

ACTIVE ADULT

ZOM Targets Active Adult in Next Growth Push After Opening First Senior Living Communities

By **Andrew Christman** | December 11, 2023

ZOM Senior Living is positioning itself to capture the “migration patterns” of older adults as the company gears up for growth, after completing its first luxury housing communities over the past year.

Primarily focused on multifamily development, ZOM Living started its senior housing vertical in 2018 and completed its first community, Wellington Bay, in September 2022. Since then it has also completed its Watermark Coral Gables and Watermark West Palm Beach communities, developed through a partnership with Watermark Retirement.

“We’re also in the entitlement process for another full continuum up in the mid-Atlantic region, while also working to pursue active adult opportunities,” Stephen Ordway, ZOM Living’s SVP of senior housing, told Senior Housing News. “We’ve been spending a lot of our time working on that segment (active adult) of the market, and working on pursuits there as well.”

With all three operational communities located in southern Florida, ZOM Living is “well positioned” for future growth due to the migration trends of seniors relocating to Florida, Texas and Arizona. The Covid pandemic has only helped propel people to move to the area, Ordway said.

“It’s been interesting coming out of the pandemic. The market has certainly gotten very strong,” he said. “I don’t know how many quarters we’ve had ... of continued quarter over quarter demand or growth in the number of occupied units across the country.”

Following this trend, Ordway noted he expects to see overall occupancy reach pre-Covid numbers in 2024 due to the limited number of construction starts that have been occurring throughout 2023. For the industry as a whole, he added the fundamentals are strong and the sector is resilient, with occupancy gains growing across markets.

“I think the transaction market is going to continue to be a little bit softer, [so] folks who can stay on and hold on to their assets as long as they can, will continue to do that,” Ordway said.



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With ZOM Living being a primarily multifamily focused company, its leaders were surprised by the minimal impact that increased mortgage rates had on the independent living portion of Wellington Bay when that community opened. Independent living makes up 159 out of the 282 units available at the community, which reached a stabilized occupancy after exceeding move-in expectations.

While higher mortgage rates have slowed housing market activity, potentially preventing some older adults from tapping home equity to pay for a move to senior living, Ordway believed the “uniqueness” of the Wellington campus helped. The community was built in collaboration with Liberty Senior Living, and early depositors were “excited to get into the community.”

“I think people felt like they were missing out if they weren’t living here living in the community,” he said.

Looking ahead to its pipeline, Ordway said future development starts will likely begin in 2025, with debt and equity likely to be more available. In the meantime, ZOM Living is focusing on its relationship with operating partners, its markets and its product line to meet the next generation of seniors. ■