

# INSIDE.

Mixed-Use Areas Meld Neighborhoods and Business

## *best of* **Both Worlds**

All across the Eastside, new communities are popping up and changing the way residents and business owners interact. Instead of the usual stop and shop, these communities invite surrounding residents and visitors to the area to stroll, dine and stay for a while. It's a step back into an old way of life, where neighbors stop and chat on the way to the grocery store and shop owners know everyone by name. With a central focus on walkability, quality shops and restaurants offer exercise with a purpose. For residents and visitors to these mixed-use communities, it's not just about running errands.

It's about a better way of living.>>

BY CHRISTY PESSEMIER | PHOTOS BY DANE GREGORY MEYER

**In the historic city of Renton,** a mixed-use community has blossomed. Adjacent to the southern shores of Lake Washington, The Landing boasts more than 40 stores, and includes hundreds of sophisticated apartment residences like the Sanctuary, and the Reserve. Walkways between shops pave the way to Boeing Renton, as well as to 57 acre Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park, a popular relaxation and play spot for Renton residents.

Renton Patch online news editor Jenny Manning moved into an apartment in The Landing last December, and loves the idea of living so close to everything. Manning has an office in her home, but also loves to get out and bring her mobile office with her. "I can walk from my apartment to Café Felice and work while I'm there enjoying a cup of coffee," Manning said. "The shop is owned by a husband and wife together and we just talk and catch up. It's a comfortable space."

Manning appreciates the environment The Landing offers. "A lot of apartments don't always feel like a home; but this really feels like home to me," Manning said. "There are a lot of young professionals. They make eye contact with you. It's also an upscale environment. It's a nice area."

The developers of The Landing, a partnership between Harvest Partners and Transwestern, promised Renton a center that would bring pride to the community, much like a city neighborhood. With new stores such as Marshalls, Vino at the Landing and Dick's Sporting Goods opening their doors just months ago, The Landing residents and businesses are enjoying the results of added amenities and convenience, as well as a closer community.

"We are committed to creating an environment that has soul and character," Michelle Davis, director of marketing at Harvest Partners said. "And we've worked very hard to provide a unique mix of complimentary tenants, while supporting some of the smaller retailers that might otherwise get lost in a large regional mall."

Kelly Stilwell and husband Ron own Café Felice, which opened in The Landing a little over a year ago. In that time, a wedding has taken place in the shop, as well as an engagement. The Stilwells have an ongoing relationship with their clients, and enjoy hearing about the latest news in their lives. "I think people like that they can come here in a cozy and inviting atmosphere and have a cup of coffee so close to home," Stilwell said. "We love having a business in The Landing. The area is beautiful and there's a huge sense of community." >>



*Kelly Stilwell, owner of Café Felice*

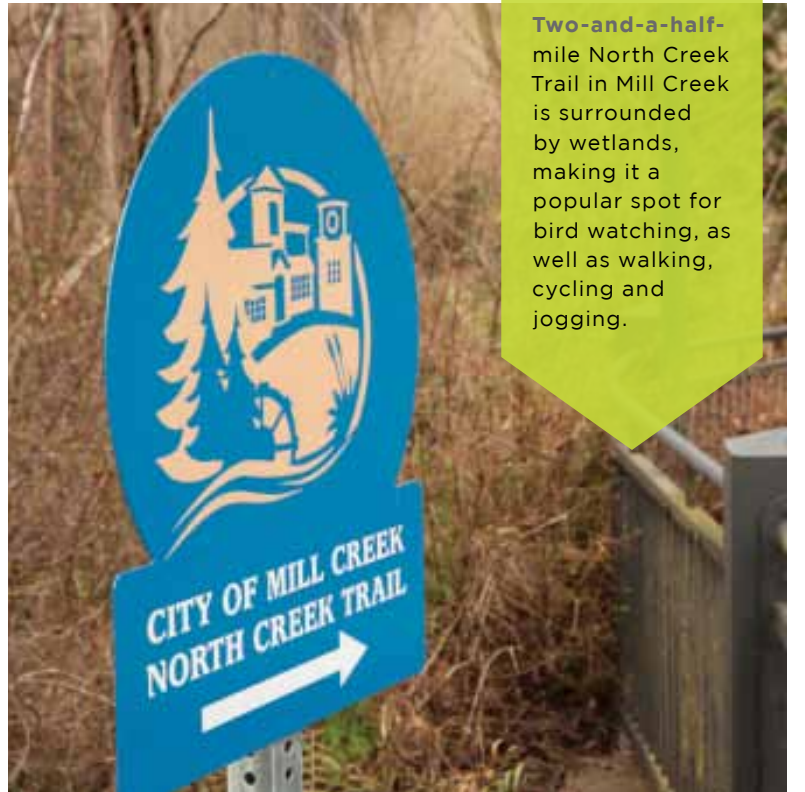


Renton is known for its strong community of volunteers, with more than **4,000** dedicated residents raking leaves, cleaning up parks and giving back to their city where help is needed.

The City of Renton has **29** developed public parks, an **18-hole** golf course and **13** miles of walking trails. Latest additions to the park system: a new **8,400-square-foot** skateboard park located inside Renton's Liberty Park, and Veteran's Memorial Park that features five star-shaped granite walls engraved with text memorializing veterans.



Greek pastries at Kafe Neo



Two-and-a-half-mile North Creek Trail in Mill Creek is surrounded by wetlands, making it a popular spot for bird watching, as well as walking, cycling and jogging.

While stepping into the innovation of these types of newer communities, developers and planners found themselves looking to yesteryear for inspiration.

“We have a future that is also a way of the past,” said Tom Rogers, planning manager for the City of Mill Creek. “What we’re doing right now is re-creating the old towns that were common 100 years ago.”

Further north on the Eastside and conveniently close to the I-5 and I-405 interchange, Mill Creek Town Center is at the center of the city life and happenings around town. Like The Bravern in Bellevue and The Landing in Renton, Mill Creek Town Center has a unique sophistication in its attractive storefronts and restaurants, often packed with joyous diners sharing a glass of wine on patios and decks overlooking Main Street.

Wooded trails tucked behind the shops offer a treasured bonus to residents near the Town Center, as well as the visitors. You regularly see residents walking on the trails with a bag of groceries on their way back home from the Town Center. “You can leave your house and walk to a coffee shop for a cup of coffee, buy a book at the bookstore, and do most, if not all of your shopping without even using your car,” said Steve Butler, City of Mill Creek development director. He says there is great appeal in pedestrian-friendly shopping areas such as Mill Creek Town Center.

Sofeea Huffman, owner of Kafe Neo, a popular Greek and Mediterranean restaurant in Mill Creek Town Center, has enjoyed the response her restaurant has received from customers since it opened in 2008. “We have a lot of regular customers, people taking walks who will stop in and have something to eat,” Huffman said. She appreciates the appeal the Mill Creek Town Center offers to business owners. “I love the town center. You can get everything here. You don’t really have to go anywhere else.”

Stan Eisner, Planning Commission Chairperson for Mill Creek and resident of Nature’s Landing, a complex of condominiums and townhomes tied to Mill Creek Town Center, says walking communities such as Mill Creek Town Center offer a more-connected way of life. “From my house to Boston Pizza is exactly one mile.” Eisner said. “I walk to the post office, bank, market, and then I walk home. I get a regular walk of almost three miles round trip.”

In addition to the convenience and beauty of the surrounding trails, Eisner also appreciates the health aspect Mill Creek Town Center offers. “It gives you a level of community you don’t find when you’re sitting in your car,” Eisner said. “Because I walk just about everywhere I need to go, I’m happy and the cardiologist is happy.”

Butler says the town center has been so well received because it’s geared toward all segments of society. “You see kids, seniors, teens — everyone is interacting. You can tell people are enjoying themselves.”>>



Stan Eisner, resident of Nature’s Landing

Mill Creek’s community development director, Steve Butler, and its planning manager, Tom Rogers, like the Town Center so much they are working on plans for another one in the northeastern corner of Mill Creek. This new mixed-use community, East Gateway Urban Village, will have trails alongside wetlands, with interpretive signs and a viewing platform.



A less-obvious mixed-use property that recently sprung up is The Bravern in Bellevue. Yes, you can live right next to Neiman Marcus and Microsoft in high-rise luxury apartments called The Signature Residences.

Due to the lagging economy, some of the Signature Residences recently were converted from condominiums to luxury apartments boasting panoramic views of the city, nearby Mount Rainier and the rest of the Cascades, along with enticing amenities. In just a few months, more than half the residential units have become occupied.

"The fact that it's rentable has opened it up to a larger market," said Michael Orbino, managing broker for John L. Scott Bellevue.

Bravern apartment resident Jacqueline Nielsen is thrilled to be a part of this new community.

"There is such a unique mix of culture and age groups living in The Bravern," Nielsen said. "I am overwhelmed with joy to be living here." When she was looking into renting at The Bravern, Nielsen was concerned that she would not be allowed to rent along with Sparky. To Nielsen's surprise, The Bravern welcomed both Nielsen and Sparky with open arms. After moving in August 2010, it didn't take long for Sparky and Nielsen to get comfortable. "Everyone knows Sparky and stops to say hi and talk," she said. "It's so easy to live in a high-end place with an animal."

In the past few months while she's lived at The Bravern in one of the wealthiest areas of Bellevue along N.E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Nielsen has taken advantage of the sales and specials the retailers at The Bravern shops offer. She says they "make you feel like a million bucks when you walk in their doors."

"I'm sitting here in my apartment with my Ferragamo shoes, looking out my window at panoramic views. I never would have thought I would live in a high-rise, but I love it. It feels like I'm in the middle of the clouds," she said.

Creating an atmosphere of luxury and comfort is what the developers of The Bravern hoped to accomplish. The complex opened Sept. 12, 2009.

"We went to London, Paris, Berlin, D.C., Boston and New York," said Tom Woodworth, senior investment director for Schnitzer West, the developers of The Bravern. "In Europe we saw old buildings dating back to the 1700s, with modern architectural influences. It didn't look so contrived. It looked natural."

After taking thousands of photographs, Woodworth and his team came back to Bellevue and shared ideas with the focus groups. They asked questions relating to their desires for design, landscaping, seating areas and other amenities. "This idea of having a walking community, with residences close by, combined with a European shopping experience was something Bellevue didn't really have."

Other mixed-use communities drawing residents include Issaquah Highlands, a vibrant newer community with trails, parks and pedestrian-friendly shops. It's developing and expanding to meet demand for this popular "living green" neighborhood along the I-90 corridor. Some local favorites there are Café Ladro, Ben and Jerry's and Zeeks Pizza, and coming soon is Swedish Medical Center, a 175-bed acute-care hospital, complete with a cancer center and a five-floor medical office building.

There's also Redmond Ridge, Snoqualmie Ridge and more popping up around the region.

"I think it's the wave of the future," Butler, the City of Mill Creek development director said. "More and more communities are doing this. We've had bus tours of people from China, Japan and all over the U.S. come and see what we have — and then go back to their communities and try to duplicate that."

**ON THE BRAVERN IN BELLEVUE**  
Rent ranges from **\$1,500-\$5,000** a month.

The Bravern includes **305,000** square feet of specialty retail and service shops, as well as restaurants along N.E. 8th Street in downtown Bellevue.

The **33-story** towers offer **215** condominium homes in the north tower and **232** apartment homes in the south tower.

There are **3,100** parking spots in the Bravern garage for tenants, shoppers and residents.



*Jacqueline Nielsen and Sparky at their Bravern apartment*



*Kreiss, a furniture store, recently moved into The Bravern*