



A lake gives a sense of serenity to many mobile home parks.



B.C. Crowder paints the trim on the mobile home of an elderly neighbor.

Mobile home living

'It's not a gypsy-type phenomenon'

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Life in mobile home parks is different now than in the 1960s when a year for a change of scenery was satisfied just by hitching the family dwelling onto the family car.

Then, many residents of conventional houses saw the parks mainly as the province of transient people in search of a better job or climate.

With the introduction in the early 1970s of large mobile homes that could not be towed by car, however, the parks began to attract less transient people who were looking for more than just economy in their lifestyles. So a new crop of parks sprung up to supply this new market.

Three parks in north Oakland County exemplify the new type of lifestyle for mobile home owners.

AVON PARK in southwest Avon is aimed at middle-aged and older residents. The age requirement isn't the only distinguishing characteristic of Avon Park. "We wanted our park to resemble as closely as possible a residential area to attract people whose children have grown up—the empty nesters," says Lindstrom.

TO ACCOMPLISH this, mobile homes in Avon Park must sit on foundations dug below the frost line. Lindstrom says this eliminates the need for aluminum skirting around the base of the homes, thus giving them a closer resemblance to conventional houses.

Most mobile homes, by contrast, rest high on concrete building blocks, camouflaged by skirting.

Lindstrom's pride in Avon Park is borne out by residents. "We have lived here five years and we love it," says Lyle Van Deventer, 74, who lives with wife Clara.

The Van Deventers moved to Avon Park from a conventional house in Detroit's northwest side. They took up mobile home

living because their house seemed too big after their children moved out. "We looked at quite a few parks before we decided to move into this one," says Van Deventer. "But we like this one the best. All the homes here have foundations—the wind doesn't bother them a bit."

He says the only thing he missed about his conventional house was the workshop.

LAST WEEK, another Avon Park resident, B.C. Crowder, passed the trim on the mobile home belonging to an elderly neighbor.

Crowder, a retired restaurant manager, lives in the park with wife Jeanette. After their children were grown, the two moved to the park from a big house in Royal Oak.

"We were rattling around that old house just like two peas in a pod," he says.

"We love it here," says Crowder. "It's just right for my wife and I, and there are a lot of nice people who live here."

Crowder says that while mobile homes are not built as strongly as conventional houses, they hold up well if kept up. Social activities are one of the major attractions in Avon Park. A residents' association schedules activities tailored to their needs, says Lindstrom. Activities include a mixed bowling league, luncheons, dances, bingo, picnics and special trips.

Rochester Estates in southeast Avon Township has 775 lots and is one of greater Rochester's largest mobile home parks. Not specialized like Avon Park, residents in Rochester Estates are of all ages.

Hollis Crutcher, manager of Rochester Estates, differentiates between trailers and mobile homes. "This is not a trailer park," he says. "You get a trailer from U-Haul."

"We'd like to get away from the trailer park concept," he adds. "It's not a gypsy-type phenomenon. We're homeowners and voters here."

Opened in 1970 as Chateau Estates, the park was sold last November to Multivest

Inc. of Southfield. The park has a clubhouse, a swimming pool, an exercise room and a completely equipped laundry room. Residents are not charged for use of banquet rooms.

THERE IS no difference between the residents of Rochester Estates and the residents of any other community, says Crutcher. "We're not an entity unto ourselves because we live in homes that aren't attached to the ground. We're all the same kind of people," he says.

Besides reasons of economics, people often move into mobile homes because they require less maintenance than conventional houses. The outside finish of a mobile home, for example is virtually permanent. "Upsleep involves only washing and waxing the outside," says Crutcher.

Like residents in Avon Park, most Rochester Estates residents are happy with their lifestyle. "I love living here," says John Prior, a 64-year resident. "It's quiet and everything."

Despite his contentment, Prior has a few complaints, mostly about the rent.

"They've raised the rent four times since I've moved out here," he says, noting when he first moved to Chateau Estates from Detroit, he understood that the park would never raise the rent for retirees.

Crutcher says the statement that retirees would never face higher rent was a sales-initiated rumor that had been floating around for several years. "It just isn't economically feasible to say that a person could live in the same place for six years without having to pay a higher rent. Utilities and taxes have gone up," says Crutcher.

MARGARET BAY, who lives across the street from Prior, also has a complaint about the park. She says that while she tries to keep her lawn free of weeds, other residents don't and the park isn't strict enough about enforcing lawn-care rules. "But I'm not really dismayed with living



Woodland Estates has spacious lots, averaging about 5,000 square feet.

here," she says. "I wouldn't mow."

Of the weeds, Crutcher says, "There are people who don't care what their lawn looks like. We can force them to mow their lawn, but we can't force them to apply weed-killer—we can't force them to have pride in their homes."

Harvey Hilson, a five-year resident, has no complaints about the park. "I'm contented. There aren't many problems here. And I don't think the rent is too high," he says.

Hilson moved to Rochester Estates from another mobile home park in Warren. Until 1969, he and his wife lived in their own house in East Detroit. Rising taxes prompted them to try mobile home living.

Hilson says he doesn't miss his conventional house. "I've lived in apartments, flats—everywhere. And I've had my fill of everything but mobile homes," he says.

Woodland Estates in northwest Oakland Township is the most spacious of the three parks. Average lot size is 5,000 square feet, according to Jim Arthur, manager of the five-year-old park.

Like Avon Park and Rochester Estates, Woodland features a clubhouse. In addition to space for games and parties, the clubhouse has a laundry room and an indoor pool. The park also has tennis courts, shuffleboard courts and an outdoor pool.

Woodland lies in a secluded area across from Addison Park Park. The area surrounding the park is so densely wooded, you don't spot the park from the road until you are virtually alongside it.

Last fall and this spring, Arthur planted 600 trees throughout Woodland to flavor the park's country atmosphere. The park will install a playground and baseball diamond for children this spring, says Arthur.

WOODLAND RESIDENTS Eugene and Evelyn Small are enthusiastic about the park.

The Smalls had a home in Detroit, which they left to get out into fresh country air. "The only things we dislike about our life out here is the country water and Romeo Road," Small says with a laugh.

The stretch of Romeo Road that Woodland fronts and two miles of the road west to Rochester Road are filled with potholes.

The Smalls note that they checked 12 to 15 other mobile home parks before choosing Woodland.

Another Woodland resident, Joyce Crawford, also likes Woodland's country lifestyle. She has lived in the park for four years, and in mobile homes for 12. She likes the mobile home life because it is carefree and lacks extensive required home maintenance.



John Prior tends to the lawn in front of his mobile home.



Mobile home parks sometimes furnish playgrounds for children.