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Bringing senior dining design up to date

Here's how an Austin architecture firm brings senior dining design into the future with the latest layouts and materials, plus current colors and textures.

Tara Fitzpatrick | Jan 05, 2018

Our oldest citizens are a changing demographic. As they consider their next moves in life, today's "new seniors" are especially leery about the stereotypical (stodgy, monotonous, no fun) aspects of residing in a senior living community, with foodservice being a top concern. Since everyone knows we eat with our eyes first,

before seniors even sit down to a meal, the experience needs to begin with the look and feel of the dining location. Austin-based interior design firm studioSIX5 has been working on “face-lifts” for several senior living communities, with a focus on outdated casual dining spots that “often resemble a fusion of a school cafeteria and the game room of a 1950s nursing home,” according to Leslie McVey Hicks, project design manager for studioSIX5. Here’s how Hicks and the team went to work on two cafes at the Erickson Living campus in Denver.



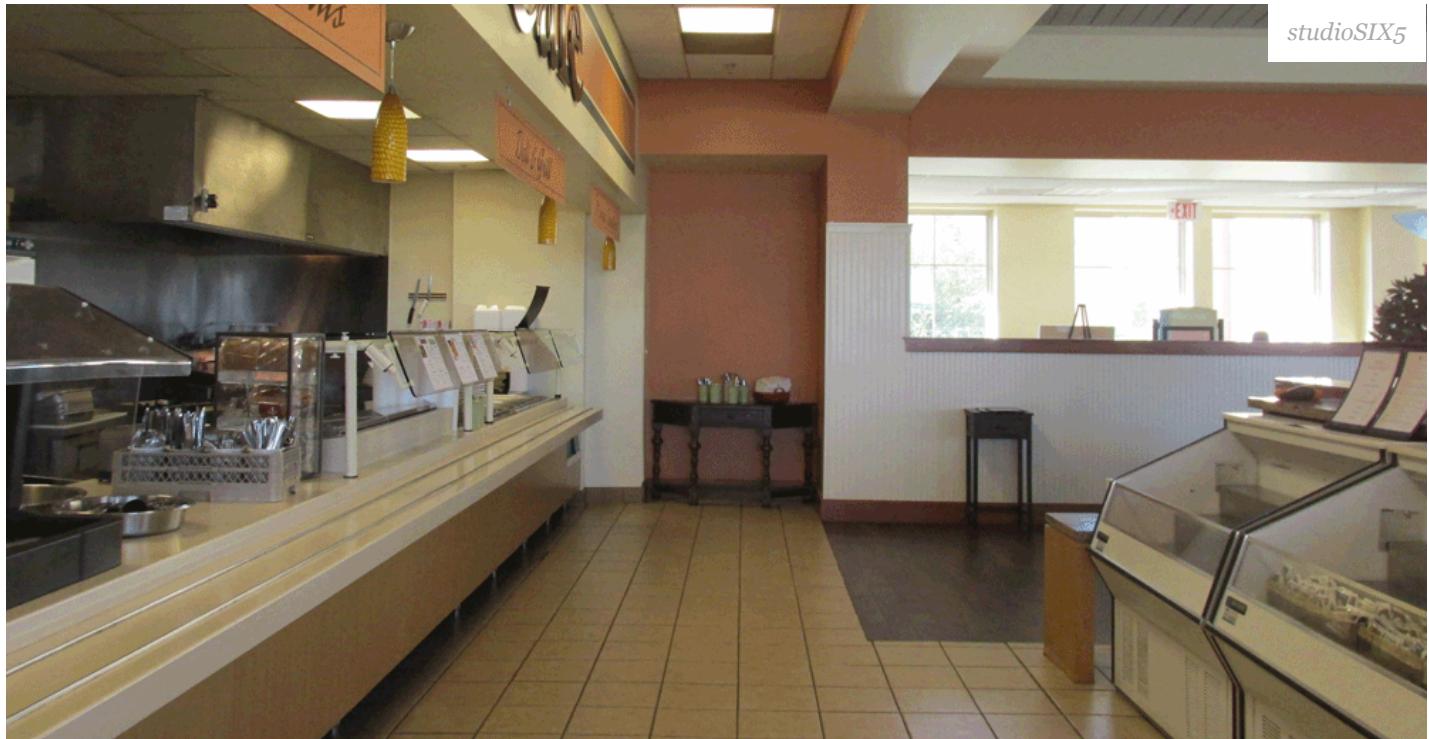
1. “Golden Girls” is a great show, but...

...the wicker/rattan/pastel floral look is outdated, as seen here in the “before” picture of an eating nook at Erickson Living.



2. Into the future

Now, the same space has been opened up and updated. The carpet has been replaced with vinyl wood flooring that not only looks better, but is also easy to keep clean.



3. Update needed

This serving area wasn't terrible, but it was a little dark and muddled. Signage is an important part of branding, and fonts can get old quickly.



4. Brightened up

Now, the same area looks a lot different with subtle changes in the signage and the color palette that are neutral, allowing for pops of color with accent pieces that can be changed out, keeping the look fresh. Lights are LED, not fluorescent, which can be cold.



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5. Out with the bland

This dining area has plenty of windows, but it still managed to feel drab and lifeless.



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6. In with the pizazz

Now, the same space is awash in light, thanks to an on-trend weathered blue paint job and seating that's varied to create more visual interest.



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7. Clunky cafeteria

This line had a definite cafeteria/institutional vibe before its makeover.



8. Fast-casual cool

With the addition of sleek tiles, dark wood, new signage and vastly better LED lighting, the same area looks light years ahead.



9. Home and hearth

Part of the design team's objective was to remove dark colors like burgundy and mossy green in this fireplace room.



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10. Getting warmer

The fireplace room has gotten a wake-up call into a welcoming, energizing place to recharge by the fire.



11. Condiment station snooze

Before, the place to get your grab-and-go meal was not exactly inspiring.



12. Seamless experience

A cove for beverages creates a more defined space for dining.



13. More grab-and-go options

Both cafes in this renovation received more stations for seniors who want to get their meal or snack to go.