

AS502807

Senior Housing: Community as an Antidote to Isolation

Francisco Colom Jover
MASS Design Group

Learning Objectives

- Employ lessons learned from the case studies to leverage community as an antidote to isolation in senior housing.
- Identify opportunities to balance the need for density and efficiency with the creation of healthier housing.
- Implement trauma-informed design strategies aimed at providing access to nature, natural light, wayfinding cues, and fresh air.
- Discover strategies to create healthier buildings that interact with the climate while designing to Passive House standards.

Description

The US senior population is growing. However, many older adults do not have the financial resources necessary for a basic standard of living. Their isolation and loneliness has been identified by experts as a great public health risk.

Understanding community as an antidote to isolation, MASS Design Group has partnered with 2Life Communities to develop a model for high density housing that prioritizes resident connections and communal activities linked to aging well. This session explores a framework that creates opportunities for meaningful communal programming at a variety of scales and increases access to green space, natural light, and fresh air.

Using various projects in Massachusetts as case studies, we discuss design strategies that connect seniors to the benefits of community. We look at ways to balance the need for density and efficiency with the creation of healthy environments that help senior residents live better, longer.

Speaker



 [LinkedIn](#)

Francisco Colom Jover is a Senior Architect with MASS Design Group managing affordable housing projects with a focus on creating spaces that promote health and embed principles of trauma-informed design. Prior to joining MASS, he practiced in Spain, the Netherlands, Azerbaijan, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States.

Francisco holds a Master in Design Studies with Distinction from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and a Bachelor and Master of Architecture with Distinction from the University of Alicante, where he was appointed as Honorary Professor of the Department of Architectural Design.

Francisco is the recipient of the Fundacion La Caixa Fellowship for Postgraduate Studies, the European Union Tempo Project Scholarship, the Harvard Eduard Sekler Fellowship, and the Harvard GSD Community Service Fellowship. His work has been exhibited at the 15th and 16th Venice Architecture Biennale.

Francisco is an AIA International Associate and LEED Green Associate.

About MASS Design Group

Our mission is to research, build, and advocate for architecture that promotes justice and human dignity.

MASS Design Group was founded on the understanding that architecture's influence reaches beyond individual buildings. MASS (Model of Architecture Serving Society) believes that architecture has a critical role to play in supporting communities to confront history, shape new narratives, collectively heal and project new possibilities for the future.

We are a team of over 200 architects, landscape architects, engineers, builders, furniture designers, makers, writers, filmmakers, and researchers representing 20 countries across the globe. We believe in expanding access to design that is purposeful, healing, and hopeful.

In 2021, The American Institute of Architects honored MASS Design Group with the 2022 AIA Architecture Firm Award. In 2020, MASS was named the Architecture Innovator of the Year by the Wall Street Journal, for our origins in healthcare and commitment to architecture as a medium for healing. In 2019, Architect Magazine ranked MASS fourth in its list of Top 50 Firms in Design and in 2017, MASS was awarded the National Design Award in Architecture, given each year by the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

MASS.

Find out more at massdesigngroup.org

[AIA 2022 Architecture Firm Award](#)

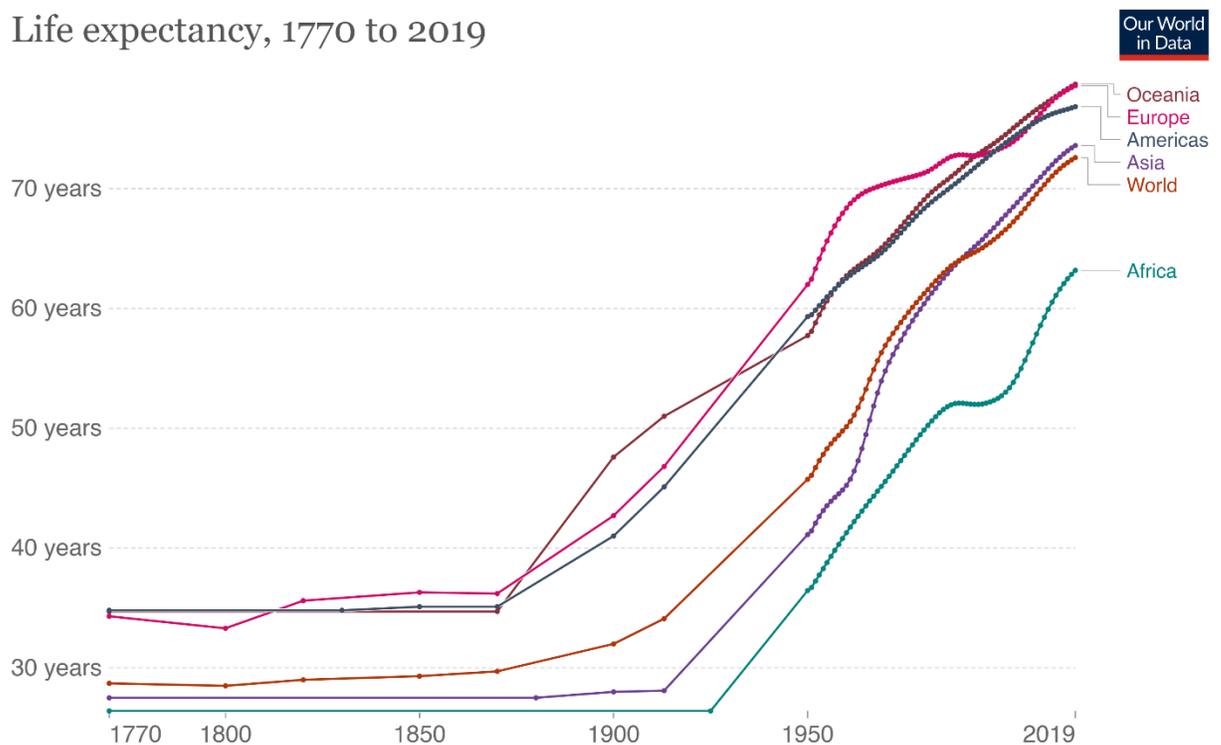
Introduction

Today, we live longer than at any other time in history. However, we also age lonelier than ever. 43% of seniors in the United States of America experience loneliness. Aging has gone from being a shared, multigenerational responsibility to something that is experienced mostly alone. Surgeon and public health researcher Atul Gawande talks about how “we have allowed aging to be controlled by the imperatives of medicine, technology, and strangers.”

Additional resources:

- [Rising Life Expectancy Around the World](#)
- [Loneliness in Older Persons: A Predictor of Functional Decline and Death](#)
- [Atul Gawande](#)
- [Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End](#)

Life expectancy, 1770 to 2019



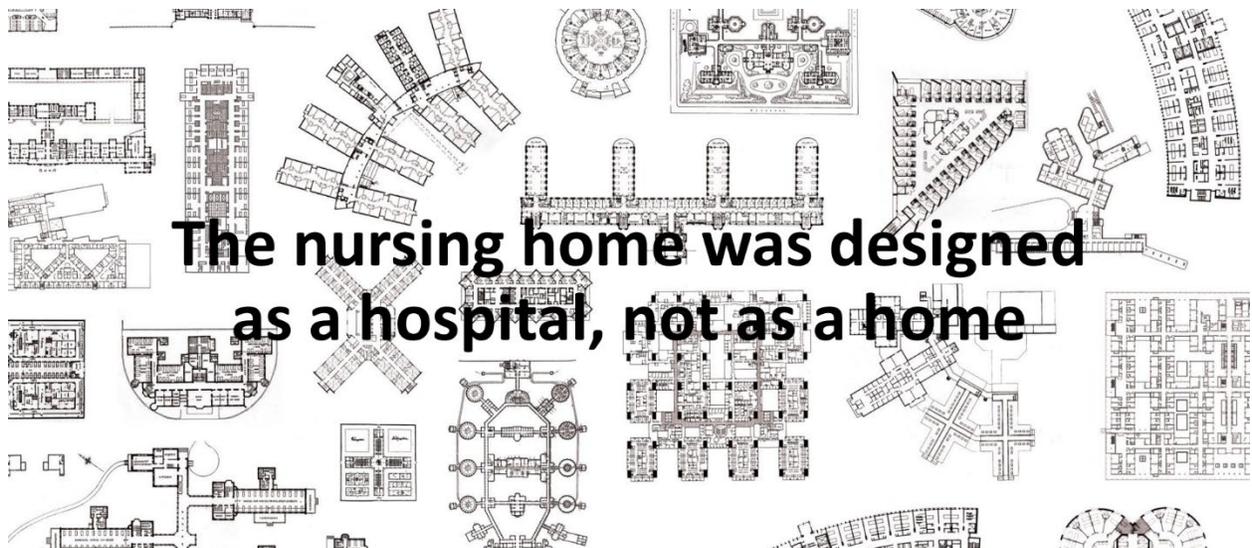
Rising Life Expectancy Around the World. Our World in Data.

How We Got Here

The story of Harry Truman tells us that as we get older, we expect more from life than safety. However, when we look at the typical alternative to independent living, the nursing home, we find that it's built around safety only. The nursing home was designed as a hospital, not as a home. Today, independent living and nursing homes have become two sides of the same coin, and too often translate into a similar experience of loneliness. We need an intermediate solution that provides a safe space where seniors can thrive and be the authors of their lives.

Additional resources:

- [Harry R. Truman \(Wikipedia\)](#)
- [Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End](#)



The nursing home. MASS Design Group.



Independent Living



Nursing Home

Two sides of the same coin. MASS Design Group.

2Life Communities

MASS Design Group has partnered with 2Life Communities, a nonprofit organization in Massachusetts that is committed to redefining senior living by creating a unique model for affordable senior housing. Founded in 1965, 2Life is open to seniors of all backgrounds and is home to a diverse population of 1,500 residents.

Additional resources:

- [2Life Communities](#)
- [Aging in Community](#)



2Life Communities

J.J. Carroll project

The J.J. Carroll redevelopment project advances 2Life Communities' vision for all older adults to have the opportunity to age in community. Boston's senior population is growing - according to the city's Boston 2030 report, the number of senior households will increase by 53% between 2010 and 2030. Compounded with this demand, many senior residents do not have the financial resources necessary for a basic standard of living, with Massachusetts ranked second only to Mississippi of the states with the largest gap between senior median income and amount of money needed for a basic standard of living. The 142-unit affordable housing community for seniors seeks to address this need through design strategies that will help residents live better, longer. MASS worked with 2Life Communities and the existing residents of J.J. Carroll to develop a model for high density housing that prioritizes resident connections and communal activities linked to aging well. The conventional double-loaded corridor apartment block was reconsidered to create clusters of unit "neighborhoods" with five to eight apartments that plug into a central zone of community program space. This framework creates opportunities for meaningful communal programming at a variety of scales and increases access to green space and natural light.

In addition to providing much-needed affordable housing, the project features commercial space, a community health center, and over 15,000 square feet of publicly accessible open space. J.J. Carroll welcomes the community at large through intergenerational programming and play space, epitomizing 2Life Communities' commitment to reducing isolation and loneliness in seniors and connecting them to the benefits of community.

METHOD

**CREATE A MODEL OF HOUSING THAT
EMPOWERS RESIDENTS TO LIVE IN COMMUNITY**

J.J. Carroll project: method. MASS Design Group.

Additional resources:

- [J.J. Carroll](#) (Video)
- [An Aging Apartment Complex Becomes a New Model for Healthy Living](#)
- [Construction begins at J.J. Carroll](#)
- [How Loneliness Is Damaging Our Health](#)
- [Medicare Spends More on Socially Isolated Older Adults](#)
- [Social Interaction is Critical for Mental and Physical Health](#)
- [Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging](#)
- [Boston 2030: Housing a Changing City](#)



J.J. Carroll project: aerial rendering view. MASS Design Group.

COVID-19: Designing Senior Housing for Safe Interaction

During the Spring 2020, MASS partnered with the Joint Center for Housing Studies and other senior housing experts to develop "[Designing Senior Housing for Safe Interaction](#)," a document underlining design principles aligned with infection control strategies that can help us preserve healthy social interaction.

People 65 years or older represent **80% of all deaths** from COVID-19

+

Older adults also need to balance another threat to their health - **social isolation**

=

How do we design for **safe interaction, not social isolation?**

Implementing design principles aligned with infection control strategies can help us preserve healthy social interaction.



Provide access to fresh air



Encourage people to spend time outdoors



Sequence flows through a space



Increase cleaning protocols for high-touch surfaces



Reduce pressure on high traffic places



Expand the threshold of the unit



Group residents into villages



Embed technology

Designing Senior Housing for Safe Interaction. MASS Design Group.

Additional resources:

- [Joint Center for Housing Studies](#)
- [Role of Architecture in Fighting COVID-19](#)
- [Designing Spaces for Infection Control](#)

Additional resources:

- [Lynn emerges as a new center of COVID-19 in Massachusetts](#)
- [500 Lynnfield St Redevelopment](#)
- [Union 2021](#)



500 Lynnfield St project: front rendering view. MASS Design Group.