

Consumer attitudes and perceptions concerning active adult communities: an exploratory study

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a preliminary study which is utilized to develop a series of propositions regarding the attitudes and perceptions of mature adult consumers pertaining to age-qualified active adult communities. The exploratory study was conducted among 200 heads of household, 50 years of age or older; residing in the potential draw area for a concept Active Adult Community. The areas of proposition development include: 1) Target buyer characteristics and information sources, 2) Community design preferences/amenities, 3) Location preferences, 4) Specific product features desired, and 5) Influence of differing factors on relative purchase interest of duplexes vs. single-family homes. These propositions are presented for further hypothesis development and empirical testing.

Keywords: Active adult communities, planned communities, mature adult housing.

INTRODUCTION

As the population ages, “the single most important demographic trend in the United States is the changing age structure of the population...The post-World War II baby boom produced 78 million baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, p.70). In a study conducted by the MetLife Mature Market Institute and the National Association of Home Builders, it is projected that the population of Americans 55+ will increase to 26% of the U.S. population by 2014 from 23% of the population in 2007 (MetLife, 2009, p.4). In terms of housing, the demographic trend of an aging society should drive demand for active adult housing in the context of age-qualified communities.

Many expect “the active adult retirement community (AARC) business to account for between 20 and 30 percent of all housing by the year 2020” (Becker, 2001, p.299). Active adult communities are an “antidote to negative stereotypes of older age as a period of decline in physical and social competencies” (McHugh & Larson-Keagy, 2005, p.252).

However, “marketers must be careful to guard against stereotypes when using age and lifecycle segmentation” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, p.194). “The simple fact that the baby boomers are aging does not guarantee that they will behave in the same way as previous generations...Research also suggests that the market for retirement housing and long-term care is heterogeneous” (Gibler, Lumpkin & Moschis, 1997, p.119), not all aging adults will seek the same type of living arrangements. “People over age 50 are not a homogeneous demographic group and...their wants and needs differ” (Cecilian, 2001, p.119). Even boomers current views on how and where they would like to spend their retirement are not necessarily a reliable indication, “as their attitudes are likely to change as they reach retirement age” (Logan, 2001, p.38).

In this paper we seek to develop a number of propositions regarding age-qualified active adult communities based on a preliminary study. The areas of inquiry include: 1) Target buyer characteristics and information sources, 2) Community design preferences/amenities, 3) Location preferences, 4) Specific product features desired, and 5) Influence of differing factors on relative purchase interest of duplexes vs. single-family homes.

BACKGROUND

Active Adult Communities

Adult age-restricted communities have been around in the United States dating back to the 1920's, when various non-profit organizations acquired property in Florida to establish sponsored supportive living environments for retiring members (Hunt et al., 1984, p.1). According to a study by the MetLife Mature Market Institute (2009, p.4) the share of Americans 55+, living in age qualified active adult communities is on the rise; those “living in adult age-restricted communities grew from 2% of all U.S. households in 2001 to 3% in 2007.”

It has been proposed that housing options for the mature market can be viewed “on a continuum starting with independent living choices to assisted living to nursing facilities that provide 24 hour care” (Timmermann, 2006, p.23). More formally, based on

case studies of 18 retirement communities, Hunt et al. (1984) developed a multi-dimensional typology of retirement communities. Five basic types were identified: 1) New Towns, 2) Retirement Villages, 3) Retirement Subdivisions, 4) Retirement Residences, and 5) Continuing Care Retirement Centers (Hunt et al., 1984, p.249-261). The typology is based on four major attributes: 1) Scale of the community, 2) The characteristics of the population, 3) The kinds and amounts of services offered, and 4) The sponsorship or auspices under which the community was built (Hunt et al., 1984, p.10).

“Retirement communities (i.e. active adult communities) will continue to evolve with a less single-minded focus on recreation. Retirees have made major shifts from the early days of the initial Del Webb facilities of the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. However, the industry viewpoint, confirmed by research (Logan, 2001) indicates that “active adult buyers purchase lifestyle, not housing” (Cecilian, 2001, p.124). “Lifestyle amenities...will make the purchase decision for the buyer” (Cecilian, 2001, p.135). Reviewing case studies of Arizona retirement communities, McHugh (2007, p.296) notes that such communities promote themselves as offering: “active leisure”, which is seen as “healthy for mind and body”, and which “serves as an antidote to aging and negative stereotypes of older age.”

Target Buyer

“Knowing what is important to the consumer is critical because it enables the developer to make adjustments to community programming, design, amenities, and other items” (Logan, 2001, p.50). A study conducted by the MetLife Mature Market Institute (2009, p.30) found the top five reasons why age-qualified active adult households 55+ chose to move. These were: 1) family/personal reasons, 2) financial/employment related, 3) change in marital status, 4) want a better quality house, 5) want less expensive housing.

“Active adult buyers remain in the buying cycle longer than traditional buyers” (Cecilian, 2001, p.122). From a consumer behavior viewpoint, “older adult buyers are sophisticated, savvy, and experienced. This is not their first home purchase, and mature adults have the time and the inclination to shop carefully” (Cecilian, 2001, p.134).

“Different age cohorts within the active adult market are likely to have different needs and preferences...The active adult market is generally considered to encompass those aged 55 to 74; outlooks and needs vary among those aged 55 to 59, 60-64, 65-69, and 70 to 74” (Logan, 2001, p.41). Considering the timeline for build out, the preferences of prospective buyers 50-54 need to be taken into account as well (Logan, 2001, p.41). “Many of these buyers will not retire as their parents did but will continue working from their new home in an active adult retirement community” (Becker, 2001, p.292). It has been found that active adult communities “are increasingly attracting households *under 60* who are still working.” The share of households under 60 in age-qualified active adult communities “almost doubled from 2001 to 2007” and in 2007 exceeded 20% of residents (MetLife Mature Market Institute, 2009, p.38).

Terms used in connection with the Active Adult housing market include “Primary Market Area (PMA) which is the geographic area from which the majority of buyers will be drawn.” “Secondary Market Area” (SMA) is defined as the secondary market areas

from which additional buyers may emanate; “Competitive Market Area” (CMA) is defined as the area within which similar real estate developments may compete for available consumer demand on a more or less equal basis” (Logan, 2001, p.47).

The study by the Mature Market Institute (2009, p.59) found the top five reasons why households 55+ selected a particular age-qualified active adult community when looking for a new home. These were: 1) Like the design of the community, 2) close to friends/relatives, 3) close to leisure activities, 4) like the particular housing unit 5) close to public services.

Gibler, Moschis & Lee, (1998) conducted a national survey of consumers over 55. Among respondents planning to live in a retirement community, it was found that the top three preferences identified as important were “access to medical services, public transportation, and shopping. In addition, they expect the retirement community to offer them greater social contacts and activities, while reducing their household chores and providing personal care services.”

In research of the decision making process in selecting retirement housing, Livette (2006) determined that a limited problem solving decision process was used rather than an extended problem solving process as would be expected based on the importance of such a decision. These findings were ascribed to a possible difficulty, especially for older consumers, of information processing, particularly when a satisfactory, but not necessarily optimal, choice was at hand. Gibler, Lumpkin & Moschis (1997) note that previous research has indicated that the factors that influence consumer selection of housing can be classified as three types of variables. These are: “a) predisposing, motivating, or triggering factors; b) enabling factors; and c) inhibiting factors” (Gibler, Lumpkin & Moschis, 1997, p.119). An example of a predisposing variable might include positive attitudes toward active adult housing and interest in that type of housing. An enabling factor might be the level of access to financial resources, and an inhibiting factor might be a negative perception of an adult community as limiting and too homogeneous (Gibler, Lumpkin & Moschis, 1997).

Livette (2007) conducted a study of buying roles in the selection of retirement housing in the United Kingdom. The study found that more than seventy-five percent of “respondents answering the question about influence, reported the advice of children and other relatives to have been important/very important. Almost all of those identifying children as an influencer considered their opinions to have been important/very important” (Livette, 2007, p.246).

Location

Research by the Del Webb company has “indicated that more than 80 percent of people prefer to retire close to home, near family, friends, and other longtime personal and professional ties” (Suchman, 2001, p.242). Gibler, Moschis & Lee, (1998) found 47% of respondents identifying distance from friends and relatives as important.

In terms of proximity to relatives, an analysis of data from the National Survey of Families and Households (Bumpass & Sweet, 1987); Rogerson, Weng & Lin (1993) found that of adults “with both parents alive and living together, almost one-fourth live within five miles; and more than one-half live within thirty miles...The median distance was found to be twenty-five miles.” In a survey conducted by Harris Interactive Polling,

for the Del Webb Corporation (Klebba, 2005) it was found that “47% of all respondents (ages 41-69) who will move, say staying within three hours of family would be an important consideration about where to relocate for retirement.” “There’s a secret weapon in our business and it’s called grandkids...staying close to family and friends, and maintaining links to their community are important things to them,” according to Dave Schreiner, vice president of active adult business development at Pulte Homes, the owner of the Del Webb brand (Klebba, 2005).

Product Design

As active adult communities continue to evolve, “the basic housing stock has become much larger, utilizes the most contemporary equipment, and provides various creature comforts. Plans are open with rooms flowing into one another. Views outside connect with the inside, and clerestories and skylights introduce light into dark/private areas of the plan” (Regnier, 2003, p.114-115). “In terms of product, research indicates that most prefer detached housing” (Logan, 2001, p.41). According to a study by the MetLife Mature Market Institute of households 55+ who chose a particular house in an age-qualified active adult community (2009, p.59); the top five reasons for buying a particular new house in such a community were: 1) like room layout/design, 2) like the size of the house, 3) financial reasons, 4) like the view, 5) like the kitchen.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

The population for this preliminary study consisted of residents of eight identified suburban communities of a major Midwestern metropolitan area whose demographic profile defines them as prime target prospects for an active adult community. These were:

- Households where at least one member was at least 50 years of age or older, were aware of the location of the prospective active adult community, and would be willing to spend in the range of \$300,000 to \$600,000 if they were to purchase a residence.
- The “Primary Market Area” (PMA) (Logan, 2001, p.47) was defined as eight northwest suburban municipalities, including the prospective site town itself, with the other seven communities being within the immediate vicinity of the prospective site. The prospective site was located in a northwest suburban town situated 45 miles northwest of a major Midwestern city.

There are 8 communities (towns and villages) included in the PMA draw area. These towns and villages have a total population according to the 2000 Census, of approximately 349,625. Approximately, twenty-four percent of that population (85,312) is in the 50 years of age or older segment of interest. The 349,625 people constitute 132

thousand households. There are 32,823 households that have a head who is 50 years of age or older. Hence, there are about 32,823 target respondent households in the PMA (see Table 1).

Table 1

Municipalities	Total Population	Population 50 Years or Older	Percent of Population 50 or older Studied	Total Households	50 or older Households
Eight Total Communities	349,625	85,312	24%	132,345	32,823

In this study, with the assistance of a Midwestern marketing research firm, individuals were initially contacted using random digit dialing from telephone number prefix lists (in the study communities). A total of 869 of them (10.4%) screened into the study as being at least 50 years of age. Of these, 278 (32%) indicated they planned to purchase a new home in two years or less, if affordable. And 200 of these latter individuals (23% of the 869 total) would spend between \$300,000 and \$600,000 for that residence.

Therefore, the sample for this study consisted of 200 screened individuals drawn randomly from the population described and distributed roughly proportionately across the eight towns identified as the PMA. Characteristics of the sample selected for the study:

- Fifty years or over in age.
- Planning to purchase a new residence in the next two years or less.
- Aware of the location of the prospective Active Adult Community.
- Purchase budget range of \$300 to \$600 thousand.

A sample size of 200 respondents was selected because it was of sufficient size to reliably and accurately measure consumer attitudes and perceptions ($n = 200$, maximum error in results reported at the 95% level of confidence = ± 6.8 percentage points).

Data Collection

All data were collected by means of computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) conducted with the assistance of a Midwestern marketing research firm. Once individuals were successfully screened into the study, the survey instrument was administered. It required about 20 minutes to complete. All interviewing was completed over a one month period.

The goal was to answer the following types of exploratory research questions related to developing a series of propositions regarding consumer attitudes and perceptions of active adult communities: 1) Target buyer characteristics and information

sources, 2) Community design preferences/amenities, 3) Location preferences, 4) Specific product features desired, and 5) Influence of differing factors on relative purchase interest of duplex vs. single-family home.

The study presented respondents with a concept statement regarding a suburban age-qualified active adult community which would be identified as a “Retirement Village” according to the Hunt taxonomy (Hunt et al., 1984, p.249-261). The presented site was an outlying suburb approximately 45 miles northwest of a major Midwestern city.

The housing product itself was presented as a duplex home. Respondents were presented with the following concept statement: “We would like your reactions to a new, age restricted community for active adults over 55 years of age. The proposed community will include 180 duplex homes priced in the \$300 to \$400 thousand range. Amenities will include two large lakes, walking trails, a small club house and tennis courts with a distinctive community entrance.” (The site was identified as located in a town 45 miles northwest of a major Midwestern city)

Table 2 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	
	Total Sample
Base, n=200	100%
	%
Gender	
Male	42%
Female	58
Age	
55 to 64 years	41%
65 to 74 years	40
75 years or older	19
Mean	68 years
Employment Status	
Employed	65%
Retired/semi-retired	25
Homemaker/student	12
Other	2
Home Ownership	
Own detached single family residence	75%
Townhome, duplex, or other attached home with a separate front	15
Condominium	6
Rent	4

Data Analysis

A sample of 200 target prospects was selected because it is of sufficient size to reliably and accurately measure prospects attitudes and perceptions ($n = 200$), maximum error in results reported at the 95% level of confidence was ± 6.8 percentage points.

FINDINGS AND PROPOSITIONS DEVELOPMENT

Respondent Characteristics

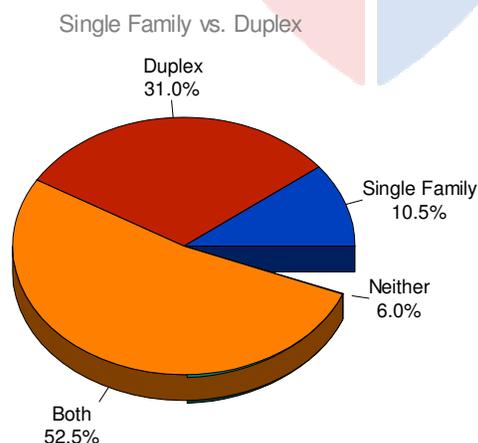
Sample characteristics are provided in terms of gender, age, employment status and current home ownership (see Table 2 above). The sample was made up of respondents 50 years of age and over, 42% male and 58% female, with 96% currently owning their own residence.

Purchase Interest

Of the sample of 200 it was determined that 21 (10.5%) were only interested in single family homes, 62 (31%) only in duplexes and 105 (52.5%) in both. Twelve people (6%) had interest in neither (see Figure 1). Therefore, one hundred and sixty seven of the 200 respondents (83.5%) were defined as Market Prospect Respondents for duplexes. Further, one hundred and twenty six (62.5%) of the 200 were defined as Market Prospect Respondents for a single-family detached homes. In total, then, 188 of the 200 prospects (94%) were identified market prospect respondents for either or both housing configurations.

Figure 1

Distribution of Purchase Interest



Target Buyers and Information Sources

The 200 respondents, screened into the study, who currently reside in the Primary Market Area, included a number of occupations. These were classified as: 3% Executive,

Military Officer, 16% Professional, 19% Technical, Sales or Admin. Support, 18% Service Worker, 5% own business, 12% Homemaker/student, and 2% other (see Table 3). Average household income was reported in excess of \$75,000 per year (see Table 4)

Table 3 OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE (Base), n=200	Total Sample
	100%
	%
Occupation	
Executive, Managerial or Military Officer	3
Professional (e.g., Lawyer, Doctor, Teacher, Engineer, Architect, Accountant, Author, Musician or Pilot)	16
Technical, Sales or Administrative Support (e.g., Computer Operator, Account Executive, Insurance Agent, Broker, Secretary or Cashier)	19
Service Worker (e.g. Waitress, Policeman, Fireman or Postman)	18
Own your own business	5
Retired/Semi Retired	25
Homemaker/Student	12
Other	2

Table 4 INCOME DISTRIBUTION (Base), n=200	Total Sample
	100%
	%
Household Income	
Less than \$40,000	4
\$40,000 to \$49,999	3
\$50,000 to \$59,999	10
\$60,000 to \$69,999	23
\$70,000 to \$79,999	14
\$80,000 to \$89,999	20
\$90,000 to \$99,999	9
\$100,000 to \$149,000	4
\$150,000 or more	3
Refused	10
Mean	\$77k

Information sources and visitation

Sales of residences in a given active adult community are predicated on awareness and knowledge of that property being established through effective use of media which motivates consumers to visit. Prospects for active adult communities employ a variety of sources to inform and educate themselves as to what is available and where the developments are located (see Table 5).

Table 5 INFORMATION SOURCES	Total Sample
(Base), n=200	100%
	%
Media	
Print	<u>68%</u>
Chicago Tribune	41
Daily Herald	38
Chicago Sun Times	17
New Homes Guide	15
Face-to-Face	<u>33%</u>
Word-of-Mouth	27
Realtors	6
Electronic Media	<u>30%</u>
TV Commercials	26
Radio Commercials	4
Direct Mail	<u>14%</u>
Internet	<u>13%</u>
Internet Realtors	7
Builder Websites	3
Realtor Websites	3
Roadside Billboards	<u>8%</u>
Other	3
Don't Know	7
Total adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses	

The findings indicate that print media, face-to-face, electronic media were key sources used by target buyers to learn about active adult communities in the metropolitan study area (see Table 5). Word-of-mouth was also found to be a significant source of information (27%). From a promotions perspective, it is important to recognize that negative experiences need to be avoided or mitigated since older consumers have been found to communicate negative word-of-mouth to a greater extent than younger ones (Aron et al., 2008). Based on these findings, it is proposed that:

- P1a Newspapers are a significant key information source for mature consumers when seeking purchasing information on active adult communities.
- P1b Word-of-mouth is a significant key information source for mature consumers when seeking purchasing information on active adult communities.

Table 6 VISITS TO ACTIVE ADULT COMMUNITIES	Total Sample
(Base), n=200	100%
	%
Number of Communities	
<u>Have Looked</u>	67%
1 – 3	56
4 – 6	6
7 – 10	4
More than 10	1
<u>None, have not looked yet</u>	30%
D.K./ Not Sure	3%
How many active adult communities have you looked at during the last six months?	

Overall, approximately two-thirds (67%) of the participants in this study indicated they had visited an active adult community (see Table 6) in the last six months. A direct relationship was found between planning to purchase a home in the near future (next two years) 100% and visiting an active adult community 67%. It is therefore proposed that:

- P2 There is a direct positive relationship between mature consumers planning to purchase a new home in the next two years and making a physical visit to an active adult community.

Community Evaluation

Community amenities offered are obviously important considerations in the purchase of any new home, including one in an active adult community. Older individuals in the market for a home in an active adult community have criteria that make them unique among home buyers. The respondents were asked to rate 10 potential amenity factors in terms of their importance in the purchase of a home at an active adult community using a 5 point Likert scale.

The findings with ratings in excess of 4.00 can be considered of substantial importance (see Table 7). As could be expected of respondents in this age group; living in a home that is low or no maintenance and in a garden-like environment are of the most importance. Also of consequence is the availability of a clubhouse with facilities and a diversity of home types. It is of note (based on the low rating given planned activities and small intimate community – 3.42 and 3.44) that these individuals are not those who prefer an organized community. Rather, they prefer a community where social life does not overly impose itself. This is not surprising since they have lived in the vicinity of the proposed community, most likely, for many years and already have well established social relations in place. These characteristics are supportive of the findings of Gibler, Moschis & Lee (1998). The findings also provide support for the contention that “buyers purchase lifestyle, not housing” (Cecilian, 2001, p.124) and that design of the community

is of critical importance (Mature Market Institute, 2009, p.59). It is therefore proposed that:

- P3a Low maintenance is a significant key amenity factor in the purchase decision at an active adult community.
- P3b Park areas with attractive landscaping are a significant key amenity factor in the purchase decision at an active of adult community.
- P3c A clubhouse with recreation rooms for parties and hobbies, fitness center and a pool are significant key amenity factors in the purchase decision at an active adult community.
- P3d A diversity of home types is a significant key amenity factor in the purchase decision at an active of adult community.

Table 7 IMPORTANCE OF AMENITY FACTORS IN PURCHASE AT AN ACTIVE ADULT COMMUNITY MEAN RATINGS (Base), n=200	Total Sample
Factors	
Living in a home that is low or no maintenance	4.61
Grassy park areas and attractive landscaping	4.54
Clubhouse with recreation rooms for parties and hobbies, fitness center and a pool	4.12
Diversity of home types	4.11
People like me live there	3.94
Walking and biking paths, and attractive landscaping and lakes, within the community	3.92
A distinctive community entrance	3.87
Gated community entrance	3.82
Smaller, intimate community	3.44
Planned activities and events for residents	3.42
Question: Please rate the importance of each of the following factors in your potential decision to purchase a home in this Active Adult Community. Scale of 5 = "Extremely Important," 4 = "Important," 3 = "Undecided," 2 = "Unimportant," and 1 = "Extremely Unimportant" to do this	

Location Preferences

The respondents were asked to rate 6 potential location factors, using a 5 point Likert scale, in terms of their importance in the purchase of a home at an active adult community. Findings indicate that the top two location characteristics include proximity to shopping and entertainment and convenient to public transportation (see Table 8).

Table 8 IMPORTANCE OF LOCATION FACTORS IN PURCHASE AT AN ACTIVE ADULT COMMUNITY MEAN RATINGS	
	Total Sample
(Base), n=200	100%
Factors	
Close to shopping and entertainment	4.42
Convenient to public transportation	4.25
Close proximity to major highways	3.99
Age, income and characteristics of surrounding area	3.87
Close to my children and grand children	3.84
Close to where I am living now	3.06
Question: Please rate the importance of each of the following factors in your potential decision to purchase a home in this Active Adult Community. Scale of 5 = "Extremely Important," 4 = "Important," 3 = "Undecided," 2 = "Unimportant," and 1 = "Extremely Unimportant" to do this.	

Based on these location factor findings, it is proposed that:

- P4a Proximity to shopping and entertainment is a significant key location factor in the purchase decision at an active adult community.
- P4b Proximity to public transportation is a significant key location factor in the purchase decision at an active adult community.

Product Design

The respondents were asked to rate 14 potential home design features, using a 5 point Likert scale, in terms of their importance in purchase of a home. More so than any other feature participants in the study most frequently prefer new residences with a patio or deck (see Table 9).

A patio or deck, a two car garage and oversized closets were reported as important design features. However, the desire for a two-car garage may be very site specific. Features like vaulted or elevated ceilings, however, were of little importance. This may be because such design features require additional maintenance. It is therefore proposed that:

- P5a A patio or a deck is a significant key home design feature considered in the purchase decision of a particular residence at an active adult community.
- P5b Oversize closets (even reducing room size) are a significant key home design feature considered in the purchase decision of a particular residence at an active adult community.

Table 9 HOME DESIGN FEATURES MEAN RATINGS	Total Sample
(Base), n=200	100%
Factors	
Patio/Deck	4.30
2 Car garage at an added cost	4.17
Oversized closets (reducing room size)	4.00
Separate living	3.95
Porch	3.94
Luxury master bath at an added cost	3.77
Separate dining room	3.63
Brick on front of home	3.63
Office/den	3.59
Vaulted, volume ceiling in great room/family room	3.48
Eating/breakfast bar	3.46
Nine foot ceilings on first level	3.31
Vaulted, volume ceiling master bedroom	3.28
1 Car garage	3.19
Question: Please rate the importance of each of the following design features in your potential decision to purchase a home in this Active Adult Community. Scale of 5 = "Extremely Important," 4 = "Important," 3 = "Undecided," 2 = "Unimportant," and 1 = "Extremely Unimportant" to do this.	

Duplex versus Single-family Detached Residences

Research indicates that most target purchasers in the Active Adult Market prefer single-family detached housing (Logan, 2001, p.41). However, as shown previously, our findings indicate that of the sample of 200 it was determined that 21(10.5%) were only interested in single family homes, 62(31%) only in duplexes and 105 (52.5%) in both. Twelve people (6%) had interest in neither (see Figure 1). This indicates that a sizeable number of respondents were willing to consider a duplex. Factors influencing interest in duplex residences versus single-family detached were investigated (see Table 10).

The most important factor influencing interest in duplex residences, relative to single-family detached, was found (51%) to be an economic (price) factor; the straightforward fact that buyers would be purchasing the same square footage at a lower price. It may therefore be proposed that:

- P6 As the expected purchase price per square foot of a duplex declines relative to that of a detached residence, there is an increase in the purchase intention of mature consumers to purchase a duplex rather than a detached at an active adult community.

Table 10 FACTORS INFLUENCING INTEREST IN DUPLEX RESIDENCES	Total Sample
(Base), n=200	100%
	%
Factors	
A duplex would be priced lower for the same square footage as a single family home	51
A duplex would require less exterior maintenance	24
A duplex would allow me to purchase a newly constructed home rather than an existing one	13
I would not be influenced to buy a duplex by any of the above factors	10
I currently own a duplex and want the same type of home	2
Question: Which one of the following factors would most strongly influence your interest in purchasing a duplex in an Active Adult Community	

CONCLUSION

This preliminary study, based on a sample of 200 target market mature consumers, sought to extend research on housing options for mature Americans. In this paper we sought to develop and present a number of propositions regarding age-qualified active adult communities based on an exploratory study. The areas of inquiry included: 1) Target buyer characteristics and information sources, 2) Community design preferences/amenities, 3) Location preferences, 4) Specific product features desired, and 5) Influence of differing factors on relative purchase interest of duplexes vs. single-family homes. The propositions are presented in order to serve as a basis for future hypothesis development and empirical testing.

Interestingly, “research indicates increased demand for age-restricted communities comes at the very same time builders are postponing new development plans because of the economic downturn” (Morse, 2009). According to Dave Schreiner of Pulte Homes/Del Webb, potential buyers may need to “recognize they may have to save more money or start thinking about a semi-work, semi-retirement arrangement... a large number of Del Webb residents are starting new businesses, getting retrained, and staying connected to the workforce” (Klebba, 2005).

One inhibiting factor in relocating to an active adult community is the sale of the current residence. This is a demographic as well as an economic problem. From a demographic standpoint, Haas and Serow (2002, p.160) note “The smaller cohorts behind the baby boom will ultimately lower the growth rate of demand for housing. Hence the baby boom may find a rather flat real estate market. Even though only a small fraction will ponder retirement relocation, those who do may experience difficulty in selling their home.” Since, “the purchase is purely discretionary, buyers have no sense of urgency” (Cecilian, 2001, p.134) and the purchase can be easily postponed.

To respond to the economic downturn and concerns of potential purchasers, active adult community developers such as Del Webb and Eriskson Retirement Communities are offering various forms of economic assistance to help potential purchasers. These

include: financial credits to help incoming residents hire professional “home stagers” to assist in selling their current residences, covering the first several mortgage payments on the new residence, allowing purchasers to rent their new residence with credit being applied to the purchase price (Der Hovanesian, 2008, p.16). Cambridge Home's adult community has offered a \$40,000 discount on the purchases of a new home and has made contracts contingent on the sale of the previous residence (Adler, 2010). Some consumers rationalize and try to reframe the situation, one stated that “Your house isn't worth what it was before, but neither is the new one...it's a wash” (Adler, 2010).

There is a need to continue the research and move on in the future to an empirical hypothesis testing research study, which can yield generalizable results. In terms of future research, post-purchase data may be collected from residents of active adult communities within a reasonable interval after purchase. Data should be collected from a geographically disbursed range of different types of active adult communities offering various levels of amenities and housing choices. Finally, future research might also seek to measure attitudes, perceptions and actual behavior of consumers in a field test situation by researching consumers' selections of housing options over time, perhaps through the use of a longitudinal study tracking individual consumers.

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