

8 Hot Spots to Reboot for New Careers in Retirement

WHERE *to* RETIRE

JULY/AUGUST 2011
Display until September 30

**THE
SHORT
LIST**

**BEST
MASTER-PLANNED
COMMUNITIES
IN THE UNITED STATES**

**How to Find
The Right
Neighborhood**

THE SHORT LIST

Joan and Pete Papp have spent most of their lives working toward this day. They have found what many Americans are searching for — the ideal place to retire. Like other retirees we interviewed while preparing “The Short List: 50 Best Master-Planned Communities in the United States,” the Papps weren’t looking only for a beautiful home — they were seeking much more.

“We wanted to be on a permanent vacation, where we can play year-round,” Joan says. “The kids were grown up and gone. It was time to think about us.” Her words echoed others relocating to communities that offer amenities once associated mainly with resorts. The Papps, in their early 50s, found their retreat at Brunswick Forest, close to the North Carolina coast, where they can golf, kayak, hike and bike. “My husband is like a kid in the candy store. He loves living here,” says Joan. Partly, Pete says, it’s because the taxes are lower than where they lived in Connecticut, saving them thousands of dollars.

The things that fulfill retirement dreams vary from person to person. In our selection of 50 communities, great diversity can be found in places from California to Florida and Wyoming to Texas, yet they share a common thread voiced by retirees: a sense of community that fosters camaraderie. The close-knit environment allows residents to make new friends easily and keep their calendars full. “I have a ton more friends than I did in Massachusetts,” says Bill Dore, 63, who moved to the central Florida community of Harmony with wife Paula.

As retirees cited their reasons for moving to master-planned developments, we noticed commonalities among our picks. Some trends are new while others have grown into prominence since 2009, when we last published a selection of 100 communities. For our seventh biennial honor roll, this year we’ve narrowed the focus to 50, zeroing in on those that are amenity-rich, with clubhouses, recreation and activities to keep residents fully engaged. Here’s a snapshot of our findings:

■ While golf and tennis long have been staples, other sports have garnered fans, notably bocce and pickleball. “All of our new communities have pickleball courts. Ten years ago, no one knew what pickleball was. Now it’s all the rage,” says Jacque Petroulakis, a spokeswoman for PulteGroup, whose Del Webb brand is the leading builder of active-adult communities.

■ Empty nesters and retirees are intent on staying in shape and physically active. Expansive fitness centers are a prime amenity. Once, a few treadmills and free weights fit the bill.

But now savvy about working out, the 50-plus crowd demands top-notch exercise equipment, such as elliptical machines that are fully dressed with individual TVs and fans. Body-and-mind classes, including Pilates, tai chi and yoga, are commonplace — and Zumba, the new Latin-inspired dance routine, shows up frequently. Walking and biking trails are the norm. After retiring to Arizona, Gail Johnson, 61, lost 20 pounds, thanks partly to the network of paths around Trilogy at Vistancia outside Phoenix. “There’s a trail that goes under the freeway and takes you directly to the grocery store,” she says. “The bike club started with 10 people. Now, we’ve just signed our 107th member. We’re all going to age, but we’ve realized that by staying active, we can lead a dynamic, younger lifestyle.”

■ The ballroom is seeing hot action on the dance floor. In

BEST MASTER-PLANNED COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

BY VAN SHERIDAN

a recent survey by Del Webb, the three most-wanted amenities were a state-of-the-art fitness center along with a swimming pool and a multipurpose room-ballroom — all trumping golf. “Reality TV has influenced people,” Petroulakis says. “Ballrooms are really popular. There has been a resurgence of interest in dancing, thanks to ‘Dancing With the Stars.’ Salsa, samba and swing — things they do on the show — are popular.”

■ Community gardens are flourishing, providing a place to cultivate new friendships while tending to patches of tomatoes and beans. (See more on this trend in “Community Gardens: The Growing Social Scene” on page 30.) Residents are tapping into the healthy eating trend along with getting exercise. As well, a number of communities now have teaching kitchens for demonstrations.

Our 2011 list showcases master-planned communities with 300 or more planned homes and a package of amenities, providing the activities many retirees want. We’ve given the range of base home prices, but they’re subject to change. Also, while researching communities to live out your retirement dream, consider following the example of Hank Morris, 80, who retired to Heritage Shores in Delaware not on “promises of things to come, but on amenities already in place at the community.”

This year, we’ve added a chart, pages 100-101, showing basic information and amenities for the 50 Best, giving readers a handy at-a-glance reference to keep. We’re also presenting our first Hall of Fame, a selection of more mature communities that made all our previous lists, and Communities on the Rise, a few up-and-coming neighborhoods too new for this time. See pages 102-103.

SOLEIL LAUREL CANYON

Canton, Georgia



WARREN BOND

The lure: Popular with retirees who want a quiet, country lifestyle but near family and friends in Atlanta, Soleil Laurel Canyon is a 45-minute drive north at the foothills of the Blue Ridge. Formerly called Seasons at Laurel Canyon and now owned by Active Lifestyle Communities, it adjoins a golf course in the master-planned Laurel Canyon development. A lodgelike clubhouse hosts wine socials, demonstrations in a gourmet teaching kitchen, fitness and crafts classes and numerous club activities. There are indoor and outdoor pools, a performing arts theater and tennis and bocce courts. An amphitheater overlooks a lake framed by pines, and gardeners appreciate the greenhouse.

What residents say: Joyce and Gene Arnold discovered the community in *Where to Retire* magazine. After several visits, they moved here from Tennessee in 2010. “Our first day here, all our neighbors came over to introduce themselves,” says Joyce, 65. “Another person invited me to mah-jongg, and one thing led to another and more friends.” Gene, 71, got interested in local Appalachian history and morning walks with a men’s group. “I’m also in the men’s cooking club,” he says. “But aside from the amenities, it met other criteria — it’s close to good medical facilities.”

Prices: \$250,000s-\$400,000s for single-family homes.

Status: 270 homes built of 728 planned on 330 acres within the larger Laurel Canyon development.

Age-restricted: Yes.

Information: Soleil Laurel Canyon, 215 Aster Court, Canton, GA 30114, (678) 880-3071 or www.soleillaurelcanyon.com.

WHERE *to* RETIRE

July 1, 2011

Mr. Evan Cramer, Development Manager
Soleil Laurel Canyon
2849 Paces Ferry Road, Ste. 625
Atlanta, GA 30339

Dear Mr. Cramer:

Congratulations! I am pleased to inform you that *Where to Retire* magazine has designated Soleil Laurel Canyon as one of the 50 Best Master-Planned Communities in the United States.

During an eight-month selection process, our editors reviewed several hundred candidates across the country. Your community is among an elite group of developments that offer today's retirees a well-rounded, active lifestyle.

Where to Retire applauds the positive impact that each of our 50 Best has made on the economic health of the towns and cities in which they are located. All of the communities are leaders in providing a high quality of life to those who are embarking on new adventures in retirement.

We extend our heartiest congratulations to you, your employees and your residents, and we wish you continued success.

Sincerely,



Karen Northridge
Publisher, *Where to Retire*