



**MARY JO PETERSON**

Designing with an Eye For the Future

My goal as a designer is to help create homes that are comfortable, safe, and stylish, while ensuring that everyone, regardless of age, size or physical ability, will be able to enjoy it for years to come. With the aging in place trend that has kept the remodeling industry booming, we know that paying attention to the changing physical and lifestyle needs of occupants is big business.

Homebuilders are often challenged by the dilemma of how to provide features that respond to these needs while enhancing rather than detracting from the personality and appearance of the home. The answer is "universal design," which is no more than enlightened application of logic and aesthetics to create great forward-looking design.

The broad strokes of universal design involve flexibility to help support today's diverse households. In fact, there are many low or no cost changes which can create more flexibility in a home's livability standard as occupants' abilities, and needs change. For example, the level or no-step

flexibility throughout the home.

The kitchen and the bath are high function areas also full of design opportunities.



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while seated allows the cook to conserve energy. Rollout storage units below the sink or cook top allow seated work without sacrificing storage space in the important "universal reach" zone (15 inches to 48 inches above the floor).

Baths are also specialized rooms where space is critical and where function must find a balance with style. I've found that personality need not conflict with safety and comfort. Today's variety of sinks, including the popular art-like vessels, provide for personal expression and open knee spaces.

Grab bars are now available in styles that match other bathroom fittings. I like grab bars wherever towel bars should go.

Most master baths have enough floor area to allow for a large conventional shower with a generous entry and flush threshold. Eliminating raised thresholds is a good idea. Tripping over something that's been there for 20 years is not so improbable.

Universal design is sometimes mistakenly linked only to its benefits for people who are aging or those who have disabilities. The reality is that it is the approach every builder should be taking. Making great forward-looking design a part every home built.

Mary Jo Peterson's Connecticut-based design firm focuses on residential projects and provides design support to major homebuilders nationwide. She is a certified kitchen, bath, and aging in place designer with 20 years experience. Her work has earned national recognition. Author of numerous books and articles, Mary Jo is a frequent national speaker and educator. She can be reached at 203.775.4763 or maryjo@mjp.netmeg.net



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entry that makes it easier for Grandma to enter is equally handy when a young parent rolls the double stroller through the generous width of the door.

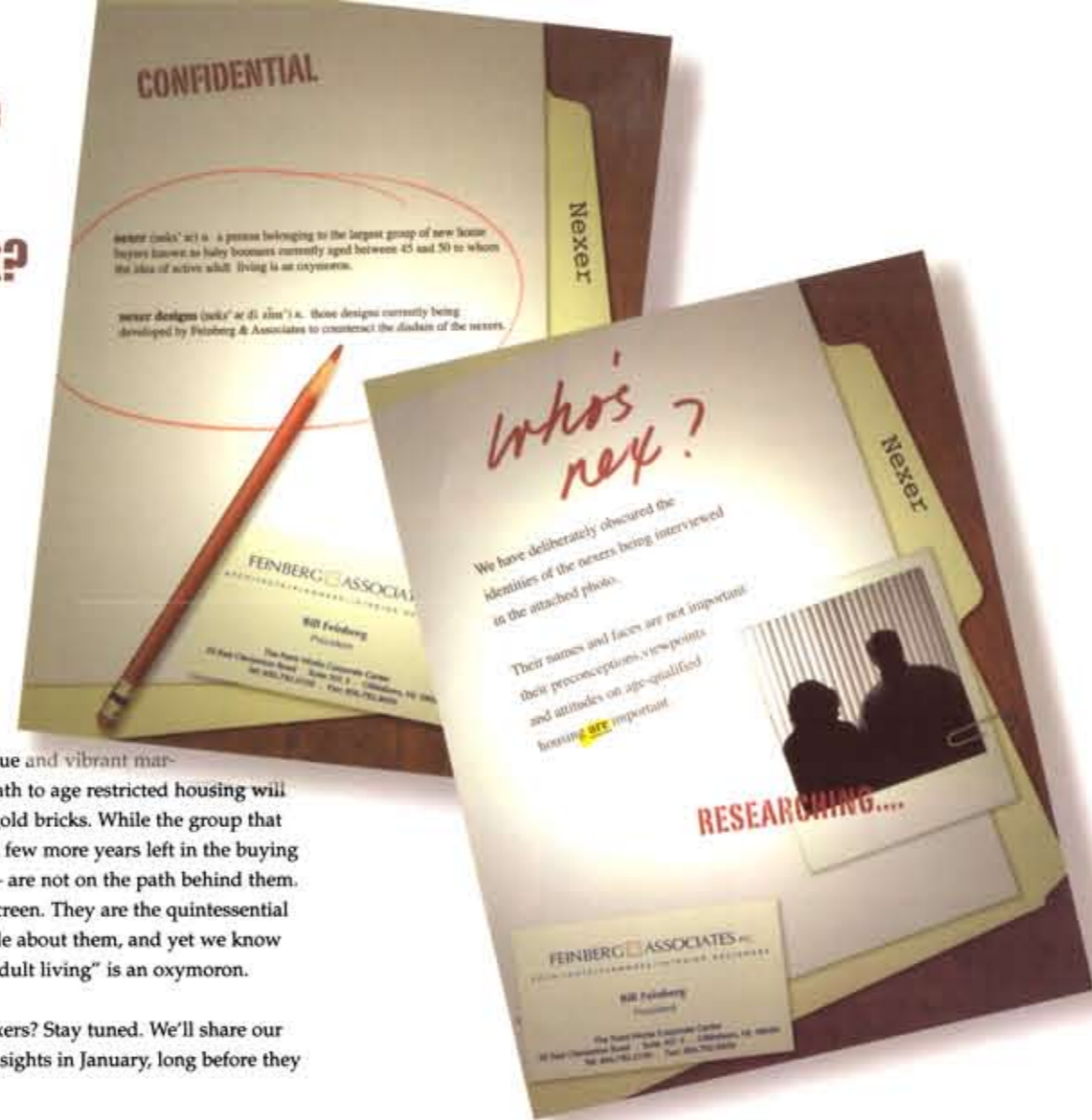
Reviewing plans and removing unnecessary walls, hallways, bends and turns can add desired openness and improved access and

## Who are the nexers and what do they want?

Soon, we will all know what makes the nexers tick, why we should care, and how we can address their needs. They are, after all, the next big market, which will come of age in this era of age-restricted housing.

Take out your calendars and mark the date - Friday, January 24, 2003 at The International Builders Show in Las Vegas, Nevada. On that day F&A will be presenting its findings on this unique and vibrant market segment. Simply put, the path to age restricted housing will not continue to be paved with gold bricks. While the group that we are currently selling to has a few more years left in the buying cycle, their kids - the nexers - are not on the path behind them. They aren't even on the radar screen. They are the quintessential moving target. We know so little about them, and yet we know that, to them, the term "active adult living" is an oxymoron.

How do you prepare for the nexers? Stay tuned. We'll share our focus group findings and our insights in January, long before they arrive at your sales office.



## Past Present Future

**May, 2002**  
NAHB Seniors' Housing Council symposium, "Building for Boomers and Beyond" in Orlando, Florida, Randy Richter serves as panelist on subject of land planning, Gavin Sweeney moderates session on warranty service.

**October, 2002**  
Feinberg & Associates conducts market research on the nexers - the next generation of age qualified buyers. F&A will present the nexer design profile nationally at IBS in Las Vegas.

**January, 2003**  
NAHB International Builders Show. F&A principals of land planning and architectural divisions will speak on topics including Selling Density, Competing with the Big Guys, and Reaching the Nexers at University of Housing educational programs.

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# MARKITECT

Market-based Ideas and Designs for Today's Builders and Developers from Feinberg & Associates and Home Design Services

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## UP, UP, AND AWAY: Multistory, Multifamily Demand Growing



by George Johns

Take a look around and you're sure to notice the growing presence of multifamily, multistory light frame projects in a location near you, often where you'd least expect it.

"welcome" to buyers and guests, in ways different from the entry and foyer of a single family home.

We are being approached by large and medium sized builders for mixed-use projects, which require a creative approach, that our work is known for. On the boards is a redevelopment piece in Northern New Jersey, marketed to professional renters, and a number of age qualified projects throughout the northeast region.



From four-story apartment buildings with elevators and underground parking garages, to multistory active adult condominiums, high density, luxury high-rise buildings are coming to life. Some offer resort-like amenities that appeal to active adults and professional renters. Others offer a cosmopolitan flair for simple living, with a touch of extravagance on the side. Granite countertops? Standard. Concierge service? Part of the package.

Housing options like this are becoming more available and more necessary, as land to erect traditional housing becomes more difficult to obtain. "No growth" rules affecting builders have forced a new way of viewing all markets, from active adult, to upscale luxury apartments.

Because of growth restriction, more builders are getting into multistory, multifamily light frame even as they maintain a strong single family or traditional residential market share.

For F&A, the increase in multifamily, multistory projects prompted the creation of a multifamily division, which specializes in the niche. Once upon a time, multistory used to be simply a walk-up in a three-story townhome community. And, plans of the future will have to take into account the caprice of the nexers. But even now plans and designs must incorporate multiple elevators, underground parking facilities, and lobbies and amenities which make a statement of

## A Letter from Our President

At F&A we've become particularly adept at identifying trends in design and marketing. As fall arrives, we've noticed that the change in seasons isn't the only change in the air.

We're faced with a changing "boomer" demographic, as a diverse, eclectic group of individuals entering their 50's and the empty nest years come into their own in a different state of mind. "This is not your father's retirement community," should be the mantra of all who wish to appeal to this growing market segment. To that end, F&A is planning intensive focus group studies of the next generation of active adults - nexers, as we call them - to learn more about this vibrant young generation's housing needs, lifestyles and plans. We'll present our findings in Las Vegas at the International Builders' Show.

In New Jersey, as in other states where land is costly and availability is scarce, creative designs for vertical living are needed. F&A's cutting edge residential designs have catapulted the firm into this growing market. No one understands this better than the leader of our multifamily, multistory light framed division, George Johns. George and his team have been designing increasing numbers of multistory/multifamily light-framed projects in recent months. George has a wealth of commercial, multifamily and mixed-use expertise, invaluable to clients as we enter a "no growth" kind of world, where housing options are changing bit by bit.

by Bill Feinberg



**MARY JO PETERSON**

Designing with an eye for the future.



How are you

planning on

reaching your

next wave

of clients?

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# Thinking Outside the Box

## Flexible Land Plans

Building flexibility and adaptability into a land plan is not only desirable, but necessary in today's marketplace.

The huge up-and-coming boomer generation, the nexers, has subsets within subsets, from those enjoying a new post-family stage of their lives, to those embarking on new and challenging careers and/or lives with their second (or third) families. Knowing how they use their leisure time, or view themselves has become less of an instinct and more of a science. Today's buyers have more options for living.

Therefore, creating adaptive and flexible land plans to appeal to broader interests, can help with efficiency and profitability. With a market as diverse as the nexers on the horizon, it's time to break the mold of age-restricted living that we've crafted over the last thirty years. That formula, we're discovering, may not work with the newest group of buyers.

Flexible land plans can offer variety and still give identity to a community. A common network of open space still remains the source of the community's identity. The individual aspects of a plan, however, can be spiced up to help builders stay competitive.



Here's how a flexible, creative land plan might be implemented. First, a common boulevard runs through the property providing the essential "spine" of circulation. At various points, however, the boulevard branches off into several villages, which appeal to different demographics, and have unique styles, and thus, identities.



One such village could be a traditional gated community designed for active adults. Another could be a more open environment, similar to TND (neo-urbanism) principles with diverse home styles, and flexible streetscapes. While another village resembles an exclusive estate community, designed for buyers who prefer privacy.

Creative planning allows each village in this community to have its own entrance and its own "village green." However, the size, shape, and design of each of these common areas will be different from each other and in complete defiance of the almost always rectangular, meticulously plotted town centers we expect. Each will be keyed to the particular community and to residents' lifestyles.

Some communities of the future will feature traditionally geometric streets, and some will have cul-de-sacs. Some will have backyards and some will not. The factors that influence culture and lifestyle also affect planning and home design.

Given this fact, adaptable inside space may be more important than outdoor space to buyers who adopt stay-at-home technology into their lifestyles. Others, given the same technology, will crave the unity and togetherness of a community that feels nostalgic or a neighborhood that offers interaction over solitude.

Whatever the future holds, builders and land planners must recognize the marketplace's lifestyle and habits will inevitably dictate the format of tomorrow's new neighborhoods. Paying attention to the nuances of life will help a planner create adaptable, and desirable communities that sell.

# Designing for Today and Tomorrow

## The Home vs. The House

There is much to be learned about the next generation of age-qualified buyers - the nexers — who will soon be coming into the market as empty nesters, looking for a home to move up to, not just into. This is the group that defies understanding — only because we have never really asked the questions.

How can we design for their needs? By paying attention to what we already know about the way they live.

Consider the changes surrounding the traditional living and dining room spaces. The days of formal entertaining at home have gone the way of the icebox. Today, people entertain more casually, and larger numbers of guests may scatter through wide, relaxed entertaining areas. Designing for that kind of living while preserving nostalgic formal dining space for special celebrations is one challenge. Even irreverent baby boomers have a fondness for traditional family occasions and the rituals that go with them and are not quite ready to give up the dining room.

Today's trend is fewer, more spacious rooms designed to be used in a variety of ways. One approach might be to



© Robert L. Faulkner



© Taylor Photo



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provide a dining room surrounded by open space that flows easily into other rooms such as the family room, an outside deck or terrace, wide hallway, or the kitchen, where people inevitably tend to congregate.

Living rooms can be offered for the buyer who wants one, but boomers might turn the living room into a billiard room, or a study or a library that is more elegant than an office, and more inviting than a formal living room for relaxation.

The most creative of all possibilities is to plan ahead so that nexers can age in place. Combine the living room, adjoining study and full bath and — "Presto!" — you have an instant

second master suite. The upstairs master bedroom becomes an exceptional guest area.

Older concepts — such as the playroom-off-the-kitchen idea that allowed moms of the 60's to watch the kiddies as they played — are reborn in today's flexibly planned spaces which become work space or tech space as children grow.

Even increased interest in outdoor living is being built in, as designs feature terraces and landscaping to create the personal retreat home buyers feel they need and deserve. And that's exactly why choices are so important, and why the best designs can influence one's life, as well as enhance it.



© Taylor Photo

# Double Duty Rooms

## Double Duty Furnishings

Across all markets, lifestyles today are a blend of on the go and stay-at-home, and today's furniture manufacturers are taking notice. Furnishings contribute to the form and function of a room, and the form and function of a lifestyle. The empty nester does not sit in the nest. The home office may be the only office one has.

Catalogues and industry press offer countless products that can handily turn one room into two, and many ideas to accommodate buyers' ever-changing needs and interests. With today's emphasis on simplicity, it's important to pay attention. The nexers — the next generation of buyers who



will qualify for age restricted living — are savvy enough to know that thoughtful furniture design is possible and is preferable to the way things used to be done. To stay fresh, consider some of these double-duty possibilities:

**The Return of the Murphy Bed:** Turn a bedroom into a home office or comfortable guest room with a completely hidden Murphy bed, stashed away into just 18 inches of wall space. Years ago, Murphy beds were everywhere, and now that so many home buyers are eager for rooms that can do double duty, they are literally coming out of the closet again! Today's Murphy bed can be designed to fit into almost any kind of wall setting - surrounded by book shelves in a home office, or as part or a creative collection of prints, set off by decorative columns, blended into a wall of closets, etc. Buyers appreciate the



© Fred Forbes



flexibility, and adaptability of the Murphy bed solution.

**Designer Exercise Equipment:** Who really sits in the master bedroom sitting room, anyway? And how can you energize a small loft? Make it usable space. Exercise equipment manufacturers are offering a huge assortment of new designs in 50 or 60 different color options to make the job easier for interior designers. Now, some treadmills are so beautifully crafted that they blend in as design elements, almost sculptural in effect. Some equipment even stashes under a bed or a couch. Like home offices, exercise rooms have been essential for some homebuyers. Where can you place yours?

**Instant Media Room:** Give buyers the media room they crave, without the expense. Surprise them



© Bill Smith

with a huge TV screen, hidden in a space over a fireplace (most likely in the family room), and covered with a Roman shade or even with an easy to lift tapestry. All it takes is the cooperation of the architect in designing a fireplace with a space above for the TV. With today's busy families craving more togetherness, the theatre-like qualities of the hidden TV in a family room answers a need for style, and lifestyle. Not to mention it's likely to be an attention-getter in your models.

## A Letter from Our President (cont.)

And then there are kitchens. Buyers indicate kitchen design is a critical factor in deciding to purchase. To give our clients an edge, F&A kitchens and baths are now created in consultation with Mary Jo Peterson, a renowned kitchen and bath designer, author and consultant to General Electric and Betty Crocker, to name a few. She recently completed the design of Betty Crocker's new kitchen, actually 20 of them, in the General Mills headquarters renovation targeted for completion in spring 2003. Read more inside this issue about Mary Jo's work.

This issue of Markitect offers ideas based on changes that can help builders thrive in a rough economy and a booming housing market. As the economy, marketplace, and competition heat up, F&A will be in the thick of it in even more creative ways.