

BRING ON THE PERFECT BABY BOOMER BATH

Building for the NEXT adventure means incorporating some key features

By [Deryl Patterson](#)



The trend in bathroom design today favors a large walk-in shower over the garden tub/small shower combination. The same holds true for the 55-plus market. Many conclude that the reason these buyers are skipping the tub is their fear of falling or difficulty getting in and out. I've found that these experienced NEXT adventure buyers have also figured out that they don't actually use the tub, so why waste valuable space with one when there are great alternatives?

Let's design a spectacular shower large enough for two with multiple showerhead options. I love the frameless glass enclosures and the feeling of space they provide. In many examples, the shower is so large, you don't need a door. However, I prefer one to trap in the steam and keep the shower warmer. Some homeowners have showers with showerheads at each end to ensure that each has the ideal height, water temperature, and spray intensity.



Housing Design Matters *Large showers are replacing garden tubs in popularity among 55-plus buyers.*

The shower is among the top places in a home where a homeowner risks injury. Including a grab bar (or at least blocking in the wall for a future grab bar) is a no-brainer. Eliminating the threshold in the shower and incorporating a single, lineal drain are both elegant and practical touches. Including a hand-held showerhead is not only convenient for the non-ambulatory bather, it also simplifies cleaning the shower. A seat in the shower is a must, but not necessarily for sitting—it's better

used as a shelf for the gals to prop up their legs when shaving. If a seat is needed for bathing, separate shower chairs are actually preferred.

Now, let's talk about the vanities. As experienced homeowners, these 55-plus buyers understand the value of personal space. Separate vanities are simply good for the marriage. Now that we have jettisoned the grand tub, there is plenty of space for it. If there is room still, consider a knee space for the woman to put on her makeup. Instead of a wall mirror, install a window in front of the knee space. As we age, we need more light to see up close and natural light is ideal. A simple magnifying mirror on the counter is more effective than a wall mirror.

Finally, there is the toilet room. You may want to start with a comfort-height toilet, which is a couple of inches taller than standard models. Thinking ahead

and including blocking for grab bars is always a good idea. Make sure to keep the door at least 32 inches wide to accommodate various forms of walking aids.

When designing the master bath for 55-plus buyers, there are many things to keep in mind. This space takes on the role of a personal spa to refresh and rejuvenate any homeowner. It must be functional without being institutional. It must be luxurious, but it also must be equipped to adapt to the homeowner's safety needs. A master bath that withstands the test of time will give any 55-plus home buyer the confidence they need when buying their NEXT adventure.