

# Over 55 and into

Developers filling seniors' demand for high-end amenities

BY STACEY ALTHERR  
Special to Newsday

**A**ron Jenkins, who moved to the Sutton Landing 55-and-over rental community in Uniondale a little more than a year ago, was just out of a relationship and ready to let go of living in a single-family home and embrace apartment living. For Jenkins, who retired after 26 years as a correction officer for the Nassau County Sheriff's Department, the attraction of living in a place with a high-end clubhouse with a pool and walking paths had other perks — a variety of social activities and new friends.

There's also a coffee bar, parties with DJs by the pool and in the clubhouse, and a social director who plans Sunday brunches and other activities.

"I can go to a wine tasting, or billiards tournament," said Jenkins, 58, who lived previously in Freeport, and pays \$2,900 for a two-bedroom unit, including a storage room. "I plan to be in an upcoming chess tournament."

For Bonnie Soman, a typical day at the new Fountaingate Gardens, part of Gurwin's new continuum of care complex in Commack, starts with a fitness class followed by coffee and chats at the bistro. She takes part in happy hours, attends lectures and appreciates the pool and artwork on the walls.

"I describe it as feeling like being on a cruise ship without the sea sickness," said Soman, 70, who moved with her husband, Stu, from another 55-and-over community in Bay Shore.

But what she appreciates most is saying goodbye to a lifelong habit.

"I don't have to cook dinner anymore," said Soman. "We eat dinner at the restaurant every night. It's great."



Fountaingate Gardens executive chef Bill Yocum with residents Bonnie Soman, left, and Michelle Leone at the complex in Commack.

## SEEKING COMMUNITY, FUN

A slice of the 55-and-older crowd — relatively more affluent and active than their parents might have been at their age — are seeking that laid-back lifestyle and often expect high-end amenities at the communities they are choosing.

That pool of customers is growing: In 2021, there were about 744,000 residents in Nassau and Suffolk counties over the age of 60, or 26% of the population on Long Island, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That was an increase of 160,000 from a decade earlier, when those 60 and older made up 21% of the Island.

Developers of the rapidly

growing complexes, whether with units for rental or for purchase, are taking notice and upping the ante, incorporating private dining rooms, fully equipped gyms and saunas, in-house movie theaters, pickleball courts and clubhouses that serve as spacious, glamorous hubs for activities.

"We are selling a lifestyle," said Diane Maier, sales agent for The Vineyards at Center Moriches and at Mount Sinai, where prices range from \$749,000 to \$899,000.

All those perks are factored into the costs of buying or renting at these complexes.

At Country Pointe in Plainview, 80% of the suites and villas are reserved for those

55 and older. Two-bedroom units range from \$765,000 to \$1.4 million, with homeowners association fees from \$540 to \$897 and annual taxes varying by model.

On the top floor of a three-level clubhouse there is a ballroom with a bar where galas are held a few times a year, said Robert Spiotto, Country Pointe's events director. Recent bashes held around the pool and in the ballroom include a black-and-white party and a '60s revival night.

Many of the events draw up to 300 residents. Even smaller ones, such as "The Joy of Oy" Catskills-style comedy show held in July and a concert by singer Tommy Sullivan, a

founding member of the 1960s group The Brooklyn Bridge, draw crowds of 200 members.

"There is a feeling of camaraderie here," Spiotto noted. "That is what we provide."

In addition to elegant clubhouses and large swimming pools, the biggest reason people move to these communities is the socializing. After raising children and holding demanding jobs, living in a resort-like atmosphere often comes with new friendships with others at the same stage of life.

## AFFORDABLE AMENITIES

Leisure Village in Ridge may have been built in 1972, but the complex, combined with two other companion nearby asso-

# the lap of luxury



From left, Toby Epstein, Ellen Levine and Debbie Greenberg of Country Pointe.



Aaron Jenkins in the card and game room at Sutton Landing at Uniondale.

ciations of Leisure Glen and Leisure Knoll, has 1,500 units with 18 styles of housing, priced from \$225,000 to \$275,000 for a two-bedroom condo, to \$335,000 for a one-bedroom home to \$425,000 for a two-bedroom, two-bath home with a formal dining room. Annual taxes range from \$3,000 to \$4,500 and HOA fees run from \$335 to \$445 a month.

For Carole Leonard, 79, a retired registered nurse, her move to Leisure Village 23 years ago when her late husband became disabled was the

right decision. She noted the dozens of events, activities and amenities that keep active seniors active, including bocce courts, a heated swimming pool and a nine-hole golf course.

"We have 42 clubs," said Leonard, who is president of her board of directors. "You can be as quiet or as busy as you want."

The clubhouse has a card room, billiard room, woodworking shop, a ceramics room with a kiln, a dartboard room, library, and fitness center. "We

have 33 miles of sidewalk," Leonard said. "You see people jogging or walking their dogs or just out for a stroll all the time."

## RENTALS, TOO

Rental communities are also training their eyes on the luxe market. While not specifically for those 55 and older, the units rent to many seniors for the easy lifestyle and conveniences they offer, both inside and outside the developments.

The Selby, a six-story apartment complex overlooking

Eisenhower Park in Westbury, opened in September with 210 units and 27 long-term executive suites that rent from \$3,200 for a studio to \$9,500 a month for a 2,200-square-foot, three-bedroom unit. More than 40% are already leased, according to Suzee Foster, a spokesperson for the Beechwood Organization, which developed the complex.

Built in a French chateau-style, the Selby offers residents a 75-foot outdoor pool and terrace, a great room with garden views, club room with

an indoor-outdoor bar, a 6,000-square-foot dining room, fitness room with yoga studio, a tranquility space and private parking with electric car charging.

Beechwood principal Steven Dubb said the new complex follows the success of the luxury rentals at the nearby Vanderbilt, where rents range from \$4,300 to \$8,000 and was fully leased within six months. There, renters enjoy an outdoor heated pool with cabanas, yoga and fitness studios, fine dining restaurant and cafeteria.

"Whether year-round or part of the year, our residents want a new, well-constructed home with resort amenities and concierge services reflective of their coveted quality of life," Dubb said.

For Jenkins, the retired correction officer, that means saying goodbye to cutting grass and thinking about oil bills, he said. Now he spends time by the pool at his complex in the summer, meeting friends at the clubhouse, which features a gym and card/game room.

"I worked a long career, 26 years, and it feels good to live a laid-back lifestyle," Jenkins said.

## 3 communities, 3 price plans

### THE VINEYARDS AT MOUNT SINAI

sales to 55 and over: 91 homes from \$749,000 to \$899,000; almost sold out. HOA fees are about \$428 monthly.

**Amenities:** Two-story clubhouse with fitness center, bar, card room, great room, heated pool, fire pit, bocce courts, walking trails and a part-time social director.

### ENCORE LUXURY LIVING IN JERICHO

rentals for 62 and over. Rents start at \$7,000 for a one-bedroom, which includes \$1,000 a month to spend at the

community's two restaurants.

**Amenities:** Housekeeping, car service, full-service concierge, lectures, wellness center with yoga studio, heated pool with cabanas. Fully furnished units available. A full-time social director not only runs social activities, but can also help residents navigate issues such as voter registration.

### FOUNTAINGATE GARDENS CONTINUUM OF CARE COMPLEX IN COMMACK

for 62 and over. Purchase not required, but there is an

entrance fee that is partially refundable when a resident leaves. For example, a new resident may pay \$320,000 for a small apartment (up to more than \$1 million) that includes assisted living and nursing care when and if needed. A monthly fee is also required, depending on the choice of plans.

**Amenities:** Chef-prepared meals, personal trainers, fitness and wellness classes, transportation, concierge, housekeeping, library, pools, arts center.

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Robert Spiotto of Country Pointe leads "The Joy of Oy."

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