the fact that each community appears very plush.

"To be honest with you, I've got a problem with the word 'luxury' because on the independent living side we need to give people more compelling reasons to leave their home preemptively," Grust says. "Early on, we were on the luxury senior living bandwagon. But I'd like to believe the value proposition has to be more than that. We're in the service business: healthcare, hospitality and real estate."

For SRG, this means differentiating themselves from the pack — creating dynamic dining experiences, providing well-designed living environments and, perhaps most of all, fostering independence among residents.

"We've pivoted to more experiential living," Grust says. "Yes, we want to have fine dining and larger apartments with nicer finishes, but the heart of our community is our programming. We hear so much

about lifespan versus health span, so we create environments that are the catalyst for people living the way they want to live. But we also give them opportunities to experience new things."

AN EVOLVING INDUSTRY

For Mather, which consists of life plan communities in Arizona, Illinois and Virginia, it's about providing residents with new experiences while keeping them connected to the life they already know so well.

"What's considered a luxury really varies by market and person," says Gale Morgan, senior vice president at Mather. "People place a high value on wellness programs and staying connected in their communities, as many still work."

For example, at The Mather, a community in Tysons, Virginia, residents can expect programs partnered with nearby universities and museums for lifelong learning. The art is curated with commissioned pieces from around the world. Extensive focus groups were conducted for residents to help shape future programming and share their thoughts on what's working and what isn't.

"Longevity is the buzzword, so it really is all about continuing to age well," Morgan says. "Whether you live here 10 years or 25, it's about having a connection to wellness — and The Mather's wellness ecosystem is ever evolving as a personal, relevant and contemporary way of living and being."

AN ADAPTIVE HOME

With residents of varying ages and interests, both Mather and SRG are adept at providing spaces, programming and hospitality to meet a wide range of needs. Morgan points to the flexible living areas, both private and communal, at each of Mather's properties.

"The flexibility offers choice and customized experiences coupled with cutting-edge amenities," she says. "These amenities invite interaction with the outdoors, like yoga on the terrace, al fresco dining and cocktails on the rooftop. Then you add in our person-centric wellness experiences (which we call ContinuWell), infusing wellness into countless aspects of each day. Plus, apartment homes have open floor plans with smart-home conveniences. We have a couple that spread out their furniture to practice ballroom dancing. You can really adapt the spaces to your lifestyle needs."

A genuine sense of attentiveness to residents provides a customized experience for each and every person living in SRG's communities.

"We get into the rhythm of life with our customer," Grust affirms. "The staff knows how a resident likes their tea or how they like their apartment cleaned. We evolve those relationships. I think that makes these communities a great place to live. You feel connected to something bigger than just other residents."

Kelly Bryant is a freelance writer in Los Angeles specializing in real estate and lifestyle topics.



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