



# Back to Mayberry

New senior living communities combine today's technology with yesterday's charm.

by Beverly Brandon, AIA

*"Pull up a chair! Have a sit-down an' shoot the breeze with us. Later on, maybe we'll go down to the drugstore to get a bottle of pop... maybe see what's showin' at the Grand. What you gonna do tonight, Barn?"* — Andy Taylor, *The Andy Griffith Show*

The Andy Griffith Show went off the air 36 years ago, but many of us can still conjure up that catchy whistled theme song like it was yesterday. There's something about that fictitious community of Mayberry that tugs at our hearts. While the cast—Andy, Aunt Bee, Barney Fife, Opie and the many other characters—are memorable, the show's very heart was its setting in the idyllic small town of Mayberry, N.C. In Mayberry, the sheriff didn't carry a gun, all the action took place on Main Street, and everyone who lived there was family.

## THE CHANGING FACE OF RETIREMENT

So what does this trip down memory lane mean to today's retirees? Believe it or not, the idea of the Mayberry-esque communities of yesteryear is driving a growing design movement called "neotraditionalism," and it just might change a whole generation's idea of retirement. The new thinking injects old ideas about small town planning and architecture into the next wave of residential development.

In fact, neotraditional communities, such as Disney's Celebration in Florida, have been springing up over the last decade, many subscribing to Celebration's theory of "using the best ideas from the most successful towns of yesterday and the technology of the new millennium." As the trend catches on among architects, builders and buyers, you can bet this new small town will be coming to a retirement community near you.

## THE NEXT GENERATION'S PROJECTS

At Cochran, Stephenson & Donkervoet, we've spent years studying the changing psychology of retirees. And today's retirees—born after the GI generation but before the baby boomers—don't want to live in isolation. They want homes big enough for friends and family. They want fences to talk over, stores they can walk to and a sense of community. We've also found that today's retirees are more physically active, social and financially secure than their parents.

Many of today's retirees are looking for country club living with a continuum of quality care. That's why CSD is designing projects like the expansion of Carroll



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Lutheran Village, an existing retirement community in Westminster, Md.

The neotraditional plan features village homes, apartments and a town square with a sidewalk cafe, fine dining, convenience retail and a new wellness/fitness center. Future plans call for a new nursing facility and additional assisted living units with child care and an education/enrichment center.

Another project that illustrates this trend is the expansion of Williamsburg Landing, an existing retirement community near Colonial Williamsburg, Va. CSD is currently designing an additional neighborhood of 2,300- to 2,800-square-foot cottages and two-bedroom, manor-style apartment units. The expansion will also include a spa focusing on a holistic approach to senior wellness and fitness.

## NEOTRADITIONAL COMMUNITY LIVING

So what is it like to live in a neotraditional community? Imagine being able to walk to a town center where apartments are available above storefronts; and streets, neighborhoods and shopping areas are made for walking.

In such a place, seniors could step out the front door of their one-level cottages and walk down the tree-lined block to the village center, which is less than five minutes away. There they can stop in the drug store, the supermarket and the doctor's office. Other residents might live in specially designed apartments in the village square even closer to essential services and caregivers' offices.

If this all sounds too good to be true, it's not. Communities such as Disney's Celebration, where homes sell in excess of \$1 million, have proven just how successful the neotraditional model can be. And best of all, neotraditional town planning helps the elderly live more comfortably, conveniently and safely with one another. Here's to seeing more of Mayberry in the future. ■

*Beverly Brandon is a vice president of the Baltimore-based Cochran, Stephenson & Donkervoet Inc. Her experience with senior living design spans over 24 years. She has dedicated her entire architectural career to understanding the needs of seniors and how to best design for them.*

## For More Information

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