

NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE WEEK: Arbor Station

Douglasville community offers many recreational amenities

Laura Raines - For the Journal-Constitution
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Located just off I-20, Arbor Station is a hidden oasis amid the commercial development of Douglasville and Arbor Place Mall. The community is aptly named, as the developer preserved an abundance of old-growth trees when he developed the land.

Nancy Bogo thought the tree-lined Arbor Parkway beautiful 23 years ago and still wouldn't want to live anywhere else. She and her husband, John, had been enduring Ohio winters, when her sister told them that Georgia needed teachers. Expecting their first child, they came down for a visit.

"While he interviewed, I went house hunting and found an affordable ranch home with a daylight basement in Springwood. The house was a bargain compared to Ohio prices and then I saw the pool and tennis courts. I told him that if they offered him a job, he should take it, 'cause this was where I was living," she said with a laugh.

"This community has been a great place to raise a family," said Bogo, who has three grown children and an 11-year-old daughter. "I was a stay-at-home mom, so everyone hung out at our house."

Bogo manages the pools and a staff of pool monitors --- residents who oversee activities and the snack bar. "With both parents working in so many families, we run a snack bar so the kids can get lunch, and have structured activities, like swim and dance lessons. A couple of hours a day, our swim instructor serves as lifeguard so that young children can come swim by themselves.

"You could pay a lot more for a house and not have the amenities we have. Even members without kids or people who don't swim come use the grills and hang out there. It's just a nice place for getting together," Bogo said.

One of Douglasville's earliest planned unit developments, Arbor Station was laid out by Stansco as a community of eight villages in 1974. At the center were a clubhouse, pools, tennis courts and other recreational facilities. A swim/tennis community with a variety of housing styles in a location convenient to shopping and schools proved popular.

"Douglasville offers good housing value, and our neighborhood has always been a great place to live. We have no plans to move," said Mike Hughes. He and his wife, Lynn, bought a Cape Cod in Creekwood on a quiet cul-de-sac in 1992.

"The girls have enjoyed their time at Arbor Station Elementary, and our oldest daughter had a good year at the new Yeager Middle School," Hughes said. The family has enjoyed parties at the pool and softball at Hunter Park. "Sweetwater Creek State Park is just six or seven miles down the road and we sail our small sailboat there and have picnics," he said.

"The building of Arbor Place Mall was a tough, messy time, but the association worked closely with the mall developers to solve problems and keep the neighborhood looking good," Hughes said. The mall brought residents new shopping, movie theaters, restaurants and job opportunities.

Trina and Richard Morin bought their first house in one of the older sections when they were expecting their son nine years ago. They liked the variety of housing styles --- including cedar

contemporary, ranch, traditional two-story --- and the way people kept them up. A few years later, they bought a larger home in Arbor Crossing.

"This is a great subdivision," Trina Morin said. "It's convenient to everything, but quiet. We have a creek in the back yard and live in a cul-de-sac full of boys, so our son has plenty of friends. The kids just move from yard to yard, and we all keep an eye on them." she said.

Carol and Larry Yockey liked the less-congested west side of Atlanta when they moved from Texas in 1994. They built a one-story home with a three-car garage and basement with a home theater in Arbor Crossing. "There are five bedrooms and three baths --- plenty of room for when the kids come to visit," Larry Yockey said.

He became homeowners association president six years ago and found that the amenities needed some "tender-loving care." Seeing that the dues weren't enough to maintain the facilities, he encouraged the board to borrow \$100,000 for repairs and raise dues over time. Today, association dues are a mandatory \$220 for most of the community (optional for Springwood), and pool membership is \$115 per year.

In six years, the board has refurbished the tennis courts and completely renovated the clubhouse with carpet and new furnishings. The center seats 150-175 people and is used for Brownies, Girl Scouts, Vietnam Veterans meetings and other community functions. The board's also replaced all the neighborhood entrance signs, refinished the pools, installed a fountain, regraded the ball fields and purchased new gazebos and cabanas for the pool area.

"We offer our senior citizens a break on the pool dues [\$75], and the gazebos give them a shady place to sit if they want to bring their grandchildren or just visit with their neighbors," he said. The community spent \$20,000 on landscaping this spring, putting in 700 shrubs and flowering plants.

"No one has as nice a pool area as we do and we all enjoy it. Four times a year we have parties where we provide the meat and everyone brings a side dish," said Yockey. For Memorial Day they hired a DJ to play music. Douglasville Mayor Mickey Thompson, who attended the March association meeting, congratulated the community on its improvements and for setting a high standard for new planned unit developments.

"I believed that if we built it, they would come and since we've been upgrading the facilities, housing values have increased dramatically. We're seeing the neighborhood turn over with young families and new kids," said Yockey. "Arbor Station is in a very desirable location --- close to schools, shopping and the interstate --- and it has a range of housing prices from the \$100,000s to almost \$300,000," said Ray Mason, a Coldwell Banker Realtor. "The trees always impress people when they drive in."

History

Stansco began developing Arbor Station in 1974 as a planned unit development. There are 759 homes in eight villages: including Springwood, Lakewood, Creekwood, Oakwood, Windwood, Knollwood, Parkwood Village Apartments and Arbor Crossing. Deciding to make it a true arbor, they left as many mature trees as possible. Construction of Springwood started in 1974. Arbor Station Elementary was built around 1980. The last village, Arbor Crossing, was built in the 1990s. Stansco sold part of the remaining land near I-20 for Arbor Place Mall.

The community has a mandatory homeowners association with dues at \$220 per year. Residents in Springwood are not mandated, but may join the association. Swim/tennis membership is \$115/year. A broad range of housing styles sell in the \$100,000s to high \$200,000s. The Web site is www.arborstation.org

Households

759

Homeowners association

Mandatory (Springwood excepted), dues \$220 a year

Property taxes

About \$1,997 on a \$174,000 house, with the homestead exemption

Amenities

> Two pools, four tennis courts, clubhouse

> Two ball fields

> Hunter Memorial Park

Arbor Place Mall

> Easy access to I-20

> Sweetwater Creek State Park

Douglas County schools

> Arbor Station Elementary, k-5, 770-920-4305

Enrollment, 508; students/teacher, 14.2; before-/after-school care, no/no; students in gifted program, 8.3 percent; total suspensions, five; 20.4 percent subsidized lunch; percentages meeting or exceeding Grade 4 expectations on Georgia Competency Tests: reading, 84; math, 78; language, 88.

> Yeager Middle, 6-8, 678-715-2100

School opened August 2002.

> Douglas County High, 9-12, 770-920-4400

Enrollment, 1,408; students/teacher, 17.4; students in gifted program, 14.1 percent; dropout rate, 5.9 percent; 24.0 percent subsidized lunch; total suspensions, 1,101; three foreign languages; 4-AAA athletic classification; SAT scores (college prep) 504 math, 508 verbal; percent passing graduation test on first round: 93 writing, 76 social studies, 66 science, 92 math, 93 language.

Housing trends in ZIP code 30134 in Douglas County

Sales of new houses: 346, up 24%

Sales of existing houses: 326, down 12%

Median sales price of new houses: \$130,950, up 4%

Median sales price of existing houses: \$106,800, up 7%

Data from January 2002 through December 2002

Source: Smart Numbers

\$279,900

9703 Squirrel Wood Run. Built on a 1/2-acre lot, this brick-front, two-story home has five bedrooms and 4 1/2 baths; kitchen with breakfast area and bar; family room with fireplace; formal dining room; living room; library/office; master and guest bedroom on main level; partial basement with bath; attached four-car garage; pool; gazebo. Listed for \$279,900; sold for same in 72 days.

\$154,900

6849 Quail Place. Built on about a 1/2-acre corner lot, this frame two-story home has three bedrooms and 2 1/2 baths; white kitchen with breakfast room; master bedroom with sitting room; great room with fireplace; dining room; hardwood floors on main; attached, side-entry two-car garage with opener; new exterior paint; fenced back yard. Listed for \$154,900; sold for same in 11 days.

\$146,000

6628 Windwood Court. Built on about 3/4 acre, this cedar contemporary split-level has four bedrooms and 2 1/2 baths; kitchen with breakfast room and pantry; cathedral-ceiling great room with fireplace; formal dining room; living room; sunroom; bonus room; office; finished basement with bath; attached two-car garage. Listed for \$155,900; sold for \$146,000 in 52 days.

Getting there

From downtown, take I-20 west to Douglasville. Take Ga. 5 (Exit 34) and turn left on Bill Arp Road to left on Arbor Parkway.

Other sales

A sampling of residential transactions in recent months:

| Address..... | Sales price |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| 6555 Blue Creek Court..... | \$187,000 |
| 9548 Clear Lake Court..... | \$183,000 |
| 8608 Dogwood Court..... | \$176,500 |
| 6850 Robinwood Trail..... | \$173,000 |
| 6979 Springwood Drive..... | \$159,300 |
| 6791 E. Woodridge Place..... | \$137,000 |