

Holly Tree Subdivision

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*One man's vision for Simpsonville countryside
develops into neighborhood with mix of people*

Once upon a time, and it seems a long time ago, developers built a golf course way out in the country near Simpsonville.

Holly Tree Country Club, they called it, and Dr. Jim McNamara envisioned an upscale neighborhood surrounding it.

Nearly 30 years later, Holly Tree Plantation is marketed for its convenience rather than its pastoral setting. And as the older kid surrounded by upstarts Spaulding Farm, Kilgore Plantation and River Walk, its residents tout getting more house for their money in the older subdivision.

"You definitely get more bang for your buck, living out here," said Trey Werner, 28, who moved from downtown three years ago. "We paid about \$65 to \$70 a square foot, and we looked at houses off Augusta Road that were \$110."

Werner grew up in the earliest section of Holly Tree, and was anxious to return to the neighborhood that provided him a stable childhood. He spent all his summers at the Holly Tree golf course, tennis courts and swimming pool, and bought a 2,800-square-foot house with the expectation that in the future, his children will be able to do the same.

"Everything's within a quarter of a mile, so we won't have to worry about them being out on main roads," Werner said. "And we won't have to worry about taking them somewhere and dropping them off."

The 18-hole golf course, beautifully carved out of rolling pastures and woodland, is certainly the selling point for the community's 530 homes, many of which back up to its fairways. Lots are large and deeply shaded by mature oaks, maples and Bradford pears. Many sit on tentacled cul-de-sacs laid out in the master plan.

Country club membership also includes 10 tennis courts, a swimming pool and a variety of special activities.

Residents who don't want to join pay only \$75 in annual homeowners' dues, which covers landscaping common areas and streetlights.

In addition, the homeowners' association organizes luminary displays at Christmas, Santa's visits, a book club, a Bunco-playing group and preschoolers' play groups. One summer, it

had a family festival at the nearby Golden Strip YMCA.

The club separately has its own events, such as Fourth of July fireworks, and next summer is planning summertime sports camps for children.

The two groups joined forces to present a hayride and haunted house last Halloween, and resident real estate agent Carol Pyfrom fed hundreds of neighbors hot dogs and chili beside the club pool on Halloween night.

The houses themselves are a mix of vinyl and brick, one- and two-story, Cape Cod and Georgian and contemporary. Redtips -- victims of blight in other areas of Greenville County -- grow here to gargantuan size, easily blocking views of State 14 or tennis court fencing or neighbors' houses.

Covenants include prohibitions on chain-link fencing, long-term street parking, visible RVs or boats, and utility buildings. All additions and paint changes must be approved by an architectural committee.

The generous lot sizes are a major selling point, according to Pyfrom, who bought her golf course home 10 years ago.

"The other thing that sells it," she said, "is the size of the rooms."

She calls Holly Tree, in fact, "a Beaver Cleaver neighborhood" of comfortable, spacious homes like those on the old "Leave It to Beaver" television show.

Emily Haller, 39, agrees that it was the privacy and size of the lots that brought her and her young family from Taylors.

"We're not on top of each other like some of the newer neighborhoods," she said.

Even a weekday drive from her job in downtown Greenville to pick up her children on the Eastside and then return home doesn't faze her.

"Growing up, I thought, 'Who would live this far out?' " she laughed. "Now that we're out here, I like it."

Holly Tree is home to a mix of long-time Greenvillians and newcomers brought to the area by industries, including ones on nearby Woodruff Road, said Pyfrom.

The current homeowners' association president is Richard Hagins, a retired U.S. Navy commander and businessman who moved from Massachusetts five years ago.

It was the golf course that attracted Hagins, but it is the diversity of the neighborhood that keeps him.

"People from all over the United States are here," he said. "When you bring in a diverse group, it helps with the climate of the community. There's no set mind-set. It is open to change. That's what diversity brings, whether that's geographic or cultural."

Hagins and his wife, Priscilla, have a daughter in each of the area's three public schools -- Bethel Elementary, Hillcrest Middle and Mauldin High.

The oldest plays on Mauldin's golf team, honing skills she learned on the country club course.

Hagins also is on the board of the Golden Strip Y, where he and his first-grader participate in the Indian Princess program.

"It's busting at the seams it's growing so rapidly," he said. "We had over 500 kids sign up for soccer."

The availability of sports and recreation for children and teens is an attraction most residents cite for choosing Holly Tree.

Barb McPoland's husband moved from Kingston, N.Y., eight months ahead of the rest of the family in 1994, and joined Holly Tree Country Club.

When she and the four children arrived, she decided it made sense to locate close by for maximum use of the facilities.

"The very first day we moved here, we went down to the pool and everybody came up to the kids and introduced themselves," she said. "It's just a great place."

But even without that bonus, McPoland said, the mature neighborhood appealed to her.

"Once I came and looked around, it was the one I liked the most," she said.

"The trees were all grown up. It made it seem more homey than a lot of the newer developments that had no big **trees** or bushes."

"The beauty of the community," agreed Pyfrom, "is the established look we have."

HOLLY TREE PLANTATION

'Average Price: \$200,762

'Years Built: 1972 to present

'Square Footage: 1,800-5,000 square feet

'Schools: Bethel Elementary, Hillcrest Middle, Mauldin High

'Parks and Recreation: Holly Tree Country Club, Golden Strip YMCA, city parks in Mauldin and Simpsonville, St. Giles Untied Soccer Club Mesa complex

'Elected Officials:

State Senate: David Thomas

State House: Michael Easterday

County Council: Dozier Brooks

School board: Marilyn Hendrix