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**For Immediate Release**

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**Senior Living Survey Finds Residents Feel Safe,  
Glad to be Part of a Community During Pandemic**  
*Staff in Independent Living Communities Feel Safe, Supportive of Response;  
Prospective Residents Only Slightly Less Likely to Move Due to COVID-19*

**Southfield, Michigan, and Charlotte, North Carolina, September 22, 2020** – A new national survey of residents, staff and prospective residents released today by Plante Moran Living Forward and Retirement DYNAMICS® showed residents and staff in senior independent living communities overwhelmingly felt safe during COVID-19 and confident their communities had taken appropriate precautions to keep them safe.

Plante Moran Living Forward, the senior living development consulting division of Plante Moran Cresa and an affiliated entity of Plante Moran, partnered with Retirement DYNAMICS, one of the nation's leading senior living consulting firms, and surveyed more than 23,000 residents and staff at senior independent living communities across the country, along with prospective future residents. While prospects worried about social isolation, shopping and other daily tasks when living in their own homes, survey results showed only a slight decrease in their likelihood to move into an independent living community as a result of the pandemic.

The survey also revealed:

- 92% of staff felt the community where they worked responded well to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 93% of residents felt their community took all precautions to keep them safe.
- 85% of staff agreed residents “are safer in their community than in their previous homes.”
- 77% of residents said they were “glad to be living in a community during the pandemic,” with 86% affirming they were glad they made the decision to move.
- Similar numbers of prospective residents (61%) and residents (68%) felt socially isolated during shelter-in-place orders.
- 74% of prospective residents reported their time frame for a move has been unchanged by the pandemic.

While independent living communities received high marks from seniors on cleanliness, sanitation and communications, they didn't fare so well in other areas. Residents generally gave their communities low remarks on alternative recreation and activities offered during shelter-in-place, as well as the variety and quality of food and dining options and technology. The survey did not include assisted living or skilled nursing facilities.

“Our goal in conducting this survey was to gauge the sentiments of those living in, working in and thinking about moving to a senior living community,” said Dana Wollschlager, a Chicago-based partner who leads Plante Moran Living Forward. “We wanted to move beyond the overriding focus on nursing homes to take the pulse of other types of senior living communities.”

“The results of this survey, which was months in the making, gave us more than a few ah-ha moments but generally affirmed that the majority of residents and staff felt their communities were doing the right things to keep them safe during the pandemic. They offered many thoughtful suggestions for improvement, which can provide the basis for some meaningful changes.”

President of Retirement DYNAMICS Bobby Sumner agreed, noting: “When we began this process, we didn’t know what we didn’t know. We wanted to ask specific questions about how people felt living and working in a senior community – or the prospect of living in one – and tap into their true feelings and sentiments.

“We wanted to understand the gravity of the social isolation we knew was taking place. We asked questions about how they were feeling, what they were worried about, the effectiveness of the communications they were receiving and more. As we prepare to move into autumn and the upcoming flu season, we have identified 10 strategies backed by data that providers should consider to improve conditions for their current residents and teams – and improve outreach to those considering making a move.”

The survey, which had a 21.1% overall response rate, was sent to senior living communities around the United States. It posed both open-ended and multiple choice questions to each stakeholder group, generating more than 7,000 write-in comments.

Plante Moran and Retirement DYNAMICS distilled this feedback into themes that shaped recommendations, which included:

- Carry out weekly wellness checks on residents: Whether in-person or via phone, weekly wellness checks by staff to ensure residents have adequate groceries, supplies and medication.
- Engage residents with small acts of kindness: Many communities surveyed provided whimsical, fun and touching gestures to show residents they cared, from an ice cream parade to puzzles and word searches.
- Utilize a variety of channels to communicate with residents: Effective communications can take a broad range, from email, texts and hard-copy letters delivered to doors to videos, Q&A sessions with leadership or in-person visits.
- Provide support technology resources for both residents and staff: Residents asked for communities to provide technical support and lessons as possible solutions to bridge the tech divide while staff felt technology could provide greater support to operations and safety.
- Enhance the dining experience and options: Already a top complaint in senior living communities, dining services faced added scrutiny during the pandemic. Residents called for more varied meal options, additional distance dining options, expanded time – and fewer meals served in non-eco-friendly, single-use serving containers.
- Communicate the community’s COVID-19 plan to prospects: To dispel potential uneasiness prospective residents have about moving, clearly spell out restrictions and measures in place to both protect residents and keep them active in community life.

“Residents and staff identified not only problems but potential solutions that are often easy fixes,” Wollschlager explained. “For example, many residents told us they had trouble bending over to pick up their meal trays. One community quickly fixed that problem by putting TV trays outside their doors.

“We realized that traditional outreach to prospects, such as in-person visits, was no longer possible during quarantine. That meant communities need to get creative – and proactive. Prospects told us they appreciated seeing videos and hearing detailed solutions to COVID-19 problems as they weighed their decisions.”

Sumner noted: “Residents and prospective residents of independent living communities were vocal with their suggestions – and just as vocal with their praise for their safety during the pandemic. This survey offers a wealth of information and many teachable moments for these communities by highlighting areas where even small changes can earn big improvements.”

### **About Plante Moran Living Forward**

Plante Moran Living Forward provides unbiased, value-driven development advisory and owner’s representation services that address the evolving real estate, development and construction needs of senior living communities. Plante Moran Living Forward brings predevelopment planning, site selection, construction monitoring and project closeout services under a single point of contact to help senior living providers stay competitive, grow and provide quality housing opportunities. Learn more at [pmlivingforward.com](http://pmlivingforward.com).

### **About Plante Moran**

[Plante Moran](http://plantemoran.com) is among the nation's largest accounting, tax and consulting firms and provides a full line of services to organizations in the following industries: manufacturing and distribution, financial institutions, service, health care, private equity, public sector and real estate and construction. Plante Moran has a staff of more than 3,000 professionals throughout Colorado, Illinois, Michigan and Ohio with international offices in Shanghai, China; Monterrey, Mexico; Mumbai, India; and Tokyo, Japan. Plante Moran has been recognized by a number of organizations, including FORTUNE magazine, as one of the country's best places to work. For more information, visit [plantemoran.com](http://plantemoran.com).

### **About Retirement DYNAMICS**

Retirement DYNAMICS is a 19-year-old senior living consulting firm headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina. RD offers specific and customized research, sales, marketing, etiquette/customer service and hospitality coaching solutions for senior living communities nationwide. RD's mission is to arm senior living professionals with timely, research-based, strategic solutions to help them operate at peak performance. For more information about Retirement DYNAMICS, visit [www.retirementdynamics.com](http://www.retirementdynamics.com).

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