

WEBSITE OF THE WEEK: WWW.AARP.ORG

The ultimate site for Baby Boomers. News, information, resources, calculators, all packed into one site. Retirement planning, health, food, travel — you name it. Probably the top site for retirees.

In search of a special town

Communities lure Boomers with lifestyles

John Brady
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Moving to a small town is an appealing option for many Baby Boomers as they approach retirement. Particularly after battling the traffic and hassles of suburban living in their workdays, the attractions of a Norman Rockwell-esque community can seem like a relaxing alternative.

One of the main reasons people like small-town living is the ability to walk downtown for necessities. The charming Colonial town of Old Saybrook, Conn., has a great walkable downtown. It's easy to find a home or condo a stroll away from many downtown restaurants and shops. In many neighborhoods, it's a short walk to where the Connecticut River meets the Long Island Sound.

The ease of making social connections is another attraction of small-town life. Port Townsend, Wash., offers a strong sense of community. Its citizens, many of them artists, share a well-deserved pride in the beautiful Victorian setting.

For a charming environment, it's hard to beat Beaufort, S.C., the "Queen of the Carolina Sea Islands," near Hilton Head. Tourists can enjoy horse-drawn carriage rides through a historic district that's canopied with Spanish moss.

Easy access to recreation is another factor that retirees might consider. Evergreen, Colo., former vacation spot for presidents and celebrities, is a good example. Residents enjoy the Evergreen Lake and Evergreen Lake House, as well as thousands of acres of surrounding parks.

While you may not think of culture as a typical small-town draw, many offer the rich cultural life that retiring Baby Boomers desire. Mount Dora, Fla., has multiple cultural venues. There are two theaters, including the Mount Dora Center for the Arts, plus many festivals and events on the Town Square.



TODD PLITT, USA TODAY
Street lamps line Main Street in Old Saybrook, Conn.



JAYNE CLARK, USA TODAY
A waterside pavillion and grass amphitheater play host to concerts and other performances in Beaufort, S.C.



VICTOR JUDD
Port Townsend Beach, part of a National Historic Landmark district.

The trick for Baby Boomers is to find the community that offers a combination of features that can provide the lifestyles of their dreams.

OLD SAYBROOK, CONN.

Old Saybrook combines New England history, a vital downtown, pristine beaches and a small-town feel.

Located where the Connecticut River flows into the Long Island Sound, this village of slightly more than 10,000, founded in 1635, is one of the original three English colonies in Connecticut.

It has the ruins of a strategically important fort built during the French and Indian War. Yale University was established here before moving to New Haven in 1716.

Old Saybrook's most celebrated resident was Katharine Hepburn.

BEAUFORT, S.C.

The Old South lives on in the quaint seaside charm of Beaufort (pronounced B'YOO-furt).

The site of this retirement community of 11,000 was discovered by the Spanish in 1514 and lies in the Sea Islands or "Low Country" area of South Carolina. Horse-drawn carriages roll along streets in the town's historic district overhung with Spanish moss.

MOUNT DORA, FLA.

Mount Dora exudes a comfortable Southern charm and hospitality. The central Florida lakefront community

is nestled in gentle hills, orange groves and live oak trees.

Its elevation of 184 feet makes it Florida's equivalent of a mountaintop town. Laid out around a large square, the downtown has shopping, antiques and a rich cultural life with many festivals.

PORT TOWNSEND, WASH.

Port Townsend is on the northeastern tip of the Olympic Peninsula, just across Puget Sound from Seattle.

It was a thriving port settlement until the Union Pacific Railroad bypassed it. Port Townsend survived with an incomparable stock of great Victorian buildings and houses that were never "remodeled." Most of the town is preserved as a national historic district. It has views of the Cascade Mountains to the east and the Olympic Mountains to the west.

EVERGREEN, COLO.

Evergreen is an affluent suburb 15 miles west of Denver with access along Bear Creek Canyon. It was originally a summer resort for wealthy folks from Denver and beyond, including both presidents Roosevelt. Its population is slightly more than 9,000. Downtown Evergreen includes a mix of historical buildings and local businesses.

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