



Brick sidewalks and neatly manicured lawns line the streets of Gratz Park.

Storied Homes

Wherever you live in the Bluegrass, you'll get more than just walls and a roof; you'll become part of a neighborhood with a rich history.

by **Alice H. Davis**
Photography by **Jeff Rogers**

Real estate broker Ken Silvestri tells the story of a physician who planned a move from downtown Boston to the Bluegrass. After battling 30- to 40-minute commutes in Boston, Silvestri says, the physician was "super excited" to find that he could own a small horse farm nestled in the green, rolling hills of central Kentucky within a 15-minute drive of the hospital where he would practice. "His commute took him down Harrodsburg Road, which is one of our scenic corridors," says Silvestri, president of Silvestri-Craig Realtors, "and he thought it was just like being in Tuscany." That appreciation for Lexington's pastoral beauty is widespread. Young professionals, families and empty-nesters find a wide variety of living options, thanks in part to the area's history and character as well as some forward thinking on the part



“Each little neighborhood seems to have a story and its own personality.”

— Ken Silvestri, real estate broker

The Ashland area (above) grew out of Henry Clay's estate of the same name; irises (right) peek above wrought-iron fences.

of urban planners.

Lexington was the first city in the United States to develop the concept of the urban service area. The concept, adopted in 1958, defines and restricts urban growth by dividing the area into an urban service area, where development is encouraged, and a rural service area, which preserves open land and limits development. (The American Institute of Certified Planners honored the concept in 1991, naming it a national historic planning landmark.)

Under state law, the city's comprehensive plan, where issues related to the urban service area are considered, is re-evaluated every five years. Judy Craft, a real estate broker who is president of the 2,300-member Lexington-Bluegrass Association of Realtors, says discussions of the urban service area are always lively yet focused on preserving a valuable asset.

“At the end of the day, whether we are pro-growth or pro-preservation, we all want to preserve our beautiful horse farms, because they make central Kentucky so special and unique,” Craft says. The comprehensive plan adopted last year did not extend the service area, a move that encourages so-called in-fill developments like the new construction and the restoration of old buildings in downtown Lexington.

Lexington neighborhoods have



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JULIEN DUPRÉ, *In The Pasture* (detail), c. 1883, oil on canvas

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distinct histories, Silvestri says. “Each little neighborhood seems to have a story and its own personality.”

Residents identify with their neighborhoods as if they were separate communities, whether they live in the Ashland neighborhood, which grew out of the estate of statesman Henry Clay; near Hamburg Place, a shopping and residential area on the city’s southeast side that sprang from the development of the horse farm of the same name; in Hartland, a neighborhood south of the city that’s popular with young families; or in one of the small towns that dot the

counties around Lexington.

Once a traditional market of brick houses with two-car garages, central Kentucky has become a market of wide-ranging choices, Craft says. Added to the blend of housing stock: townhouses and condos for the growing number of empty-nesters, young professionals and singles; multi-use developments and spacious lofts downtown; and the suburban developments around the city.

“Everyone wants their own space,” says Craft. And in the Bluegrass, finding that space is becoming easier, no matter your taste.



Artek Lofts are among the new housing options in Lexington’s downtown area.

MOVING IN, MOVING UP

Surrounded by a dozen historic districts and bordered by two institutions of higher education, downtown Lexington celebrates its past. And, as Harold Tate sees it, an exciting future.

Tate, a former city architect, heads the nonprofit Downtown Development Association, established by Lexington Fayette Urban County Government in 2001 to promote and market downtown. One of the association’s many projects is an “urban life and style tour” to show folks how living in downtown has changed in recent years.

Over the last three years, developers have introduced almost 900 new residential units to the downtown area, for a total investment of \$500 million, Tate says.

“We’re trying to create a true mixture of housing, so people can work and live in downtown,” he says. New developments combine condominium and apartment living with shopping, entertainment, and work spaces. Plans call for additional parks and green space and a developing arts and cultural corridor in restored bourbon distilleries.

“Downtown’s for everybody,” says Tate. — Alice H. Davis

ARTEK PHOTO COURTESY SARAH R. MACHARG

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