

ATLANTA

BUILDING NEWS eNewsletter



IT'S ALL IN THE FAMILY: DESIGNING A HOME THAT APPEALS TO EVERY GENERATION

[Print this article](#) [Return to main page](#)

by Lita Dirks, MIRM, CAASH, IIDA

Everyone plays a role in today's homebuying process; from the 50+ home buyer to their children and grandchildren, everyone has a say. In the past, home buying decisions were most likely made by a husband and wife who looked at homes with a Realtor and then decided on their future and that of their family. They made their decision based upon their needs and goals, and everyone had to accept and accommodate those decisions. A new paradigm is in effect today.

When that same couple searches for a home in today's marketplace, they often have the input of their children and grandchildren who may now be living with them due to the impact of today's economic downturn. Or, that couple may want to make sure that their relatives will be close to them and therefore will choose an environment that is attractive to everyone.

So how can we design and merchandise a home to appeal to such a diversified group? It's easier than you might think. I'll focus on seven areas that offer some simple merchandising ideas to appeal to the 50+ buyer and their families.

Authentic Experiences and Individuality

The 50+ generation is sometimes called the "me" generation. Many in this generation value individuality and hold large organizations in suspicion. When designing for this market, it's important to know your buyer, offer them as many choices as possible and be upfront with them about costs and timelines. Lots of choices and no surprises equates to credibility, trust, referrals and repeat business.



Offer a sense of individuality with unique built-ins and creative details.

Merchandising Tip: This buyer wants to create a unique space that is very personalized. They value craftsmanship, customized details and textures, porches and sitting rooms. Offer them upgrade options so they can design a home that reflects their unique personality and vision.

Green Building and Technology



**BUILD BUYER
CONFIDENCE,
INCREASE
SALES,
& LEAVE THE
RISK TO US!**



Remember, protecting Mother Earth isn't something created by today's youth—it came of age in the 1960s. With this in mind, it's no wonder that grandchildren today relate so well to their grandparents. Although everyone wants to protect the planet, the 50+ buyer is also concerned about saving on energy costs and creating a healthy environment. The 50+ generation is also responsible for creating the Internet and the technology boom we're enjoying today, so don't skimp on the technology. This buyer is tech-savvy and wants to stay current with the latest advances.

Merchandising Tip: Use sustainable materials like bamboo flooring and glass tiles and organic fabrics. Knowing your buyer will tell you whether green materials should be standard features or optional upgrades. Display iPod docking stations, flat-screen TVs and computer work stations, all of which appeal to the 50+ buyer.

Current Economic Conditions

A sense of community is born during times of suffering, and our current economic downturn is no exception. This environment has inspired a renewed sense of family and community in which everyone plays a part in helping turn things around.

Merchandising Tip: Whether creating traditional or contemporary rooms, use light, bright, happy touches that translate into warm, comfortable, safe spaces. Straight lines and eclectic mixes will keep your rooms from being dowdy or boring.

Multi-Generational Housing

Many 50+ buyers, through necessity, have returned to the multi-generational style of living they experienced in their youth. Their parents may not be able to live on their own any longer, and their children may be divorced or unable to find work. Builders who offer homes that help them prepare for that possibility or deal with that current reality will stand out and be appreciated.



Merchandise with a mix of activities to welcome multi-generational families.

Merchandising Tip: Just as good fences make good neighbors, private spaces make for peaceful co-habiting families. What used to be called the mother-in-law suite might now be called the second generation suite, still featuring its own bath and entrance. Additionally, subtle, kid-friendly details will show that grandkids are welcome to visit and play but won't necessarily be moving in.

Flex and Small Spaces

The new big is small. Scaling back has become more popular, and the days of the starter castle are over for now. The 50+ buyer wants to be free of maintenance and upkeep. When designing smaller spaces, functionality at each stage of life is what it's all about, and merchandising can help show your buyers how functionality means value.



Use window treatments sparingly to maximize natural light.

Merchandising Tip: Avoid using heavy draperies, and let the light shine in. Combine that with a large mirror to reflect the light and visually open the space. Use built-ins to replace large furniture and keep rooms open and spacious. Use outdoor areas as extensions of indoor living space. All of these details will work together to create panache and value in the buyer's mind. They will love impressing their friends with the smart, efficient and stylish features of their new home.

Urban Areas

Today's 50+ buyer wants to enjoy a sense of community while maintaining individuality, and urban transit-oriented communities are just the right setting. Buyers appreciate having retail, cultural and educational options close to them. Being able to forego the automobile to take mass transit when appropriate saves time and money.

Merchandising Tip: Details should reflect an active lifestyle. Use cleaner, straighter lines with simple details. Use accessories and art that echo the location and images that reflect the lifestyle awaiting them outside their doorstep.

Health and Fitness Amenities

Staying healthy and being fit, and amenities that cater to those goals, are still of paramount importance to the 50+ buyer. Clubhouses with social programming, the latest offerings in fitness technology, pools and playgrounds, as well as other physical activities attractive to the whole family, appeal to this buyer.

Merchandising Tip: In the home, display rooms or corners with exercise equipment. Make sure it looks like fun by keeping the area light and bright. Ensure that the clubhouse is well maintained and that the amenity package is designed to appeal to your region's buyers.

Although the 50+ buyer is your actual customer, designing to appeal to the whole family will win you accolades from the entire family.

[Lita Dirks & Co.](#) is an award-winning design and merchandising firm that has worked with builders throughout the country for more than 30 years.

Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association

1484 Brockett Road
Tucker, GA 30084
770-938-9900
atlantahomebuilders.com

