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Why Seniors Thrive in Central Virginia



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Real Estate (<http://www.c-ville.com/category/magazines/real-estate-weekly/>)

By Ken Wilson –

“Hardest for me is reflecting quietly on the path I’ve taken to where I have yet to go.”
#healthyagingnevergetsold

REW Writers
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When Charlottesville’s 1,800-member Senior Center puts a Twitter hashtag on its front page, it’s a sure sign today’s senior citizens are not yer grandparent’s old folks. Today’s “active seniors” navigate the internet with a little help from the grandkids, and navigate the globe with tour groups designed for lifelong learners.

Seniors like these aren’t retired, they’ve just refocused their still considerable energies. They travel, they teach, they study, they volunteer, and they find all the best

places to live—places like Central Virginia, which is especially popular, according to REALTOR® Ed Davis, with retiring New Englanders, upper-Midwesterners and . . . Sunshine Staters?

“There is so much to do here; believe it or not we have people from Florida moving here,” Davis says. “This is sort of in the middle climate-wise. We have all the seasons. A lot of people think ‘I’ll move to Florida,’ but they get down there and say ‘Oh, it’s so hot. And there are hurricanes coming through.’”

There are very few hurricanes in Central Virginia, but that’s only one reason it’s popular with the wise and wizened. Folks around here love the horse country and the hiking trails, and the mountain valleys dotted with breweries and wineries, golf courses, resorts and historical sites. They appreciate the University of Virginia and its top notch medical facilities, and love the easy access to Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport. They relish the cultural and culinary scenes and the stimulating intellectual fare available in Staunton and Charlottesville.

Even better, with this smorgasbord of delights comes affordable housing. Retirees from places like Washington D.C. or the upper Atlantic states, where property costs are higher, “have all this money when they come,” Davis says. And so “they buy this big house here and they’re in it for a few years, and they start thinking ‘Maybe the house I bought is a little too big; maybe I need a smaller one!’”

Active Adult Communities

When that thought hits and that time comes, many seniors seek out developments built specifically for the 55-and-not-old-yet crowd. Like traditional retirement homes—continuing care communities where residents can first live independently and then move to assisted living and health care facilities when necessary—these new style communities offer “aging in place” barrier-free architectural features that allow residents to stay in their homes.

Such features include “zero threshold” (no step) entries and 3-foot wide hallways and doorways. Bathrooms come with high toilet seats, walk-in showers, non-slip floors, grab bars and a 5-foot turning radius.

Pot fillers over stoves eliminate the need to carry heavy pots of waters from sink to stove. Doors with lever handles and lights with rocker switches require less hand strength. All these design elements make one-story homes safe and comfortable for active but less than agile occupants, especially those in wheelchairs.

Along with these practical architectural features, such developments advertise “maintenance free living,” which may include a range of amenities such as work on a home’s exterior and grounds paid for through Home Owner Association (HOA) dues. These model villages, virtual resorts for Boomers entering not a second childhood, but a second season of abundant free time, also offer amenities like pools and fitness centers, and bocce and tennis courts that facilitate community and make for luxury living.

University Village

Just down the road from the University of Virginia, University Village, on Charlottesville’s Ivy Road, is a 94-unit condo community designed for independent living. Large glassed-in atriums on either side of each of the two village buildings offer great views of the city and countryside.

The two-level Village Club features a bocce court, game room, library and arts and crafts studio, plus public and private dining rooms, kitchen facilities, and an outdoor patio. Dinner is served five nights a week. The lower level of the Club includes a 75-foot swimming pool, whirlpool, fitness center, showers, and another private patio.

University Village also offers underground parking, chauffeur car service, and four well-appointed overnight guest rooms for friends and family. Most Village residents own their homes. Owners help run the Village, electing its Board of Directors, which establishes policy and oversees staff management and operation of the facility.

The Lodge at Old Trail

Crozet's The Lodge at Old Trail is a Senior Living Community with condos and assisted living and memory care facilities. The Lodge sits at the heart of Old Trail Village, a planned community of over 500 families in Crozet, with single family homes, townhomes and apartments surrounding a village center, the site of Friday night concerts and other gatherings for the whole community.

The Lodge itself is only a short walk from the [Village Center in Old Trail Village](http://lodgeatoldtrail.com/index.php?id=old-trail-village) (<http://lodgeatoldtrail.com/index.php?id=old-trail-village>) with shops, restaurants, healthcare providers and more. Also in walking distance are a community pool, community garden, fitness center, soccer field, golf course, historic sites, houses of worship, and six miles of walking trails.

Four Seasons at Charlottesville in Greene County

Despite its name, Four Seasons at Charlottesville is located in Ruckersville in Greene County, where it offers wonderful views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The development's 120 detached homes (over 400 more are planned) feature first floor master suites and two-car garages. The Clubhouse has an indoor pool and fitness center, plus cyber café, card tables, billiards room, library, sports TV area, and ballroom. Outdoor amenities include bocce and tennis courts, croquet lawns, a putting green, and walking trails.

Villages at Nahor

Named for the intersection of Routes 53 and 636, which has been called Nahor since the 1700s, the Villages at Nahor sit near Lake Monticello in Fluvanna County. Every Village home has a "main-level-living floor plan," with ease-of-use features including a no-step entry from the exterior of the home, rocker-style light switches, large doorways, and raised electrical outlets.

The Magnolia model floor plans range from 1,600 to 1,800 finished square feet while The Savannah floor plans are from 2,400 to 2,600 square feet, with an optional upstairs for additional bedrooms.

Village's amenities include a community pool and clubhouse, a bocce court, an outdoor walking path, a playground and Tot-Lot for grandkids, community gardens, sidewalk lined streets, and a picnic pavilion with outdoor fireplace. Services include lawn care, landscaping and snow removal on roadways and driveways. The Villages are within walking distance to shops and restaurants, and are 14 miles from downtown Charlottesville and 13 miles from Martha Jefferson Hospital.

“The Villages at Nahor is unique and special in that we focus our efforts on connecting new and existing residents in the community,” says Sales Consultant Ryan Reynolds. “Our goal is to facilitate and help foster relationships: from the simplicity of gathering for game nights, to hosting community parties, coming together and building a foundation of neighbors who support and grow with one another.”

Rosewood Village

The 16 villas at RoseWood Village at Wintergreen in Nellysford sit next to the 27-hole Reese Jones Stoney Creek Golf Course. RoseWood's Development Director, Shareef Tahboub, describes the vision for the community as “a self-sustaining village within the Stoney Creek community, a place where folks can age in place, have care services available to them, but really get out and enjoy all Wintergreen has to offer with very little home maintenance.

The idea was to create a retirement community within Stoney Creek that meets some very specific needs at Wintergreen and in Nelson County.” Villagers enjoy landscaped common areas, walking and hiking paths, lawn care, snow and trash removal, and building maintenance.

RoseWood Villages at Greenbrier Drive and Hollymead Town Center in Charlottesville offer assisted living care, including the Innovations Program for residents with Alzheimers and other forms of dementia. Residents at the Hollymead facility enjoy a state-of-the-art therapy pool and beautiful views of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Senior Center of Charlottesville

“Civic Center, Community Center, Cultural Center, Fitness Center and Social Center”—that’s Charlottesville’s non-profit Senior Center on Pepsi Place, where 2,000 members and 8,000 annual visitors participate in programs designed to foster “healthy aging through social engagement, physical well-being, civic involvement, creativity, and lifelong learning.”

One way members stay physically and mentally fit is to help run the place, volunteering more than 40,000 hours annually at the Center and at other community organizations—work valued at almost \$1 million by the Virginia Employment Commission. Members also lead many of the Center’s 100 programs a week, which run the gamut from crafts and the fine and performing arts, to travel, recreation, and health and brain fitness.

Physical exercise classes include line dancing, Tai Chi, square dancing, pickle ball, water workout and seated massage. Recently the Center has added courses on drawing and quilting, and on writing legacies and fighting crimes against the elderly. “We want people to live to be 100 but also have quality of life, says Program Director Jennifer Ayers. “That’s what we strive to help them do.”

One of every four Central Virginia residents will be 65 or older by 2024, and the Center is planning for that future with a \$23 million campaign to finance a larger (60,000 square foot) Charlottesville facility on Belvedere Boulevard off of Rio Road. Counting gifts, pledges, and the value of the current Pepsi Place facility, the Center has secured just under \$11 million in gifts and pledges for the Center at Belvedere, including \$3.2 million from the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County.

Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital plans to lease 3,000 square feet in the new Center for a primary care clinic open to the public but focused on seniors. The University of Virginia Health System will run a wellness program at the Center. As a key component of its mission of social engagement and community building, the Center will house a Greenberry’s Café, open to all, which will serve coffee, food, and beverages including beer and wine.

Prefer to Rent?

Older adults who prefer to rent have 55+ options as well. Jefferson Heights at Pantops in Charlottesville offers one and two bedroom apartment homes conveniently close to restaurants, shopping centers, churches, the Social Security Administration, the DMV, and the new Martha Jefferson hospital. Residents enjoy free shuttle service.

Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA) operates three communities in Charlottesville (Timberlake Place, Woods Edge, and Park View Apartments) and one in Nelson County (Ryan School Apartments), which provide regular health services and screenings while assisting seniors (defined as 55 and up) to maintain active lifestyles. JABA also offers personal care at its assisted living facility, Mountainside Senior Living in Crozet, where private and semi-private rooms are roughly 80 percent of market rate.

Options and Opportunities

Seniors around here have an abundance of lifestyle options, and many places to turn for assistance—as Ed Davis found out. When Davis wanted to help his elderly parents with things like de-cluttering their home and probating a will, he found himself with question after question and didn't know where to turn.

When he became a REALTOR® Davis put together Augusta Senior Resources, a free referral service with contact information for a team of experts knowledgeable in many fields, including de-cluttering and downsizing, money management, investment, trust and estate planning, accounting and tax assistance, and moving and property auctions. With assistance like that, aging may not be carefree, but it's filled with opportunity.

“Seventy,” says Davis, “is the new fifty.”