

Mixed use a hot trend in senior community development

By Cathy Rosebaugh-Jennings

These days, senior citizens seem to be looking for more than simply smaller houses with low-maintenance yards and active-adult community centers.

They also want the convenience of a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood, with commercial and retail establishments that range from dry cleaners to restaurants, and amenities such as recreation centers, walking trails, and multi-purpose classrooms.

Across the country, mixed-use — or new urbanism — is just as much a buzzword in senior community development circles as it is in non-senior developments. People are talking about a return to the small-town character of yesteryear, complete with village centers and town squares, as well as an array of housing choices, shops and offices, and streetscapes that favor pedestrians over cars.

The presence of senior housing is integral to many of these new mixed-use developments. Fortunately, the Triangle area is responding to the need.

Mixed-use communities

Chapel Hill's "neighborhood of the future," Meadowmont is a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly community with homes, apartments, a town center, elementary school and The Cedars of Chapel Hill, a continuing-care retirement community.

With a pedestrian tunnel that runs underneath U.S. Highway 54 — as well as walking and cycling paths on both sides of the street — The Cedars is within walking distance to Meadowmont Village.

Another continuing-care retirement community with a mixed-use feel is The Cardinal at North Hills, currently under development by Kane Realty and Drucker & Falk LLC. The North Hills community will feature complete medical care and access to a full spectrum of amenities, including entertainment, dining, stores, and retail shops — all



Photo courtesy The Cedars of Chapel Hill

within the pedestrian-friendly, multi-generational community of North Hills.

SearStone, located at the intersection of Davis Drive and High House Road in Cary, is another mixed-use development retirement village on the way. Architect Bill Sears is partnering with Hartford, Conn.-based Retirement Living Services to develop the community. SearStone residents will not own their homes but will make an upfront entry fee combined with monthly fees in a rent-purchase hybrid.

Low-key living

While The Cedars of Chapel Hill, The Cardinal at North Hills and SearStone are targeted to an affluent market, other mixed-use developments in the planning stages are targeting seniors of more modest means. They also are active-adult or age-targeted communities, rather than full continuing-care developments.

A gated, active-adult neighborhood called SummerWind Plantation is in its development stages and will be located off Interstate 40 in Clayton. The community calls for a lushly landscaped entrance with a tree-lined boulevard meandering past a four-acre stocked fishing pond, but with shopping and

dining across the street. Its planned 13-acre medical office park and proposed assisted and independent living center make the mixed-use development attractive to seniors as well.

The SummerWind Activities Center will be more than 7,000 square feet. Overlooking a fishing pond, its wellness center — complete with indoor pool, sauna and steam rooms, and cardio fitness equipment — will cover four acres. Residents will be able to choose optional in-home services such as housekeeping, cooking, health care, and pharmacy and grocery deliveries.

Today's sophisticated Baby Boomer has a wide range of choices in the Triangle — those that provide the preferred amenities only found in true mixed-use developments. From continuing-care retirement communities to active-adult or age-targeted communities, seniors can select the home and setting that will offer them comfort, care, and social activities during their retirement years. ▲TRE

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