

# 55+ Standing Ovation

Polygon Northwest, a division of William Lyon Homes, introduced its first 55+ lifestyle community to one of the country's hottest markets to deliver on a future promise.

*by Dawn Duhamel, Possibilities for Design*

When William Lyon Homes launched its 55+ lifestyle brand Ovation in 2017, three of the four locations were in the most well-known areas in the west: Phoenix, Southern California and Las Vegas. But it was their fourth location, far from the sunshine of the Southwest, that is a unique study in 55+ living. In the shadow of 14,000-foot Mount Rainier, with five freshwater lakes and more than 1,200 acres of public parkland, nestles Lacey, Washington, where you'll find Ovation at Oak Tree.

For landowners and developers exploring how 55+ consumers live differently today, Ovation at Oak Tree's story deserves a read. The design team at Polygon Northwest realized its market was prime for a different take on amenities, and set out to address the most important consumer requests: integration and connection with their community, neighborhood, and amazing outdoor environment.

Integration began with the location: Oak Tree has easy access to Interstate 5, an important site attribute, given this buyer's tendency to delay retirement. With over 70% of residents working, the idea of a 55+ community located off the beaten path isn't something today's 50-something buyer is looking for.

As commute times continue to inch up in Seattle, quality of life begins to be measured by a reduction of windshield time, a non-negotiable for this buyer. I-5 keeps the cities of Lacey and Olympia nearby, creating an essential connection with their community.

Neighborhood integration pairs with outdoor assimilation through the design of scenic winding paths, interpretive trails, bird-watching platforms and two clubhouses, each with its own personality and perspective. Instead of tucking away the neighborhood trail, it's integrated within the community, fulfilling a meaningful purpose.

"We found that our target audience is interested in connection on a variety of levels. And while they love trails for their implied health benefits, the added bonus is that they absolutely look forward to meeting new people as part of the trail experience," said Brandon Scheibner, Polygon's division president.

With just over 800 homes planned for the community, one large clubhouse could easily have accommodated the needs of Oak Tree: That's a usual standard for many active adult neighborhoods across the country. So why did Polygon elect to design, build and furnish two?

"The conversation began within the context of asking ourselves how we can fully engage our customer. By building two clubhouses, we were able to offer a multitude of places for socializing, and that in itself started to drive robust discussions," said Lisa Ross,



Polygon's marketing manager. "By starting the smaller clubhouse first, we were able to quickly deliver an amenity, which is something that many communities can talk about, but typically cannot execute until much later in the development life cycle."

Beyond simply having a clubhouse built immediately, residents at Oak Tree will experience the benefit of national experts in architecture and interior design. Johnston Architects is the architect for both clubhouses, and Possibilities for Design is its interior design firm. Both companies have many years of experience in the Seattle market.

Together, Polygon, Johnston Architects and Possibilities for Design created an interior for The Pavilion, the first, smaller clubhouse that captures one of Polygon's critical visions: Bring the outside in, no matter what.

The massing of the first clubhouse nestles easily into the surrounding homes and landscape, and many of the interior spaces have more windows than walls. This creates a gathering area that soars with drama but in a

soft, approachable way. "It needed to be friendly and welcoming, like the way you feel when you walk in your best buddy's front door," said Richard Rawlings of Polygon who, together with Johnston, drove the exterior design. "It was important to design the smaller clubhouse in a way that felt substantial architecturally, yet not overt."

This 4,600-square-foot structure is actually two separate buildings bisected by a single entry. An aerial view reveals a design akin to a bird with its wings spread, which is exactly what Polygon hopes their buyers do—spread their wings and enjoy their surroundings. One building includes a kitchen, bar and gathering space, while the second is dedicated to fitness, with exercise machines, a room for classes and a sauna. "We packed a lot in a small area," said Rawlings, "and our consumer knows it. That's exactly what they want."

Possibilities for Design president and founder Doris Pearlman says years of active adult clubhouse design experience prove that the design of multiple seating and socializing areas are critical to creating the right atmosphere. "It's important to this consumer that they have flexibility in their community clubhouse," she said. "They are engaged in their world, and they find ways to be involved."

This could mean a weekly meeting, a pop-up event or a chance encounter, and they want flexible spaces for each of those interactions. We've learned over the years that this audience responds well to intimate areas when interior volume soars. The architecture and design of The Pavilion create a launching area for new interests and friendships," Pearlman said.

Response to Ovation at Oak Tree has been tremendous. Since opening in late 2017, Polygon has sold over 55 homes in six months, with the Pavilion clubhouse set to open July 21. Future home

owners have six one-level floor plans to choose from, each with unique layouts to accommodate their lifestyles. With at least one covered outdoor living space and in many cases two, home owners can enjoy the outdoors even if they find themselves in a light drizzle.

As more and more Washingtonians discover Ovation at Oak Tree, they are making the move from all around Western Washington, not just nearby ZIP codes. Nearly 60% of buyers come from counties to the north, home to major employers like Boeing, Microsoft, Amazon and Starbucks. These home buyers are taking advantage of the unique opportunity to live close to the amenities the region offers, while also finding peace and tranquility outside of the bustle.

In The Villages, Polygon's next amenity buildings, plans are to expand upon the groundwork laid in the Pavilion with a completely new approach to the singular large clubhouse concept by bringing together a series of buildings that, while linked through a variety of covered connections, appear to be organized as described—a village.

An additional exercise facility will include more equipment as well as a swimming pool, while other buildings will feature areas for large and small-scale entertainment – a ballroom, a parking area for food trucks and a farmer's market, smaller living room and game rooms. Additionally, The Villages will have an abundance of outdoor spaces opening directly to the Oak Tree Preserve, where Polygon has retained 40 acres of oak trees that were part of the original property. A fire pit, bocce ball court, two play courts and covered entertainment spaces will ensure these active adults can lead the life they demand.

Polygon Northwest has listened to its clients and created a unique community concept that integrates residents, facilitates interaction, and delivers on the future promise of an active adult community: A standing "Ovation" well deserved.

