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New Developments

Single-Family Feel in a 55-Plus Multifamily Property

Livingston, N.J.–based developer BNE Real Estate Group hits a home run with its latest foray into active adult housing.

By **Barbara Ballinger**



Pierre Jaborska

The exteriors of the nine separate buildings were designed to capture the intimacy of single-family homes, so the structures were kept to two stories and given residential details such as pedimented roofs, porticos, shutters, balconies, and stone bases.

Livingston, N.J.–based developer BNE Real Estate Group knew that buying and developing a 45-acre, mostly vacant parcel 35 miles north in Pearl River, N.Y., meant dipping its toes further into the 55-plus age group, since that’s what area zoning dictated. “It turned out to be a blessing, since it was our first entry in that [Pearl River] market after working primarily on single-family and multifamily housing and commercial and hotel development,” says Kristina Hedden, the firm’s vice president of marketing.

The 2015 purchase of the site that would be home to the 160-unit Club at Pearl River also required retaining a historic house on the property, dubbed the Seth House in memory of its last owners.



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The Seth House, a historic home on the site that was refurbished, offers quiet activity options for residents, including a place to play cards or games, with a backdrop of books—again, evoking a club or homey feel.



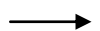
Water Views

The scenic site was located on a hill that overlooks the Lake Tappan Reservoir and bordered woods and a public golf course. The developer and its architect, BartonPartners, Architects Planners, in Norristown, Pa., decided the 160 one- and two-bedroom rental apartments should be arranged in nine buildings so that many could be oriented toward the water. Arranging the structures in low-lying positions also offered the feeling of individual homes rather than multifamily dwellings. Barton project manager and architect Barbara Malewicz further emphasized the sense of home with classic residential details: pedimented roofs, porticos, balconies with railings, shutters, and stone bases.



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The large, social clubhouse with billiards table, bar, fireplace, and sleek decor reflects the idea of having one large space with areas carved out for more-private gatherings. Its design lends the feeling of a resort or club; hence the project's name, The Club at Pearl River.



Easy Care

BNE knew that many people reaching 55 no longer want a single-family home because of costs and maintenance. Other potential residents in this age group are ready to trade up for a more luxurious lifestyle but still rent. And many in either segment want to spend their time being active as they would at a resort. The result: a central green for walks; a swimming pool; a fitness center; a yoga studio; a clubroom with bar, fireplace, and billiards table; a movie theater, library, card-playing area, and kitchenette in the Seth House; and Wi-Fi throughout. An activities director was even brought on to orchestrate on-site functions and integrate residents into the larger Pearl River community. A lack of competition in the area's rental market—unlike with saturated developments in warmer climates—helped the project to lease up fully when it opened last summer.



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The large swimming pool accommodates all guests and residents, many of whom were expected to relocate to the community to be closer to their families, including grandchildren.



Luxurious and Hip

While the buildings' traditional façades convey a feeling of timelessness, designer Rene Pabon, president of the Childs Dreyfus Group in Chicago, intentionally gave the project's interiors a hipper feel to suggest residents were getting "a new lease on life," he says. But Pabon also wanted to connote a luxurious, resortlike feel, so he chose a neutral, mostly gray palette, limited patterns for sleekness, and rich materials such as marble, wenge wood, and high-end upholstery. The same approach was used in the Seth House. "We could have gone with a straightforward historical rehab, but we went a little more contemporary to create more usable space," he says.

Lock and Go

The development's units were designed for care-free living, since many of its residents have other homes, travel, or want to visit family nearby. Units range from 750-square-foot one-bedrooms from the \$1,900s to 1,472-square-foot two-bedrooms with den and water views in the \$3,000s. All have 9-foot ceilings, washer-dryers, wood-look porcelain floors, and garage and storage space. Trash removal is included, and residents may sign a two-year lease if they desire. Elevators within the buildings make second-floor access easier.