

Environmental wellness: where ‘green,’ health, and well-being converge



Environmentally friendly features at Splendido include, among others, landscaping with low water-use plant material; garden areas with native, reused trees; and balcony floors made with reclaimed wood and plastic. Image courtesy of Mather LifeWays

Resident/member demand is driving ‘green’ initiatives in many communities and centers geared to adults over 50. But environmental wellness is about more than what’s good for the environment; it’s also about what’s good for people

by Marilyn Larkin, MA

From “Waste Not, Want Not” to “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,” environmentally friendly concepts have been with us for some time. These concepts offer concrete steps that people can take to lessen their impact on the natural world, mitigate damage, and play a part in protecting the environment. But, even as people act for a healthier world, what is often lost is the environment’s impact on *their* health.

“Research shows that our health and well-being are influenced by everything around us, whether in the built or natural world,” says International Council on Active Aging® CEO Colin Milner. “That expands our notion of wellness. It also helps us understand that environment is an integral piece of the puzzle.”

Since 2001, ICAA has promoted a multi-dimensional wellness model as the framework for living life fully at any age. These dimensions include emotional, vocational, physical, spiritual, intellectual and social wellness—and, as of 2010, environmental wellness. The environmental dimension, as defined by ICAA, encompasses:

- both indoor and outdoor environments;
- use of environments for wellness; and

- creating environments that support health through more eco-friendly products, services, processes and designs.

The association has also launched a GREEN Plan that includes new publications and opportunities for ICAA members (see “ICAA launches GREEN Plan” on page 26). “Our goal is to make a difference—helping to change the way we age by changing the way the environment ages,” Milner explains.

Through the GREEN Plan, ICAA members will learn about the multitude of options available to them to enhance the environmental dimension in their organizations and for the older adults they serve. This *Journal on Active Aging*[®] (*JAA*) article explores some innovative ideas and key concepts in environmental wellness today (beginning with green building below). The *ICAA Green Review* debuts this spring to illuminate many more topics.

Mutual benefits

When it comes to green building, an environmentally sensitive development approach, the benefits are already well-documented. The US Green Building Council (USGBC), a nonprofit organization of building industry professionals, estimates that, on average, green building reduces energy use by 30%, carbon emissions by 35% and water use by 30–50%, and generates waste cost savings of 50–90%.¹

Recent research suggests that many of the same practices that are good for the environment are also good for people (see “The great outdoors: a key to promoting physical activity for older adults” in the May/June 2009 *JAA*). The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), an international organization created by Canada, Mexico and the United States under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, under-

scored the link between healthy environments and healthy people when it stated:

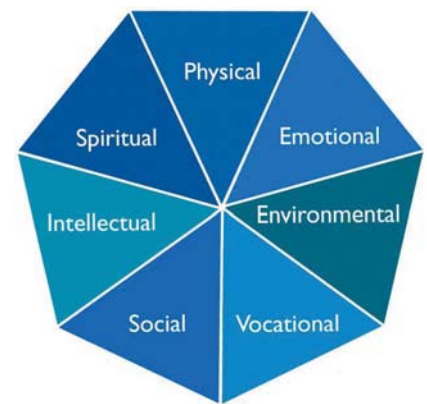
“By continually improving how we locate, design, build, operate, and retrofit buildings, North American leaders can significantly improve the well-being of North America ... [and] help achieve gains in human health and prosperity.”¹

Kathy Sykes, senior advisor, Aging Initiative at the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), comments that “for a long time, public health focused on trying to change behaviors at the individual level. But now we’re recognizing how we also make important systemic changes at the community level. For example, engineering walking back into our daily lives could have huge environmental benefits as well as public health benefits in terms of reducing chronic diseases, and improving mental health and well-being.”

After World War II, America changed how it designed neighborhoods by segregating housing from schools, work and grocery stores, rendering many places accessible only by car, Sykes explains. Now, developers and other stakeholders are beginning to understand the importance of creating “walkable” communities—especially in areas with older adults who no longer drive. Created by mixing land uses and building compactly, walkable communities have streetscapes that serve pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders, as well as automobiles. These and other concepts are taking hold, largely under the umbrella of “smart growth.”

To raise awareness about the “healthy synergies” that communities can achieve when they combine and implement smart growth and active-aging concepts, EPA introduced its annual Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging Awards. (Information about the 2009

recipients appears on page 33.) Active-aging programming, with its efforts to promote physical activity through community design, complements smart growth, which aims to create healthy, sustainable and vibrant communities. Green building takes a similar focus, but narrows it to the individual building or development.



ICAA's seven dimensions of wellness

Driving forces

CEC has identified several forces propelling green building forward in the US and Canada. First, the increasing demand for green real estate has led to government policies and regulations that support the move. The result: “increased information on green building, better green materials, a more experienced construction industry, and enhanced efforts by nongovernmental organizations, the government, and the financial sector to promote green building.”¹

Moreover, green building is less expensive now than ever before. According to CEC, “studies show that the cost premium to deliver sustainable properties to the market in the United States and Canada has declined considerably in recent years; they can be delivered at costs competitive with conventional buildings. In addition, case studies show

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The LEED-certified Good Shepherd Institute for Healthy Living benefits the environment and the health of the region's residents. Photo: Forbes & Butler. Image courtesy of Good Shepherd Medical Center

that the life-cycle financial benefits of green design significantly outweigh the additional initial cost associated with green building.”¹ Increased corporate interest in green building and investor interest in green real estate investment funds are additional drivers.

With respect to the older-adult market, customers seem to be a major driving force. “There is a large older-adult movement going on—a surge of older adults, like the Green Seniors organization, who are passionate about helping the environment,” observes Reed Engel, director of Wellness Strategies at Mather LifeWays in Evanston, Illinois. “Organizations would be wise to step up and be part of that movement, because older adults are taking it seriously and want to be involved.” Mather LifeWays has made a commitment to green practices, having integrated environmentally friendly steps at Splendido in Tucson, Arizona (see below), and the north building of The Mather in Evanston. The organization is also seeking Gold LEED® certification for The Mather’s south building (see the box on page 33).

Elizabeth Bush, senior vice president, marketing and sales at Life Care Services LLC, also stresses “resident demand” as the impetus for a “green” approach to the

company’s Timber Ridge at Talus continuing care retirement community in Issaquah, Washington (turn to the “Snapshot” on page 31). “Our focus groups of prospective residents showed great interest, and that paralleled what we find in all of our communities—namely, that our residents want to leave a legacy.” That legacy takes many forms, she explains, “including being a good citizen of the planet, and leaving things behind in better shape than how you found them.”

Research is documenting what our interviewees are finding in their communities. For example, a survey conducted by market research firm Experian Simmons in summer 2009 revealed that older adults (over age 55) are most likely among all age groups to feel a personal obligation to be environmentally responsible. They are also most likely to “hand over their hard earned green to green companies.”² The emergence of groups such as Green Seniors in the US and the Greener and Wiser Taskforce in the United Kingdom³ suggests the trend is likely to be international in scope.

Implications for industry

In light of the mounting evidence and interest in the benefits of going green,

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ICAA launches GREEN Plan

Grounded in the feedback of International Council on Active Aging® members, who indicate a high level of interest in the environment, the GREEN Plan is the first program to come out of ICAA 2020, an initiative designed to help the active-aging industry look forward and prepare to thrive in the future. The plan, which ICAA is rolling out this year, currently includes the following components:

ICAA Green Guide

This annual online publication offers ICAA members access to scientifically based, how-to information from world leaders in environmental wellness and stewardship. This guide will also delve into products, services, processes or designs that can help members meet their environment-related goals.

ICAA Green Review

This quarterly e-newsletter provides ICAA members with the latest research and information on products, services, processes and designs that are eco-friendly and/or enable use of the environment for wellness.

ICAA Green Vendors Program

This yearlong online program recognizes companies for their commitment to developing products, services, processes and designs that are eco-friendly and/or promote environmental wellness.

ICAA Green Preconference Day

The Going Green Preconference Series is a daylong event at the annual ICAA Conference. Participants learn about the latest in technologies and systems, enabling them to provide greener wellness and community environments.

ICAA Green Awards

This annual awards program recognizes organizations or programs for their commitment to the environment.

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Timber Ridge at Talus invites residents to enjoy the scenic views from the community's outdoor terraces. Image courtesy of Life Care Services LLC



At the Good Shepherd Institute for Healthy Living, members of all ages make use of the cardio equipment to improve their health. Photo: Forbes & Butler. Image courtesy of Good Shepherd Medical Center

ICAA's Milner suggests that the industry broaden its efforts to become “good stewards” of the environment. “Research has shown that the environment can have a significant impact on levels of physical activity, and on physical and emotional health and well-being, so it’s imperative that we try to create the right environment in our communities and centers, in an environmentally sound way,” he says. “That means incorporating into the built environment engaging and motivating areas that encourage wellness—for example, labyrinths, walking trails, and meditation and healing gardens. It’s not just about letting residents/members see flowers when they look out a window.”

Organizations also could start taking advantage of energy-saving opportunities in older structures as well as new ones (see “Getting started” below). “At the end of the day, it’s about stepping back, looking at everything we do day-to-day, and asking how we can make these things fit better with the environment, be it using energy-saving lights, installing low-flow faucets and shower heads, or recycling paper, cans and batteries,” Milner advises. “These and other strategies, like replacing air filters and using fewer chemicals when cleaning, also have a direct impact on health.”

A number of organizations, including some of those profiled in this article’s “Snapshot” sections, have decided to work towards LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. This green-building rating system is administered by the USGBC (with an adapted system offered by the Canada Green Building Council). Building projects can apply for certification and earn credits for meeting green-building criteria in five main categories:

- sustainable sites
- water efficiency
- energy and atmosphere

- materials and resources
- indoor environmental quality

Based on the total number of credits earned, one of four certification levels (Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum) is awarded.

Life Care Services’ Bush observes that “from a marketing perspective, using the LEED certification as a way to articulate and prove we’re green is of great value. In Washington, other communities were using the green concept and implementing some green here and there,” she says, “but that doesn’t show the dedication and focus that going through the certification process shows—that we’re committed, and meeting someone’s standards other than our own.”

Employees are also interested in green initiatives, Bush adds. And because going green is “as beneficial emotionally and financially to employees as it is to residents,” Life Care Services has identified “environmental” as an essential dimension of wellness. “This is one area where everybody can feel better about what they’re doing,” she comments. “When you work in a green community, you have to follow the same rules as the people who live there, so this truly is a wellness dimension that expands across the entire community.”

Changing mindsets

Similar forces drove the construction of the Good Shepherd Institute for Healthy Living, a 75,000-sq.-ft. hospital-based health and fitness center that recently achieved LEED Gold certification (see the “Snapshot” on page 29). The board of directors and the former CEO of Good Shepherd Medical Center “had the vision of making Longview, Texas, one of the healthiest communities in the state,” current CEO Edward Banos tells *JAA*. The result is a freestanding facility “that not only is improving the health of the community, but is also good for our environment.”

The concept behind the Institute is to provide two paths of wellness, according to Banos. One path offers “outpatient rehabilitative services for individuals requiring a medically guided continuum of care, and a second path provides individuals and area employers ways to improve and maintain health through a comprehensive fitness and wellness facility.” Many people in the community have obesity-related illnesses due to lack of activity and a high-fat diet, “so we’re providing a lot of education on better lifestyle choices that can help prevent diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and other conditions,” he explains. The response has been “overwhelming.” The Institute anticipated enrolling 1,000 members in its first year, but more than 12,000 joined.

Seniors centers are also embracing environmental wellness. For example, Spectrum Generations—Coastal Community Center in Damariscotta, Maine, is collaborating with local land trusts, conservation organizations, farmers’ markets, and other nonprofit collaborators to help “change the face of the center,” says Center Coordinator Marianne Pinkham (see “Snapshot” on page 32). “When I came here five years ago, my mission was to make the center an active, vibrant part of the community—not just a place where people come to have a free lunch.”

The transformation involved “changing mindsets” as well as capitalizing on the green environment, Pinkham tells *JAA*. Today, the center is no longer viewed as a place for people who are unable to participate in activities. Rather, “it’s a place to learn new things, to explore, and to connect with others.” Under the umbrella theme *A Sense of Place; A Sense of Wellbeing; A Sense of Community*, the center’s wellness program “is based upon the belief that the landscape acts as a teacher in shaping our perceptions of place, our connections with our inner self, our friends, family, community and the environment,” she says.

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Snapshot: Good Shepherd Institute for Healthy Living, Longview, Texas



Solar-powered systems heat the water in indoor pools at the Good Shepherd Institute for Healthy Living. Photo: Forbes & Butler. Image courtesy of Good Shepherd Medical Center

The Good Shepherd Institute for Healthy Living is a freestanding health and fitness center located on 50 acres about four miles north of the Good Shepherd Medical Center. The \$20-million project took about two years from design to opening, according to CEO Edward Banos. As part of the effort to gain LEED Gold certification, the following green design elements were included:

- a reflective white roof to reduce heat and cooling requirements
- pervious pavement that allows rainwater to soak naturally into the soil
- landscaping with plants that require little or no irrigation
- interior pool water that recycles with the aid of appropriate filtering systems
- temperature control with room monitoring sensors for automatic adjustments
- ozone-enhanced cold water laundry systems
- solar-powered heating system for indoor pools
- open space and aquatic-based habitat for wild critters through restoration of existing pond and reforestation of undeveloped land
- minimization of storm water run-off impact
- reduction of water use by more than 40% over conventional plumbing designs

“Longview residents are accustomed to strip-mall fitness centers. When they came here, the ‘wow’ factor was unbe-

lievable,” Banos says. Aside from signing up more than 10 times the number of anticipated members in the first year, the retention rate is over 95%. “Members are excited to be here, and staff are proud to work in a green building that’s good for the environment.”

Importantly, the Institute is achieving its goal of improving the health of its members. On January 7, the winner of the first annual Inspire award was announced. This award recognizes members who have achieved “astounding” weight loss or improved fitness and health. Finalists collectively lost hundreds of pounds, and many reduced or eliminated risk factors such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes, Banos reveals. The winner had suffered from juvenile diabetes for 29 years, received a kidney and pancreas transplant in 2002, but still had diabetic neuropathy and osteoporosis. She was almost completely dependent on her wheelchair and the assistance of others when she joined the center. In the next year, under the guidance of concerned instructors, she participated regularly in aquatics classes and personal training, resulting in large improvements in strength, balance and stamina.

And that’s why, for Banos, the “lesson learned” is that “while it’s wonderful to have a beautiful facility with great equipment,” it’s crucial to hire the right staff.

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Participants absorb the local landscape through an outdoor art class in Damariscotta, Maine. Photo: Marianne Pinkham. Image courtesy of Spectrum Generations—Coastal Community Center



More than 1,000 shade trees help reduce solar heat gain and decrease water evaporation at Splendido. Among other environmentally friendly features are low water-use plant material for landscaping, harvesting areas for natural rainwater; and a storm water management program. Image courtesy of Mather LifeWays

Getting started

The idea of going green “might bubble up from customers, staff, vendors, or the public asking if your community [or center] is environmentally friendly. But, eventually, management has to support the idea, because it involves changes in the way the company does business,” explains Mather LifeWays’ Engel, who has presented on how to start a company-wide environmentally friendly initiative from the ground up. “Commitment from management is the first step towards getting your ‘green machine’ going,” he emphasizes. “If that doesn’t happen early on, you have a tough road ahead.”

One way to sell the concept to management is to show how working within an environmentally friendly model can have a positive impact on the company’s bottom line. To help create change in an

existing building, for instance, “you can replace existing lights with energy-friendly lights,” Engel suggests. “Mather LifeWays’ Splendido development saved \$4,500 a month by making that change and implementing a guideline about turning off all but emergency lights after hours in unused areas.”

Indeed, Engel reported that an article in *Consumer Reports* (10/08) showed the following steps resulted in not insignificant energy savings over one year:

- using compact fluorescent lights: 13%
- reducing hot tub temperature, except when in use: 8%
- using Energy Star appliances: 4%
- using energy-efficient windows: 2%

Identifying “green champions”—individuals who support the concept and will

head up initiatives—in every department in the organization is also key, Engel advises. “Every area can play a role in your green effort,” he stresses (also refer to the “Snapshot” on page 33). “For example, you can let housekeeping know that you don’t need all your towels changed and washed the same way you do in a hotel—by not putting them on the floor. You can also purchase products with fewer chemicals, and ensure that all refuse is recycled.”

In addition, Mather LifeWays offers incentives to employees. Individuals receive reusable water bottles, so they don’t have to continually purchase water, and subsidies to encourage them to take public transportation to work instead of driving. (Of course, walking or biking is even better!) Ongoing educational programs show employees and residents how

green strategies fit with the organization's core mission and are part of the overall promotion of health and wellness.

Once green efforts are underway, it's important to track progress, Engel states. For example, before and after implementing green strategies, measure:

- number of recycling bins filled per month
- utility costs
- change in public transport subsidies
- expense reduction in nonrecyclable products
- anecdotal evidence (excitement among employees, residents/members and the

public about the company's participation)

That "anecdotal evidence" is likely to be among the most important drivers of strategies that promote wellness for the environment and for members, residents and staff, our interviewees agree. It will also provide the momentum needed to make environmental wellness a key part of the model for active aging. ☞

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2. Experian Simmons. (2009). Review of the Green Attitudes & Behaviors of American Consumers. Available at <http://smrb.com/web/guest/american-green-attitudes>.
3. The Greener and Wiser Taskforce. (2009). Greener and Wiser—An Older People's Manifesto on the Environment. London, UK: Green Alliance. Available at <http://www.greenalliance.org.uk/grea1.aspx?id=2954>.

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Snapshot: Timber Ridge at Talus, Issaquah, Washington

Part of a large urban "wild land" spanning 20,000 acres across Cougar, Squak and Tiger mountains, Timber Ridge at Talus was the first continuing care retirement community in the United States to achieve LEED Silver certification status. The Life Care Services' team worked for a decade with environmental groups and the City of Issaquah to create an ecologically sensitive plan. To protect the gateway to the Issaquah Alps, only a quarter of Talus's 630 acres is open to human habitation.

Like other LEED-certified communities, Timber Ridge met the following criteria:

- *Sustainable sites:* maximizing open space; reducing heat island; reducing light pollution; using storm water quality control; using alternative transportation; reducing construction pollution
- *Water efficiency:* water-efficient landscaping; reducing water use
- *Energy and atmosphere:* commissioning of building and equipment that



Large windows increase the amount of natural light in a Timber Ridge at Talus dining room. Image courtesy of Life Care Services LLC

- meet or exceed energy performance; refrigerant management
- *Materials and resources:* use of rapidly renewable resources, regional materials, and recycled materials; recycling construction waste; recycling building waste

- *Indoor environmental quality:* smoke-free building; use of low-emitting paints, adhesives, carpets, composite woods, and other materials; controllability of lighting and thermal systems (i.e., with sensors); increasing daylight and views

"LEED causes the developer and designers to consider things they previously wouldn't have considered," says Project Development Manager Jason Jorgensen. By doing so with Timber Ridge, they not only ensured that the community would be environmentally friendly, but they also had the bonus of "being moved to the front of the schedule for city development approvals."

A major benefit of having built to LEED specifications is "it keeps our operational costs down," which helps keep resident fees down, adds Executive Director Scott Doherty. "This has been most noticeable with our utility cost." In addition, the environmentally friendly community "has created a positive 'buzz' and a sense of pride for our residents to know they are making a difference."

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Resources

Internet

Canada Green Building Council/LEED
www.cagbc.org

Good Shepherd Institute for Healthy Living
www.gsmcinstitute.org

Green Seniors
www.greenseniors.org

Mather LifeWays
www.matherlifeways.com

Spectrum Generations
www.seniorspectrum.com

Timber Ridge at Talus
www.timberbridgelcs.com

US Environmental Protection Agency:
Aging Initiative
www.epa.gov/aging/index.htm

US Green Building Council/LEED
www.usgbc.org

Print

Green Building in North America: Opportunities and Challenges. Secretariat Report to Council Under Article 13 of the North American Agreement on

Environmental Cooperation
Commission for Environmental Cooperation, 2008
Available at www.uli-la.org/files/GB_Report_EN.pdf

Greener and Wiser—An Older People’s Manifesto on the Environment
The Greener and Wiser Taskforce, 2009
Available at www.green-alliance.org/grea1.aspx?id=2954

Growing Smarter, Living Healthier: A Guide to Smart Growth and Active Aging
US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2009
Available at www.epa.gov/aging/bhcg/guide/index.html

Snapshot: Spectrum Generations—Coastal Community Center, Damariscotta, Maine

When Marianne Pinkham became center coordinator five years ago, she was charged with transforming the Coastal Community Center from a place that mainly provided meals to the frail and underserved into a vital organization that would draw people of all ages from throughout the community. She and the center staff have accomplished this goal in part by finding ways to turn the pristine environment into a learning and activity tool. Working with local land trusts, conservation and watershed associations throughout Lincoln County, “we have programs that incorporate hikes, nature camps, biking and boating programs, kayaking, and farmers’ market tours, as well as talks about ‘green’ concepts and the environment,” Pinkham says.

The center’s wellness program, *A Sense of Place; A Sense of Wellbeing; A Sense of Community*, “builds a bridge that connects the County’s past and present to a sustainable future,” explains Pinkham, “by introducing maturing adults to their environment, the com-



The Miles of Friends program connects the generations in Lincoln County, Maine, where nearly one-third of the population is over age 65. Photo: Marianne Pinkham. Image courtesy of Spectrum Generations—Coastal Community Center

munity and the outdoor activities that are within their grasp.” These activities encourage participants to “go beyond their comfort zones” and to exercise as they explore the coastal region.

In terms of demographics, “Maine is the oldest state in the [United States], and Lincoln County, where the center is located, is the oldest county,” Pinkham points out. But although close to 30% of the population is over 65, “my approach is intergenerational,” she stresses. One program, Miles of Friends, connects elementary school children with older “buddies.” Together, they participate in such activities as exploring a marine center, storytelling, and learning about animals in programs that also educate about the environment. “We are at our best when we learn together,” observes Pinkham.

“By forging relationships, partnerships and collaborations with community organizations, the wellness program has introduced residents from the 19 towns served by Coastal Community Center, as well as visitors to the region, to the simple pleasures of being well by being active in one’s own extended neighborhood,” Pinkham concludes.

Snapshot: Mather LifeWays, Evanston, Illinois

At Mather LifeWays, “residents and employees are passionate about the environment,” says Reed Engel, director of Wellness Strategies. When the not-for-profit organization called a meeting to discuss going green, “we had a packed room,” he recalls. While the company is now pursuing Gold LEED certification for a second building, all locations, including the café-style centers, are taking steps to help protect the environment as part of its whole-person wellness model and new tagline, “Ways to Age Well.” In this regard, company-wide efforts include the strategies described in the “Getting started” section on page 30, as well as the following:

- **Telecommuting:** saving the cost of office space and commuting, while appealing to the workforce and increasing recruitment and loyalty to the organization



Simple yet effective in-house efforts—such as these examples from Mather LifeWays—can help save the Earth and keep an organization’s green message visible. Images courtesy of Mather LifeWays

- **Transportation:** replacing the company fleet with hybrid vehicles; offering ridesharing for customers; encouraging car pooling for employees; making bike racks available
- **Purchasing:** buying bulk and recycled products
- **Administration/Information Technology:** using both sides of paper for copies; storing files electronically; emailing instead of using hard copy when appropriate; removing the company name from junk mail lists

- **Dining services:** replacing paper products such as napkins and plastic products such as tablecloths with cloth; using biodegradable to-go service products; trying composting gardening as part of waste management; buying locally to support the community and enjoy fresher food; donating unused food, decorations, and supplies
- **Building renovation and development:** using LEED criteria or National Association of Home Builders’ model green home building guidelines; installing motion sensors and energy-saving lights

What Engel has learned throughout the process is to “never underestimate the interest of residents and employees in going green. They’ll take it on, they’ll help get it going, and they’ll promote it. Give them the ball. They’ll run with it!”

Building Healthy Communities winners

In February 2010, the United States Environmental Protection Agency announced the 2009 winners of its Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging Awards. These awards recognize communities “for their outstanding comprehensive approaches to implementing principles of smart growth, as well as strategies that support active aging.”

2009 Achievement Award Winners *The Town of Cary, North Carolina*

The Town of Cary is recognized for its many achievements, including major investments to preserve 2,300 acres of open space and 22 parks. The town created 174 miles of biking and walking trails connecting greenways with residential neighborhoods, as well as “activity centers,” which are the building blocks for its long-term planning. These centers are physically and esthetically unified, concentrating mixed-use development in a pedestrian friendly fashion. Cary has also encouraged active aging on a community-wide basis by offering hundreds of fitness

and wellness courses designed by and for older adults.

Martinsville/Henry County, Virginia, Coalition for Health and Wellness for Activate MHC

The Martinsville-Henry County Coalition for Health and Wellness received this award for its leadership in adopting active-aging programming and implementing smart growth policies. The coalition made strides to increase participation in physical activities and advocated for additional active living resources. Through the Activate initiative, community walkabouts have led to the assessment and improvement of the walking and biking opportunities, and created the first bike lane and pedestrian safety lights. Activate publishes an annual physical activity guide and toolkit with information on recreation programs and physical activity programming, and held its first healthy community challenge. In 2009, the County’s comprehensive plan included a framework that supports a smart growth vision.

2009 Commitment Award Winners *City of Gaithersburg, Maryland, for the*

Gaithersburg Upcounty Senior Center

The City of Gaithersburg was selected for its efforts to improve the quality of life of its older residents. The Upcounty Senior Center helps older people to get involved in fitness activities that help them maintain active lives. Gaithersburg plans to relocate the center to a larger facility within walking distance of public transit. It also has overseen the development of several mixed-use developments with senior living facilities, including the Kentlands, an award-winning smart growth community.

County of San Mateo, California, for the Half Moon Bay Senior Campus Plan

San Mateo County is being recognized for its Half Moon Bay Senior campus plan that will provide a much-needed expansion of services for older adults. The plan integrates affordable housing with a network of pedestrian walkways and open space intended for structured and unstructured activities. One special feature of the walkways is the raised pavement where paths cross streets, signaling to motorists to yield to pedestrians. ☺