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## **Independent Living Exercise, Pool and Spa Facilities**

### **Introduction**

Regular exercise can strengthen muscles and joints and slow the negative physical effects of aging. It is essential for seniors to get the right amount of daily exercise in order to maintain a strong, healthy body for as long as possible. Senior fitness centers should be designed with pools and equipment for ease-of-use and adaptable for all fitness levels to maintain an optimal level of exercise and increase flexibility, movement, stability and blood circulation.

Today's active adults and aging Baby Boomers are more focused on health and wellness than previous generations. The senior living industry has responded accordingly by incorporating larger fitness centers with more options, like the 20,000 SF LEED certified green facility at Wesley Glen ([www.wesleyglen.com](http://www.wesleyglen.com)) in Columbus OH, which has the benefits of scale in its offering as a larger continuing care retirement community (CCRC). Another example of added dedicated space is the 25,000SF rehabilitation and wellness pavilion at The Davis Community ([www.thedaviscommunity.org](http://www.thedaviscommunity.org)), in Wilmington, NC, which is also open to the public on a membership basis.

The wellness center at The Stratford ([www.stratfordliving.com](http://www.stratfordliving.com)), in Carmel, IN, is part of an impressive Best of Class facility located in what most would agree is the highest income suburb in greater Indianapolis. The facility is nationally recognized for their award-winning wellness program. As part of their monthly fee, residents can take advantage of the approximately 16' x 60' heated, indoor therapy pool offering water classes, Jacuzzi, a broad range of exercise and fitness related classes and seminars, and stationary strength training exercise equipment. Personal training, salon services, spa, manicures, pedicures and massage therapy are offered for an additional cost.

The Palace at Coral Gables ([www.palacecoralgables.com](http://www.palacecoralgables.com)), Coral Gables, FL, is a luxury retirement community inspired by the Four Seasons George V Hotel in Paris that has been selected as the "Best 50-Plus Independent Community" in the country. It features a fitness center with complimentary personal training, a 22' x 60' heated indoor pool with water exercise classes, Jacuzzi and a full-service beauty salon.

While many facilities provide access to their pool and fitness center as part of a resident's monthly fee (like The Palace at Coral Gables [[www.palacecoralgables.com](http://www.palacecoralgables.com)] and Carmel's The Stratford [[www.stratfordliving.com](http://www.stratfordliving.com)]), some are membership-based (like The Davis Community [[www.thedaviscommunity.org](http://www.thedaviscommunity.org)] in Wilmington, NC) and open to the public.

On-site, full service spas with massage services are an important part of an amenity package since regular massage treatments for seniors can provide various health and mental benefits. Massage for the elderly is much gentler than traditional massage in that it involves gentle

stroking, kneading and the application of light pressure on specific points, as noted in a blog from Pacific College (<https://www.pacificcollege.edu/news/blog/2015/01/22/therapeutic-benefits-massage-elderly>). While beauty salons are usually separate facilities, nail and hair services can be offered in part of an extended spa located close or within the exercise facilities.

### **Utilizing Off Site Services**

Many US towns and cities, along with YMCA's and other organizations, have exceptional facilities that provide a wide range of exercise and aquatics programs and services available to all age groups, including seniors. Pine Bush Senior Living, Senior Consulting's 192 unit IL/AL/MC project in Guilderland, NY, has the large, expansive Capital District YMCA ([www.cdymca.org](http://www.cdymca.org)) located within 1-2 miles. Their extensive senior aquatics program in a 25 yard, 8 lane indoor swimming pool offers the following classes:

- Aqua Zumba
- Aqua Tabata
- Shallow and Deep Water Workouts
- SilverSneakers Splash programs specifically designed for active older adults.

The Excelsior Springs Community Center ([www.excelsiorspringscommunitycenter.com](http://www.excelsiorspringscommunitycenter.com)) in Excelsior Springs, MO, has a state of the art natatorium with three lap lanes, an eleven person spa and a zero entry family pool. Seniors can take advantage of water arthritis classes designed to work on range of motion, balance, building muscle strength and reducing pain and stiffness all while utilizing the resistance of the water. Group exercise classes include Zumba® Gold for active older adults looking for a low-impact workout, SilverSneakers Classic for strengthening muscles and increasing range of movement or SilverSneakers Chair Yoga designed to increase flexibility, balance and range of movement.

### **Indoor Pools for Senior Living Facilities**

Heated, indoor, saltwater therapy pools offer residents the opportunity to swim laps, participate in water aerobics or take advantage of free swim sessions. Exercise pools are more commonplace, many of them saltwater. In Columbus, OH, Wesley Glen [www.wesleyglen.com](http://www.wesleyglen.com) goes one step further and offers a HydroWorx® Pool with a moveable, underwater treadmill, resistance and jet technology and a computerized underwater camera recording system.

Wellmore at Tega Cay ([www.well-more.com/tega-cay](http://www.well-more.com/tega-cay)) has a smaller saltwater and wave pool that features a ramp to enable easy entry. Their "Waves" aquatic program is low-intensity and designed to soothe anxiety, improve appetite and strengthen bonds between members and caregivers, while their "Aquacize" workout is a mix of flexibility, strength training, balance and cardio exercises. Open swim sessions are also offered.

Some facilities require staff members to complete the Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program (AFAP) multi-component training program. This warm water exercise program is for people with arthritis and related conditions and designed to reduce fatigue, pain and stiffness and improve mobility, muscle strength and coordination. ([https://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/Practice\\_and\\_Patient\\_Care/Patient\\_Care/Arthritis/ArthritisFoundationAquaticProgram.pdf](https://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/Practice_and_Patient_Care/Patient_Care/Arthritis/ArthritisFoundationAquaticProgram.pdf) )

Pool sizes vary and are dependent on the size of the facility. The Palace of Coral Gables ([www.palacecoralgables.com](http://www.palacecoralgables.com)) has a large indoor pool and Jacuzzi spa with a large patio. More typical are pools approximately 40' x 18' like at The Davis Community ([www.thedaviscommunity.org](http://www.thedaviscommunity.org)) or at Warm Hearth Village in Blacksburg, VA ([www.retire.org](http://www.retire.org)).

If both exercise and lap pools are provided, the preference is for them to be connected in an “L” shaped with one filtration system to help manage operational costs. Like fitness centers that are not age restricted, separate locker rooms are usually provided for showering pre and post-swim.

### **Exercise Facilities**

It is important that staff members are trained to provide safe and effective exercise programming designed specifically for seniors and develop personalized exercise plans. Well-designed senior living or active adult exercise facilities will have state-of-the-art exercise equipment designed and targeted for seniors:

- Stationary or recumbent bikes for cardio workouts to boost heart rate. Recumbent bikes are recommended for a comfortable workout the low impact on joints.
- Elliptical machines for a low impact, whole-body workout.
- Treadmills for gentle to vigorous cardio workouts.
- Weight training machines for enhancing muscle function and mass.

Some senior living facilities have a fitness center open 24-hours a day. Many offer a separate aerobics/group exercise room where land-based programming, such as strength, stretch, core training, balance-specific and SilverSneakers-type classes, is conducted. The Palace of Coral Gables, Coral Gables, FL ([www.palacecoralgables.com](http://www.palacecoralgables.com)) is a prime example of a more upscale fitness center. The fully equipped, state-of-the-art center offers a fitness center and an aerobics room for group exercise classes like aerobics, yoga, tai-chi and a variety of SilverSneakers classes.

### **Salon-Spa Services**

Large numbers of Best of Class senior living facilities have an on-site salon-spa that caters to both men and women to help them look and feel more attractive, healthy, balanced and strong. Massage services can help stimulate circulation, release endorphins and improve or maintain range of motion. Manicures can offer temporary relief of arthritis and regular pedicures are essential to diabetes management. These salon-spas use products specifically designed for the senior population. Upscale facilities can offer these services through third-party providers, such as Rejuvenate Salon & Spa ([www.rejuvenatesalonandspas.com](http://www.rejuvenatesalonandspas.com)), who offer:

- Hair Care
- Barber Services
- Skin Treatments
- Massage
- Manicure and Pedicures
- Wellness Support

The salon-spa area can be a dedicated 10' x 12' room with a lobby/receptionist area with counter, three 4' x 8' massage rooms, changing area, half or full bathroom (depending on the service

offerings) and a small office. The Davis Community ([www.thedaviscommunity.org](http://www.thedaviscommunity.org)) has private rooms with a Jacuzzi tub.

## **Conclusion**

Baby Boomers are the first generation where a significant percentage have embraced the importance of a lifestyle centered on diet and exercise, but also expect additional features as mentioned in Senior Consulting's January, 2018, white paper: "*Senior Housing Trends and Emerging Models*" (<http://seniorlivingdeveloper.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Senior-Housing-Trends-Emerging-Models-1-24-18.pdf>).

As an unlicensed product, the definition of senior living (particularly Independent Living) continues to blur with Senior Housing or the much larger active adult communities that are typically spread out with single family homes, have pool and exercise and spa facilities that are in relative proportion to the number of homes within the campus. As investors, developers and operators alike seek to capture the emerging Boomer population, design features more common to active adult communities (like pools and more expansive exercise facilities) will become the norm, rather than the exception.

While Best of Class senior living facilities, i.e., Independent Living, Assisted Living and Memory Care collectively like (Wellmore at Tega Cay [[www.well-more.com/tega-cay](http://www.well-more.com/tega-cay)] and The Stratford [[www.stratfordliving.com](http://www.stratfordliving.com)]) offer an extended package for exercise and spa facilities, it is more common to see these types of facilities in upscale rental housing targeting millennials and Baby Boomers. As Baby Boomers continue to age, Senior Housing that targets older Boomers and seniors alike must continue to offer expanded services and amenities options like pools, exercise and spa facilities.

Incorporating indoor pools, as well as larger, more expansive exercise and spa facilities, is a substantial capital investment for senior living developers. Therefore, most facilities with these types of pool, exercise and spa offerings are both larger and considered Best of Class. Offering membership to seniors in surroundings dedicated to seniors provides addition revenue to both offset costs but increase socialization with the community at large.

Please see Exhibit A for additional information on facilities referenced in this white paper.

## Exhibit A

Davis Community, Wilmington, NC

919-686-7195

[www.thedaviscommunity.org](http://www.thedaviscommunity.org)

AL and SNF with 123 beds

25,000SF rehabilitation and Wellness Pavilion. Membership-based at a fee of \$49.95/month and open to the public. Aquatic center has an indoor heated 43' x 3 lane, saltwater therapy pool with aquatic fitness classes, Arthritis Foundation specific classes and free swim. Fitness center has state-of-the-art equipment for resistance training and cardiovascular. Group exercise classroom/educational classroom. Classes include strength, stretch, core training, balance-specific. Spa rooms with private Jacuzzi tub are located in the Assisted Living facility.

The Stratford, Carmel, IN

317-708-3290

[www.stratford-living.com](http://www.stratford-living.com)

120IL, plus AL, MC and SNF (approximately 200 total units)

Indoor heated pool approximately 16' x 60' heated to 90°. Jacuzzi. Best of Class private wellness center. Nationally recognized, award-winning wellness program. On-site spas.

Warm Hearth Village, Blacksburg, VA

540-552-9176

[www.retire.org](http://www.retire.org)

400+ units

Active Adult, IL, AL, MC, SNF

The community center was built as the community matured and expanded. Approximately 40' x 18' heated indoor pool with a broad range of classes. The fitness center offers workout machines, free weights and personal training along with a separate aerobics room, Massage services are available through an on-site, third-party provider. Affiliated with Virginia Tech who sponsors Lifelong Learning Programs.

Wellmore of Tega Cay, South Carolina

803-835-7000

[www.well-more.com/tega-cay](http://www.well-more.com/tega-cay)

CCRC

152 units

This for-profit CCRC has a smaller saltwater and wave pool can accommodate 10-12 residents in an exercise class. Fitness center has 7-8 pieces of equipment. Full service spa with massage, nail and hair services.

The Palace of Coral Gables, Coral Gables, FL

305-445-7444

[www.palacecoralgables.com](http://www.palacecoralgables.com)

243 IL

“Five Star” amenities & services included in monthly fee. Best of Class 22’ x 60’ indoor heated swimming pool offering water exercise classes and Jacuzzi spa with large patio, as well as men’s and women’s locker rooms with showers. State-of-the-art fitness center with complimentary personal training. Aerobics studio.

Wesley Glen, Columbus, OH  
855-215-5155  
[www.wesleyglen.com](http://www.wesleyglen.com)  
151 IL; 74 AL; 21 MC

20,000 square foot LEED certified green facility. Membership open to the Central Ohio community. Heated, indoor lap pool is located in a two-story atrium that houses the four-foot deep pool that is available for swimming laps, water aerobics, and relaxing. HydroWorx® Pool features moveable, underwater treadmill, resistance and jet technology, and a computerized underwater camera recording system. The 24-hour fitness center is equipped with state-of-the-art strength training equipment such as treadmills, bikes, recumbent and upper body cycles.

Liberty at Shoal Creek, Kansas City, MO  
816-272-5722  
[www.libertyatshoalcreek.com](http://www.libertyatshoalcreek.com)  
Over 55 SH  
185 units

Indoor pool and spa opens in-season to outdoor patio. Second level fitness center overlooks pool. Yoga/pilates studio with virtual fitness on demand. .

Using a Best of Class ranking on a scale of one to five, with a score of 3 being very well appointed and maintained existing or newer facilities targeting middle to upper to middle income and a score of 4 targeting more upper middle income residents, this facility would be ranked a four. The facility was built in two phases. Two “L” shaped buildings were connected into one building with an expansive interior courtyard. Approximately 40% of residents have a garage under the building or separate garages along the exterior of the property.

Capital District YMCA, Guilderland, NY  
(518) 456-3634  
[www.cdymca.org](http://www.cdymca.org)

25 yard, 8 lane indoor swimming pool offering Aqua Zumba, Aqua Tabata, Shallow and Deep Water Workouts and SilverSneakers® Splash programs specifically designed for active older adults. Fitness classes include: Zumba® Gold with Zumba Gold Toning, Balance, Cardio/Sculpt Circuit, Fit Over 50, Forever Strong, SilverSneakers Classic, SilverSneakers Circuit, SilverSneakers Cardio, SilverSneakers Yoga, Walking For Wellness, Chair Aerobics and Stretch & Strength classes.