



Question of the Month: What did we in the senior living sector learn from the pandemic? - by Gregory Smith

November 22, 2022 - Front Section



Gregory Smith

COVID-19 has had a major impact on reshaping the entire senior living industry with many changes likely to remain for the long term. The pandemic underscored the limitations of the current system, and provided many like us with the opportunity to reevaluate plans for the future and identify best practices to utilize data and technology, invest more in infrastructure systems, and evolve in a way that will improve the health outcomes for our senior living residents.

As was the case with some other senior living developments in New York City, the pandemic put a delay in our plans to open Inspîr Carnegie Hill - our newest luxury property on the Upper East Side of Manhattan - initially slated to open in the first quarter of 2020. We used the delay to focus on how the Inspîr senior living residence could provide the best care during such uncertain times and we expedited several new technological and safety initiatives for the future.

Maplewood Senior Living, as a company, has always had strong infection prevention and control policies, but from the early onset of the pandemic, we worked closely with regional departments of public health to intensify our guidelines to ensure the highest level of comfort and safety for our residents, families and team.

Across our portfolio, we have made a number of enhancements. At our Inspîr Carnegie Hill location, they include increased outdoor air ventilation, doubling the amount of fresh air ventilation required per code in the building use type. We installed photohydroionization systems and enhanced HVAC filtration to improve air quality, brought in ultraviolet light sanitizers for infection control and intensified deep cleaning and disinfecting protocols.

Of course, even before the pandemic, our properties were designed to promote health and wellness with a strong connection to nature. We incorporate interior gardens into our properties, floor-to-ceiling windows that fill the interior with natural light and a selection of organic materials throughout the residences and common spaces. The connection to nature has been linked to a host of benefits including sharpened cognition, lower stress, better mood, and overall improved health and wellness which became even more important during the pandemic. We've always empowered residents to maintain a sense of purpose with meaningful activities focused on motion and mobility, and daily programs that infuse art and music into our environments. Our early adoption of technology and intentional design of our amenity spaces proved to be critically important as we faced the challenges of keeping residents safely engaged while socially distant – these considerations remain top of mind as we develop new properties.

Inspîr - now open and bustling with residents and life - is Maplewood's next-generation concept for urban senior living on a luxury level, offering residents a transformative, one-of-a-kind experience made possible by combining expertise and insights from the residential, hospitality and healthcare industries. Featuring state-of-the-art spaces, exceptional care, intelligent technology and immersive experiences, we have curated an environment that supports a philosophy of vibrant, intentional living based on Nine Core Elements; a lifestyle philosophy found in areas around the world, known as blue zones, where people live longer, happier lives.

Inspîr has come to be recognized as one of the first buildings in New York state within the assisted

living sector, and the largest in the city, to achieve the WELL Health-Safety Rating. This certification is given through the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI), the global authority for transforming health and well-being with its people-first approach to buildings, organizations and communities. The WELL Health-Safety Rating is an evidence-based, third-party verified rating for all new and existing building and space types focusing on operational policies, maintenance protocols, stakeholder engagement and emergency plans to address a post-COVID-19 environment now and into the future.

It has been nearly two decades since we created our Maplewood Senior Living brand, with residences in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Ohio. Each of our properties is thoughtfully designed to have a distinct look, feel, and personality. We are setting the standard for senior living communities across the northeast and beyond. Our residences are also crafted to blend seamlessly into the local community, so that transitioning is even easier for residents.

I believe that we will see larger amenity and community spaces to accommodate social distancing within senior living communities. At Inspîr, we have over 40,000 s/f of amenity space to allow residents to find areas for alone time and enough room to connect with others safely. Additionally, the design of senior living will have a larger focus on an infrastructure that supports the use of technology. Inspîr is utilizing the most up-to-date technology to improve safety and comfort for our residents.

But most critically for everyone in this growing industry: each community needs to be designed to not only care for the residents but to inspire them to stay active, engaged and healthy.

Gregory Smith is president and CEO of Maplewood Senior Living, New York, NY.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540