

8 Predictions on the Future of Senior Care

As the economy changes, so do the realities of senior care. Read our predictions for the future of senior care and find out more about the housing trends shaping the industry.

The U.S. economy—and the health care industry—have seen more than their fair share of ups and downs over the past decade or two. The Great Recession has only been the most recent upheaval to affect the way Americans plan for their retirements and their aging parents' senior care. And along with all the economic shifts, there have been big changes in technology, geriatric medicine, and how we view [healthy aging](#).

It's no surprise that senior care and [senior living](#) options are also changing in response to socioeconomic conditions. Both consumers and providers have had to tighten their budgets and get creative, looking [outside the box](#) for [senior housing possibilities](#). The rising cost of assisted living means that some families are looking at aging in place, home care, and multi-generational housing instead of more expensive nursing care options. Those who do opt for residential senior living will find a wide range of offerings in new, booming areas like eco-friendly housing and so-called "smart homes," as well as expanded amenities at more traditional assisted living communities

What overall trends can we expect to see in housing for older Americans? Check out our eight predictions for the near future of senior care.

1. The Decline of the Nursing Home Model of Care

We've been seeing it for some time—a move away from the concept of senior housing as synonymous with [nursing homes](#), and a move toward other senior housing options, whether it's [independent living](#), [memory care](#) or [home care](#). It's not a trend that's likely to change anytime soon. According to [Senior Housing News](#), factors such as the high cost of skilled nursing and recent cuts to [Medicare](#) and Medicaid programs will only accelerate the shift.

Dwayne Clark, CEO and Founder of Aegis Living, comments that he wants his residents to "experience vacation at their disposal." In fact, resident enjoyment is so important to Clark that he's helping to reinvent memory care. "We are building a community between [Madison Park](#) and Capitol Hill, scheduled to open fall of 2013. We went back to the Madison Park of the 1950's and are creating the look and feel, for our memory care residents, based on that time as seniors with dementia resort to long-term memories."

2. The Rise of Technology-Enhanced Senior Care

Personal care robots are just one attention-grabbing example of the types of up-and-coming [technology](#) that are going to revolutionize senior care as we know it. Without straying into *Star Trek* territory, there are plenty of options at our



fingertips already that promise to improve the health and quality of life for seniors—from “smart home” computer systems that keep track of medications and vital signs to wireless networks that provide mobile bedside support for seniors in care facilities.

3. More Multigenerational Housing Options

Active seniors who don't want to move into a community or facility—or can't afford it—are looking at other options for an independent lifestyle. One possibility is multigenerational housing—the idea that a family will pool their resources and either modify their existing home to suit multiple generations, or move into a place that's built to house both young families and older adults.

4. Neighborhood-Friendly Civic Planning

With the economy still recovering, many active retirees want to continue working, and living close to a city center or commercial district just makes good sense in those cases. On the other hand, there are limited-mobility seniors who still want access to the amenities of a thriving downtown. These are both good reasons why community planners want to be senior-friendly in the future, whether it's creating senior housing in existing downtown hubs or considering the needs of older adults in planning new neighborhoods.



5. Cooperative Living: Senior Co-housing

Senior co-housing is another way active older adults can gain the benefits of community living, but on a smaller scale, without the nursing home feel. Co-housing is more like living on a commune, where residents have [independent](#) homes but also benefit from shared spaces like gardens and recreation facilities. There are generally some shared meals and housekeeping duties, paid for through monthly dues, and residents have a say in community decisions. This trend has been growing over the past decade.

6. More Amenities and Lifestyle Perks in Traditional Senior Housing

With inevitable rising costs for senior living options like assisted living and continuing care retirement communities, these more traditional forms of housing have begun offering a wide range of amenities to tempt potential residents, from lifestyle-based communities that cater to [LGBT seniors](#) or Asian-Americans to an increased array of recreational options like cultural events, fitness classes, and educational opportunities.

7. Going Green: Eco-Friendly Senior Living

These days, eco-friendly increasingly means economical, too, and green senior housing offers older adults the ability to be environmentally minded as they enter their golden years. While there may be an initial investment in building up a green infrastructure—homes and facilities that are LEED-certified, for instance—eco-friendly building, lighting and appliances can save money in the long run and are much better for the environment.



8. Aging in Place Means a Booming Home Health Care Industry

More and more seniors want to remain at home for as long as possible, as evidenced by some of the trends

discussed above. But it's not just improvements in technology and civic planning that are going to facilitate aging in place. The burgeoning home health care industry is also a necessary adjunct to seniors remaining in the home. The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) predicts job growth of 70% for home health and personal care aides over the coming decade, noting that [home care](#) can be a less expensive alternative for those who don't need comprehensive assistance.

Have you seen evidence of these trends in your own search for senior housing? What do you think is the biggest change yet to come in the senior living industry? Let us know in the comments.

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Sarah J. Stevenson is a writer, artist, editor and graphic designer living in Northern California. Her visual art has been exhibited around California, and her writing has appeared in a variety of web sites and print publications. In addition to writing about older adults, she also writes for younger ones--her first novel for young adults, *THE LATTE REBELLION*, was published in 2011 by Flux. For more information, please visit: <http://www.sarahjamilastevenson.com> View [Sarah's Google Profile](#).



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