



A home in the Foxborough Estates subdivision in Kildeer. The village features custom and semicustom homes, mostly two-story, on spacious lots. (Dave Shields/ Photo for the Tribune / January 17, 2013)

KILDEER PRIZED FOR SCHOOLS, TRANQUILLITY

By Leslie Mann, Special to the Tribune

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Named for a white-bellied bird that shouts "kill-dee," Kildeer is a wealthy, secluded enclave that has no aspirations of becoming larger, noisier or hipper. This is where the well-heeled kick off their shoes at the end of the day, content to see more deer than people from their spacious homes.

"Nightlife" means joining neighbors for a progressive dinner, catching bass from backyard ponds or unwinding with poolside cocktails in the summer.

Thirty miles northwest of the Loop, Kildeer was incorporated in 1958 to preserve its solitude. Residents drove developer Joseph Brickman out of town after he suggested turning its countryside into a 60,000-resident "billion-dollar city."

A half-century later, the community is nearly landlocked, with 4,000 residents and 1,200 homes, all single-family. Still low-density. Still mostly residential. Still watchful of developers who want otherwise.

Along the way, "Killdeer" (the bird name has two Ls) morphed into "Kildeer."

"We're not sure how it started, but it stuck," said Clayton W. Brown, author of the village's history book.

Until 2002, "village hall" was resident Laurel Schreiber's basement. Now it's a lodge-like hub where homeowner associations gather around a stone fireplace and residents call Village President Nandia Black (a Chicago attorney by day) by her first name.

Known for its one-acre-per-house minimum, the community has eased its rule. Newer houses are closer together with common grounds, but a 40-acre subdivision has 40 homes.

Subdivisions are nestled among the hills that belonged to German farmers and English land speculators, who bought this sliver of Lake County from the government in the 1840s. Ponds were dug by early developers.

On weekdays, Kildeer is quiet, save for the stay-at-home moms and retirees jogging the village's paths or meeting friends at such places as a pilates/yoga studio.

On weekends, residents flock to Cupcake Couture Cafe, where flavors include "Pink Diamonds" for girls and "Tailgate" (with your team colors) for guys. Kildeer's few restaurants include Gianni's Cafe and Tsukasa of Toyko.

Other than the annual Residents' Day Golf Outing at the Kemper Lakes Golf Club, village administrators focus on minimizing costs instead of event planning. Buying electricity with another village, for example, slashed residents' utility bills beginning in 2012.

To elevate sales tax revenue, the village oversees commercial development of its crossroads. Gone are the country taverns and Ethel's Place farm stand that used to define Kildeer as a pit stop on the way to Wisconsin. Commerce is small and upscale, consisting of two strip malls, the Shops at Kildeer and the Quentin Collection.

Recreational amenities are private — country clubs and homeowners' pools, sports courts and tennis courts. Independent sports leagues for children thrive.

The first of a three-phase bike path is complete. By 2018, the project will connect the village to area forest preserves.

Kildeer's houses are mostly two-story, in styles favored by custom and semicustom builders in the last 50 years. The newest dwarf the originals. Only a handful predate World War II.

Kildeer's newest development, the Sanctuary Club, will include houses that will register at 3,600 or more square feet.

Newcomers should read their subdivisions' covenants, which govern landscaping and lighting, for example, and the village's "no fences" ordinance.

All Kildeer homes have wells, according to the village. Older ones have septic systems, but newer ones are connected to a Lake County sewer line.

Home prices took a hit during the recession and are slowly climbing back.

"A few years ago, you couldn't buy here for less than \$900,000," said Jeff Ohm, real estate agent with Premier Realty Group in Kildeer. "Now, you can find one for \$500,000."

The area's highly regarded schools contribute to Kildeer's appeal. "We demand a lot of them," said Virginia Savio, who moved here in 1968 to raise her family. "But when (schools) need volunteers, the parents are there."

Daily commuters use the Metra train station in Palatine or catch Interstate 90 by way of Illinois Highway 53.

Violent crime is "nonexistent," said Black. Because police track residents' vacation times, you can count the number of annual burglaries on one hand.

"I tell my kids this is not like other towns," said resident Jim Hack. "You can leave your bike out here, and it will be here when you get back."

Today, the only kildeer in Kildeer are the wooden ones perched in village hall. And sweet corn comes from upscale grocers, not Ethel's Place.

But Kildeer has steadfastly retained the tranquillity that has lured homebuyers since it became a village. It's a bubble, for sure. But it's a safe and secure bubble that its residents work hard to preserve.

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