

## RETIREMENT HOMES Are The New Lifestyle Trend | Seniors Invest In Community Living For Carefree Sunset Years

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At 32.1 degrees Celsius, the sun was unrelenting on February 28. MR Sathyaraj, 90, up early as was his routine, was driven nearly 40km from his home to a posh hotel on Residency Road. His task: Speak to people who are looking at settling into homes designed for the retired and elderly. "Senior living homes," Sathyaraj said.

He spoke eloquently: "The meet was to showcase our property with all its facilities, and we thought it best to make people living there our ambassadors," MN Shanthasheela, general manager of Primus Eden on Kanakapura Road, said.

These projects are designed to take care of the needs of elders, and come as the perfect solution for families where the young are busy chasing dreams, and the seniors want to lead a free and dignified life.

"We have a 24/7 medical aid facility, we are close to a hospital. Customized food, reading area, swimming pools, a place for fitness and well-being, besides the managers organize other programmes to keep us busy. I have all the comforts I wanted," says Shank Srinivas, 84.

Tina Mahajan, 58, has an eye problem. "Earlier, I lived with domestic helps who were unreliable.

Now, I am taken care of well and we really like it here." Husband Chandar Mahajan, 74, and she have lived in more than one country but find this place works best for them.

Lalit Lakhota says as he exercises: "When we lived by ourselves, we were dependent on service providers like domestic help, cook, driver... There was no guarantee they would stick around, they needed supervision and we weren't free of responsibilities. Here, we are doing what our hearts want to, with a lot of time for hobbies and exercise."

The concept, in vogue in the West, is becoming a lifestyle trend in Indian cities, which are slowly beginning to push the elderly to the edges. Even Bengaluru, Pensioners' Paradise, as it was called back then. Now a competitive dreamland with shrinking public spaces, decaying parks, little patience, less safety, and almost no place to walk. Some global reports named it among the worst places for the old to live.

Yet, it's a favourite with seniors. "I've seen many places in my service years, but when it came to settling down, it had to be Bangalore," Air Chief Marshal H Major had said four years ago.

Pub City was a young metropolis in the 1970s and 1980s, but not alien to the elderly. Home to PSUs and state government-run institutions, several people settled down here post retirement. Senior defence personnel also made Bengaluru, a land of gardens and lakes, their home.

Post 1991, things began to



Pics: Chethan Srivakumar

# Pensioners' Paradise COMES FULL CIRCLE

### ASSISTED LIVING A BIG DRAW

While there are various business models for retirement villages/homes, one common feature all have is 'assisted living', which is why seniors prefer these places. It means a long-term system that has senior care options. This system provides personal care and support like food, bathing, cleaning, posting material, shopping, transportation and so on. The most important aspect is healthcare and medication. In all, projects in Bengaluru have a 24/7 doctor on site. An ambulance is parked within the facility, there are duty nurses and in-house helps who keep track of medication of the seniors.

Besides, there are several other options, including personalized food, depending on health conditions.



**FREE & FUN:** Lalit Lakhota says they are doing what their hearts want to, with a lot of time for hobbies and exercise

**RIGHT MIX:** PM Chandrashekar, a doctor who is also in charge of the retirement home on Kanakapura Road in Bengaluru, says the facility is convenient and also less lonely

change. New educational institutions and new economy jobs saw an influx of the young. By the mid-2000s, riding the IT dream, Bengaluru's demography changed. By 2010, Bengaluru was an old metropolis with a young population. Many were using it as a launch pad for careers abroad, leaving parents here, dependent and lonely.

The demand for old age homes began to grow. Something still accepted with a frown in Indian society. Many seniors found themselves in such homes, which were more like orphanages.

This was an opportunity for the real estate sector, which began putting plans on drawing boards, and came up with community projects. According to a 2016 Jones Lang LaSalle report, Bengaluru has nearly 10 retirement projects coming up on the outskirts, while a few are already operational.

Sathyaraj is among many who have come to accept and even praise these homes. "Have you seen heaven?" asks Ranjit Lilani, 76, a retired businessman who spent many years in Nairobi and is now settled in Bengaluru. His question, while rhetorical, may seem to have an exaggerated answer - but it's apparent Lilani is happy.

PM Chandrashekar, a doctor who is also in charge of the facility, says: "Not too far from the city, and people to take care of other facilities, we find this convenient and also less lonely."

A few kilometres away is Suvridha, another such project. "This is a retirement village," says Ashok Dey, 78. "There are multiple advantages - physical security,



**GOOD CARE:** Chandar Mahajan and Tina Mahajan, who have lived in more than one country, find the retirement home on Kanakapura Road works best for them

medical facilities, and all other needs are taken care of."

Dey says these aren't like old age homes. "We chose to invest our money here and came by choice. Several people have properties in Bengaluru but prefer to live in such facilities." Satish Rao, whom Dey calls a 'snow bird', has invested in a cottage here although he only comes when it gets too cold in Canada.

While seniors continue to make Bengaluru their home, such facilities are for those with the resources, and are not going to replace old age homes. For them, there is no empty nest syndrome: while their young are taking wing, they are building new nests of their own.

### TIMES VIEW

In a society where the young are too busy to care for parents, retirement homes appear to be the ideal solution and should not be looked upon as a segregation or ghettoisation of the elderly. This is a niche concept and may go against the traditional Indian joint family system, but the positives are many: seniors are cared for professionally, lead safe and meaningful lives, and most important, are not lonely. We need to accept it as a reality, without guilt. At the same time, we ought to spare a thought for those abandoned in old age homes. Surely, their lives can be bettered too.

## Builders tap the grey market

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Ahuja said.

**Bengaluru:** With more people eager to live comfortable and carefree retired lives, property developers in Bengaluru are increasingly focusing on addressing the needs of this segment, known as senior living.

As offspring follow the rainbow out of their hometowns, in search of better careers and lifestyles, the proud go-getter generation is trying to ensure its sunset days are not spent being desolate and marginalized. The retirement home, a popular concept in the West, is gaining momentum in India as well. Mantri Developers, Ozone and Brigade have already moved into this category and are building community projects on the city suburbs. Mantri set up a separate company, Mantri Primus Lifespaces, two years ago to focus on senior living.

Ozone's Urbana, an integrated township in the northern suburbs of Bengaluru, has a portion dedicated to seniors, named Serene Living. Brigade Orchards, also located in Devanahalli, names its seniors project Parkside Homes.

"We haven't taken a real estate approach but a services approach, as these are not old age homes but a way to free up the retirement phase for individuals," Adarsh Narahari, managing director, Mantri Primus, said. He said only those who are 55 years old are allowed to stay.

Mantri has two types of senior living homes - Primus Eden which is leased, and Primus Reflection which can be purchased - in Kanakapura. The company has leased 45-50 of its 75 apartments, and sold about 80 apartments in Reflection. For a lease, the company takes a refundable deposit of Rs 25 lakh and charges Rs 25,000 per person. It provides a food and beverages centre, medical facility, concierge, daily housekeeping and gymnasium.

Tata Housing's Riva Residences consists of 187 units, of which 127 are sold, according to the company. These are 2-3 BHK apartments, with prices starting at Rs 50 lakh.

Ozone says it sold all 314 apartments under Serene Living and customers are expected to occupy them mid-year. They range between 1BHK to 3BHK flats, and cost up to Rs 60 lakh.

Brigade's Parkside Homes consist of 160 apartments, 90% of which are sold and possession is expected early next year. "High-profile corporate retirees are moving in," residential chief executive Om

These homes find three types of buyers - senior corporate executives who book together to plan their retirement, those who stay abroad and worry about parents living in independent houses, besides senior citizens who don't have a support mechanism, said Ahuja.



**HAVING A BALL:** For Ranjit Lilani, a retired businessman who spent years in Nairobi, the retirement home feels like heaven

### SPECIAL DESIGN

Builders have to keep special design features in mind, like specifically designed elevators, doors, passage-turning radius and proper staircases. Some other features

- Convenient sliding windows
- Anti-skid tiles
- Wide corridors with support railings and grab bars
- Shower controls with anti-scald devices
- Emergency call systems in bathroom, bedroom

### COMFORT ZONE

- Well-equipped gym
- Multi-purpose lounge, dining halls
- Concierge services, housekeeping, laundry
- Clubhouse with recreational therapist
- 24/7 healthcare with telemedicine facility

with running kitchens, indoor pools, massage centres

- Reading room
- Concierge services, housekeeping, laundry
- Clubhouse with recreational therapist
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