

Resident Voices: How Residents Shape Their Senior Living Experience

Throughout their marriage, Helen and Tom were always the first to lend a hand. When their kids were young, they led the neighborhood watch, organized block parties, and served on the local community council. Being involved and having a voice mattered to them. With their children grown and downsizing on their minds, they wonder, "Would we have a say in a senior living community?"

That question is important for many seniors. The good news is that the answer is absolutely yes! At many senior living communities, residents play an active role in shaping daily life.

Leadership and Purpose Continue Here

For people like Helen and Tom, leadership isn't something that ends after retirement; it simply takes a new form. Resident councils, committees, and town halls give senior living residents a way to stay involved and connected with others who share their enthusiasm for community life. Through these programs, they can stay engaged, purposeful, and proud of the place they call home.

What Is a Resident Council?

A resident council is a resident-led group who meet often to discuss ideas, share feedback, and suggest improvements to community life. Think of it as a neighborhood association. It's a place where everyone can express their voice. Staff attend meetings too, to make sure that resident feedback reaches community leadership.

Councils may weigh in on everything from dining menus and event calendars to transportation and wellness programs. Resident councils do more than just talk. They're catalysts for teamwork, innovation, and real change.

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When staff follow up on council feedback, residents see their voices matter. Also, leadership gains valuable insight into residents' evolving needs. This partnership leads to stronger connections and a shared sense of pride in the community.

How Resident Councils Organize Themselves

Resident councils are typically formed through a simple yearly election. Every resident has the opportunity to vote and/or run for a position. This democratic approach means that the council reflects the voices and perspectives of the whole community.

Most councils include a few key roles to keep things organized:

- **President or Chairperson:** Leads meetings, sets the agenda, and serves as the main contact between residents and management.
- **Vice President:** Supports the President and steps in when needed.
- **Secretary:** Keeps meeting notes and shares updates with the community.
- **Treasurer:** Keeps track of the council's budget
- **Committee Chairs:** Oversee specific projects or report on committee activities, such as dining, wellness, or hospitality.

For people like Helen and Tom, these roles provide residents with meaningful leadership opportunities and a clear structure for collaboration. As Helen says about the community they chose, "It feels good to know our ideas still matter. We're not just living here. We're actually helping make it better."

Resident Councils Make a Tangible Difference

In one community, residents wanted more opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Their suggestion led to the creation of a community garden and monthly "Garden Talks," where residents share planting tips and stories from their own backyards.

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In another community, the resident council heard from several neighbors that they were having trouble with their dishwashers. The council brought the issue to management, and together they coordinated a plan to replace the faulty appliances for everyone affected.

Small changes can have a big impact when they're driven by the people who live there. When residents help shape the community environment, they feel truly at home.

Committees: Turning Ideas into Action

Resident councils often inspire specialized committees that focus on key areas of community life. A few examples include:

- **Dining Committees** work with culinary teams to review menus and suggest new options.
- **Wellness Committees** help plan fitness classes, health talks, or walking challenges.
- **Hospitality or Welcome Committees** greet new residents and help them settle in.
- **Activities Committees** brainstorm and organize events, day trips, and volunteer projects.

These groups allow residents to focus on what they love most (food, fitness, creativity, or connection) and bring their ideas to life in meaningful ways.

Emma's Story

When Emma realized that several new residents in her community were vegetarian, she brought the news to the dining committee. Together with the community chef, they added more vegetarian dishes to the dinner menu, giving everyone more variety and choice at mealtime.

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Town Halls: Open Conversations for the Whole Community

Many communities also hold regular town hall meetings. These meetings are open forums where residents, staff, and leadership come together to share updates, ask questions, and exchange ideas.

Town halls create a spirit of transparency and collaboration. Residents can hear directly from leadership about upcoming plans or community improvements. They can also raise topics that matter to them.

Nancy's Story

At a recent town hall, Nancy mentioned that her community's front entryway felt a little "abandoned" in the evenings. She suggested adding brighter lighting and background music to make it more welcoming for visitors and late-night walkers. Within weeks, the staff worked with the resident council to test lighting options and playlists. Now, the lobby glows warmly at dusk, and residents often stop to chat on their way in from dinner or an evening stroll.

Town halls remind everyone that senior living is a partnership—one built on trust, respect, and open communication.

The Benefits of Getting Involved

When Helen, Tom, Emma, and Nancy take active roles in their community, their lives feel richer, more connected, and more meaningful. Here's why:

- **Empowerment:** Residents have a say in what happens day to day. Having that voice builds confidence and reinforces independence.
- **Better Quality of Life:** When neighbors and leaders hear ideas and feedback, real tangible change happens.
- **Stronger Connections:** Working together toward a shared goal brings people closer. Friendships form and residents feel proud of the community they've helped shape.

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When residents engage in their community, they not only help the community thrive; they also enhance their bodies, minds, and spirits.

Resources for Seniors and Families

If you'd like to learn more about how resident councils work, explore these helpful resources:

- [Resident Council Rights Fact Sheet – Consumer Voice](#)
 - https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/long-term-carerecipient/Resident_Council_Rights_Fact_Sheet.pdf
- [National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center \(NORC\)](#)
 - <https://ltcombudsman.org/>
- [Resident Councils: What's the Law?](#)
 - https://ltcombudsman.org/uploads/files/support/Resident_Councils_Whats_the_Law.pdf
- [Consumer Voice Resident Council Center](#)
 - <https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/recipients/nursing-homeresidents/resident-council-center>

Building Trust and Connection

At Kisco, we believe open communication and collaboration are the foundation of community. Resident councils, committees, and town halls all give residents meaningful ways to share feedback and stay involved.

Our leaders and staff listen closely, respond quickly, and work hand in hand with residents to create solutions. Whether it's adjusting the dining schedule, adding new activities, or improving common areas, every suggestion counts. Together, residents and staff create a community built on partnership, pride, and heart.

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Live Looking Forward

At Kisco Senior Living, we celebrate, respect, and empower residents to make a difference every day. Resident councils are one of the many ways we bring *The Art of Living Well* to life.

If you or your loved one are exploring senior living, contact your nearest Kisco community to schedule a tour. See how resident voices shape a warm, welcoming environment where everyone truly belongs.

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