

New Building Considerations

- It is imperative to include design specialists who know what they are doing. Consider using Lifespan Design Studios, or someone similar who has experience in building over 130 senior centers. **Lessons learned: ensure the designer has built a “senior center”, not a retirement community, not a nursing home, but a senior center.** A building that is ADA compliant is required by law, that does not mean it is “older adult friendly” and meets the needs of older adults.
- Use an architect to create a space needs analysis.
- Use posters (similar to Downtown Master Plan) with suggestions from the architect on how space could be used. Include older adults to provide feedback on the suggestions and if they would use the space as suggested....make changes as needed.
- Sound: newer facilities have not taken into consideration how sound carries when they designed their buildings. It was extremely difficult to have a conversation with the person sitting next to you because of how loud the room was. It was very challenging for individuals without hearing impairments and nearly impossible for people with hearing aids.
- Artwork hung on the “senior center” side should be artwork by local older adults.
- Age Friendly: please consider using a professional that is versed in age-friendly construction. Some of the major complaints from senior centers are:
 - Poor lighting and Sound (as mentioned above);
 - Bathrooms that can accommodate individuals with different abilities and varying heights, grab bars, stall doors that open OUT, stall doors with handles for people that may have difficulty grasping items and encounter pain frequently, one brand new Center did not have urinals in the men’s restroom. There are different considerations to factor for older men and urinals.
 - Provide a sense of warmth and coziness with comfortable areas to sit in, but are easy to get in and out of, and clean (NO CLOTH).
- Water fountain that includes a water bottle filling component.
- A small (stackable) washer/dryer. Currently staff take home dirty towels to launder for the next meal day.
- Partial commercial kitchen (please work with the health department for design requirements and a sensible layout): include commercial refrigerator, *deep* 3 compartment sink (like the one currently in the Community Center), *High Temp Commercial Dish Machine* (no chemicals), and not a residential “dishwasher” from a box store. A commercial range with hood is expensive and would be a lot of ongoing upkeep for the Town, which is why only a partial commercial kitchen is recommended.
- Large multipurpose rooms with storage: crafting, cards, games, etc. Be able to have more than 1 activity in different parts of the building.
- Space for the pool table.
- Easy to clean surfaces: cushioned vinyl chairs (no cloth); stain resistant tables.
- Easy to move and set up tables and chairs that are light weight.
- Vehicle/Bus: designated and convenient parking (drive through), easy to load and drop off area. Covered parking to protect from the elements.
- More handicap parking than suggested for building capacity, then graduated parking (if it is a shared space with younger generations, the non-handicap parking that is up closer to the building should be reserved for older adults).
- Technology: ability to host educational presentations for the seniors – screen, projector, cordless microphones, etc., it’s easy to use and does not require a computer engineer degree to operate. Ability to pipe in background music that could also be used for announcements throughout the entire building.

- The last thing you want to do is spend a lot of time and dollars to build a facility that everyone complains about because the subject matter experts (older adults and *senior center* designers) were not at the table every step of the way, not just in the beginning.

Resource Contacts:

- Jill Hall, *NISC Chair, State of Colorado*: Senior Services Manager for the Highlands Ranch Metro District, overseeing the development of a new 22,000 square foot center.
- Tom Lathrop: Colorado Springs Senior Center. Currently building a new building.
- Lifespan Design Studios - Doug Galow: d.gallow@lifespandesignstudio.com

Here is a list of inputs from our seniors:

- Indoor walking course (3)
- Outdoor garden area for flowers and vegetables (2)
- Outdoor sheltered picnic area (2)
- Memorial garden. Bricks w/names (donations)
- Indoor pickleball w/gym
- Big TV room to gather to watch sports
- Industrial dishwasher & sanitizer
- Larger refrigerator
- Dance floor/room
- Coffee Bar
- Handicap bathrooms (3)
- Automated handicap entry to facility and restrooms
- Library with computer
- Activity area for pool/ping pong
- Larger card/craft room with storage (6)
- Larger dining area for meals (3)
- More handicap parking (4)
- Water fountain that includes a water bottle filling component.
- Small stackable washer and dryer. Staff currently take-home dirty towels to launder for the next meal day.
- Cushioned chairs
- Easy to move and setup tables and chairs that are light weight with storage area.
- Stain resistant tables.
- Technology: ability to host educational presentations for the seniors – screen, projector, cordless microphones, etc. Ability to pipe in background music that could also be used for announcements throughout the building.
- Hanging extension cords to plug in electronics.
- Microphone and sound system for making announcements and entertainment.

Other recommendation

- Add an additional staff member. Senior center continues to grow and add activities and would definitely benefit from additional support of an additional staff member
- Senior center has a representative involvement with the process. Typically, senior center is asked for input at the beginning of the process and that's it. This has caused frustration with not having a voice in the entire process and has been a Major complaint from many senior centers we talked with.