



**FirstService**  
RESIDENTIAL



# *Retirement goals:* **The Active Adult Lifestyle**

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**Today's active  
adult communities  
have different  
cultures and  
objectives than  
communities in  
the past.**

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For those planning their retirement goals, an active adult community may be at the top of the list. These associations have so much to offer residents, from action-packed facilities to strong neighbor connections. We know that today's new breed of seniors (55 plus) are healthier, more physically fit and more vibrant than ever before. Many of them are seeking the perks of living in an active adult community where they can enjoy a variety of facilities and activities: fitness, recreation, entertainment and wellness.

As a board member for a 55 and better community, you know the value of your neighborhood, but you might also know that your community poses unique challenges. We have put together best practices for management in this guide, to help you lead your residents in living their best lives yet.

A photograph of an older Black man and woman smiling and waving their hands towards the camera. The man is on the left, wearing a light pink shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a dark top and large hoop earrings. The background is a bright, slightly blurred indoor setting. The image is partially covered by a blue diagonal overlay on the left and top, and a yellow diagonal overlay on the right and bottom.

# Making *Connections*

“Our community, like many, is a mixture of residents in different stages in life,” said Jason Mitchell, Property Manager at Regency at the Woods of South Barrington in Illinois. “About 25% are still working, some building a second career. Some residents who move in here are downsizing from a large home, but some people are upsizing. We have a lot of snowbirds that spend winters down south. All these factors are considered when we plan activities, regulations and budget items.”

Ask 10 residents why they moved to a 55+ Community, and you’ll probably get 10 different reasons. But one common thread is that people are at a stage in life when they crave connections with others. Savvy board members build community connections from the very beginning, when a new homeowner moves in.

“It’s definitely the people that make this place special,” Mitchell says. “They truly care for one another and look out for each other.” When someone moves into the neighborhood, members of the Welcome Committee will visit them soon afterward and invite them to some of the myriad events hosted in the community. “They understand that people might be shy to go to a party or a movie with people they don’t know, so they offer to introduce them to the crowd.”

Good connections can mean more than attending events together. Residents who live alone might

signal to their neighbors that all is well by turning on a particular light each evening or opening their blinds in the morning. Block captains or members of walking clubs can be alert for signs that something is out of the ordinary. It is helpful if the board and property manager defines a reporting structure and basic guidelines to help people watch out for each other – and to maintain the privacy of those who do not want to connect.

In this unprecedented time, those connections have an important practical aspect. Some residents might need to be exceptionally cautious with their health. Their neighbors might be able to run errands for them, drop off groceries at the door or just visit with them from a safe distance on the lawn. This helpfulness is also important for people who have had an injury or are recovering from sickness or surgery. Elderly people are more susceptible to loneliness, so these visits and acts of kindness are crucial.

To facilitate these connections, consider a virtual noteboard or common area bulletin board where people can notify others when they need help or are available to volunteer. A committee might form to be “on-call” for different needs, whether it is fixing a leaky faucet or maintaining a lending closet of medical items. At one community in Arizona, a group of crafters used to gather to make handmade cards to send to neighbors; they now craft together while chatting in a Zoom meeting.



### Activities

Active Adult Communities used to be synonymous with golf and bingo clubs – but that was before the active, healthy Baby Boomers moved in. Today's population may be interested in more lively pastimes like pickleball tournaments, educational seminars and hot yoga classes. Because each community has its own character and culture, the board or social committee should do some research to find out which things are most important to residents.

A social committee or a paid lifestyle director can help events and pastimes keep up their momentum. Regency at the Woods of South Barrington employs an assistant manager who helps the board and committees plan and schedule events. “Our committees add value to residents by offering classes and programs for them to participate in,” says Mitchell. “It’s important for residents to get to know their neighbors and offer opportunities for them to stay happy and healthy.”

Associations have had to pivot during the pandemic to contact-free types of activities. Luckily, many organizations and services have pivoted as well, to provide virtual classes, online activities and low-contact pastimes that residents can enjoy.

For exercise options, you can also reach out to local gyms, yoga studios and personal trainers to work out a partnership with your community. They



can offer classes and training tips via YouTube or live classes through video conferencing platforms. FirstService Residential communities around North America have created numerous partnerships like this.

Depending on the interests and rules of your association, you might plan a “Drive-In” movie activity where people spread lawn chairs across a common area or someone’s driveway. The movie, program or events can be projected on the side of the building, or a resident might play the video from a TV in their garage. This can work for many types of programming so the residents can watch together while remaining socially distanced. Consider themes for the day or week: virtual museum day, seminar week, health topic month.





## Association *Committees*

At one property managed by FirstService Residential, a lifestyle committee is working on a holiday golf cart parade and a virtual cooking demonstration that residents can follow at home with their own supplies. At another association, a health and learning committee books experts to put on virtual seminars about heart health, better communication techniques for couples, dementia support, and TedTalks discussion groups. For the last activity, residents all watch an interesting topic from the TedTalks library, and then discuss together via Zoom.

Committees like these illustrate how varied the interests are in a community and how an active committee can nurture those efforts. In today's busy world, everyone is juggling multiple tasks and responsibilities. A well-run committee offers much to the community – it allows for more to get done than if it was done by the board or manager alone. A committee might convene to address one initiative, such as building a butterfly garden. Or the committee could be an ongoing effort, such as an advisory group for the board.

The board, and/or community manager, should be involved in starting the committee. You want to be sure the board is meeting for the right reasons – reasons that benefit the association. Begin by defining a charter or mission statement for the group so that the purpose is clear, and members aren't wasting time on anything falling outside that purpose. If the group is granted a budget, define who is accountable for the money and how it is expected to be used.

You probably have experts in all sorts of fields within your association, so make sure you tap into those talents and encourage people to use their skills to benefit the community. Beware of residents with an agenda joining the team, as they can be disruptive or even discourage others for participating. Finally, the board should periodically recognize or publicly thank the team members and make sure all residents know the difference they're making.

### What would your community value?

**Social Committee:**  
book club, card club, parties, religious groups, travel, charity events and activities for grandchildren

**Health & Wellness:**  
wellness speakers, exercise clubs, sports leagues, seminars and blood drive

**Administrative groups:**  
rules & regulations, finance, property tax, architecture and landscape committees

**Bereavement group**

**Welcome Committee**





As Illinois weathers the pandemic, it is a good time to think about the activities and committees that have been successful in the past and plan for new activities in the future. Perhaps you've determined that you need new equipment or that you need to retire an activity that has not been very popular. Now is an excellent time to develop steering groups that would make your work as a board member easier.

Over time, communities will face greater pressure to keep up with these truly active adults and provide the amenities they demand. People have a choice in which community they want to settle in. Give them a reason to choose yours by providing in-demand hobbies and entertainment.



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### About FirstService Residential

FirstService Residential is the Illinois expert and North America's residential property management leader, partnering with more than 500 community associations within the Chicagoland area and over 8,500 communities in the US and Canada. Community associations, HOAs and condos rely on our extensive Illinois experience, resources and expertise to maximize their property values and enhance their residents' lifestyles. Dedicated to making a difference, every day, we go above and beyond to deliver exceptional service.

FirstService Residential is a subsidiary of FirstService Corporation (FSV), a North American leader in the property services sector. Find out how we can help your community thrive. Visit [www.fsresidential.com/Illinois](http://www.fsresidential.com/Illinois).