

It also can be one very long shopping trip. You can buy a locally made mattress at the Fluffo Mattress Showroom near downtown, learn how to be a barber in Madison at the International Barber College or buy a new or used car at a big (or small) car dealership in the River-gate area.

You can do some hard-core thrift-store shopping at three different Goodwill Superstores in Madison, Hendersonville and Gallatin.

You can chow down on pit barbecue at Center Point Barbeque, right where Davidson County turns into Sumner County.

The family-run business —one of the most beloved, down-home barbecue spots in Nashville — is the traditional midway point between East Nashville and the city of Gallatin.

I've been going to the beloved little shack of a restaurant off and on since the 1970s. I'm not the only one.

Owner Robert Duke said the big-name country pickers and stars having been ambling in for decades.

My own involvement with Gallatin Pike goes way back.

► Please see **PIKE**, Page 2



BILLY KINGSLEY / STAFF

This home at 1136 Riverwood Drive, where reporter Linda Bryant's grandparents lived, is an example of the stable, established residential neighborhoods just off Gallatin Pike.

► Learn more about homes & neighborhoods **On Pages 5, 8.**



MANDY LUNN / STAFF

Travers Harper from Gallatin and his girlfriend's son Jaylaun Turner, 3, hang out on the football field at Gallatin High School during practice. Harper's son Dan'twon Harper is a freshman on the team.

► Learn about Gallatin High School's football tradition **On Page 6.**



MANDY LUNN / STAFF

Kate Seaver, 11 months, of Hendersonville, enjoys a sunny day on the swing at the Moss Wright Park playground.

► Learn about places to relax and play along the pike **On Page 7.**



MANDY LUNN / STAFF

Michelle Hall shops with her kids Sam Hall, 9 days old, and Sara Hall, 3, in downtown Gallatin.



BILLY KINGSLEY / STAFF

Casey Chadwell, 14, takes a water break while David Gray, 14, prepares his new fishing pole to cast a line in the lake at Hendersonville's Memorial Park.

Sumner County may be next star in high-end home real estate

By **MARILEE SPANJIAN**
For *The Tennessean*

Those high-end residential real estate developers who once looked to Williamson County may now be looking northward to Sumner County.

It's like that old saying, "If I only knew what I know now," often applies to real estate. Go back 20 years. If we would have suspected that not only Davidson, but also Williamson and Sumner counties' land, would be so valuable, more of us might have sold some family heirlooms and skipped eating out and vacations to buy some dirt.

Homes along the Pike

Land remains a hot property in Middle Tennessee. And not only is our rolling landscape attracting the first-time homebuyers, but savvy out-of-state buyers searching for a simpler lifestyle are buying million-dollar dream homes.

For the past 12 years, the real estate market has been strong here, says John Sheley, executive vice president of the Home Builders Association of Middle Tennessee, a trade organization with more than 950 company members based

in the above three counties as well as Robertson, Cheatham, Dickson, Maury and more rural counties (but not Rutherford). "And there's no sign that it's going to slow down."

A prime indication of just how hot this market has become is the Parade of Homes. For the past 16 years, this annual event has showcased as many as six new decorated, furnished and landscaped homes in a new community. Moreover, for the past three years, HBAMT has found enough interest to hold two Parades, one every spring in Sumner County and one every fall in Williamson.

A test of the market's strength

In an indirect way, the Parades have been a true test of the real estate market's strength. Although the Parades are designed to showcase new products along with decorating and remodeling ideas, the two-week events also attract prospective buyers.

"They only account for around 1% of the show's attendees. However, take this last Parade at Fairvue (Plantation in Gallatin held June 11-26), where 31,000 people attended. That means around 300

prospective buyers went through the six homes. The least expensive were just under a million dollars and the most was \$3.4 million. All sold before the end of the Parade," Sheley said.

Sounds like a fluke? Hardly, said builder Bryan Edwards of Hughes-Edwards Homes, a 27-year old family-run local business. He admits there is a risk building spec homes, especially one over a million dollars. But he has built two Parade homes, one in 2003 and again this spring. Both are in Fairvue.

► Please see **HOMES**, Page 8

Homes

FROM PAGE 1

"This is the development that is bringing people to Sumner County. It is the only golf course lakefront community in Middle Tennessee. If you can sell six million-dollar homes, then that's a lot of success factor. ... But I can guarantee you that these buyers are probably going to look at Governors Club, too."

Is Sumner becoming another Williamson?

Only time will tell whether Sumner will experience the same growth as Williamson County and, in the process, get more share of the luxury-home buying market. Obviously, the Parades will help.

In 1989, a Parade of Homes was held in Blueridge, a Hendersonville community developed by

Chris Wicke, who is also developing Fairvue.

"At the time, there weren't a whole lot of upper-end communities in Sumner. Anything over \$200,000 was really high. The norm was \$120,000 to \$150,000. We had one Parade house that was \$240,000. It was 4,000-square feet."

That was just the beginning as other communities soon followed. As for the million-dollar market, it wasn't until about five years ago, when Fairvue broke ground in Gallatin, that Sumner had any high-end communities to compete with Williamson for buyers. Of the 650 lots in Fairvue, there are about 175 still available. However, the lake lots are now starting around \$400,000.

Soon, Wicke plans to open Foxland in Gallatin, a mixed-use community with approximately 550-units ranging from village style to condominium to traditional lots. He plans for more lake frontage and another golf course.

And the price? "Similar or higher," he said.

The differences and the similarities

Mike Gaughan has been a broker with ReMax Choice Properties in Sumner County since 1983. He watched the market start to change when land prices drew national builders to the area and the widening of the Interstate gave hope to commuters that, once it was completed, they could shave down their drive time.

"Sumner is similar to Williamson when it comes to the makeup of the people. There are a lot of white-collar residents, a lot of executives. Our park systems are as good and so are our schools. We also have a new Catholic high school (Pope John Paul II), and that's drawing a lot of people. And compared to Williamson, it's equal distance to the airport. The big difference though is the (Old

Hickory) lake. People who want access and want a boat dock in their back yard come to Sumner."

As for the retail and office space, well, they're working on it, Gaughan said. "Indian Lake Boulevard goes into Hendersonville. It won't be like Cool Springs, but it will have higher-end retail. We already have Lowe's and Home Depot and we're starting to get more restaurants and even a new 16-screen theater. ... Williamson County has seen a lot of growth, but now, larger developers are looking up north."

Still, when it comes right down to it, the deciding factor for most buyers is the house, the lot, the neighborhood and the drive time to work, Gaughan said.

New Parade coming

Distance from the airport, distance to downtown Nashville, level of shopping, private and public schools and employment opportunities all equate to loca-

tion. That is why Sumner County is the rising star in the Middle Tennessee real estate market.

Those factors also continue to power Williamson County. Location is one reason why Legends Ridge in the Grassland area, the site of this fall's Parade of Homes, has remained a viable site even though the development sat dormant for four years. Developer Paul Craig of J & C Properties said that by the time that he and his partners took over the development at the corner of Hillsboro and Berry's Chapel roads, there was practically no competition in the immediate area for homes priced at the higher end.

Then, after the announcement that the Parade was headed south again from Sumner County, lot sales took off. Not only did five of the seven lots around the neighborhood's lake go to Parade builders, more interior lots sold. Before the announcement, Craig said, they had sold five lots in three months.

And after the news that the Parade would be in Legends Ridge

on Oct. 15-30?

"We sold 25 in eight months. We've been able to sell them for a higher price. There's definitely been a cost involved to get ready for the Parade. But it's given us a shot of credibility," Craig said.

Still, Craig said, initially, builders weren't lining up to build the Parade homes. "We targeted 25 builders. We wanted name recognition. But for one reason or another — some had been in a Parade already and knew the work involved, and others were already committed to building elsewhere — not one came through."

Then, one by one, the five experienced builders (one is Craig's development partner, John Ring) in the upcoming Parade came to them. The builders plan to pack these homes with design, architectural and decorating ideas as the homes' initial prices range from approximately \$1.5-\$2.2 million.

At this point, one is already sold. Not a bad way to head into the next Parade. ■

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