

AGING IN STYLE

Retirement communities go upscale, letting residents "live life"

By ELIZABETH SUH | THE OREGONIAN

HILLSBORO —

A cruise ship on land — that's how some could describe the next big retirement community to open in Washington County, co-owner Fee Stubblefield said.

Set to open in March, The Springs at Tanasbourne will rise four floors on six acres in the bustling, upscale Tanasbourne district of east Hillsboro, offering 230 apartments amid restaurants, a pool, spa,

Living in such communities is not cheap, said Lauren Shahan, spokeswoman for the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, an association of nonprofit aging services providers, including retirement communities. But they have become more affordable and popular since the concept was launched 30 years ago, she said.

"Part of the appeal is that people want to remain in their own homes," Shahan said.

"Home is really the place where they have the key to the door, they can fix themselves a sandwich and they control the space, but (retirement communities) are attached to services and activities that give them both fun and peace of mind."

The United States has more than 2,200 "continuing care retirement communities," which provide varying levels of services and medical care. That number has stayed fairly level after a growth spurt in the 1990s, according to B.C. Ziegler and Co., a financial investment firm.

The average age of residents is 83 in The Springs' retirement communities in Salem, Milwaukie and elsewhere, built by Stubblefield's company, Willowcreek Management. So baby boomers — the oldest of whom are in their early 60s — will not be the focus for at least another decade.

In 2007, about 9 percent of Washington County's population — 45,000 people — were age 65 and older, according to Portland State University's Population Research Center. That percentage is similar to Multnomah and Clackamas counties.

Another 38,000 Washington County residents are projected to hit 65 by 2020, according to PSU's Institute on Aging.

Several full-service retirement communities already exist in the metro area. SpringRidge at Charbonneau in Wilsonville provides an upscale setting with a restaurant, health club, pool, spa, sundries shop, bank and salon.

Laurel Parc at Bethany Village, to open in 2009 in Bethany Village Centre, a mixed-use plaza, will offer a wide range of amenities and assisted-living units.

The Tanasbourne location, at Northwest Cornell Road and 192nd Avenue, seemed ripe for

movie theater and concierge services.

Part of a steady market for retired adults who aren't willing to accept the nursing homes of their parents' day, The Springs is for an older iteration of generation-next, Stubblefield said.

A generation that wants things "the way they want it," he said. "They want to live life."

But style comes at a cost: from \$2,400 to \$4,500 a month, plus a deposit.

Willowcreek Management because of its active, attractive environment, with a slew of amenities within walking distance, including Whole Foods and The Streets of Tanasbourne outdoor mall.

Stubblefield understands the price tag for resort-like living is out of reach for many. While Willowcreek's other communities in Oregon accept Medicaid payments, the cost of the Tanasbourne site — more than \$50 million — is too large for the company to recoup enough from Medicaid reimbursements, he said.

Of The Springs at Tanasbourne's 230 units, 82 are assisted living, including a secure area for memory-care patients with conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

Options run from studios to two bedrooms, with varying rents and an entrance fee of as much as \$10,000 or a deposit of as much as \$309,000. That deposit is refunded if the resident moves or passes away, and it lowers rent in the meantime. Assisted-living care costs an extra \$250 a month per level of care needed.

Those costs may seem steep, but they could even out for people who otherwise would pay separately for bills and services such as mortgage, food, gardening, utilities, entertainment and personal medical care.

The Springs at Tanasbourne includes a restaurant and pub, for which residents have \$500 in credit monthly, a putting green, rooftop party deck, small movie theater, sundries shop, health club and spa with physical therapy, library and computer room, chapel, chauffeurs, and views of newly opened Magnolia Park next door or of the Coast Range and Mount Hood.

If residents end up needing more personal and medical care, they can get it without moving away by switching to an assisted-living apartment.

Linda Jo Enger, who's worked for 24 years at the Elsie Stuhr Center, a day center for senior citizens in Beaverton, said Washington County needs more affordable housing for seniors, but there are plenty of people who would pay for the extra comfort, activities and refinement offered by The Springs.

The Springs at Tanasbourne has about 30

units reserved, even without a model for view.

Cost was one of the factors that kept Bill and Corinne Swift of Beaverton from deciding whether to go with The Springs at Tanasbourne.

The couple, who have lived in their two-story home for 28 years, need to downsize but found the units at The Springs too cramped and the busy neighborhood too hectic. They're looking for a retirement condo with a smaller kitchen and a more storage.

On the other hand, Shirley O'Neill, 72, a resident at Willowcreek's Springs at Clackamas Woods in Milwaukie, is a believer. She loved The Springs so much after her mother moved in that she and her husband Tommy, 80, made the move, too, about five years ago.

In between movie nights, game nights, parties with varying rents and an entrance fee of as much as \$10,000 or a deposit of as much as \$309,000. That deposit is refunded if the resident moves or passes away, and it lowers rent in the meantime. Assisted-living care costs an extra \$250 a month per level of care needed.

"If you did everything on the calendar, you would hardly have time to sleep and take a bath," Shirley O'Neill said.

That vibrancy is partly how Willowcreek communities work toward enhancing a significant chapter of people's lives, Stubblefield said.

The idea is personal to him.

"Promise me you'll never put me in an old folks' home," his grandmother told his family. But they were desperate for the right place for her after she became unable to care for herself.

Stubblefield was already working in real estate and decided to try to build communities where he would want his grandmother to live. She lived at The Springs at Clackamas Woods until her death.

"Our family's story is other people's stories," he said.

When training new employees, Stubblefield shows pictures of his grandma when she was younger, reminding employees of residents' rich histories.

They've gone to school, been married, gone on their first vacations. "They're just ahead of the game," he said.

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WILLOWCREEK MANAGEMENT

LEFT | An artist's rendering depicts the lobby at The Springs at Tanasbourne.

BELOW | Some balconies at The Springs at Tanasbourne, which is under construction for a scheduled March opening, will overlook a courtyard that will feature a putting green.



OLIVIA BUCKS/THE OREGONIAN



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ABOVE | Residents order dinner at a restaurant at The Springs at Clackamas Woods, built by the same company building The Springs at Tanasbourne. The Springs communities not only offer a range of amenities aimed at active adults, but also provide extra care in assisted living apartments.

45,000
Washington County residents age 65 and older in 2007 (9 percent of population)

230
Number of units at The Springs at Tanasbourne

\$2,600 to \$3,200
Monthly cost of one style of a one-bedroom apartment at The Springs at Tanasbourne

83
Average age at Willowcreek Management's retirement communities

62
Leading age of the baby boomer generation

Sources: Portland State University Population Research Center; Willowcreek Management