

Planning for Success: The Facility Analysis

by Greg Huntman, AIA, Pi Architects, Inc.

How does your senior living facility compare to the others out there? Have you maximized your facility's potential?

In order to better understand your facility's strengths and weaknesses, it is important to conduct a facility analysis from the vantage points of the residents and family members, as well as the staff.

View the facility through the eyes of the residents and their family members. What do they see as they turn their car into your facility to help their parent decide where to live?

What is their last impression as they leave?

The family's decision to select your residence will be based on their perception of the facility's total physical and social environment. The combination of the building components and service philosophies should culminate in a residential environment that fosters security, warmth and independence.

To assist you with your facility analysis, a checklist is provided. The checklist covers five areas, beginning with the exterior and working into the core building systems.

Building Exterior

Let's start with prospective residents' first impression of the facility - the site and building exterior. As with any neighborhood, you can assess a person by how well they maintain their yard and house. Does the image and maintenance of your home compel future residents and their families to walk through your doors?

Public Spaces

One of the biggest challenges when planning a new building or renovation is what types and sizes of public spaces to provide. My best recommendation is to consider the facility like any well-planned house. You want a variety of spaces that allow both group and private activities in a comfortable setting. This does not mean that you have to include a separate space for every conceived activity. You want to maximize the usability of each space by grouping compatible activities. This is especially important in smaller facilities.

Of course, the interior décor needs to exemplify the good services the residents receive. This is the most cost effective way to improve the image of a facility. With careful selection of finishes, furniture and accessories, it can be done affordably.

Resident Apartments and Rooms

This is one of the most crucial components of a successful building. The resident's apartment provides a space for privacy and personal expression.

Practical and safety features should be combined to create apartments that are efficient and easy to maintain which encourages independence.

Staff Areas

View the building through the staff's eyes. How can modifications to the facility layout reduce task times and enable staff to be more efficient and spend maximum time with residents?

This can be accomplished by providing staff stations with maximum visibility of the residents and easy access to resident activities and storage areas.

Close attention to staff areas shows the support of management and helps maintain quality staff.

Building Systems

Underlying all the residential features is a complex system of medical, environmental and practical features to insure resident safety and comfort. The existing systems should be checked for compliance with current requirements to identify required upgrades.

Lighting levels should be increased to accommodate diminishing eyesight and should be appropriate for the activity. Use soft lighting to replace harsh fluorescent fixtures wherever possible. New energy conservation codes make this challenging, but through the selection of appropriate fixtures both can be achieved.

Pay special attention to resident security features from

the entrance controls to the emergency call system. Resident and family security concerns will continue to increase and be one of the most critical decision factors.

Conclusion

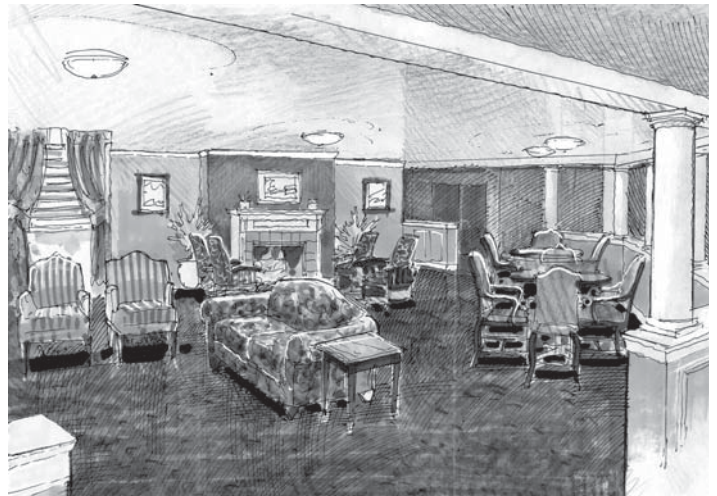
The architectural environment is never a substitution for good care, but well-planned facilities influence residents' and families initial decisions and promote longer resident stays.

Only by taking a close and critical look at the facility, can you better analyze the options and make decisions that maximize the marketability, functionality and long term success of your facility.

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See page 12 for a facility checklist.

An underutilized space is converted into a comfortable and versatile living room in this Houston, Texas senior living facility.



Facility Analysis Checklist

Building Exterior

- Well landscaped site
- Entrance signs easy to identify
- Building image inviting with a residential scale
- Entrances inviting and easy to identify
- Positive site drainage
- Covered drop-off
- Enough parking for both residents and staff
- Adequate number of accessible parking spots with accessible route into building
- Covered parking
- Exterior activity areas and walkways
- Hazard free routes without steps and grade changes
- Good exterior lighting that illuminates hazards and increases security

Comments: _____

Public Spaces

- Interior image current and appropriate for the region
- Residential scaled and detailed spaces
- Furniture is comfortable, durable and easy to get in and out of
- Lobby with natural lighting and space for residents to wait for rides and converse
- Reception and attendant stations reminiscent of a country club or hotel
- Facility layout is intuitive and easy to navigate with directional signage to assist way-finding
- Versatile living room allows for group conversations and movies
- Dining room sufficiently sized to allow for a variety of dining options with chairs with arms and casters on front legs
- Separate dining/conference room for family dining and parties
- Variety of activity spaces for group and individual activities
- Craft and art room with good lighting and lots of storage
- Display cases to show off residents crafts and artwork
- Library with computer terminals connected to the Internet
- Spaces for exercise equipment and aerobics classes to encourage wellness activities
- Resident laundry room sized to allow folding clothes and encourage casual conversation
- Corridors with handrails that look like chair rails
- Toilets easily available for residents
- Resting spaces allow residents to rest and socialize when traveling between activities
- Ample storage throughout
- Improve acoustics in areas with hard surfaces and loud equipment

Comments: _____

Resident Rooms

- Variety of apartment unit sizes appropriate for the target market
- Window coverings and finishes appropriate for target market
- Kitchens functional and easy to use without assistance to promote independence
- Adequate space for typical room furniture layouts
- Accessible bathrooms with storage space for towels and toiletries

Comments: _____

Staff Areas

- Efficient work spaces minimizing incidental tasks
- Marketing office easily accessible from entrance
- Resident visibility maximized
- Break room with lockers
- Kitchen sized for preparation and storage of a greater variety of menu options to meet the increasing expectations of seniors and dieticians
- Storage for supplies and equipment
- Large soiled and clean utility spaces to better control odor and carts in hallways

Comments: _____

Building Systems

- Medical systems hidden from view of residents and families
- Mechanical systems that provide good air control and introduce outside air
- Lighting which provides a variety of lighting levels appropriate for the activity
- Building exterior maintained
- Durable finish materials that are easy to clean and soft to protect resident falls (such as carpet and rounded edges)
- Emergency electrical systems that meet current standards
- Smoke compartmentation as appropriate
- Fire alarm with visual and audible alarms
- Cable and internet to activity spaces and resident apartments
- Computer systems connecting staff and allowing for easy continued education
- Emergency call system with resident pendants and remote pagers for staff
- Security system controls at building entrance

Comments: _____

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