

## DESIGN ELEMENTS TO AVOID IN Memory Care Communities

### 01 Integrated Risk Reduction

One of the many struggles of dementia is being aware that something is "off" but unable to place what it is. This can lead to feelings of stress, anxiety, overstimulation, and more. For these reasons, it is essential to integrate risk reduction when designing.

What this means is that while you want to create a safe space for seniors with dementia, you also need to consider the different ways it will impact them.

For seniors in cognitive decline, the thought/feeling of being trapped in a hospital or facility can be debilitating. This is why integrated risk reduction strategies can make a space feel more like home.



### 02 Wandering & Wayfinding

Seniors who have dementia are very prone to wandering. This is a natural part of cognitive decline as they try to get their bearings in a new environment/space. However, rather than try to prevent wandering, it is a much better strategy to implement design elements that encourage wayfinding. By encouraging residents to wander through mindful design, they will be more active, which in turn helps them feel more hungry and thirsty. Dehydration and not eating enough are widespread issues in the elderly community, and those with dementia are no exception.

Here are some ways you can design your memory care community around encouraging wandering by establishing wayfinding strategies:

#### CLEAR SIGNAGE

By implementing clear signage with large, easy-to-read print and/or pictures, residents can know where they are and find where they want to go.

#### LIGHTING

A well-lit environment is best for seniors in cognitive decline for several reasons: safety, wayfinding, vision, timekeeping, activities, and more.

#### LANDMARKS

Landmarks help dementia patients remember how to find their way around more easily. Utilizing specific items as "landmarks" can give residents a clearer picture of their surroundings.

#### FABRICS

Choose light colors and simple patterns. Dark fabrics may appear as a missing space, and busy designs can be mistaken for debris, while textured fabrics may encourage residents to pick at the material.



### 03 Crowding and Privacy

Sometimes, seniors in memory care communities may feel like they are losing their independence and privacy; and are very prone to feeling crowded in common areas. Fortunately, you can make several mindful design choices to help prevent these issues:

- Windows are a great way to help seniors feel less isolated in space
- Open floor plans are a great design choice for memory care communities
- Implement private spaces exclusively for residents who need time to themselves
- Table sizes that seat two to four residents can create a more comfortable setting for residents to interact and minimize distractions

