

Primetime

News for life's
second half

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The good life

Luxury CCRCs cater to the selective

High-end continuing care retirement communities offer all the amenities of an upscale resort plus the security of knowing that future needs can easily be met.

The apartments and villas at upscale communities include the latest finishes and open floor plans with great rooms. Some communities even have penthouses.

Residents at upscale retirement communities have access to hotel-style amenities such as salt-water pools, fitness centers, art studios, multiple dining venues, spas and a wide range of activities.

Judie Knott lives at GreenFields of Geneva, an upscale CCRC in the western suburbs. She belongs to a group that puts bird feeding stations on the campus, while her husband plays golf at the course next door. "We're unexpectedly more active than I thought we'd be," she says.

Many services

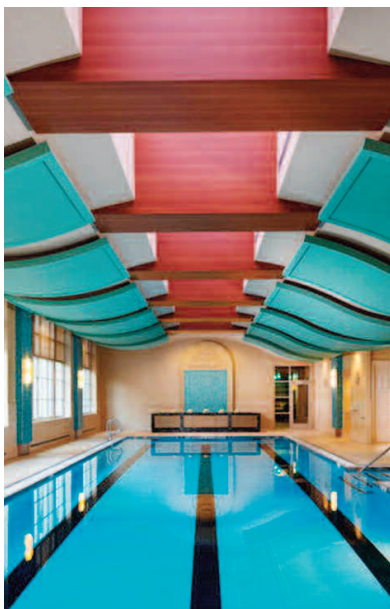
Luxury communities also offer a wide range of services from housekeeping to parking valets and concierges. More importantly perhaps, CCRCs include assisted living and nursing care, providing the security of knowing that help is available, if needed.

Carol Monsees lives at The Mather, a luxury retirement high-rise in downtown Evanston. She lives in a two-bedroom, two bath apartment on the 10th floor. Her husband also lives at The Mather, but just across the street in the community's health care center.

Carol enjoys many of the activities offered by the community. Every morning she participates in water aerobics. "It's a lively group," she says. "It's a great way to start the day."

It's also easy for her to visit her husband several times a day, while knowing that he's getting the care he needs. "That's real security," she says.

Continuing care communities typically charge an upfront entry fee along with a monthly fee. Entry fees vary widely depending on the location and the size of the unit.



The pool at the Mather in Chicago makes a design splash. (July 10, 2014)

Entry fees at upscale communities range from about \$300,000 to more than \$1 million. Most communities offer a partial refund once the resident leaves the unit and it is resold.

Dining in style

Special programs are featured at The Clare, a 52-story skyscraper and luxury continuing care community in downtown Chicago. The building recently showcased an evening with soprano Alicia Hurtado, including Spanish and French classical music and ballads. Another popular event was a bus trip for residents to Chicago's Newberry Library for the opening reception of the Chicago Calligraphy Collective Exhibit.

Individual apartments at The Clare can be customized, an option sometimes available at other CCRCs. Residents can add hardwood floors, change wall configurations, and personalize their closets. "We can do anything you'd do in a home to make it yours," says Kyle Exline, executive director at The Clare.

Exline, executive director at The Clare.

Meanwhile, upscale retirement communities are reinventing the dining experience. Multiple dining venues are typically available for formal meals or quick snacks. The Admiral at the Lake, in Chicago, has a formal dining room called the Waterfront with views of Lake Michigan as well as a more casual bistro setting. "We have a fabulous dining program," says Joyce Carey, a resident at the Admiral since 2012. She has a two-bedroom apartment on the 12th floor with views of Lake Michigan.

The Admiral's executive chef, Alejandro Arreola, formerly of The Ritz, holds food demonstrations for residents that focus on dining trends, such as the use of locally produced foods. In fact, the Admiral has its own community garden where herbs and vegetables are grown for use at the dining venues. The community's gardening committee helps maintain the gardens.