

SUNDAY NEWS

SERVING LANCASTER CITY AND COUNTY

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Retire: To Lancaster

Golden years, Garden Spot

By Jeannette Scott, Sunday News Staff Writer, jscott@lnpnews.com

Never mind Florida. Lancaster is the place to enjoy the golden years.

The City of Lancaster and its suburbs are featured in the September/October issue of Where to Retire Magazine as among one of the eight places with "Terrific Home Buys, Great Lifestyles."

Easy access to major highways, Philadelphia and Baltimore airports, hospitals, shopping, theaters, golf and restaurants attract the senior set, said Jim Pappas, a Realtor with

Prudential Homesale Services.

About 32 percent of his homebuyers relocate from New York, New Jersey and Washington, D.C., Pappas said. At least half are retirees.

"They get more for their money here," he said.

In June, the median home price in Lancaster City was \$102,000. The median home price in Lancaster County was \$175,000.

By way of comparison, the National Association of Realtors reported in the first quarter of this year that the median home price in the Philadelphia area was \$206,000; in New York and its suburbs, \$374,000; and nationally, \$169,000.

Lancaster County also has comparably low taxes, and "A lot of people search by taxes," Rochelle "Rocky" Welkowitz, Realtor with Prudential Homesale Services and founder of Transition Solutions for Seniors, said. "They just want somewhere where they can afford to live."

Those who retire to the city are attracted to the urban setting and the ability to walk to restaurants, Central Market, and entertainment, she said.

"They think it's a beautiful, well-preserved and maintained town, very clean, visually appealing and it offers so many things for people to do," Welkowitz said. "They feel good being here."

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There is growing demand for age-restricted housing in the city, Scott Miller, director of marketing for Garden Spot Village, New Holland, said.

That demand prompted Garden Spot Village to enter talks with developer Ed Drogaris about a possible partnership to convert the Lancaster Press building at Prince and Lemon Streets into condominiums for people 55 and older, he said.

"There's definitely a group of people that prefer an urban setting," Miller said. "First Fridays, the Fulton, the Barnstormers and the restaurants are attractive to them."

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East Hempfield, West Hempfield and Manheim townships are also a draw for their proximity to Lancaster, Pappas said.

At one time, "everyone wanted an acre of land that backed up to a farm," Welkowitz said. "Now they want a place that's accessible, where they can make friends."

Active adult communities in suburban Lancaster are also sought after, Welkowitz said.

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In February, Bob and Carol Marquardt moved to a twin cottage at Calvary Fellowship Homes Retirement Community in Manheim Township.

They previously lived in the New Jersey suburbs outside of Philadelphia, and in rural Tennessee.

Now they have the best of both worlds, Carol Marquardt said.

"We just like everything being close, but in just a minute or two, you're out in the country," she said.

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For this reason, Welkowitz said, "We are becoming one of the top retirement places in the country from what I have seen."n

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