



EDENTON, NORTH CAROLINA



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON



SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH



CLEVELAND, OHIO



QUEENS, NEW YORK

2007 cottageliving OUR TOP 10 COTTAGE COMMUNITIES

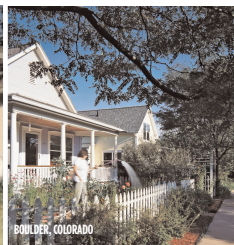
Both new and old, the best neighborhoods nationwide use creative ideas to solve common problems



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



OCEAN SPRINGS, MISSISSIPPI



BOULDER, COLORADO



LAKE ELMO, MINNESOTA



TUCSON, ARIZONA



EDENTON MILL VILLAGE, NC

The idea

Each year we look for neighborhoods we'd like to call home. Our 2007 favorites have charming cottages, a sense of community, and an eye on the future.

NOW IS A GOOD TIME FOR GREAT COMMUNITIES. Across the country, many older neighborhoods are enjoying comebacks—homes lovingly restored, crime driven out, young trees greening up streetscapes. And new communities are cropping up that improve quality of life through innovative design and clever solutions to familiar problems, such as long waits in commuter traffic and skyrocketing utility bills. Today's architects, planners, preservationists, and developers are combining the best from the past with the bright ideas of tomorrow, all for the good of the people who call these neighborhoods home.

Last year, we celebrated to well-established cottage neighborhoods—places with inspiring architecture, porches, and gardens; walkable streets with parks and playgrounds; locally owned shops and restaurants; and an enveloping neighborliness. This year, we've broadened our criteria to include the most exciting and attractive communities, large and small, being built today. The trees may not be mature enough to offer much shade, and the residents may still be getting to know one another. But these examples offer winning alternatives to alienation, car-dependency, high energy costs, commercial sprawl, and soaring housing prices. The following neighborhoods bring cottage style to smart growth. >



THE CRITERIA

Again this year we strove for geographic diversity, canvassing all corners of the country for neighborhoods to write home about. And since no database could ever quantify the results we were seeking, we once again relied on footwork, which is only fitting since people—not numbers—are the heart of any great community. Unlike last year, however, we did not limit our search to cities of 100,000 people or more. Here's what we looked for and the weight given each category:

HOMES (30 PERCENT) Along with inspiring architecture, cottage-y scale, and relative affordability, we looked for unifying design elements and walkable streets.

PEOPLE (30 PERCENT) Behind every great neighborhood are the residents who live there, those who spark a resurgence, or the designers and developers who envision it and bring it to life.

BRIGHT IDEA (20 PERCENT) The best communities not only are fine places to live but also spur innovative, positive changes on a regional and even national level. Our examples include "net-zero" homes that conserve energy; a brownfield development that protects its green, or unpolluted, counterparts; and historic preservation that saves rail cottages and local heritage while stirring economic revitalization.

COTTAGE TWIST (20 PERCENT) something that brings a smile

Know a great cottage community? We'll consider it for our 2008 Top 10 list; visit cottageliving.com

ILLUSTRATION: JEROME COOKSON



Community Profile

LOCATION: Queens, New York; 20 minutes and four subway stops from Manhattan on the express line
NUMBER OF HOMES: 660 houses, 220 townhouses, and 11 apartment buildings with 631 units
WHAT \$300,000 WILL BUY YOU: a one-bedroom apartment
FOR MORE INFO: foresthillrealestate.com

1 Forest Hills Gardens Queens, NY

This is the model cottage community, designed almost a century ago and emulated ever since

I LIVE IN NEW YORK CITY, a place known more for high-pitched change than a slow, neighborly pace. But my community, Forest Hills Gardens, feels magically removed from all the bustle. Stop at any random corner, look around, and the view is almost the same as it was nearly a century ago. Maybe that's why this original of cottage communities still inspires many newer developments that seek to replicate its simple yet timeless effective design.

Forest Hills Gardens—not to be confused with nearby Forest Hills—is a small community (142 acres) laid out in 1910 by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., the premier landscape designer of his era. In the United States, Forest Hills Gardens is the granddaddy of what might be termed the planned, pedestrian-scale community. Its influence is visible everywhere, from Shaker Heights, Ohio (begun in 1912), to more recent developments, especially those of the popular New Urbanism movement.

"I wish I could get it as perfectly as Olmsted did," says Andrés Duany, a founder of New Urbanism. "He was the master, and I'd be happy to get even close to that level of design."

Olmsted's gift was that he was equal parts landscape architect and social engineer. When planning Forest Hills Gardens, he chose to curve the streets—not to avoid any particular impediment but simply to promote a feeling of calm. This was an innovation at the time. The effect slows traffic, both auto and pedestrian, to a more leisurely pace. >



WELCOME TO STATION SQUARE, gateway to Olmsted's urban-planning masterpiece and a wonderful meeting place that connects residents for work and play.



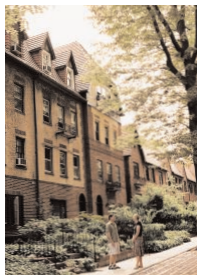
COTTAGES TURNED at angles create common spaces where neighbors can meet and landscaping can flow together.

Olmsted was also partial to small parks. The larger a park, he believed, the higher the risk that visitors would move about behind a veil of urban anonymity. (Interesting, since his father was the visionary behind Manhattan's Central Park.) So rather than one big space, Forest Hills Gardens boasts four smaller parks. They are used abundantly, in all seasons, by residents of all ages. In fact, you can't really move through the neighborhood without passing by or through one of them, and since park space means social space, my wife always reminds me to factor in 20 minutes for chitchat.

Even the houses feature subtle touches meant to foster a sense of community. Many of the cottages are the work of Grosvenor Atterbury, an esteemed architect notable for designing the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A bit of a utopian, Atterbury built Forest Hills Gardens homes in the Arts and Crafts style. He elected to attach many houses to one another. Your home is not a castle, he seemed to be saying. You share your walls, your roof, your drainpipes with those around you.

But not all connect; that would be too predictable and, well, boring. Forest Hills Gardens includes a number of cottage clusters with small homes turned at angles to create informal common spaces. "Live here and you are simply going to know your neighbors," says Scott Marcus, an 18-year resident.

Like the houses, the neighbors tend not to look—or cook—the same. The 6,000 residents of Forest Hills Gardens are a diverse lot, hailing from all over the world. My twin 5-year-olds attend kindergarten >



BY DESIGN, this row of townhouses fosters a sense of community and adds another layer to the housing options.



SMALL PARKS keep Forest Hills Gardens on an intimate scale, slow traffic, and offer a break on an afternoon walk.



COTTAGE THOUGHT:

New Urbanism is an increasingly popular movement that espouses a traditional approach to modern development. The idea is to create more integrated, balanced, walkable, and sustainable communities that can be a positive solution to disconnected sprawl and the isolated "McMansions" neighborhood.

Andrés Duany of Miami's DPZ Architects is one of the founders of New Urbanism. He believes, as we do, that Olmsted's Forest Hills Gardens (FHG) embodies the ideal in neighborhood design. Andrés discusses his favorite elements of FHG, features that reappear in his designs as well as in each of our Top 10 communities:

- **The community transcends its surroundings.** Some folks might not think of Queens as New York City's most appealing borough, but the design and planning of FHG have allowed it to become something initially unexpected.
- **The neighborhood has a real care with high density and mixed-use housing.**
- **It's hooked onto a transit system.**
- **Olmsted's detailing of sidewalks, curbs, and street signs is the best in the country.**
- **FHG is filled with beautiful landscaping and good architecture.**
- **The street layout connects smoothly to the existing Queens grid system but keeps its own leisurely pace with Olmsted's curving design.**

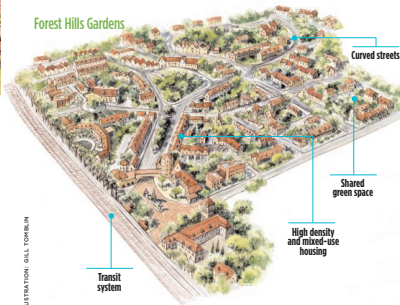


ILLUSTRATION: GILL TOMLIN

“Stop at any random corner, look around, and the view

is almost the same as it was nearly a century ago”



THE IDEAL NEIGHBORHOOD grows into its surroundings over time so the whole scene, from house to roofline to overarching tree, looks as if it grew together.



JUSTIN MARTIN (who wrote this piece) and his family, in front of their four-bedroom townhouse, enjoy the neighborhood's sense of small-town escape.

“Thankfully, the well-designed community is not a thing of the past.”

at the School in the Gardens, a first-rate public school. They've had the opportunity to try a variety of dishes, from Chinese and Greek to Moroccan, that their classmates bring on holidays.

To preserve the uniqueness of this neighborhood, Forest Hills Gardens has an active—obsessive, some would say—property owners' association. Without the group's blessing, you can't make modifications to the outside of your home. When my next-door neighbor wanted to repaint the trim on his house, he had to figure out the precise green that wouldn't clash with the rest of our row.

It may sound irritating, but this persnickiness maintains the neighborhood in a classic and harmonious style. It's key to preserving the illusion that New York City is a million miles away.

Fortunately, that is just an illusion. In a matter of minutes, I can walk out of Forest Hills Gardens and into a dense, urban scape where I run errands or stroll off to Austin Street (Forest Hills' main shopping drag) for lunch. To get way into the city, I hop on the subway or a commuter train and emerge 20 minutes later in Midtown Manhattan.

All of these subtle elements—curved streets, mixed housing, small parks, diversity, and a connection to a larger urban environment—amount to an ideal neighborhood: the original cottage community. I grew up in a small town in Kansas, and I'm happy my children will have the luxury of a similar experience, only in a much larger city, during a much faster age.

Thankfully, the well-designed community is not a thing of the past. The remaining nine cottage communities featured on pages 80–94 build upon Olmsted's prototype while adopting new solutions to common development problems. >