

This village has big plans

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Friendship Village of Schaumburg, IL, is incredibly large by any measure. According to a ranking maintained by Ziegler Capital Markets Group, it is the nation's 15th largest continuing care retirement community. And it has not nearly stopped growing.

Friendship Village has five distinct communities, encompassing independent living, assisted living and rehabilitation services for seniors. The Briarwood Healthcare Center offers nursing care, whether the stay is 24-hour care after surgery or a long-term period. Friendship Village also offers a program called Reflections, aiding those affected by Alzheimer's disease.

The newest addition to Friendship Village is Bridgewater Place, a six-story center that contains 170 private apartments and stretches over 260,000 square feet.

Fluid planning

The colossal new building cost \$68 million and took nearly two years to construct. Architects' planning, including lakes and a pool, for the project was equally daunting. Water is a major theme at Friendship Village's new Bridgewater Place.

“The first challenge was locating it along the shores of the existing lakes,” says Cornelia Hodgson, senior partner at Dorsky Hodgson Parrish Yue.

Bridgewater Place was designed to provide a link to the outdoors for residents through visual links to the lakes and by allowing as much natural light into the building as possible.

Construction crews faced a unique set of challenges, as well. The new building is by the lakes, and extremely close to the older Bridgegate Apartment Homes, which remained occupied during construction.

“We held weekly ‘Construction Coffee Breaks,’ which were routinely attended by 80 to 100 residents,” says Friendship Village CEO Robert Alston. “Every meeting included an update on the progress of construction.”

Community opportunity

Water is a big part of the Bridgewater Place design. Integrating this feature not only allowed designers to provide additional resources for the residents, but it also gave them an opportunity to open Bridgewater Place to the community at large.

In fact, the entire first floor of Bridgewater Place is filled with public amenities, from the aquatic and lifestyle fitness center, to a spa and salon; from casual and fine dining to assembly halls, meeting rooms and even a meditation garden.

Without a doubt, Alston says, the most popular new place is Herman's Bar and Grill, a casual eating establishment.

The dream keeper

Hodgson says it's important to have someone on your project team to carry the vision into the future, someone she likes to call “The Dream Keeper.”

In this case, she says, it was Alston, the community's CEO.

According to him, the success of Bridgewater Place is a great indicator that they're on the right track. Within nine months, the new addition achieved 70% occupancy.

“Resident satisfaction is high, and most importantly, they invite friends and guests to visit and see their home,” says Alston. “Our residents are proud of where they live, and Bridgewater Place.”

Lessons learned

- 1 - Ask around—see what works well for similar facilities when starting your design
- 2 - Town-hall style meetings and open communication make residents feel like a part of the project
- 3 - One step at a time: Complete large projects in phases, but don't lose sight of your long-term goal

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